

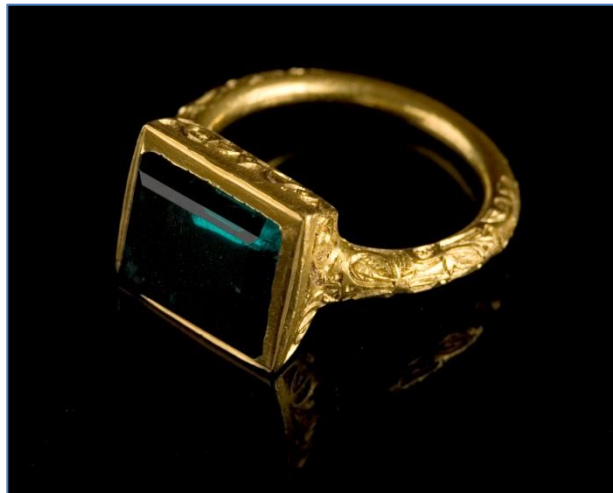
Carat Emerald Ring Found- June 2011

By James Sinclair

Continuing the wonderful finds from the Nuestra Senora de Atocha, on June 23, 2011 Capt. Andy Matroci and the crew of the J.B. Magruder have done it again! This time with the recovery of a beautiful emerald ring, two silver spoons and some silver coins. In the last Newsletter I mentioned in the article on the gold rosary find, that it may be that Capt. Andy and his crew was beginning to develop a “trail” of material that could lead to spectacular finds, and indeed, they have.

The Ring

The ring holds a square cut emerald of enormous size, easily 10 carat of the finest quality Colombian Muzo emerald the deep vibrant green has a clarity rare in jewelry of this time period and certainly with all of the spectacular finds from the Nuestra Senora de Atocha through the years this ranks as one of the finest gemstones to date.



Emerald Ring Artifact #90326

The ring itself is done in a baroque style with a high relief of decoration. In fact the meaning of the term baroque was originally applied to pearls that are natural and irregular. In time it came to define a class of art and architecture that was notable for its abundance of decoration. This style was particularly popular between the 16th and 18th centuries. It became a term with negative connotations much the same as byzantine is sometimes used when referring to a situation or illustration that has almost too much decoration included.

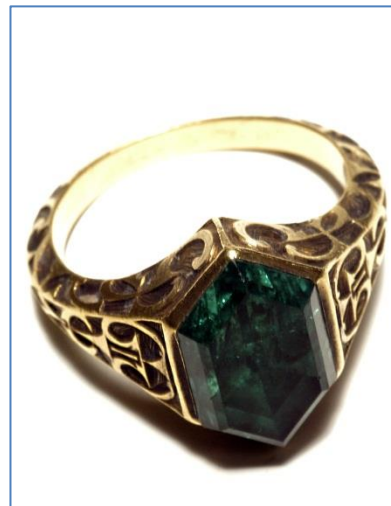
Manuel Marcial de Gomar of Emeralds international who is in the process of appraising the emerald in the ring brought forth the idea that while baroque may be applied here that there is much in the design of the ring that is reminiscent of the style in Spain that was an amalgam of a both Christian Spanish and Muslim Spanish known as “Mudejar” which literally translated means

“those left behind”. After the Reconquista of Spain was completed in 1492, a large population of Muslim Spanish was left behind

Examples of “Baroque settings on rings”



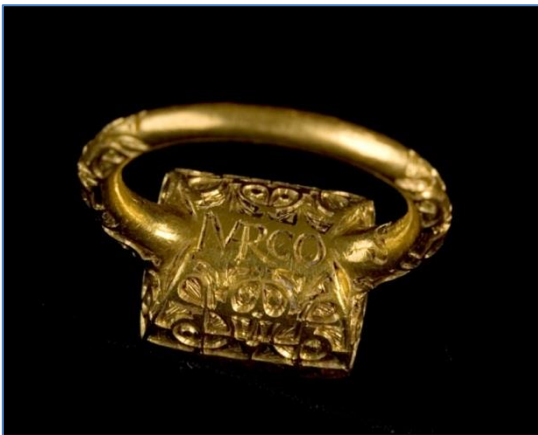
Atocha Emerald Ring, 1996 #58504



Atocha “Bishops Ring”, 1982

The inscription:

On the undersurface of the setting of the ring is a monogram word/name. There has been speculation on the exact meaning however, using Occam's razor principle (the simplest explanation is usually the most correct) it seems fairly straightforward. Marcos is Spanish for St. Mark who, among other things is credited with bringing Christianity to the indigenous people of Africa, hence the other name for Mark "the evangelist." Perhaps the efforts of St. Mark in establishing the Christian faith in Africa resonated with the owner of the current find in his efforts in the New World, for rings like this were the province of the very wealthy and powerful and more specifically a powerful and wealthy member of the clergy. However, there is also, in the first three letters of "marco" a monogram that contains the sacred monogram of the Virgin Mary which are the three letters MAR. It is known as the *Sacred Monogram of the Blessed Virgin*, and consists of the stylized letters AMR conjoined - the initial letters of *Ave Maria Regina* (Hail Mary Queen) - denoting Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Queen of Heaven. The idea of Mary as Queen of Heaven comes from Revelation 12.1-5. In fact, all five letters of the name MARIA can be deciphered in this motif. So quite possibly we have a very complex and deep religious meaning to these few letters contained on the reverse of the ring.



Arrow showing "Mary" Monogram

These rings are known as "Bishops rings" or "Pontifical rings" which are also ancient symbols of the faith and commitment of the individual wearing them. Bishops have worn a ring to denote their special office. The first tracing of a Bishop's ring is found about A.D. 610. Bishops' rings were always designed around a single stone, which was a ruby, an emerald, or a sapphire, and the stone was not engraved. The other example of a ring found like this was recovered from the *Atocha* in 1982 and is known as the "Bishops Ring". It came out of a silver box along with a pectoral cross studded with deep green emeralds.

The current ring, coming as it does aboard the Nuestra Senora de Atocha, is set with a magnificent example of what are acknowledged as the finest emeralds in the world, those from the famous Muzo mine in Columbia. Manuel Marcial de Gomar, owner of Emeralds International located in Key West Florida, who has studied and appraised the collection of Atocha emeralds ever since their discovery was extremely excited by this find. He believes this is one of the finest quality emeralds to be found on the Atocha and also due to the large size of the stone, approximately 10 carats, it's in a class all by itself.

It seems as though this latest find is another example of possible “church” treasures. Just the type of valuable material that we are searching for and expect to see in the stern castle of the Atocha - will the team find a matching “pectoral cross” to this ring as in the 1982 find? Excitement keeps mounting about these finds and this area - these latest treasures may well be remembered as the first clues that showed the way to the “other mother”. And as Mel said for so many years,

“Today is the Day!”



*1982 Atocha “Bishops Ring”
Photo by: Dylan Kibler
Courtesy of Mel Fisher Heritage Society*