



A Roman carnelian intaglio. Mars Gradivus.

Circa: 2nd-3rd century A.D.

Carnelian

1.15 x 1.65 x 0.2 cm (0 1/2 x 0 5/8 x 0 1/8 inches)

Roman, 2nd-3rd century A.D.

The god of war walks leftward, wearing a crested helmet, holding a spear and weapons trophy. On the hips is tied a drapery. At his feet, a star. Groundline. Interesting and well-composed work, executed with deep and marked engraving lines. Signs of wear and burnt traces on the surface of the stone.

Appellation given by the Romans to Mars, the god of war. The name Gradivus means "He who advances" (in battle), or "He who makes the crops grow" (because Mars was, prior to his assimilation to the Greek Ares, an agricultural god). Numa Pompilius created twelve Salian priests in his honor.

Festus puts forward several hypotheses on the origin: we named Mars Gradivus because we advance in battle from one side to the other.