

A Grand Tour Carnelian intaglio. The Death of Othryades.

Circa: 18th century

Carnelian

1.2 x 1.5 x 0.3 cm (0 $^{1}/_{2}$ x 0 $^{5}/_{8}$ x 0 $^{1}/_{8}$ inches)

18th century

The intaglio shows a seated male figure, his head lying on his shield. With spears, and breastplate. The bearded man has his eyes closed, the facial expression suggests the man's abandonment towards the Beyond. The anatomical details, as well as the engraved details on the weapons, and their rendering denote great finesse of execution for the small size of the stone.

The composition of the scene is reminiscent of certain contemporary statuary groups representing the Spartan hero Othryades, tired of having survived his companions, he is represented laying down his weapons and killing himself. (cf. an engraving dating from 1781, showing an intaglio on carnelian).

Othryades is a Spartan warrior who gives victory to the Lacedaemonian state at the Battle of the 300 Champions in 546 B.C. He is frequently cited by ancient authors, like Leonidas and the Three Hundred of Thermopylae, as an example of Spartan heroism. By tradition, Othryades was ashamed to be the only man in his unit to live, and so he killed himself on the field of battle rather than return to Sparta.

Platz-Horster, citing Cades, refers that one similar intaglio has been executed by Calandrelli, copying an ancient gem.

Literature

For a similar scene see

- Cades 74, 9 I I

- Paoletti VII, I 66

- Platz-Horster 7, C37