A gold Signet Ring set with a Roman Magical Prasium Intaglio. Jupiter Heliopolitanus

Stone: 11 x 14 mm

US size 7 — UK N½ — 4,61 gr

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

Mounting: Late 19th century

A remarkable gold signet ring set with an ancient Roman intaglio carved in green prasium (plasma), depicting the cult image of Jupiter Heliopolitanus — the great sky god worshipped at Baalbek (ancient Heliopolis) in the Beqaa Valley of Lebanon.

The deity is represented in his characteristic hieratic form: a rigid, frontal figure wrapped in a sheath-like garment, holding attributes in each hand — likely a whip and ears of grain, symbols of his role as a cosmic and agrarian deity. The god wears the distinctive tall kalathos (modius) headdress, and his body is adorned with multiple busts, representing astral or planetary divinities, emphasising his syncretic and cosmocratic nature. At the base, two sacred bulls flank the cult statue, animals closely associated with Jupiter Heliopolitanus and symbolic of strength, fertility, and the thunderstorm.

The field is enriched with magical inscriptions or characteres — mystical symbols common on Roman magical gems, intended to invoke divine protection and power. Such gems were worn as powerful amulets, combining the authority of the supreme god with apotropaic inscriptions to safeguard the wearer.

The intaglio is carved in translucent green prasium — a variety of chalcedony highly prized in antiquity for magical gems due to its colour, associated with life, renewal, and the verdant earth. The stone is set

in a later gold mount of classic signet ring form, with tapering shoulders leading to a smooth bezel.

A rare and powerful piece of Roman glyptic art, uniting religion, magic, and the mysteries of the Eastern cults that spread throughout the Roman Empire.

Condition: Very good. Stone intact with minor surface wear consistent with age. Gold mount solid.

Literature

For a similar typology, see the celebrated bronze statuette of Jupiter Heliopolitanus published by René Dussaud (Jupiter Héliopolitain), from the Charles Sursock collection, which displays the same iconographic scheme: the sheathed deity flanked by two bulls on a rectangular base.