

## NECKLACE ADORNED WITH SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES AND ANIMALS

Sarmatian, 1st century B.C. - 1st century A.D.

turquoise and amethyst

L: 35.6 cm, Weight: 242 g (L: 14 in, Weight: 8.53

Reference: 15788



This massive neck ornament is composed of three different parts: a complex, ropelike loop-in-loop-chain; its finials, which take the shape of crouching animals and are inlaid with turquoise; and a rectangular centerpiece set with a large oval amethyst of exceptionally fine dark purple color.

The most fascinating elements are the crouching animals, which tuck their front and rear legs under themselves. While their bodies and ferocious appearances are that of a lion, the twisted, curving horns above their heads make them into lion-griffins. These fantastic creatures are generously inlaid with turquoise, which are set into openings and function as an integral part of the bodies: haunches, ribs, ears, eyes, and cheeks are all indicated by drop-shaped inlays of various sizes. With its muzzle, one lion-griffin holds a square setting also filled with turquoise. The other hook, also covered with a similar setting, links the chain to the central ornament. The clear, geometric lines of this ornament present a remarkable contrast to the liveliness of the animals. A rectangular, gold base supports the slightly raised oval setting, which holds a domed amethyst surrounded by a ledge.

While the multiple chain and the central setting of this impressive piece accord perfectly with the jewelry of the late Hellenistic and early Imperial Roman periods, the crouching animals with integrated turquoise inlays suggest a late Sarmatian origin. The Sarmatians, a multiracial confederacy of Iranian people akin to the western Scythians, favored a very particular goldwork marked by their own colorful interpretation of the famous Animal Style. Oval, drop-shaped, circular, and even rectangular turquoise was generously used to indicate parts of the bodies of fantastic animals. Splendid examples of Sarmatian work and style have been found in the rich burials of these nomads, who inhabited the steppes from Afghanistan in the east to the Ukraine in the west.

Late Sarmatian gold work of the first century B.C. to the first century A.D. sometimes shows the influence of goldsmiths of the Classical world; this object, for example, is a Sarmatian interpretation of the Hellenistic animal-head necklace. A similar hinged clasp, with an oval mount on a rectangular base, was used for a Hellenistic bracelet now in

the Museum of Historical Treasures in Kiev.

### CONDITION

Excellent condition. Some tarnish on chain and some corrosion on finials; a few stone inlays are missing from their settings on finials.

### PROVENANCE

Ex- de Chambrier private collection, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 1960s.

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