

DAVID AARON



Inlaid Gold Torque

Central Asia

1st-2nd Century A.D.

Gold

H: 15cm

For a thousand years the Sarmatian tribes had contact and influential exchanges with the major military powers of the ancient world including Persia, the Crimean and Pontic kingdoms, the Celts, Thracians and finally the Romans. As nomadic tribal and trades people, they travelled extensively by horse, kept grazing livestock and carried their wealth as portable gold. Herodotus even claimed of one tribe 'Their arms are all either of gold or brass...'. They developed a rich culture characterised by opulent tombs, fine metalwork, and a brilliant stylistic art. The excavations of royal burials have provided the most complete record of the jewellery of the Central Asian tribes.

Typical metalwork objects were in the form of stags or other animals, hammered or stamped out of gold and often inlaid with coloured glass or semi-precious stones. This torque is formed of a solid circular section with hinged opening, carefully inlaid with glass enamel and colourful stones. The areas of inlay which are now missing, may have been created from a material more susceptible to decomposition with time, on the basis of comparison with other Sarmatian jewellery it is safe to presume they may have been coral or enamel. Some of the inlays are in the form of 'Tamga' symbols which act as tribal or clan emblems, widely used by Eurasian nomads and recorded on various precious metal objects and ornaments found throughout the region.

Literature:

Drouot, Paris, May 29th-30th, 1963, no. 27, illus.

Sotheby's, Ancient Sculpture and Works of Art, 3rd July 2018, Lot 77.

David Aaron Ltd, 2020, No. 10

