Necklace

Place of origin: Tétouan (possibly, made)

Date: 1700-1799 (made)

Artist/Maker: Unknown

Materials and Techniques: Silver-gilt filigree set with pearls, emeralds and rubies, on a necklace of swags of pearls, with beads of silver-gilt and cloisonne imitation enamel

Credit Line: Gibson-Carmichael Collection

Museum number: 607:1, 2-1902

Gallery location: In Storage

Public access description

The imperial urban jewellery of Morocco is traditionally made of gold, unlike the jewellery worn by the tribal people, who had a strong preference for silver. While it is clearly related to the jewellery worn elsewhere in North Africa, it often retains a richness and sophistication, derived from the medieval Islamic culture of southern Spain, which is absent in many other countries.

This necklace shows many of these characteristics. The cylindrical beads, called qannuta in Morocco, are directly descended from a pattern used by the Moors of Andalusia before their expulsion in the 15th century. The same design continued in use among Spanish Christians in such places as La Alberca until the 19th century. The symbol of a double-headed eagle, representing power throughout the Islamic Mediterranean region as much as in Europe, may date from the same period.

There was no information about the origins of this necklace when it arrived in the Museum in 1902. It may have been made in Tétouan, a centre of Andalusian culture on the north coast of Morocco, where similar necklaces were worn in the 18th century.

Descriptive line

Silver-gilt and seed pearl necklace with double-headed gem-set eagle pendant, Tétouan (Morocco), 1700-1799.

Physical description

Necklace of swags of seed pearls, eight strands in each swag, interspersed by decorative silver-gilt beads, with a pendant shaped like a crowned double-headed eagle. There are two spherical open filigree beads, one on each side, on the necklace, and two cylindrical beads. The cylindrical beads are covered with cloisonné imitation enamel, and have a circle of small filigree beads round each end. The pendant consists of six pieces linked by jump rings and hooks. The body, tail and two wings are made of silver-gilt filigree. The lower feathers of each wing, and the border of the tail, are made of sheet silver, gilded, and engraved to look like feathers. These engraved feathers are alternatively gilded in yellow and red. The head is made of gilded hollow sheet silver, and the two legs are made of cast gilded silver. All the pieces are set with gems (emeralds, rubies and pearls), and there is a string of seed pearls round the neck of the eagle, and a pearl hanging from each beak. The filigree is all open work, and decorated with applied granules.

Dimensions

Height: 26.5 cm, Width: 16.5 cm, Depth: 1.8 cm

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URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O116921/necklace-unknown/