



Gold Bishop's Ring With An Amethyst Pebble. Langobard, Italian, 7-8th Century Ad



52 800 EUR

Period : Before 16th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Gold

Description

A gold Bishop's ring set with an amethyst pebble. Langobard, Italian, 7th-8th century AD. Ring Size M 1/2 UK / 6.5 US / 53 EU. Ring measurements 3.5 x 2.2 x 1.1cm. Weighs 11.4 grams. A finely crafted gold Bishop's ring featuring a prominent square bezel set with a polished amethyst pebble, which perfectly fills the tall setting. Each side of the bezel is adorned with stylised crucifixes, flanked by outward-facing birds, which likely represent peacocks whose torsos merge elegantly into the ribbed shank. Provenance: Private English Collection, formed between the late 1970's - early 1990's. References: A closely related ring resides in the Griffin Collection, currently on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Object Number: L.2015.72.36). The ring, catalogued as a

Dealer

Belle Histoire

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"Langobard Bishop's Ring, Italian, 7th-8th century', shares key stylistic features, including a tall setting decorated with crucifixes and peacocks along the shank.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/661735> Another gold ring with similar bird motifs is held by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Accession Number: 615-1871), it is catalogued as a 'Gold ring, the bezel formed of two confronted peacocks modelled in the round, Byzantine, 6th to 10th century'.

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O126685/ring-unknown/?carousel-image=2007BL8694> A further parallel is found in the Musée d'Archéologie nationale, Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye (Inventory Number: MAN87191). This ring, featuring a tall, square bezel set with a chrysoprase and having a similar shank was excavated from a 7th-century burial beneath the Basilica of Saint-Denis.

https://musee-archeologienationale.fr/en/phototheque/oeuvres/bague-a-chaton-pyramidal-ajoure-imitant-une-corbeille-de-feuillage_chrysoprase_or-metal_orfevriere-technique Historical Context:

The Langobards (or Lombards) were a Germanic people who invaded and ruled much of the Italian Peninsula from 568 to 774 AD. Their kingdom, known for its fusion of Germanic and Byzantine artistic traditions, persisted until the Carolingian conquest under Charlemagne. A Bishop's ring is a large, often ornate ring worn by bishops as a symbol of their office and spiritual authority.

Traditionally, it signifies the bishop's commitment to the Church and is considered a mark of his episcopal dignity. In Christian art, the peacock symbolises immortality, resurrection, and divine vision. Early Christians adopted this imagery from ancient beliefs that peacock flesh never decayed, making it a fitting emblem of eternal life. Byzantine mosaics, such as those in San Vitale, Ravenna, depict peacocks near the Fountain of Life, reinforcing their connection to paradise and renewal. In illuminated manuscripts

like the Book of Kells, peacocks appear as decorative motifs, representing Christ's victory over death. Their distinctive feather "eyes" also came to symbolise God's omniscience, making the peacock a powerful visual reminder of Christian faith and the promise of resurrection.