

CAT No. 569 - Silver Niello Mount

**K82–K83, K168, K182, K251, K350, K421, K431, K538, K619, K867, K929, K975, K982, K1005, K1098,
K1111, K1285, K1296, K1615, K1630, K1669, K1700, K2170, K5044, K5051**

Condition Report

Conservation Started: 09.09.2014

Conservation Finished: 16.09.2014

Conservator: Rachel Altpeter

Time Taken: 34 hours

Including digital photography, report, conservation and packing.

Dimensions: L. 212mm; W. 33mm; Th. edge 1mm

Weight before: see individual fragment reports

Weight after: 67.87g

Digital photography:

Taken with a Canon EOS 1100D digital camera under bulbs. Taken before and after. Details taken with Keyence VHX-1000 3D digital microscope.

Annotation on any of the storage bags or boxes:

Stored together with K1286 but it is thought that this is not part of the same grouping. Associated soil samples and fragments stored in individual boxes, joined group mounted for display.

Description: Visual and microscopic examination using Meiji stereo microscope 7-75x magnification

Silver plate or strip with niello inlay and a gilt border. One of the short ends of the strip is finished in a straight line, the other in a triangular shape. There are evenly spaced fastening holes in the gilt border with an overall of 15 gilded pins with dome shaped heads. The niello inlay forms a geometric decoration with a striped border along the inside of the gilt part and a “mushroom”-shaped pattern. The pattern is largest towards the triangular end and becomes narrower and smaller towards the middle, getting only slightly larger again towards the straight end.

Associated Objects:

The object consists of 26 fragments: K82, K83, K168a, K182, K251, K350a and b, K421, K431, K538, K619, K867, K929, K975, K982, K1005, K1098, K1111, K1285, K1296, K1630, K1669, K1700, K3509, K5044, K5051, which have previously been grouped as niello object group D and E.

UPDATE LM 22/05/15: K168 is also labelled as ‘Group D’ however it is packaged in a separate box.

Pre-Conservation Condition: Visual and microscopic examination using Meiji stereo microscope 7-75x magnification

Please see individual condition reports for further detail on each of the fragments.

The fragments have been cleaned of soil but traces have been left in the niello channels where the niello is damaged. Both the silver and the gilt areas are tarnished, especially on the main strip towards the triangular end around fragments K421 and K1630.

Most of the fragments are distorted from their original shape and areas at a large angle, are torn. Some of these cracks have been temporarily stabilised with a support backing of Paraloid B72 and Japanese tissue paper (on fragments K251, K1630 and K1700). Niello has been lost along the edges of some of the smaller fragments in the centre of mount therefore the remaining metal support is thin and weakened.

Most of the fragment edges have a grainy appearance with a slightly shiny surface from recent breaks as well as eroded old break edges (see individual descriptions).

There are several marks which are probably the result of intentional breaking up of the object. There are short quite deep cut marks near the edge of the gilt border where this has been pulled up (on K82, see figure 1). A short incision mark on the edge of the gilt border less than 1mm from the next fragment (on K619) and an edge that may have been cut; it appears smooth with slight striations and a ridge on the back of the edge (on K251, see figure 2).

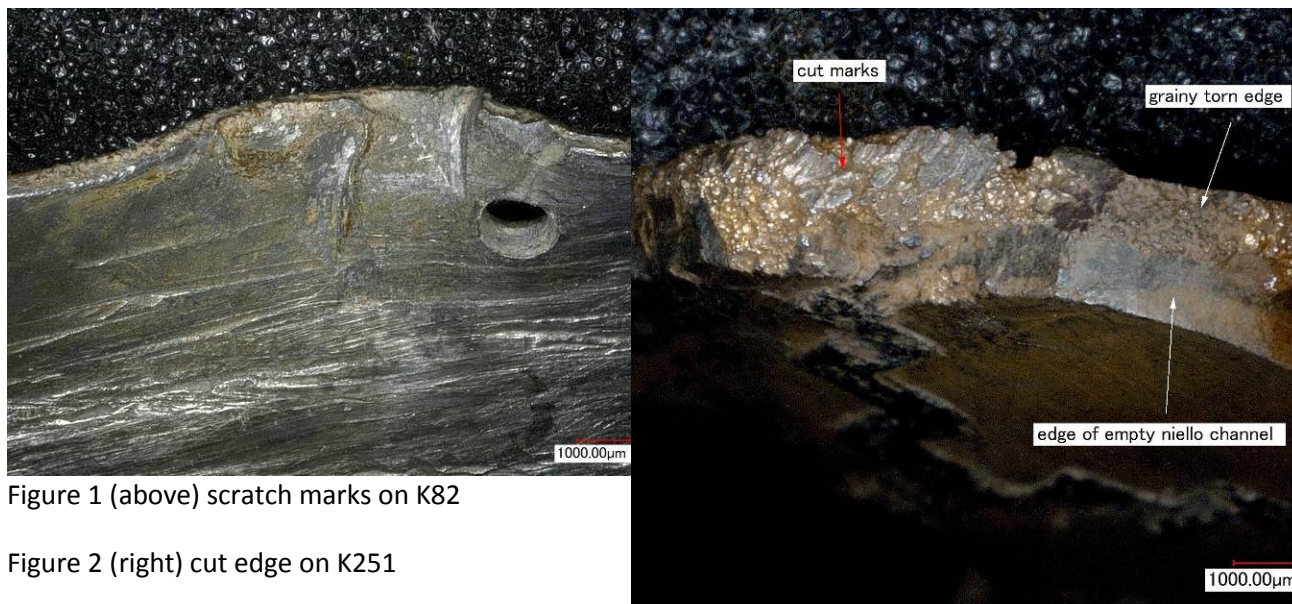


Figure 1 (above) scratch marks on K82

Figure 2 (right) cut edge on K251

Treatment: Carried out using a Meiji stereo microscope

Purpose: Display and further study of the shape

Aim: Stabilization, reassembly and preparation for display

Materials: Acetone and cotton wool swab for removing temporary backing, Paraloid B72 (ethyl methacrylate copolymer) 15% w/v in acetone for applying backing and 20% w/v in acetone for direct joins, Reemay Polyester netting 30gsm, scissors for cutting backing material, black Plastazote (polyethylene foam), scalpel for cutting Plastazote

The fragments K421, K82, K1005, K182 and K350 were further cleaned using a natural thorn, IMS and a brush/swab to achieve a similar level of cleaning across the fragments and allow break edges to be joined.

Any previous backing support (Japanese tissue) was removed with acetone and a cotton wool swab, so that the treatment across the object would be consistent.

The fragments were grouped together to form one object:

Some of the fragments were much distorted therefore a mixed approach to re-assembly was applied. Fragments that keyed well together or which were part of a homogenously flat area, were joined directly at edges using 20% W/V Paraloid B72 in Acetone with additional backing support from polyester tissue secured on with 15% W/V Paraloid B72.

There were five large pieces (Figure 3) which were formed by joining directly and then adding a thin strip of polyester tissue on the reverse side, both adhered with the materials above.

One area was backed overall with the polyester tissue and in this case, the number labels were taken off and new ones added on top of the backing (Figure 4).

These larger pieces were then arranged on a custom made mount of Plastazote in each original position so that they were fully supported and in the original, yet now very distorted, shape.

A loose fragment of niello inlay was reattached onto fragment K1700 using 20% W/V Paraloid B72 in acetone.

The loose pins were secured by adding a small round of Plastazote threaded onto the pin on the reverse side to prevent them from falling out.

8/3/2016- K. Fuller

K541 was added to the niello assemblage- 0.69g with HMG Paraloid B72

Post-Conservation Condition/Findings:

The joined pieces are still very fragile, and are held in place on the mount with pins while moving.

Key Features:

- Silver strip with gilt border
- Niello inlay in geometric design with mushroom shaped decoration
- Gilded pins in situ
- Cut/ tool marks

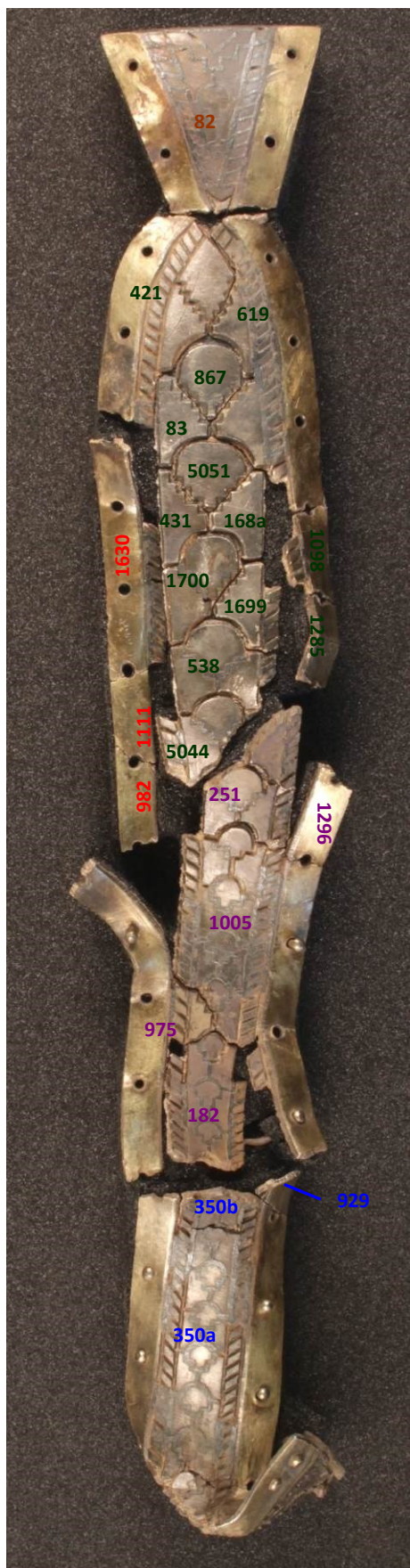


Figure 3 (left)

The silver strip after treatment, fragment numbers marked in the same colour are now joined together

Figure 4 (below)

Reverse side with backing tissue and number labels reattached

