CAT No. 570- Niello Mount
K161, K241, K713, K823, K1036, K1069, K1182, K1196, K1233, K1716
Condition Report

Conservation Started: 25.09.2014
Conservation Finished: 01.10.2014
Conservator: Rachel Altpeter
Time Taken: 21 hours
Including digital photography, report, conservation and packing.

Dimensions: L. largest 78mm; W. 14mm; Th. edge 1mm
Weight before: n/a
Weight after: 29.68g

Digital photography:
Taken with a Nikon Coolpix 4500 digital camera, under fibre optic lights or bulbs. Taken before and after.

Annotation on any of the storage bags or boxes: Individual storage boxes combined. Small find numbers transferred onto paper number strip.

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

Fragments of a rectangular silver strip, with a geometric pattern of zigzag and straight triangular niello inlays. The three larger surviving or reconstructed pieces each have one finished short end, two of which are straight and form a rectangular end, one follows a diagonal line. The strips have a 5mm-wide silver gilt border along one long edge with round fastening holes. There are additional round fastening holes in the body of the object (i.e. the ungilt area) and on two of the larger strip pieces (on K713, K161 and a part visible on K241). These are generally located in the middle of one of the triangles in the pattern. In two of the fastening holes on K 713 gilt pins are left in situ. Traces of a pin are left in one of the fastening holes in the gilt boarder of K1069.

Associated Objects: The group consists of the fragments K161, K241, K713, K823 (a-g), K1036, K1069, K1182, K1196, K1233 and K1716. They are grouped for their similarity in form and decoration, not all elements belong to the same object.

UPDATE LM 22/05/15: K639 is also labelled as 'Group C', however it was not possible to ascertain that it belongs to the same object therefore it was packaged in a separate box.

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

For a more detailed condition and description see individual reports for fragments.

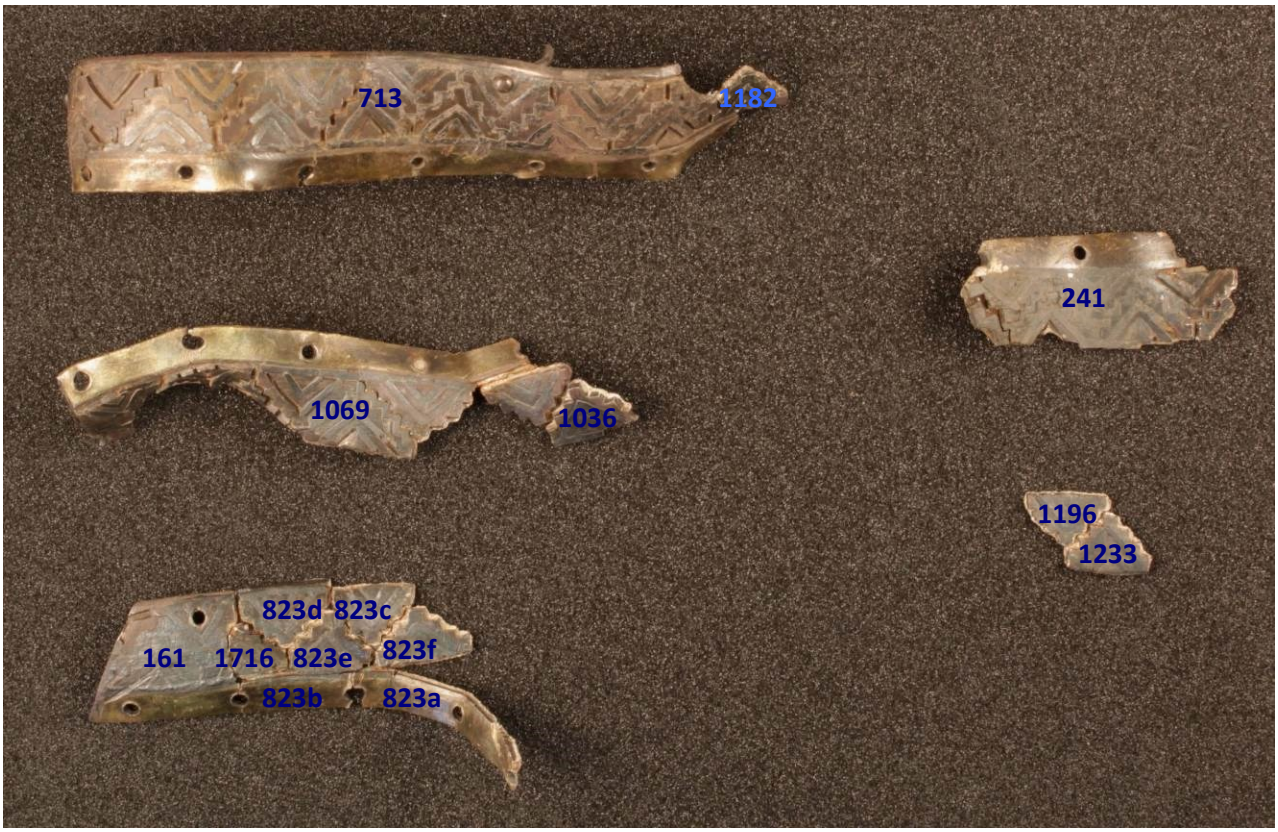
The objects are fragmented with many break lines inside the empty niello channels. The strips are distorted and the longer pieces appear to some extent twisted. A thin covering of soil is left in some areas particularly in the empty niello channels, break edges and some of the fastening holes. The niello inlay is lost in places, especially where the strip is strongly bent. The gilt and silver areas are strongly tarnished on K713 and a thin layer of more granular black material is adhered to the back.

There are several weak areas on fragments K713, K241 and K1069 which have been previously stabilised with a backing of 20% W/V Paraloid B72 and Japanese tissue. In some areas this had become dirty from the soil still left

on the object while on K713 the edges of the backing appeared bright orange, possibly from an iron corrosion product.

Treatment: Carried out using a Meiji stereo microscope
Purpose: Study
Aim: Full cleaning, Re-assembly and association
Materials: natural thorn, IMS, cotton wool swabs, soft brushes, Paraloid B72 (ethyl-methacrylate copolymer) 20% w/v in acetone for direct joins, Paraloid B72 15% w/v in acetone to apply backing, Reemay Polyester netting 30gsm, acetone, Plastazote (polyethylene foam), Japanese Tissue

The remaining soil was removed as far as possible using a natural thorn and IMS on a cotton wool swab. The previous backing material was removed and where necessary re-applied in the same way as the backing for joins. Several fragments of loose niello inlay were adhered to their place in the silver channel on fragments K1182 and K241 using 20% w/v Paraloid B72 in acetone. Where the fragments form a clear join they were adhered at the break edges using 20% w/v Paraloid B72 and polyester netting fixed into position with 15% w/v Paraloid B72.
The pieces were repacked into one crystal box with individual supporting cut outs for each fragment in white Plastazote. 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.



Post-Conservation Condition/Findings:

Three larger pieces of strip could be identified, two of which might belong together to form one object, but which does not join directly. One small fragment (K823g) and several fragments of niello could not be placed in context with the larger fragments and are kept in sample jars alongside the object.
The decorative pattern and form of the strip becomes more easily visible through the joining, but most of the joins have very small contact and are quite fragile when handling.

Key Features:

- Niello inlay in geometric triangle-zigzag pattern
- Silver gilt border
- Fastening pins in situ

Samples:
Soil samples transferred to new box from fragments K161, K241, K713, K1036, K1069, K 1196 and K1233
Loose niello fragment that could not be reintegrated repacked into new box from K161, K241 and K1069