

K1185 Condition Report

Conservation Started: 14/08/2012

Conservation Finished: 17/08/2012

Conservator: Arianna Carini

Time Taken:

Including digital photography, report, conservation and packing.

Dimensions: (L) 23 mm (W) 16 mm (D) 6 mm

Weight before: 2.19g

Weight after:

X-ray plate: L42, L95, L104, L116, L125, L139

Catalogue number: 75

Digital photography:

Taken with a Nikon Coolpix 4500 digital camera, under daylight or bulbs and Meiji Techno RZ Stereo microscope with an Infinity 1 camera (with analyses capture software) and fibre optic lights, 7-75x magnification. Taken before, during and after.

Annotation on any of the storage bags or boxes: 'Niello group K'

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

Silver object with possible silver gilt and niello decoration. Decoration consists of lower and upper sections. Lower section (on left for descriptive purposes) is silver gilt triangle with possible niello decoration and two horizontal niello bands along the (long) top and bottom edges. Upper section (on right) is cushion shaped metal piece with wide carved borders and recessed rectangular space with linear decoration. Two sides of carved borders are visible out of the three present.

Associated Objects: Group K of Niello characterisation project (including K163, K744, and K1112)

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

Object is 80 to 90% covered in sandy soil and chloride corrosion, obscuring most details and decoration. Small spots of orange iron corrosion are present on the triangle and bottom niello band. Most of the silver is evenly dark, especially the raised cushion, which has few scratches and looks nearly polished (possible wear). Reverse is 95% covered in sandy, rocky soil with one small metal fragment embedded in the soil; it is unclear if this is from K1185 or another object.

The perimeter of this fragment is in the shape of a deformed pentagon. The bottom and top edges are finished and right edge is broken in one line. The left edges are broken in two edges around the triangle decoration.

The reverse is almost entirely covered in soil but small pieces of attached metal sheet are present where soil is thin.

Treatment: Carried out using a Meiji stereo microscope

Purpose: Study - niello characterisation project

Aim: Partial cleaning - front decoration and broken edges

Materials: Soft natural/synthetic brushes, cotton swab, cocktail stick, thorn in pin vice/holder, IMS or deionised water/IMS (1:1) on metals.

The granular soil on the decorated surface and broken edges was mechanically removed or reduced where possible using cotton swabs, a fine thorn tip secured in a pin vice and a small pure bristle brush. IMS was used to soften the soil to facilitate removal. Loose particles of soil were then removed with a small swab of IMS.

Corrosion products were left in situ; corrosion was not active and can be further cleaned or stabilised at a later date.

The paper K number was adhered to the interior surface with HMG brand Paraloid B72 (ethyl methacrylate copolymer) from the tube, applied with a fine paint brush.

A new storage box padded with white polyethylene foam was constructed to house the object. A strip of Tyvek (spun bound polyethylene fibres) was used as a cushion for the object and to help lift it out of the foam.

JULY 2013: Removed soil from back using thorn in a pin vice, IMS, brushes and swabs.

Post-Conservation Condition/Findings:

A significant variety in decoration was revealed after treatment. Recessed panels (both the upper, within the cushion, and lower section, between the triangle and the cushion) are silver gilt and incised with simple, geometric interlaced patterns. Niello remains in the borders of the cushion and the horizontal bands in the lower section. The bottom band may have an intentional decorative gap in the niello, or this may be an even scratch. The edges to the left and above the triangle have traces of gilding and may have evidence of interlaced pattern decoration.

The triangle appears to be silver gilt on the sides and top edges. Flat niello decoration covers the majority of the top surface with deliberate seed-shaped openings showing bare silver, possibly mimicking a simplified interlaced triangle shape. Other triangles in group K (specifically on K1112) have evidence of similar decoration, though no break edges appear to line up.

Cushion in upper decoration section has niello remaining in two of three edges (upper and left), but is covered heavily with silver chloride corrosion.

Copper corrosion is present along the top and bottom (finished) sides, and is present in a few places on top of the niello or within the channels.

The shape of the entire object is relatively flat with the bottom side wall extending outward and around the soil on the back.

Key Features:

- Silver and silver gilt fragment with niello decoration
- Recessed panels show geometric interlace pattern, with evidence of more of this decoration surrounding triangle setting
- Bands in lower decoration section have flat and slightly round niello bars
- Triangle setting has niello decoration on top surface in possible interlace pattern
- Light green copper corrosion along sidewalls and by some niello channels.
- Cushion has three differing border decoration styles:
 - Bottom shows small incised triangles
 - Left shows channel with niello surrounding thin zigzag line
 - Upper shows plan rectangular channel with niello

Analysis Undertaken:

No analysis performed

Samples:

1. soil from front and sides
2. rootlets from lower recessed area **DISPOSED**
3. metal fragment **DISPOSED**
4. rootlets from right broken edge **DISPOSED**
5. miniscule pearlescent inclusions in soil **DISPOSED**
6. soil - back (from second conservation, July 2013)