

K1384 Condition Report

Conservation Started: 16/08/2012

Conservation Finished: 23/08/2012

Conservator: Cymbeline Storey

Time Taken: 4 hours

Including digital photography, report, conservation and packing.

Dimensions: (L) 32mm (W) 27mm (D) 2mm

Weight before: 4.22g

Weight after: 4.22g

Catalogue number: 76

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 and after.

Annotation on any of the storage bags or boxes: None noted.

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

The object is a four-sided, flat fragment of silver gilt plate. Three edges are breaks and one is finished. The border along the finished edge has a channel into which twisted gold filigree wires are set. These wires are soldered onto a gold base to form a strip that is set into the recessed channel. In the centre of the fragment is a roughly triangular ungilded area with niello inlay in a zoomorphic (?) design. Adjacent to the niello area on two edges (one between the niello area and a break edge and one between the niello area and the finished edge) is a silver gilt area with a knot-like design.

Associated Objects: TBC

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

Front: The fragment is flat with two break edges and one finished edge. The breaks are soil-free but look old. The ungilded silver area (centre, around niello) is very heavily tarnished to a consistent dark grey colour. Gilded areas have light to moderate tarnish (knot design areas) to heavy tarnish (area surrounding filigree wires).

The niello looks fragile and has some waxy, purple silver chloride corrosion. Some of it is missing. The niello looks as if it was pressed into the channels – its appearance is different from all other niello observed in the hoard.

A section of the filigree wire strip is broken, bent and splayed out of the channel, allowing the channel and the base of the strip to be seen.

There is some compact, sandy soil in recessed areas of the knot design. The remainder of the object is fairly clean, suggesting that it might have been washed after excavation.

There are a few small patches of green corrosion on the surface. They appear to be inactive. There are a few patches of an unknown brown residue on the niello areas. In the filigree channel, at the bottom there is a little bit of white material (composition unknown). There is also a patch of it on the back of the filigree strip that has come out of the channel.

Back: The back of the object is ungolded silver that has a rough, pitted texture, some tarnish and some large patches of light green corrosion products. Apart from one small clump of soil it is clean.

Treatment: Carried out using a Meiji stereo microscope

Purpose: Study / Analysis

Aim: Partial cleaning

Materials: Soft natural/synthetic brushes, thorn in pin vice/holder, IMS on metals

The goal of this treatment was to (1) remove soil from gilded areas for display reasons, and (2) to sample the niello for analysis.

The granular soil on the silver gilt 'knot' area was mechanically removed or reduced where possible using a fine thorn tip secured in a pin vice and a small pure bristle brush. IMS or water was used to soften the soil to facilitate removal. Loose particles of soil were then removed with a small swab of IMS.

No attempt was made to remove soil from the filigree, the niello, the break edges or the back of the object. A small amount of soil was removed from a soil-filled niello channel so the depth/dimensions of the channel could be determined.

Two tiny samples of niello were taken with the tip of a thorn. See 'K1384 Treatment Details' for locations.

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 back with HMG brand Paraloid B72 (ethyl methacrylate copolymer) from the tube, applied with a cocktail stick.

A storage box padded with white polyethylene foam was made for housing 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.

Post-Conservation Condition/Findings:

Nothing was done to the object apart from a small amount of soil removal on the knot area (and in one empty niello channel) and sampling of the niello. As such, the condition of the object is virtually the same as its pre-conservation condition. The niello samples have been sent to the British Museum for analysis (results pending).

No attempt was made to clean the niello area or to remove corrosion products.

This object is fragile and has delicate, protruding wires. Handling should be carried out with great care and kept to a minimum.

Key Features:

- Niello inlay in zoomorphic (?) design
- Silver gilt knot design
- Twisted filigree
- Green corrosion on back
- Some silver chloride corrosion on niello

Samples:

1. Two niello fragments
2. Soil from front