AMULET

Unique ID: BERK-0B6771

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Awaiting validation

CORONER'S REPORT

Description of Object

Gold Roman amulet (lamella), comprising a rectangular sheet (lamella), cut from gold foil, with sixteen lines of incised text along the short axis (width). 12 magical 'characters' on lines 1-3 are followed by the main text on lines 3-16 in Greek cursive lettering.

When found the lamella was tightly rolled. The finder partially opened it out in order to determine its character. At the request of the Treasure Valuation Committee and with the agreement of all parties the lamella was completely 'unrolled' by a metals conservator at the British Museum.

The lamella is complete though with extensive rolling creasing and post-depositional crumpling. Two clusters, of three and two tiny perforations, visible both at the unrolled and the partially-opened stage, and puncturing lines 5/6 and 13/14, are probably fortuitous rather than intentional.

Discussion

This is the third such amulet (not including fragmentary examples) to be found in Britain. The other examples are from Caernarvon (RIB 436) and Billingford (2003 T93: TAR 2003, 67 - where references to the fragmentary examples from Britain are given). Another fragment, barely legible, was found in the Torksey area (2004 T66: TAR 2004, 71). The standard corpus of precious-metal amulets of known provenance (R. Kotansky, Greek magical amulets, 1994) contains only 68 items, so they are quite rare.

Dr Roger Tomlin (Wolfson College, Oxford) has kindly provided the following provisional summary:

"16 lines of text have been inscribed with a fine-pointed stilus: lines 1-3 consist of 12 magical 'characters', adapted from Greek letters or simple geometrical figures, which can be paralleled in other amulets; lines 4-5 are 'magical names' in Greek, but ultimately derived perhaps from Egyptian;

lines 7-16 are a more or less grammatical appeal to the 'holy names' to protect a pregnant woman called Fabia, the daughter of Terentia. They are written in Greek cursive, reasonably legible but not particularly accomplished. The text is formulaic, but its formulas are difficult to parallel. There are some 'Vulgarisms' of spelling, which reflect the spoken language, and at least two errors.

The amulet is apparently a charm to ensure safe childbirth. Like other examples of amulets, it was rolled up and was probably worn in a cylindrical amulet-case from the neck. Whether it was inscribed in Britain or imported by the wearer is uncertain. To judge by its handwriting the amulet probably dates to the third- or fourth-century AD."

Date

Probably 3rd-4th century AD.

Dimensions

As received at the British Museum (partially opened), height 37 mm, width 28.3 mm; after 'unrolling', height 63.1 mm, width 28.3 mm.

Metal Analysis

Non-destructive surface metal analysis conducted at the British Museum indicated a gold content of 90 -93 % and a silver content of 6-8%.

Find of note status

This is a find of note and has been designated: National importance

Subsequent actions

Current location of find: British Museum

Subsequent action after recording: Acquired by museum after being declared Treasure

Treasure details

Treasure case tracking number: 2007T1

Chronology

Broad period: ROMAN

Period from: ROMAN

Dimensions and weight

Quantity: 1

Length: 63.1 mm Width: 28.3 mm Weight: 1.41 g

Discovery dates

Date(s) of discovery: Monday 1st January 2007

Personal details

This information is restricted for your access level.

Other reference numbers

Other reference: 2003 T93, 2004 T66

Treasure case number: 2007T1

Materials and construction

Primary material: Gold Completeness: Complete

Spatial metadata

Region: South East (European Region)

County or Unitary authority: Oxfordshire (County)

District: <u>South Oxfordshire</u> (District) To be known as: South Oxfordshire

Spatial coordinates

Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 0.01 metre square.

Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Metal detector Current location: British Museum