

10.

Gold Ring with Engraved Virgin and Child and Inscription

Byzantine Empire, 6th-7th century AD

Circumference 54.51 mm.; weight 9.0 gr.; US size 7; UK size O

The bezel is joined to a solid, cylindrical hoop. The engraved image depicts the Virgin seated frontally on a flat throne, holding a disc containing the head of the Christ Child. She is flanked on either side by an inscription in Greek of uncertain meaning (perhaps two names). A few sharper lines in the engraving of the ring, now worn but in good condition, may suggest an attempt to sharpen the image.

This ring belongs to a type of tablet-bezel rings of circular shape popular in the sixth and seventh centuries and displaying religious subjects, such as the archangels, the saints, Christ, and especially the Virgin and Child. The composition of the enthroned Virgin derives from monumental church decoration but is found on many small objects in the Early Byzantine period as well. The ring is remarkably similar, not only in composition but in the contours of the drapery of the Virgin, to one now in a private collection (Spier 2012, no. 19, pp. 124-125) and another in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (inv. 17.190.1654). Neither of these rings bear inscriptions. ■

Provenance:
London, Private Collection

