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NOTES ON PHILIPPINE PREHISTORIC JEWELRY and RELATED ITEMS (PART II)

By F. William L. Villareal
PNAS LM-015

This article is the second part of a series on "Notes on Philippine Prehistoric Jewelry and Related Items" which was first published in the *Philippine Numismatic Monograph*, Number 24, July 1988. As such, this article should be taken in the same context and spirit as that which premised the first part, particularly that it might inspire and encourage others who are in possession of hitherto unreported items or related information to come out and participate in a continuing effort to catalogue these precious fragments of our indigenous culture.

At this point, we wish to express our thanks to the Buglas Heritage Collection (BUGLAS), as well as other collectors who wish to remain anonymous, for being gracious enough to lend us some of their pieces for inclusion in this article.

Unless otherwise specified, the scale appearing on the following photographs is English on the upper and Metric on the lower portion thereof.

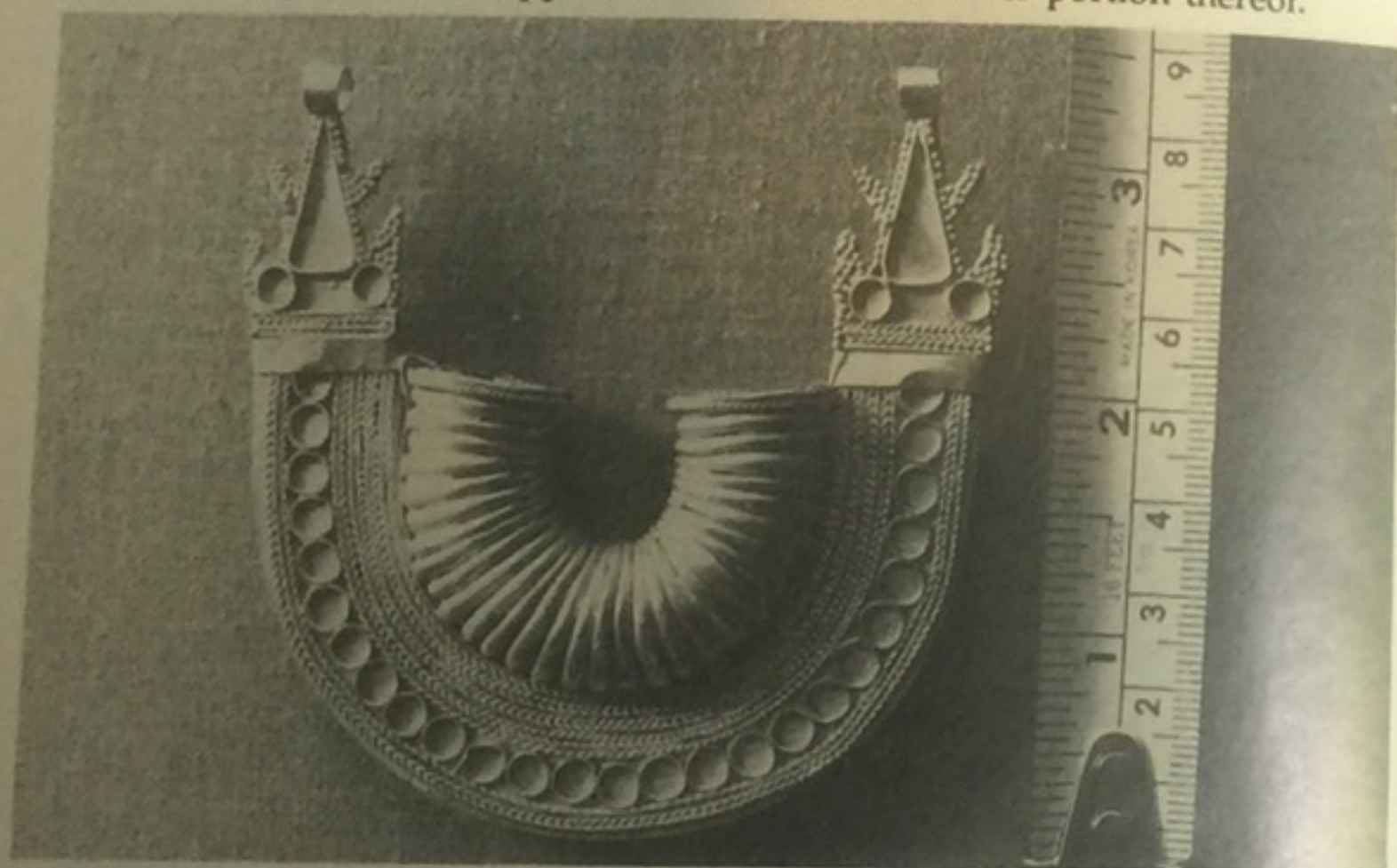


FIG. 25 : A superb gold "half-moon" ornament from Cuyo, Palawan, approximately 66 grams, unusual for its weight and size and similar to a pair from Samar published in *Piloncitos to Pess*, p. 10. (BUGLAS).

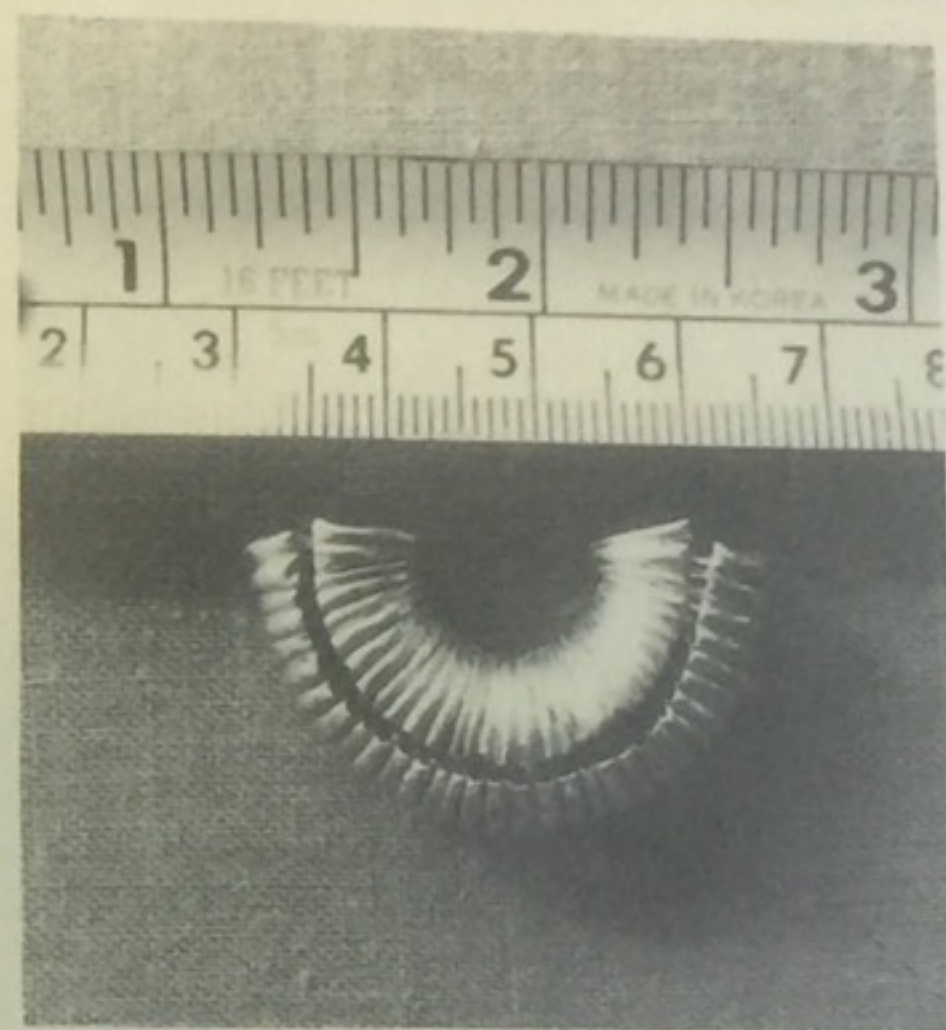
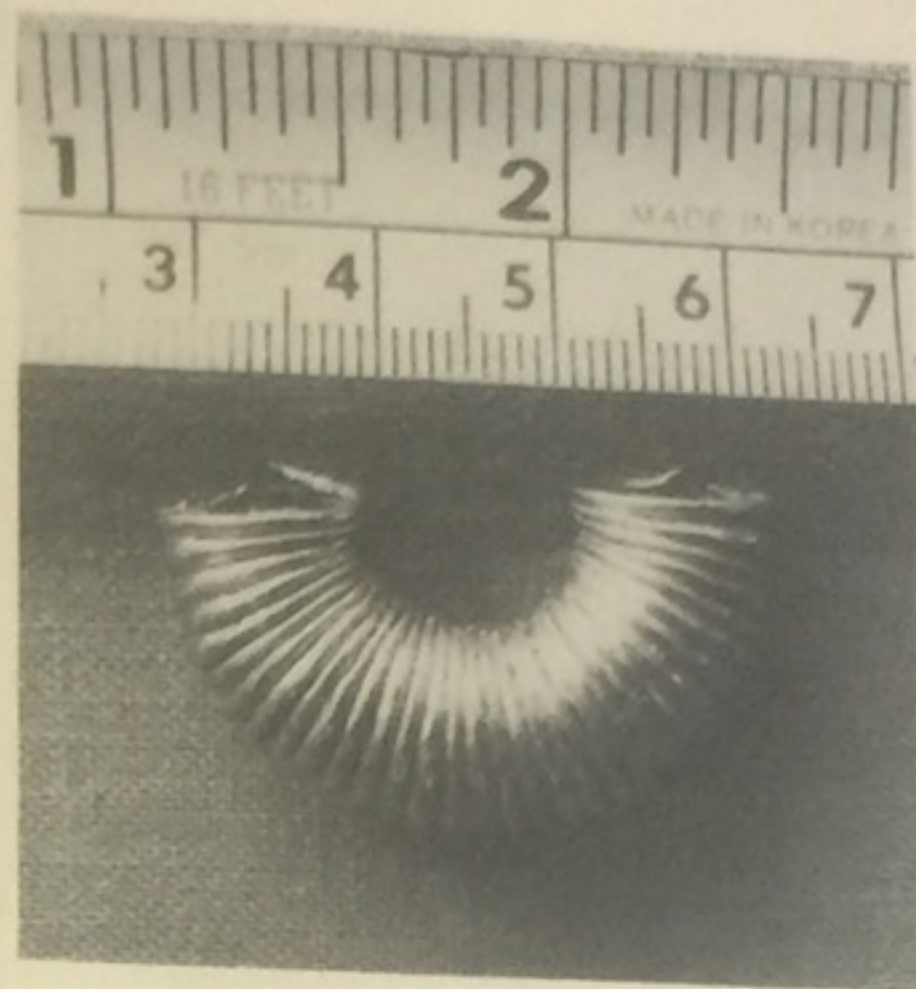


FIG. 26 & 27 : Front and rear views of a gold *uod* (caterpillar) used either as the centerpiece of a half-moon or as a separate ornament in itself. The curved cut or notch at the back is probably a structural device to ensure the tight but graceful curve required and may also have been used, as previously suggested, to attach the ornament to some piece of cloth or garment. (BUGLAS).

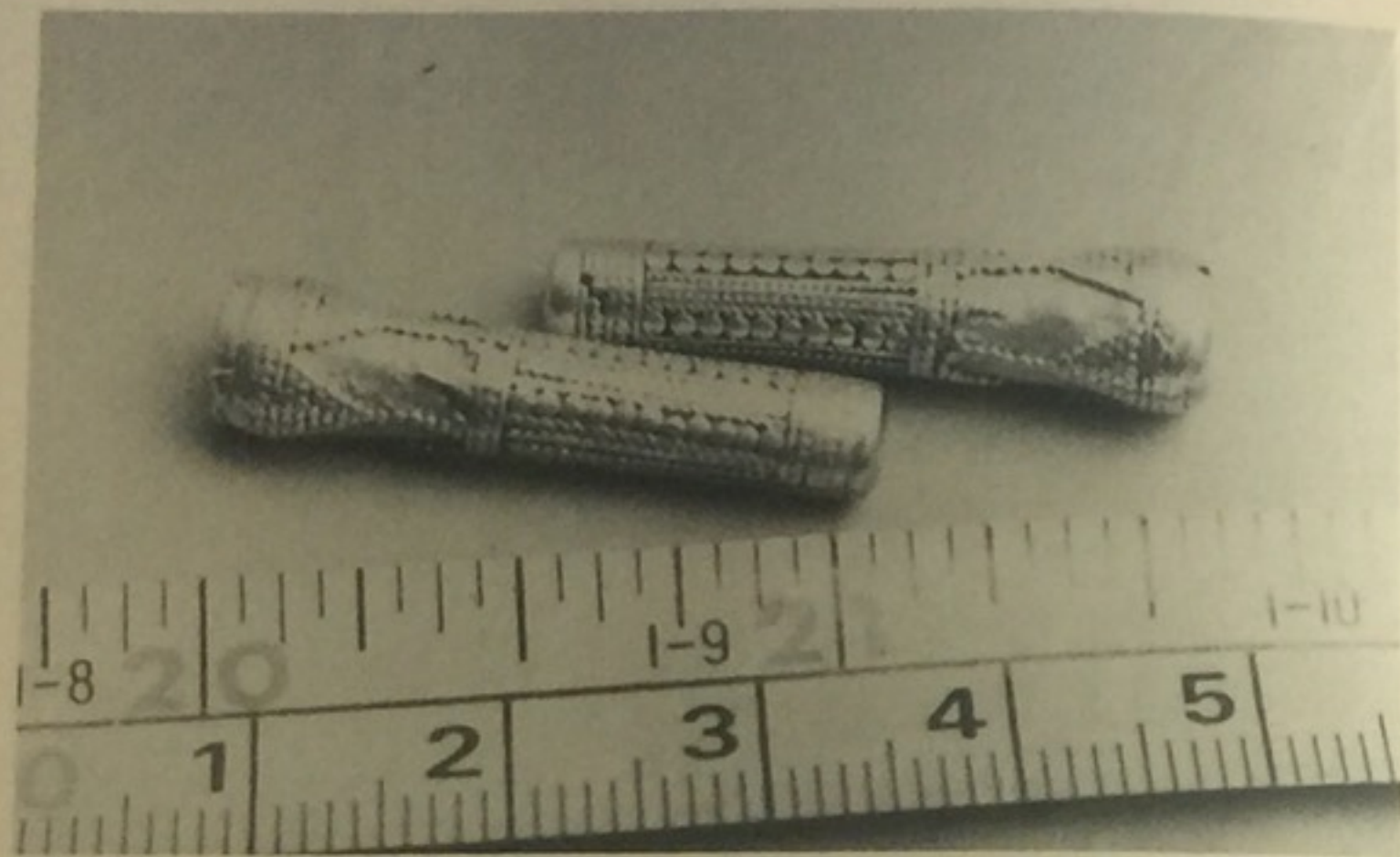


FIG. 46 : Another set of paired gold finials from Mindanao similar to FIG. 20. The design is very intricate, precise and classic.

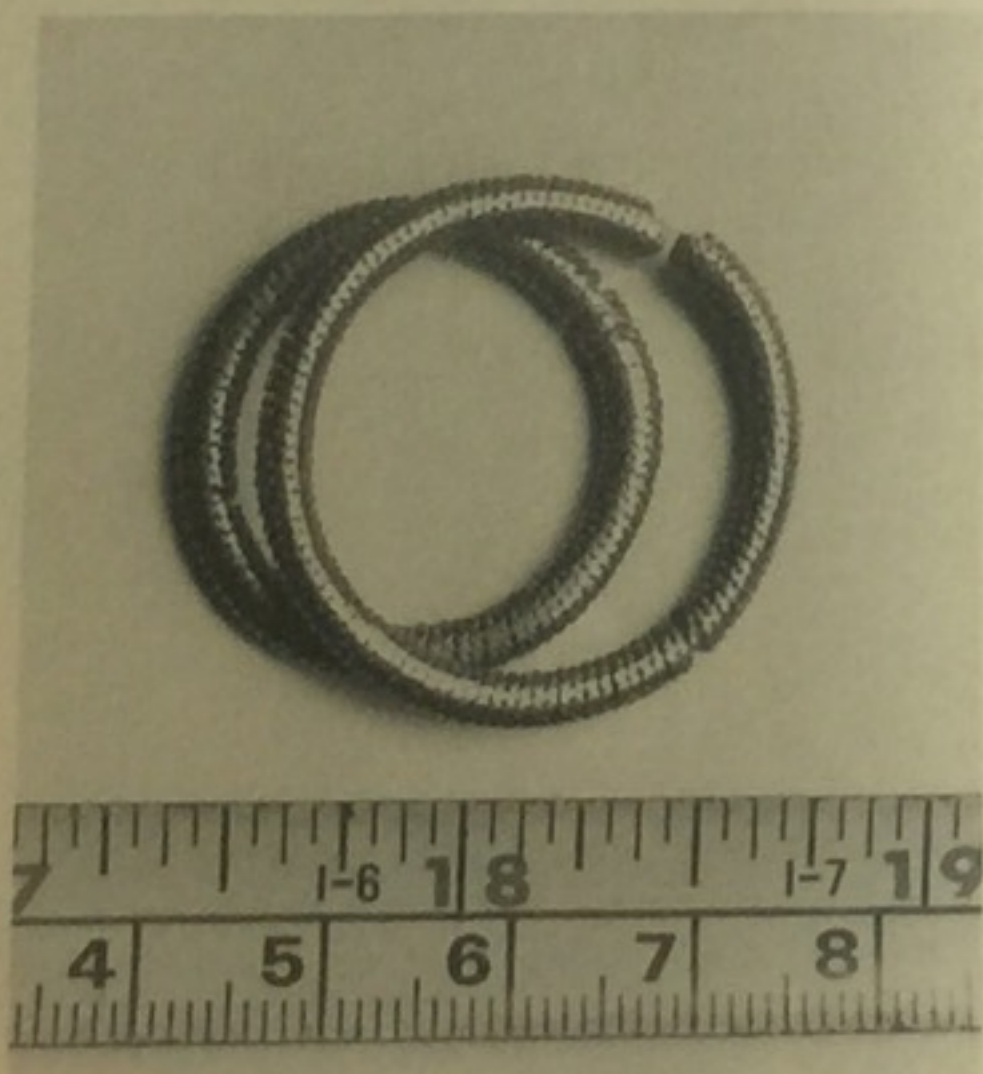


FIG. 47 : A pair of gold earrings from Mindanao carefully wound through their entire length with fine twisted gold wire. (BUGLAS).

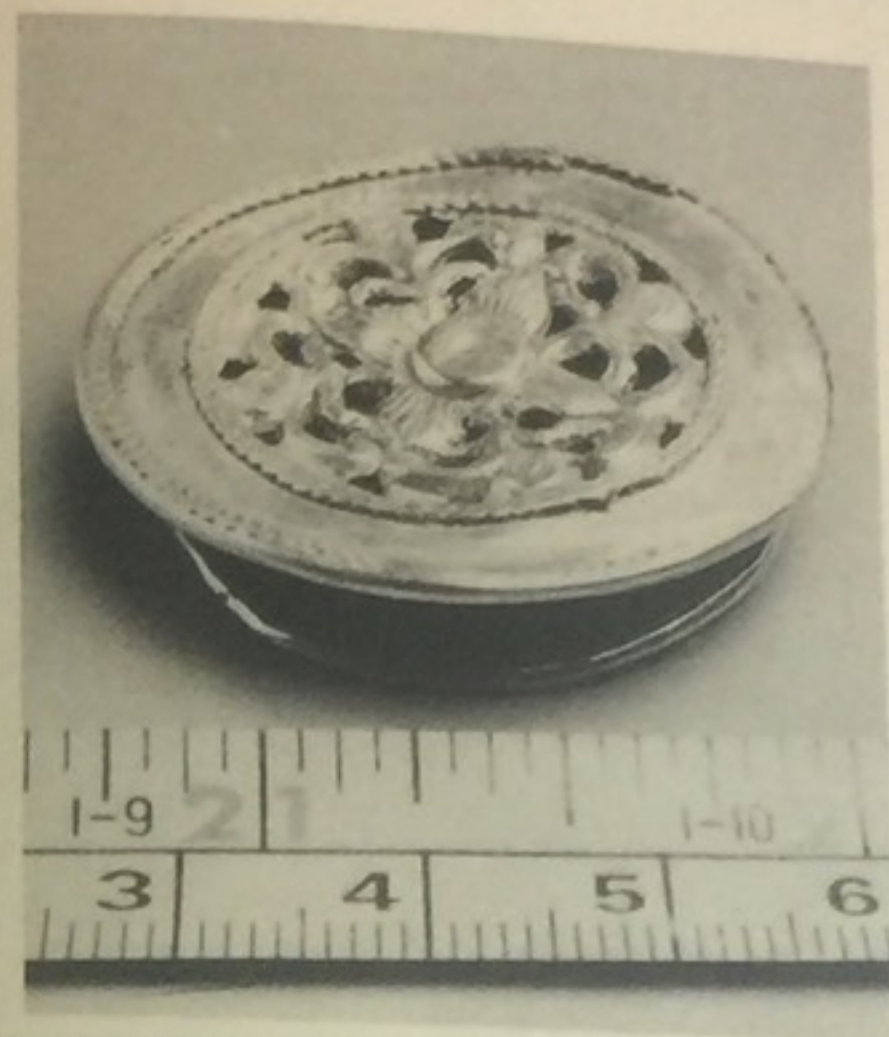


FIG. 48 : Gold earplug from Butuan, Mindanao with peculiar mainland/central Asian floral design. (BUGLAS).



FIG. 49 : Gold bangles of different designs from Butuan and Agusan, Mindanao.

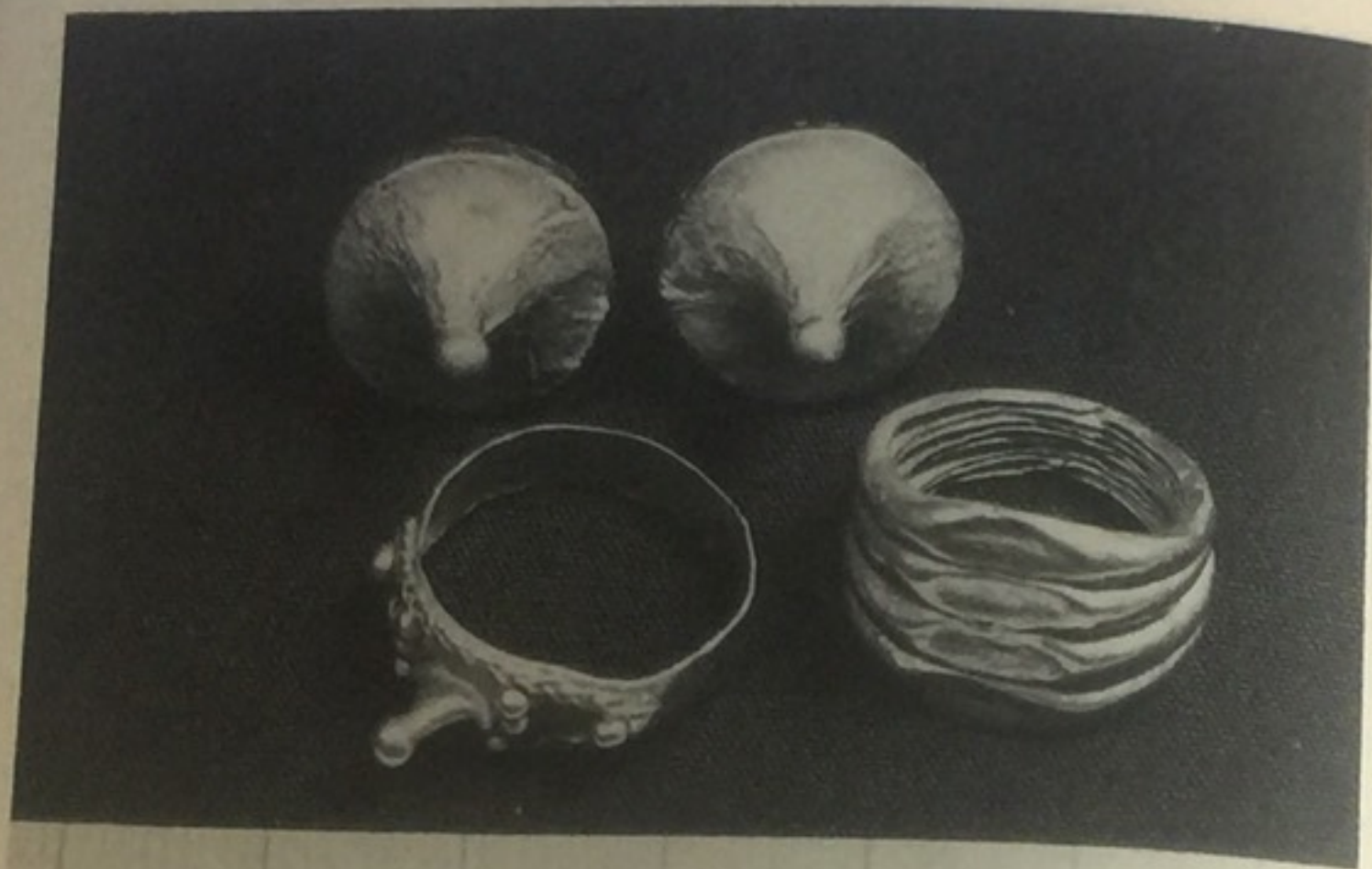


PLATE XIII: SAMAR. Gold ring and earrings (?) buttons (?) with what appears to be a very strong Thai influence. Four-tiered gold ring at lower right is fashioned in *uod* style and is usually found in Southern Philippines.



PLATE XIV: SAMAR.



FIG. 41 : Gold fertility charms (?) amulets (?) more likely used as money or media of exchange much like the African *manillas* featured as "*Odd and Curious Primitive Money*" in the Hong Kong International Coin Exposition auction (May 11 & 12, 1990) and Pre-Columbian money pieces (Lot No. 57, Schulman Auction Sale, Sept. 1973). Likewise very similar in form to gold-alloy pieces found in many of the Indonesian islands.



FIG. 42 : Two different renditions of the "electrum amulet" described in *Kayamanan: The Philippine Jewelry Tradition*, p. 77. As these electrum pieces often appear together with items of much higher gold content, could there be a special amuletic, spiritual or even economic/monetary significance to the seemingly deliberate use of electrum to fashion this particular item in its unique form? Similar items found in Java and Vietnam described as "ear pendants" by Jon Miksic in *Small Finds*. Singapore: National Museum of Singapore. 1988. Fig. 53 & 54.

THE SICAN LORD

By F. William L. Villareal

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The subject of this report might have been just a mere sidelight, one of several items reported in *Notes on Philippine Prehistoric Jewelry and Related Items* (Part II), had it not been for a series of uncanny and serendipitous events that came together.

It all began in Manila. It was March 04, 1990, a typical hot and humid day in the metropolis. I was with a friend looking through a jumble of assorted gold artifacts which had just recently been excavated (unsupervised and unofficial) from southern Philippines. From this heap of unearthened jewelry, I came upon a SMALL GOLD MASK (39mm at its widest) which immediately caught my eye because of its strange and magnetic appeal. Recalling the incident, it might have been more accurate to say that the mask somehow found me.

As I started to handle the piece, my first impression was that it must have been some kind of funerary piece akin in form to the usual coronet-eye-nose-mouth pieces, and in use similar to the usual jewelry pieces that would accompany early primary and secondary burials in the south. It was the formal sternness of the full-face figure that had immediately grabbed my attention. Almost simultaneously I surmised that this must have been some primitive religious amulet to ward off evil (?) death itself (?). Was this the face of God? a guardian? a god?

It was undoubtedly a strange piece. I wanted it. What was even stranger though, was that I felt that it somehow wanted me. My friend was clearly entranced by the mysterious piece. Obviously, he wanted it too. After asking a few questions from the dealer who brought the items to us, I challenged my friend to purchase the mask with a subtle threat that I would only be too glad to buy it if he did not want it. Without a moment's hesitation, he paid the dealer and the mask, I am glad to report, is now in the Buglas Heritage Collection (BUGLAS).

It was now around Christmas time and I was in the middle of drafting the second part of my *Notes* series scheduled for publication in the next PNAS *Monograph*. I was particularly happy not only because I had so far gathered sufficient new material but specially because among this new material was the mask that had so intrigued me. For lack of any other information at that time, I had initially reported it as follows:

PLATE XI: NEGROS. Small gold mask in the form of a human head with repousse work highlighting facial features and earrings/plugs...from

Kabangkalan, Island of Negros, West Visayas.

FIG. 31 & 32: Front and rear views of the mask (39mm at its widest) showing clear attention to details supportive of early European accounts describing the tattooed and bejewelled appearance of the inhabitants of the Visayan Islands or *Islas de Los Pintados*. Very interesting formal similarities to related artifacts found in modern and rather recent archaeological sites in the Americas, particularly Mexico and Peru. The small mask appears to form part of larger piece. What was it used for?

*From floor
jumble of
of 1990?*



FIG. 1: Small gold mask found in Kabangkalan, Negros Island, West Visayas. WIDTH: 39 mm. WEIGHT: 2.2 grams THICKNESS: .1 mm FINENESS: .750.

The truth was that I was struck. I needed more information. I had to reach the persons who had actually unearthed the piece and try to get as much information about the circumstances surrounding its excavation and of possible associated and other materials — all these without necessarily arousing too much suspicion and interest as to the reasons for my inquiries. I immediately made very discreet inquiries

Kabangkalan, Island of Negros,
West Visayas.

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*From the
middle of
a tum?*



FIG. 1: Small gold mask found in Kabangkalan, Negros Island, West Visayas. WIDTH: 39 mm. WEIGHT: 2.2 grams THICKNESS: .1 mm FINENESS: .750.

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through my friend who was based in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental. Through our previous mutual acquaintances and connections with coin and metals dealers, pot hunters, diggers and middlemen in the Visayan area, he had as good a chance as any of obtaining the kind of information that I needed.

Weeks went by. Nothing. Then one day it all happened. My friend arrived from Bacolod City on a business trip. He apologized for still not having gotten in touch with the persons I wanted to interview. He had, however brought along for me to see a book entitled : *Masterpieces in the Museum of Primitive Art: Africa, Oceania, North America, Mexico, Central to South America, Peru.* (Switzerland. Museum of Primitive Art. 1965. Library of Congress Card # 65-23544). His brother-in-law had inherited the book from his mother who, during her lifetime, had been one of the most avid collectors of porcelain and pottery. She had used this book as one of her references.

As I started browsing through the book, I thought of it as another interesting, but rather remotely related reference material. Mildly perplexed as to how this particular book could possibly have helped me with my problem, I hurriedly and disappointedly leafed through the pages. Until I turned to pages 125 and 126. I almost fell off my seat, as there again, staring me in the face with that same lingering magnetic look, was that SAME FACE (Fig.2), but this time described in the book's catalogue as a PERUVIAN piece as follows:

124. Funerary mask. North Coast, Lambayeque valley, Batan Grande: Chimu. Gold, 28 3/4" wide. 57.161

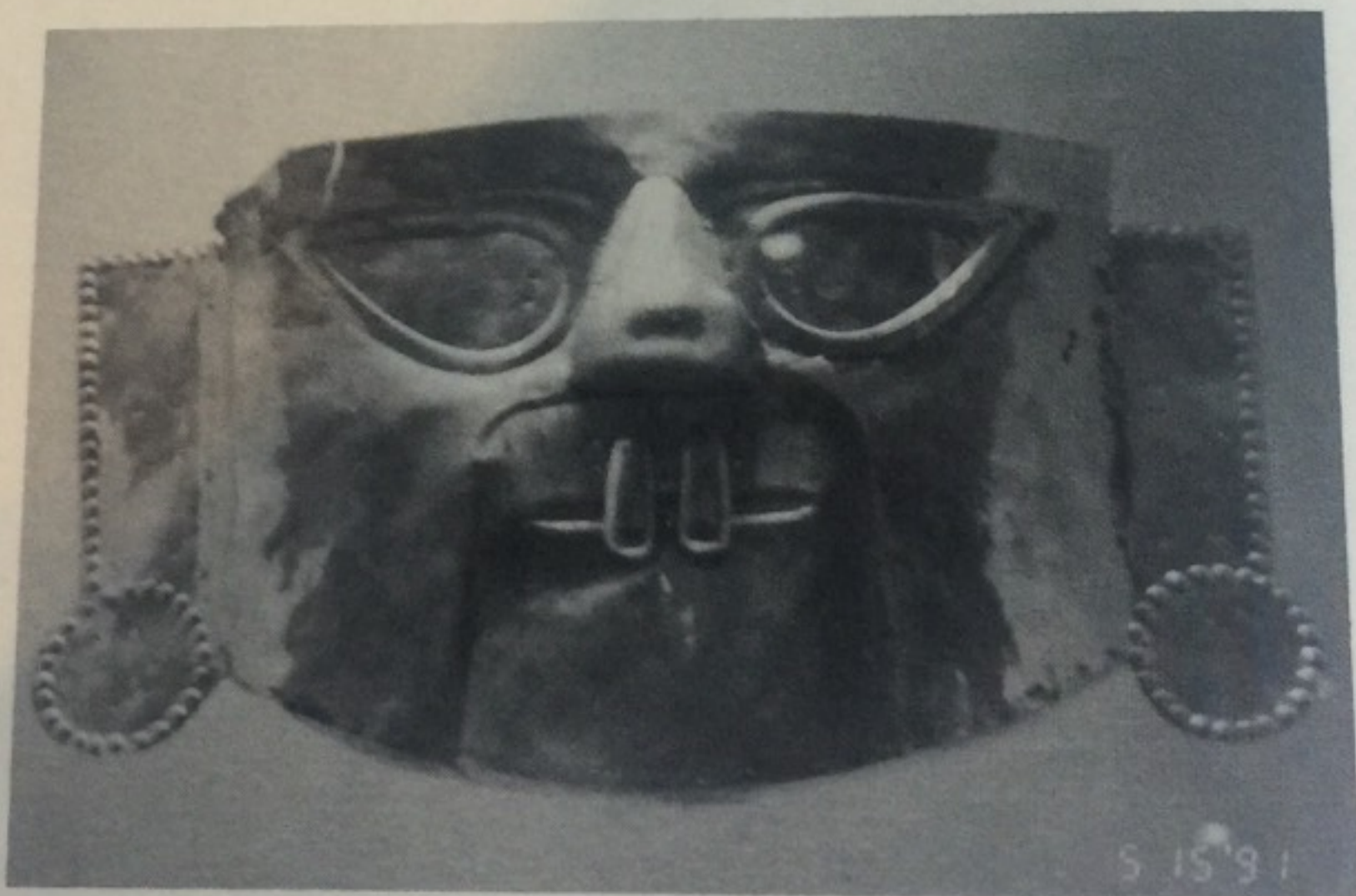


FIG. 2: Large gold funerary mask, Batan Grande, Peru. Width: 28 3/4 inches. Museum of Primitive Art, New York City.