



BARRILLA

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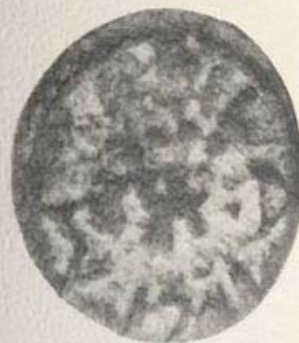
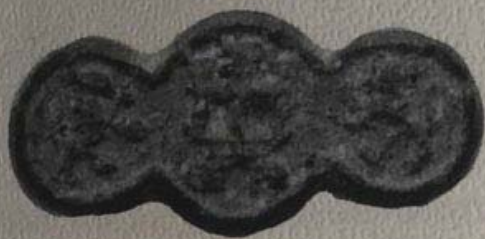
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there. One can only guess at how these diverse coins and medals are found in the river bottom in such quantities, and why. Siniloan has been the source of many unidentified pieces which are being dubbed indiscriminately as "barrillas" and which have been appearing in the numismatic market. Since there is no known documentation for these pieces they remain an enigma in Philippine numismatics.

It is unfortunate that the extremely high prices paid for the early specimens

which appeared on the market led to the surfacing of so many more "unique" and "formerly unknown" pieces that the serious numismatist is at a loss to evaluate these many "finds." It would have been easier perhaps to tell between the genuine and the spurious if prices for these specimens had been held down initially. In today's numismatic market, with thousands of pesos at stake for "unique" or "extremely rare" pieces, the temptation to manufacture these pieces of metal with crude designs may be too much to pass up.



Specimens of "unidentified pieces" recovered from the Siniloan river.

PHILIPPINE AMULETS

by Gilda Cordero Fernando

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BUCOLOM, balalam, biam, am.

"Write on three pieces of round paper, put in mouth, and kick the ground hard before leaving the yard. Will be protected against someone who has evil designs."

A set of similar instructions in a little book goes with each of the medals pictured here. Popularly known as *anting-anting*, they are copies of antique talismans carried by their possessors from generation to generation. The medals are presently mass-produced in Pasay, Parañaque, and Cavite, and sold around churches (competing with the religion inside). Its believers revere them, teenagers wear them as a-go-go medals, collectors acquire them for their charming folk art quality, and as frightening evidences of a sub-culture still very much with us.

Anting-antings are usually medals, but actually they may be anything — pieces of stone, shells, tektites, animal bones (specially crocodiles and whales), teeth, grass, chips of bamboo and banana trunk, unusual in growth or found under mysterious circumstances. A banana trunk where a lizard has laid eggs, a bamboo tree whose rings converge — are ready-made *anting-anting*.

In the Laguna area, where the *anting-anting* is also called *mutya*, it may be a rare seed found in the green lemon

(*dayap*). Placed in the center of a clean plate with *kalamansi* juice squeezed on it, the seed allegedly dances, as if it had life. One possessor of such a seed, a *negociante*, it is claimed, acquired such persuasive powers that she could easily break down anyone's sales resistance. Another *mutya* is the flower of a fern, and since ferns never have flowers, this is indeed rare. A young girl in the town, not at all pretty, but for whose favor the young swains fought, was diagnosed to own this *mutya*.

The original antique medals are believed to have been worn by Spanish soldiers as amulets even while they landed with Magellan with messages of Christianity. These medals were acquired by Filipinos from their elders who probably picked them off dead Spaniards. Closely entwined with the Catholic religion, the medals contained stock symbols — the Eye, the Trinity, Christ, the Virgin Mary, the angels.

Later copies were embellished and pushed one inch further. Thus Adam and Eve became voodoo dolls with which to wreak vengeance, Christ has parallel feet to differentiate him from Dimas, the good thief, who had his right foot over his left, and the left-foot-over-right fellow who is the bad thief Hestas. Another cross has a double figure nailed back to back (to prevent



a double cross?), another is the Virgin feeding her child with bared breast, another is a Christ Child, smaller than Tom Thumb, in his birthday suit. The latter, swallowed with water and wine 13 Fridays before Good Friday, is believed to endow its bearer with perpetual youth and virility and make him irresistible to women.

Each *anting-anting* medal is accompanied by an *oracion*. This is mostly in pig Latin such as: *Tumaus, tutaus, tabiuis, Jubub* and the instructions are — *Sa sunog, tumawag sa apat na sulok ng mundo*. (This is probably why we have so many fires *Tumatawag sa Tumaus* instead of *tumawag ng bombero*.)

Pig Latin evolved when phrases taken from ritual and religious books were repeated without understanding and fractured in the process. People believed in the power of the phrases themselves,

believing them to be the deliverance from all harm. The word *anting-anting*, in fact, if Lorna Montilla is to be believed, evolved from the Latin word “anti” and therefore means “against-against.” Much of this superstition was fostered by the Spaniards — the change-over from belief in animism to Christianity was no easy undertaking. The *anitos* had to be substituted with saints, *Bathala* with God — and the supernatural would protect you if you were good, punish you if you misbehaved.

Each war has spawned its stories of talismans. During the revolution, it is related, the *revolucionarios* wore *anting-anting* medals and said the prayers — when they reached the word “rum” they pulled out their bolos and charged at the Spaniards. They fell like leaves. (Or they survived. Miraculously.) Actually, weapons in the old days were so

inferior that a cannonball dropping harmlessly from the cannon's mouth to the ground didn't have to be due to supernatural intervention.

Bataan veterans came home with numerous tales of salvation from death even while comrades died like flies. A *guerrillero* who owned an *anting-anting* was said to be invincible to bullets. To prove it, his relatives would show his undershirt which was indeed full of bullet holes. Eventually, the guerrillero died though not by gunfire – they crushed his skull with a stone (the head supposedly being the one vulnerable part of a bullet-proof body, like Achilles's heel).

Even during times of peace, charms are popular with army men (one general allegedly buys up every new *anting-anting* that turns up in Quiapo), with the PC, with policemen, and truck drivers – men whose lives are constantly



exposed to danger. An amulet-wearing Makapili, surrounded by armed townspeople determined to kill him, was still able to escape. A pretty young girl who lived in a clearing in a wooded area, was given an amulet by her uncle as protection against a band who had attempted twice to rape her, and they could not approach a third time. She is now 45 and still a virgin. A "*may galing*" came into one town, allegedly chewed some buds of *bandera española* growing on a riverbank, shook the tree beside him, and had a bountiful harvest of 20-centavo coins.

Teachers wear them, businessmen own them, one family boils an ancient coin and make their sick drink the water.

Bandits are notorious possessors of them. Santiago Ronquillo (Cavite's Robin Hood) was allegedly hit during an encounter with the PC because he put his *anting-anting* to save the boy in whose hut he had been cornered. Outlaw Nardong Putik was captured with the most bizarre talisman of all — a pickled foetus. President Marcos is rumored to own several *anting-anting* medals — but whether he uses them as charms, for collection, or as a-go-go medals is open to dispute.

An *anting-anting* is so valued by its owner that at least one "powerful" one has been exchanged for two carabaos and a cow. The only *anting-anting* exhibit held by the National Museum had to be discontinued after two days — the medals kept being pilfered. An *anting-*

anting possessor sometimes may allow a friend to duplicate a medal for his own use. A mould is made and soon it is public property — that is how medals have found their way to every corner of the Philippines. Ordering the rarer medals takes some time to finish. Someone says it's because the maker, who used to be a bell caster in Binondo, has to steal some metal from the railroad tracks first. And that is the cause of many derailments — amulets.

Some *anting-anting* are not copies of old ones but some vision immortalized in bronze. The miniature Santo Niño, for instance, was allegedly patterned after a recurring hallucination of an inch-high Christ Child appearing to its possessor on the surface of a stream. Another person



A GALLERY OF PHILIPPINE "COIN AMULETS"

These "coin amulets" bearing fanciful dates such as 1000 and 1101 are of special interest to numismatists because most of them were struck using as planchets the Mexican 8-Reales and the U.S.-Philippine 1-Peso. — Ed.



GREEK COINS

by Otto Paul Wenger

Otto Paul Wenger is a member of the Numismatics Department of the Credit Suisse branch in Berne and is regarded as a leading authority on antique coins.

Antique numismatics is a "book of seven seals" even for well educated people. It is cultivated by few clubs and studied at very few universities. But antique coins are well worth studying; they are eloquent witnesses to the economic and cultural conditions in the ancient world and, even today, can transmit a treasure of knowledge and beauty. In his "Italian Journey," Goethe wrote in 1787:

"Today we were shown the medallion cabinet of Prince Torremuzza. I went there somewhat unwillingly. I understand too little of this field, and a merely curious traveler is hateful to true experts and connoisseurs. But since one must start sometime, I acceded and derived much pleasure and benefit. What profit, to obtain even a slight glimpse of how the old world was strewn with places the smallest of which left us charming coins which portray, if not an

entire panorama of art history, at least some epochs. An endless springtime smiles at us from this cabinet, a springtime of the blossoms and fruits of art, of a craft of life in the higher sense, and a great deal more besides."

THE INVENTION OF COINS

If we may believe the testimony of the Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophanes, it was the Lydians of Asia Minor who struck the first coins shortly after 650 B.C. They were unprepossessing, lumpy objects made of "elektron," a natural, light-yellow mixture of gold and silver which was sifted through animal skins from the sand of the rivers Hermos and Paktolos and then washed out. These coins bore no images; the front face was irregularly grooved, and the reverse had one or more indented squares, the marks of the punch which held the coin firmly as it was struck.

Some time later the first silver coins were struck on the island of Aegina, bearing the image of a sea turtle. Shortly thereafter the famous owl coins were

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This silver Lydian coin (enlarged) was minted under King Croesus (561-546 B.C.). The obverse shows a lion's head facing a bull's head, a motif also found on ancient Babylonian cylindrical seals. This is also the king's emblem. The reverse has no picture; the depressions in the metal were made by the punch which held the coin firm while it was being struck. The coin, a "siglos" (half-stater) was minted in Sardeis, weighs 5.25 grams and its longest diameter is 1.8 cm.

minted in Athens and those with the winged horse in Corinth. The Aegina coins were known simply as "turtles" in the old world, those of Corinth were called "little horses," or "colts," while the Athenian coins were "owls." Many archeological finds have confirmed that these three types of coin were in widespread use as currency in antiquity.

THE PRODUCTION OF ANTIQUE COINS

The ancient Greek coins were struck by hand. The quality of the stamp was of prime importance. The real creator of the coin was the stamp cutter. On the polished surface of the stamp, which was made of tempered iron, the stamp cutter carved the image to natural size, but reversed as in a mirror reflection. The stamp for the front face of the coin was set into a kind of anvil, while the

stamp for the reverse face remained movable. The minting blank, a pre-formed and pre-weighted piece of metal, was laid on the anvil stamp and the reverse-side stamp was set on top of it. With a powerful blow of the hammer, the minting blank was pressed into the depressions of both front and reverse stamps, thus forming both sides of the coin simultaneously. Because of this more or less primitive method, the coins never turned out perfectly round. Sometimes the image was imperfectly stamped into one of the surfaces, and many coins developed splits along the edges. To a collector of Greek coins, however, these defects become virtues: no one coin is exactly like another, each piece is unique. This is one of the incomparable charms of these relics of antiquity, coins which were created as works of art by the skilled hands of Greek stamp cutters.

COLLECTING GREEK COINS

If you are interested in collecting antique Greek coins, you would be well advised to first brush up on your knowledge of the history of ancient Greece with the help of outstanding historical textbooks. As in every scientific field, serious collecting – especially of antique coins – has to rely heavily on the aid of special texts.

The budding collector of Greek coins will have to dig deeply into his pocketbook, for this is undoubtedly the most expensive of all numismatic hobbies. Antique coins in general have risen considerably in price in recent years. But the important thing is to restrict yourself only to really fine pieces. Poorly preserved coins are a

source of little joy in the long run. They are also much more difficult to resell, whereas well preserved pieces always find a buyer. An important rule is to deal only with serious coin dealers, with experts who are willing to vouch for the genuineness of their merchandise.

THE SELECTION

There is an extraordinarily large selection of ancient Greek coins. How should you set about organizing your collection?

The best place to begin would probably be those coins which constituted a kind of standard currency in the ancient world. These are primarily the “owls” of



Ambrakia, a colony of Corinth. As a rule, on Corinthian coins Pegasus is shown flying but on this stater from the beginning of the 4th century B.C., the winged horse is depicted standing; the letter between its legs is the initial of the city. The reason Corinthian coins bear the image of Pegasus was that according to legend, Bellerophon, son of the Corinthian king, Glaukos, was ordered to kill the monster, Chimaera. The goddess Athene gave him Pegasus with whose help he succeeded in his task. Thus, with Pegasus on the obverse, Corinthian coins bear the helmeted head of Athene on the reverse.



The coinage of Phocis (Ca. 500 B.C.) begins at a very early period, not much later than the middle of the sixth century.

The bull's head is perhaps symbolical of some special sacrifice in honour of the national hero, Phokos, to whom there was a temple called the Heroon, where sacrifices were offered daily throughout the year; and, at certain stated times, a great sacrifice on behalf of the whole people, when a prize bull may have been the victim. The head of the goddess on the reverse is probably intended for Artemis.

Athens, the "turtles" of Aegina and the "little horses" of Corinth. Another good item is a silver coin of King Croesus of Lydia, and a Persian piece showing an archer, and then perhaps a "stater" from Tarent showing a boy riding a dolphin, and a coin from Syracuse (Sicily). A "hekte" from Mytilene or Phokaia would be a proper representative of the once-widespread "elektron" coins from Asia Minor. From the Hellenistic period (300-27 B.C.) every collection should have at least one coin of Alexander the Great, as well as one minted

under the Thracian king Lysimachos which bears a picture of Alexander. In addition, a good starter's collection might have a piece each from the Syrian and Egyptian kings, and finally a Greek coin from the Roman imperial era, which forms a bridge to the collecting of Roman coins.

In time a collector becomes capable of enlarging his collection on his own. Growing familiarity with the subject brings a deeper historical understanding of the conditions which formed the setting for the minting of antique coins.