

W. GLASBERGEN

## THE LATE NEOLITHIC GOLD ORNAMENT FROM BENNEKOM

### I. *The Discovery*

(pls. III–V; figs. 9–11)

In 1933 Dr. F. C. Bursch published two remarkable gold objects with linear decoration on their oar-shaped ends. They had been discovered on the Oostereng estate near Bennekom, on the south-western part of the Veluwe (Gelderland), many years before the excavations which the State Museum of Antiquities at Leiden carried out there in 1929–30.<sup>1</sup> They constitute the second gold find associated with the Bell Beaker culture in the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> Gravel workings had cut into a barrow from which a *grober Glockenbecher* had come to light, together with the gold objects. Although the direct association was not absolutely certain, Bursch did not hesitate to attribute the gold objects to the Bell Beaker culture.<sup>3</sup> He assumed that the two oar-shaped objects were the fragments of a single ornament<sup>4</sup> and compared it with the gold ornament with undecorated oar-shaped ends from Arlon, in Belgian Luxemburg.<sup>5</sup> Bursch did not illustrate the Beaker,<sup>6</sup> and his figure of the fragments of the gold ornament shows the details but very poorly.

In September 1954 it occurred to me—as it turned out mistakenly—that the Bennekom gold objects might represent a pair of earrings—this time rolled out flat—similar to those from a barrow near Radley, Berkshire. The earrings from Radley are of basket shape, each a semi-cylinder made from an oval sheet which, on one side, continued in a central tongue curving round the exterior. Both carry a simple ornamentation executed in *repoussé* lines. They were found under a barrow, with a Bell Beaker and three flint barbed-and-tanged arrowheads, accompanying a skeleton with drawn-up legs.<sup>7</sup>

In order to verify the earring hypothesis I approached Mrs. H. E. H. Quarles van Ufford at Bilthoven, near Utrecht, the owner of the Bennekom objects.<sup>8</sup> She immediately gave her consent for a closer study of them, and it is more than a pleasant convention which makes me express my deep gratitude for this.

Mrs. Quarles, and her daughter, Miss C. F. I. Quarles van Ufford, had placed the two gold objects crosswise over the mouth of a Bell Beaker of Veluwe type. They stressed that this was how the objects had always been arranged in the late

Jonkheer H. J. Quarles's collection. To the best of Mrs. Quarles's knowledge, the gold objects were still in the state in which they had been found about 1890. Mrs. and Miss Quarles were aware that the gold objects and the Beaker were believed to represent a grave group. A close examination of the gold objects confirmed the correctness of Bursch's judgment, *viz.* that they are the fragments of a single ornament.<sup>9</sup>

The discovery, by Miss Quarles,<sup>10</sup> of the original notes of her late father has, however, thrown new light on the Bennekom find. The documents are:

- (1) Notes on the discovery in 1891 by Jonkheer H. J. Quarles van Ufford, with a sketch of the 'urn'.
- (2) A covering letter, dated 13 January 1892, from Jonkheer Quarles's father-in-law, Dr. C. G. C. van Hengst, of Utrecht, to Dr. S. Muller Fzn., Keeper of the Public Records at Utrecht. One fragment of the gold object accompanied this letter.
- (3) A letter from Dr. Muller, dated 13 January 1892, sent with (1) and (2) to Dr. W. Pleyte, Director of the State Museum of Antiquities at Leiden, and asking for an opinion about the object.<sup>11</sup>
- (4) Dr. Pleyte's answer to Dr. Muller, dated 16 January 1892, with a reconstructed drawing of the gold ornament (fig. 11).<sup>12</sup> – Pleyte made another drawing of the half of the object which had been sent to him. This drawing has been found at Leiden by Professor H. Brunsting.

As a result of a study of these documents and of the finds themselves we can now make a number of additions to the description of the finds as given by Bursch.

*Circumstantial evidence.* Jonkheer Quarles recorded: 'The urn was found in a gravel layer, about six feet below the surface. The objects—if I have well understood—lay west of the urn, but in the immediate vicinity. I think to have understood from the finder that the two objects were kept together in the accompanying small piece of resin and that they were already twisted when found.'

Six years later, on 10 December 1898, he added: 'This urn and the gold objects were found in the gravel layers on Ooster-Eng near the so-called *Kwartiersbosch*, in the year 1891.'

Although it is not said explicitly that the objects were found beneath a barrow, this is clear from their depth below the surface.

*The Bell Beaker.* Bursch stated that the gold ornaments had been found with a *grober Glockenbecher* of the usual, somewhat coarse type, like the majority of Dutch Beakers.<sup>6</sup> This description, without an illustration, is insufficient to determine the Beaker type.

Jonkheer Quarles's pen-sketch, on a separate sheet, shows a Bell Beaker of the well-known Veluwe type, with the annotation that 'on this urn of finer ware and workmanship', all smaller lines, except those on the shoulder zone, had been stippled (*gepointeerd*; with a sketch showing the impressions of a dentated spatula or comb). The drawing represents the Beaker shown to us by Mrs. Quarles. Overleaf the ornamentation of another Bell Beaker of Veluwe type 'of coarser ware and workmanship' had been drawn.<sup>13</sup>

The Beaker (fig. 9, pl. V:1) has a height of 12.2 cm; the maximum diameter at

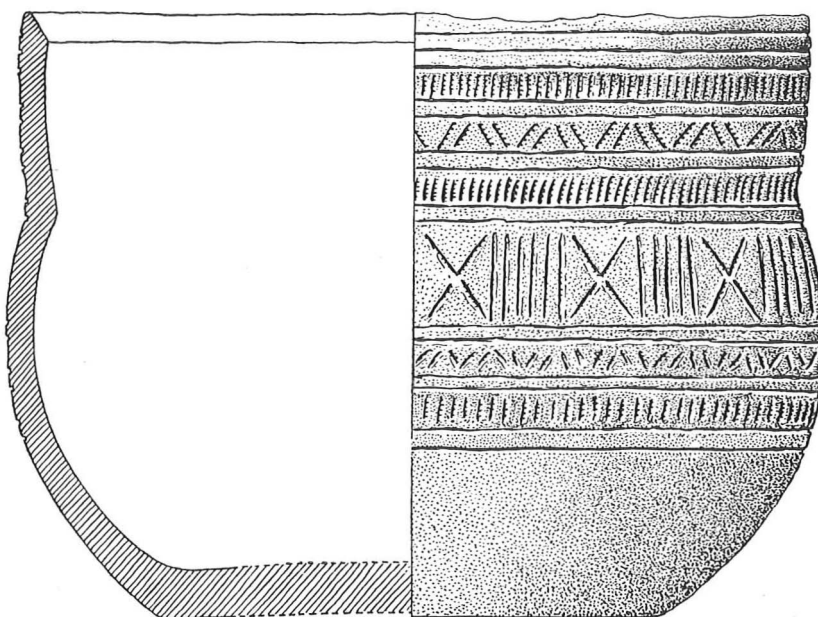


Fig. 9

rim is 16.6 cm. It has an internally bevelled rim. The fragments have been restored by a cabinet-maker<sup>14</sup> who—after replacing the missing parts with plaster of Paris and polishing (*sic!*) the surface—completed the restoration by painting over the entire surface in ochreous yellow. The original surface was ochreous grey. The Beaker is a good specimen of the late Bell Beakers of Veluwe type. It belongs to type 2<sup>If</sup> of the Dutch Bell Beaker development (2<sup>1a-f</sup>) according to J. D. van der Waals.<sup>15</sup>

*The gold ornament* (fig. 10, pl. III, IV, V : 2).<sup>4</sup> The one fragment is 19.15 cm long. Its very thin oar-shaped end is 1.75 cm wide and c. 5.7 cm long. The long stem (1 mm wide and c. 0.5 mm thick), curved at the end, consists of sheet gold folded and hammered together, as is clearly to be seen on both flat sides, as well as along the edges at those places where there has been strong torsion. The weight is 3.735

grammes. Along the rim of the blade there is a continuous sequence of small embossed points.

The other fragment is 20.15 cm long. Its very thin oar-shaped end is 1.8 cm wide and c. 5.7 cm long. Along the central embossed line the blade has cracked over a

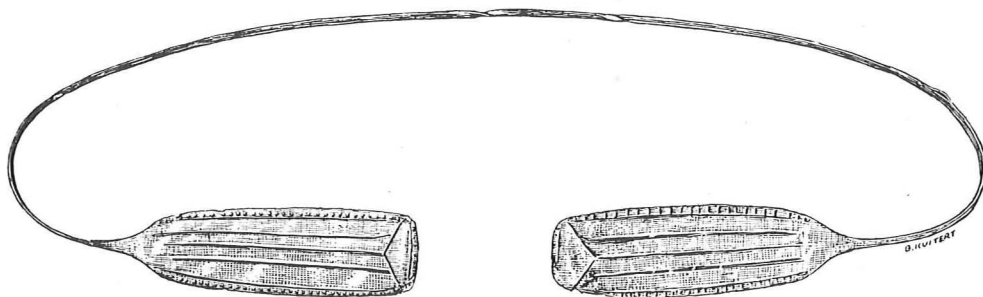


Fig. 10

distance of 1.8 cm. The stem is 1 mm wide and c. 0.5 mm thick. As a result of torsion it can clearly be seen at one place that layers of gold strip have been hammered together. The end of the stem confirms Bursch's finding that it was broken by torsion. The weight is 3.950 grammes. Along the rim of the blade there is a continuous sequence of short grooves embossed at right angles to the edge.

Both pieces have a dull lustre, and show light brownish black incrustations between the elements of the embossed decoration.

*The amber bead.* Dr. Muller had seen the 'piece of resin' (*stukje harst*) 'which connected both halves' of the gold ornament, but 'it seemed to be lost'. 'It fitted in the fracture of the gold.' Pleyte identified it 'as the remnant of an amber bead, frequently occurring on similar ornaments' (*sic!*). Mrs. Quarles faintly remembered the amber bead, and she confirmed that it was lost many years ago.

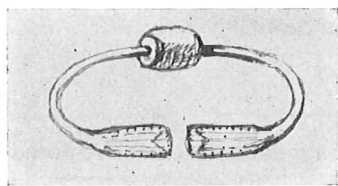


Fig. 11

Pleyte believed that the fragment sent to him belonged to a gold head ornament of this shape (fig. 11).<sup>16</sup>

*Conclusion.* In 1891 a Bell Beaker of Veluwe type, and, close by, a broken gold neck ornament with oar-shaped ends were discovered beneath a barrow on the Oostereng estate near Bennekom (Gelderland). An amber bead was attached to the gold ornament. Bursch's contention that the gold ornament and the Beaker constitute a grave group may be accepted as probable if not certain.

Groningen, August 1957.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> F. C. Bursch, *OM Leiden*, n.s. xiv, 1933, pp. 89–90, fig. 75. – During his excavations at Oostereng in 1929, Bursch, through the kind offices of the then owner, Mrs. C. A. S. In-singer, had been allowed to inspect some notes of the former owner, Jonkheer H. J. Quarles van Ufford, concerning the earlier finds on the estate. Bursch was much interested in this description, and he got into touch with Jonkheer Quarles, who still possessed all the objects and allowed him to study the gold find and to take it along to Leiden to have it photographed. Jonkheer Quarles died shortly afterwards, and on their return Mrs. Quarles carefully preserved the objects, to which her husband had always been greatly attached.

<sup>2</sup> A Beaker burial with associated copper and gold objects was discovered by Van Giffen (1929) beneath a round barrow near Odoorn (Drenthe). The primary grave contained a Bell Beaker of pan-European type with incipient zone-contraction (type 2<sup>1b</sup> of the Bell Beaker development in the Netherlands, according to J. D. van der Waals; see *Palaeohistoria* iv, 1955, pp. 21–22), a long copper tanged dagger with rounded point, a copper spiral bracelet, a copper awl, two amber beads, and finally two tiny rectangular strips of sheet gold with bent over and perforated ends. A. E. van Giffen, *Bauart*, 1930, pp. 166–75, latterly at length in *NDV* 1947, pp. 79–126; cf. also M. E. Mariën, *Archéologie* 1949, pp. 408–9; J. D. van der Waals & W. Glasbergen, *Palaeohistoria* iv, 1955, pl. viii: 24; S. Junghans & E. Sangmeister, *Germania* 35, 1957, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> In his publication he points out that these parts of Holland are very poor in metal finds of later periods and that—except for the Beaker period—grave goods are as a rule scarce, so that there can be no question at all of a secondary interment (*sic!*). As gold finds are relatively common elsewhere (Brittany, England, Bavaria) and were not entirely unknown from Holland, Bursch concluded: ‘*Vorläufig müssen wir also den Fund als gesichert betrachten.*’

<sup>4</sup> ‘Der Goldschmuck besteht jetzt aus zwei Teilen, die aber, und das ist sehr wichtig, ursprünglich ein Ganzes gebildet haben. Zwar sind beide Teile gleich lang (20 cm), aber die Bruchstelle ist zu deutlich, um Zweifel in dieser Hinsicht zuzulassen. Es macht den Eindruck, als ob der Bruch durch Torsion entstanden ist. Der Stiel hat einen rechteckigen Querschnitt, und ist bloss 1 mm dick. An einer Stelle (*read*: at several places) war noch zu sehen, wie dieser entstanden war durch Zusammenbiegen einer dünnen gehämmerten Platte. Die Umbiegung am einen Ende des Stieles kann wohl nicht ursprünglich sein. Der spatelförmige Teil, lang 6 cm, breit 3 cm (*read*: 1.8 cm), ist ganz dünn ausgehämmert, und blattförmig. In der Stielrichtung sind oben in der Mitte drei parallele Linien eingetieft, unregelmässig in Richtung und Tiefe. Aus der Mittellinie gehen noch zwei Linien nach den Ecken. Es ist weiter eine Furche eingetieft den Rändern entlang und zwischen dieser Vertiefung und dem Rande sind Punkte oder Striche eingepunzt.’

<sup>5</sup> A. de Loë, *Belgique Ancienne* ii (Les Ages du Métal), 1931, p. 55, fig. 42; M. E. Mariën, *Oud-België*, 1952, fig. 172, p. 190.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Der Becher hat nichts Besonderes an sich, er ist von der gewöhnlichen, etwas groben Art, wie die Mehrzahl der holländischen Becher.’

<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Audrey Williams, *Oxoniensia* xiii, 1948, pp. 1–9; cf. also C.F.C. Hawkes, *Inventaria Archaeologica*, Great Britain, 1st set, 1955, GB 2.

<sup>8</sup> On 15 December 1954 I journeyed to Bilthoven, studied the find, and was moreover given permission to take the two gold objects and the Beaker with me to Groningen for further study and photography. Mrs. Quarles could inform me that the find had been made about 1890, at the time when the Quarles van Ufford family owned and lived on the Oostereng estate. Her late husband, Jonkheer H. J. Quarles van Ufford, on leaving the estate in 1898 had taken the prehistoric objects which he had collected at Oostereng with him to Bilthoven. — In the course of my visit Mrs. Quarles intimated that, in view of her advanced age, she intended to place the Oostereng finds in a public collection, where they would always be available to interested scholars. In a letter dated 25 April 1955 she ceded the objects

to the Institute for Biological Archaeology in the State University of Groningen, this Institute having latterly carried out excavations at Oostereng, in 1952 and 1954. Cf. A. E. van Giffen, *Gelre* liv, 1954, pp. 9–26. The objects have been inventoried as 1955/V 1–3. The collection further included sherds of the Bell Beaker of Veluwe type mentioned on p. 55, note 13, several stone and bronze axes, a retouched flint knife, &c. (1955/V 4–10).

<sup>9</sup> The supposition that we might have here two earrings like those of Radley, rolled out (on discovery?), has therefore appeared unfounded. A correspondence with Mr. H. J. Case, Assistant-Keeper in the Department of Antiquities, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, has moreover convinced me that the Radley earrings, if unrolled, would assume a rather different shape than those of Oostereng. – Professor S. Piggott, Edinburgh, who had independently reached the earring hypothesis some years ago, studied the objects on a visit to Groningen, on 1 April 1955. He also came to the conclusion that these objects are not earrings, but parts of a single ornament.

<sup>10</sup> On the occasion of my second visit to Bilthoven, on 4 October 1955.

<sup>11</sup> We received a copy of this letter, preserved in the archives of the Museum at Leiden, through the kind offices of Professor H. Brunsting.

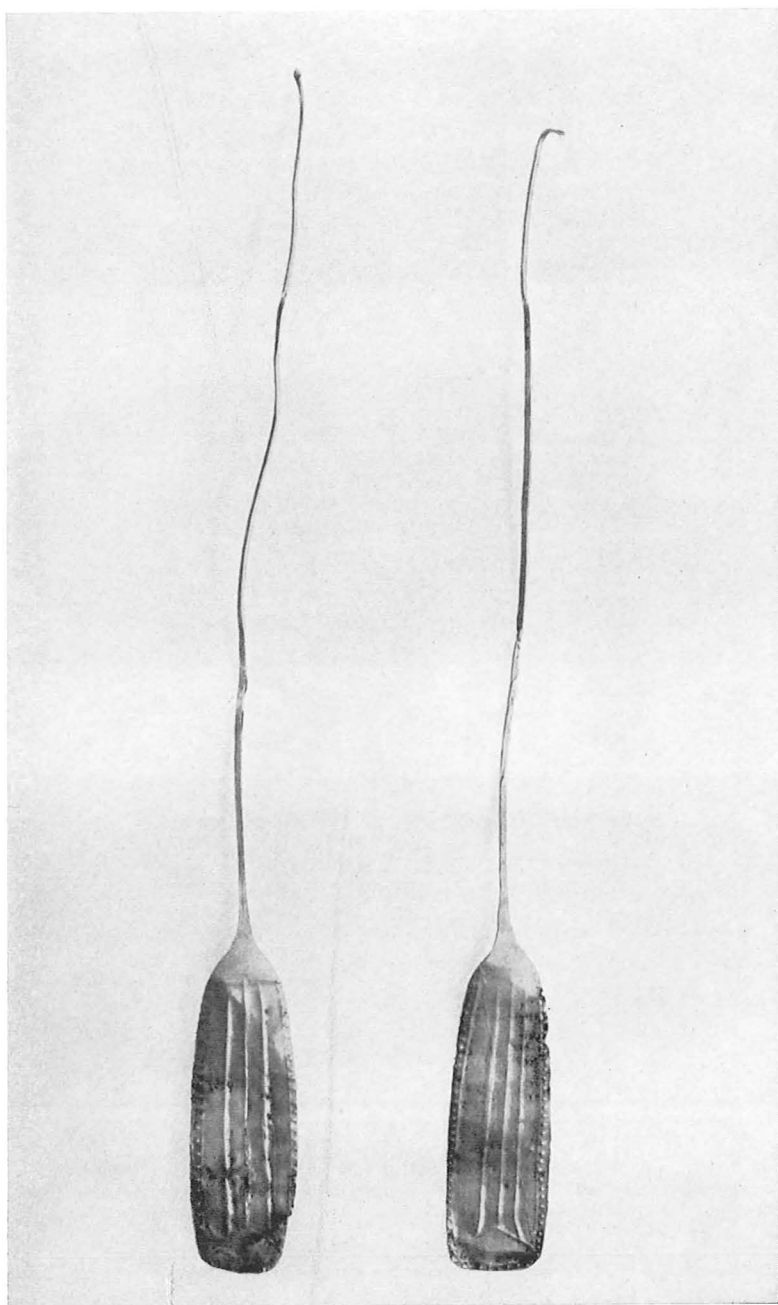
<sup>12</sup> A copy of this letter is preserved in the archives of the Leiden Museum.

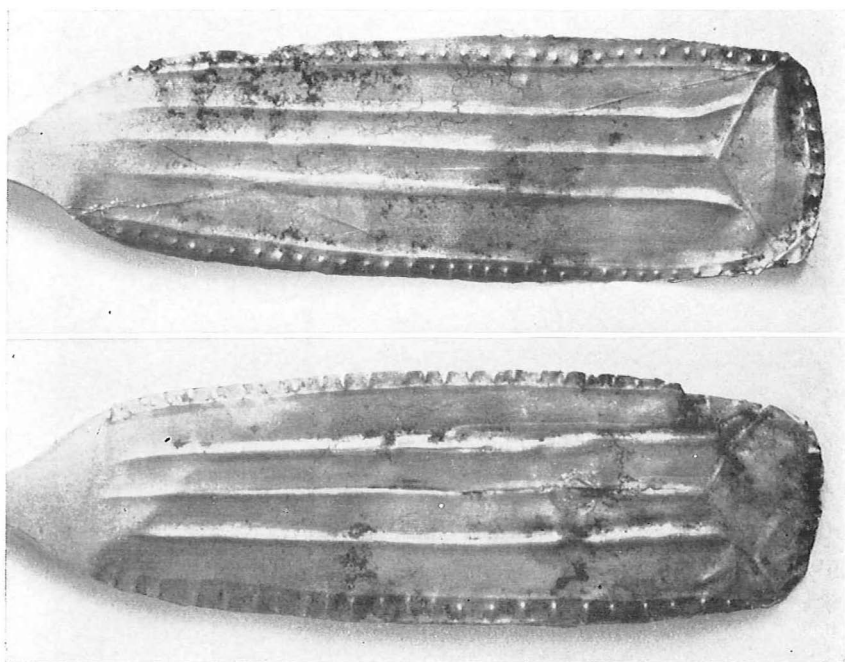
<sup>13</sup> These sherds now also belong to the collection of the Institute for Biological Archaeology (1955/V 4), see note 8.

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Muller, in his letter dated 13 January 1892, mentioned that the urn had gone to pieces, and that it had been restored by a cabinet-maker.

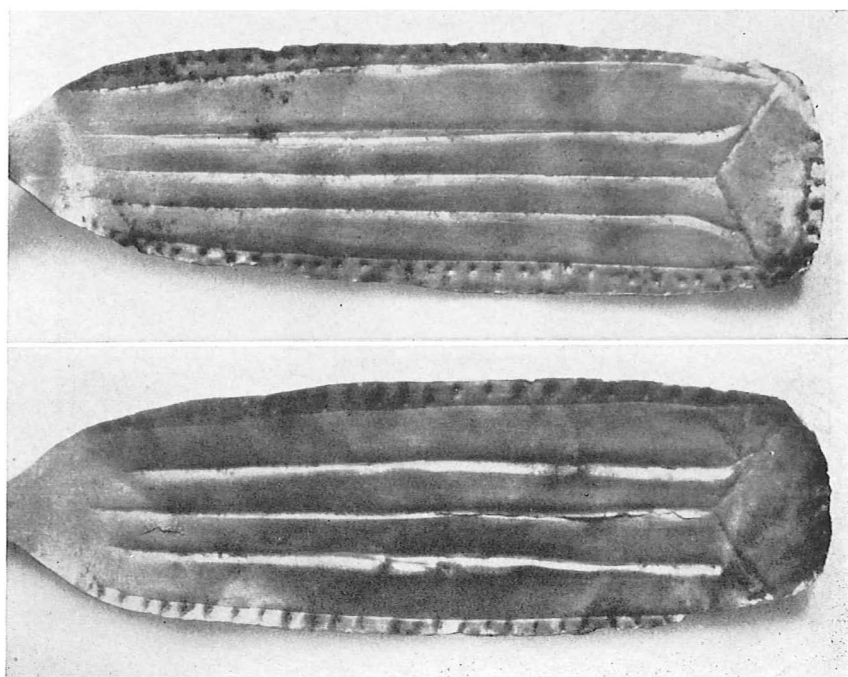
<sup>15</sup> *Palaeohistoria* iv, 1955, pp. 24–27.

<sup>16</sup> He would like to see the urn as this might give him a better idea of its date and origin. Provisionally he believed that the objects were of 'Old Saxon' origin.





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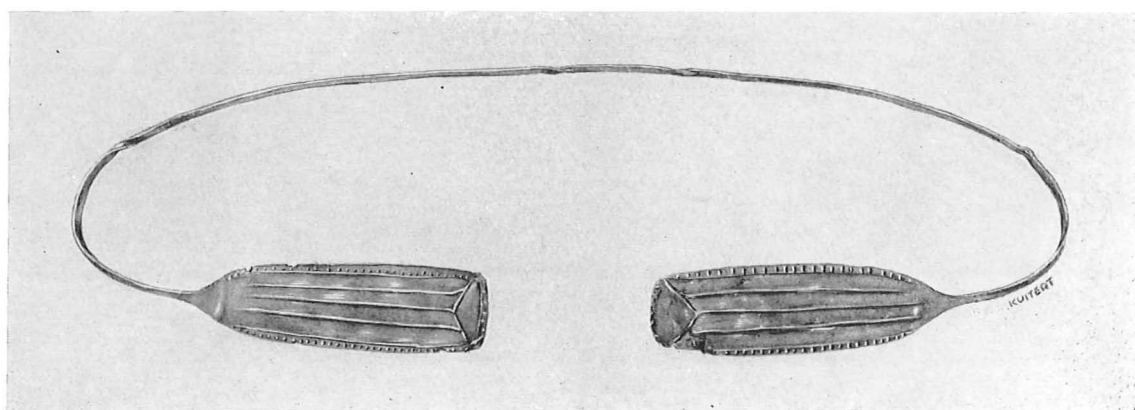


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