A61-AM,S-Colombia- Tairona-Gold Figurine-Crocodile-1000-1500 CE







Figs. 1-3. Colombia-Tairona-Gold Figurine-*Crocodile*-1000-1500 AD/CE

**Case No.: 7**

**Formal Label:** Colombia-Tairona-Gold Figurine-*Crocodile*-1000-1500 AD/CE

**Display Description:** This gold figurine is of a mythic crocodile and was made by the lost wax process by the prehistoric Tairona culture (1000-1500 AD/CE) of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta**, NE Colombia**. By 1000 AD/CE Tairona goldsmiths, using the lost wax method, had attained one of the highest levels of technical and artistic achievement of gold-working in the Americas. The mythic crocodile,which otherwise might be dangerous, is the conduit of the classic shamanic initiation to *aluna*, the Tairona spiritual principle of being in harmony with the cosmos: “each being, even a small stone and the air, maintain the balance of the universe.” The crocodile in this case is the devouring one who ingests the aspirant, who then becomes skeletonized and then escapes and is reborn with shamanic capabilities to attain *aluna* (see Reichel-Dolmatoff 1945: 12-15; 1985: 38-43) to implement its goals: the protection of territory, the strengthening of oral tradition, sustainable development, food security and responsible consumption and harmony with the ecosystem” ([EÑES](https://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?depth=1&hl=en&prev=search&rurl=translate.google.com&sl=es&sp=nmt4&u=https://medium.com/somos-enes%3Fsource%3Dfooter_card&usg=ALkJrhhV4slgnlp8CrzVzf2wyo-CDNCwag). 2017; see Coleridge 1950: cf. *aluna* and *natura naturans*).

**Accession Number:** A61

**LC Classification:**  F1434.2

**Date or Time Horizon:** 1000-1500 CE

**Geographical Area:** Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta**, Colombia. Indigenous** Kogi **name** (*Gonawindua)****.***

**GPS Coordinates:** 10°57'N, 73°48'W.



Fig. 4. Map of Spanish Provinces in 1600. After <https://html2-f.scribdassets.com/5nmwqq7itc4aqx2e/images/6-a5a093175f.jpg>. Yellow place-holders mark the centers of the four Tairona cultures (in bold) as of 2017.

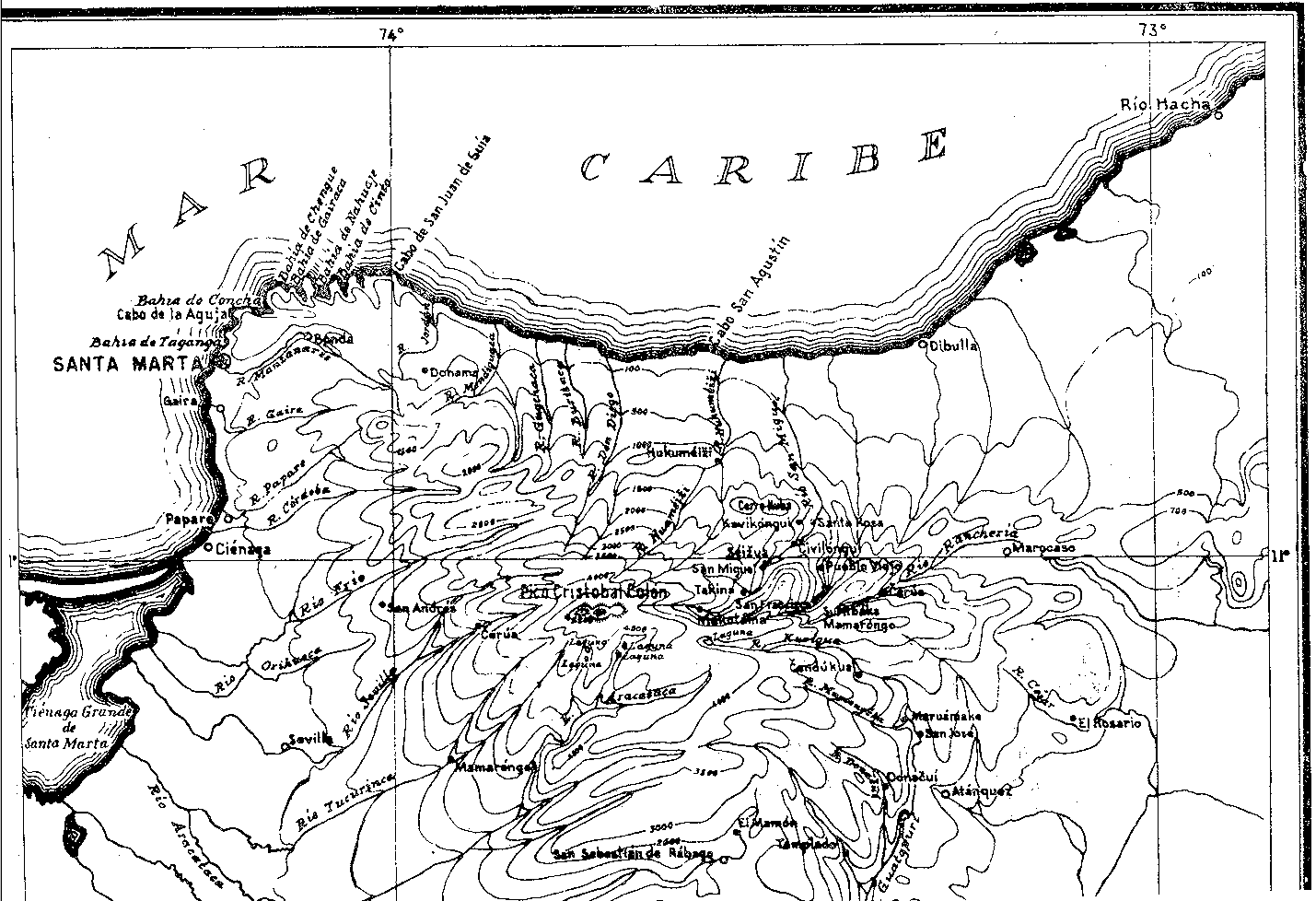


Fig. 5. Topographic map of the Sierra Nevada of NE Colombia. From Reichel-Dolmatoff 1950.

**Cultural Affiliation:** Tairona, Chibcha Language

**Medium:** Lost-wax cast of tumbaga, an alloy of gold and copper. Its surface was subsequently enriched by the depletion method, also known as *mise-en-couleur*.

**Dimensions:**

**Weight:**

**Condition: original**

**Provenance:** Tairona villages of the Kogi ethnolinguistic group. The four descendants of the Tairona are:

**Arhuaco (aka Aruaco, Bintuk, Bintukua, Binmticua, Ica, Ijka, Ika, Ike), pop. 14,301, (Arango and Sanchez 1998, SIL 2005); S slope,** 10°42'N, 73°38'W.

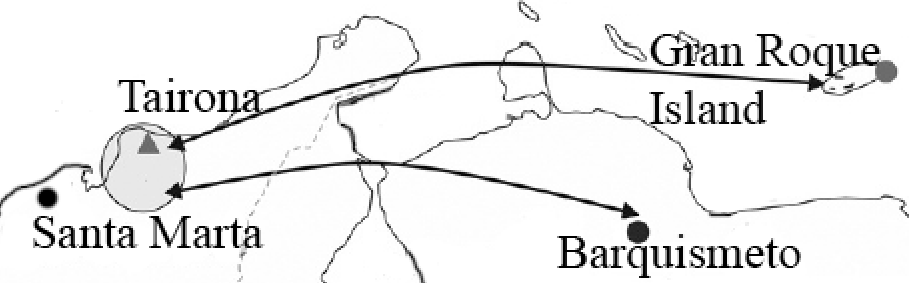
**Kankuamo (aka** Kankuaka, Kankui or Kankuané**), pop. 15,000 (**<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kankuamo>**;** Hammarström, Forkel, Haspelmath, Bank, 2016)**; S slope,** 10°45'N, 73°21'W

**Kogi** (aka Cogui or Kágaba, = “jaguar”), pop. 9,770 (SIL 2005, 1998 census); N, E, W slopes; 10°57'N, 73°48'W.  
**Malayo (aka** Arosario, **Arsaro,** Damana, Guamaca, Guarmaka, Guamaco, Maracasero, Sanja, Sanka, Wiwa) (**SIL 2005,** Hammarström, Forkel, Haspelmath, Bank 2016; pop. 7,000, Joshua Project 2017**): S, E slopes;** 10°56'N, 73°24'W.

**Discussion:**

The pre-Tairona period is known as the Nahuange Period (Bischof 1968) and is based on the stratigraphy of jadeite objects and the dating of gold artifacts excavated from coastal sites ranging from cal. AD/CE 130 ± 40 to cal. AD/CE 480 ± 40 (Bray 2003:324) in small, isolated, non-hierarchical towns and buildings without stone foundations (Giraldo 2010:181). Beginning ca 450 AD/BC pressure from the Caribs in the Orinoco River Valley caused an ethno-linguistic group, the Taino, to advance from the Orinoco River Valley into the Lesser and Greater Antilles (Menhinick 1997). During this Carib expansion Nahuange descendants, the Tairona, migrated from the lower to the upper slopes of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and assembled non-hierarchical towns with circular stone foundations which they connected by flagstone trails (Rogonzinski 2000; Allaire 1997; Basso 1977).

# These trails continued a desire to maintain trade and exchange with neighboring areas that they had developed for precious gems such as greenstone beads of the variscite-group minerals from Gran Roque Island and Barquimeto (Acevedo et al. 2017).



**|\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_|** 300 km

Map of Tairona trade routes from Gran Roque Island and Barquismeto. After Acevedo et al. 2016, fig. 7.

Tairona mythology, dating from their Nahuange predecessors whose dwellings lie below those of the Tairona (Acevedo 2016; Dever 2007), views the highest mountain, which the Spanish named “Pico Cristobal Colon” to negate its indigenous religious power but which the Kogi **named it** *Gonawindua,* the “Holy Mountain.” Similarly, the Spanish gave the mountain massif the name of a Catholic Saint to again deprive it of its indigenous religious power, “Sierra de Santa Marta,” but the Tairona preserve its original name, “the Heart of the World.” Tairona mythology teaches that they are "Elder Brothers" of humanity and that those not living in the “Heart of the World” are called "Younger Brothers," the Caribs from the Orinoco Valley and by extension the Spanish and all those apart from the Tairona and their descendants (Cadavid y Herrera 1985; Groot 1985; Langebaek 2003, 2005; Oyuela-Caycedo1986, 1987; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1997; Serje 1987; Wynn 1975). When the Spanish arrived in the sixteenth century their Conquistador leader, Rodrigo de Bastidas, as he initiated the building of the city of Santa Marta in 1525 had the following proclamation read out on the beach (Tairona 2015)

  “I assure you that with the help of God I will enter powerfully against you, and I will make war on you in every place and in every way that I can, and I will subject you to the yoke and obedience of the church and their highnesses, and I will take your persons and your women and your children, and I will make them slaves, and as such I will sell them, and dispose of them as their highnesses command: I will take your goods, and I will do you all the evils and harms which I can, just as to vassals who do not obey and do not want to receive their lord, resist him and contradict him. And I declare that the deaths and harms which arise from this will be your fault, and not that of their highnesses, nor mine, nor of the gentlemen who have come with me here.”

In 1965, Colombian archaeologists thought that they had discovered a previously unrecorded mountain trail of 1,200 stone steps, which led to an abandoned city (“Ciudad Perdida”; 11°02'22.9"N 73°55'33.8"W) in the rain forest ("Infierno verde" or "Green Hell") on the slopes of Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Tairona descendants—the Arhuaco, the Kankuamo, the Kogi and the Malayo—reported that their ancestors had built the ancient site, which they called Teyuna and that it was the center of their network of ancient villages, when the Tairona were forced to move into the highlands during the Arawak expansion in the 5th century AD/CE. Teyuna consists of a series of 169 terraces and several small circular plazas.

Tairona spirituality is based on *aluna*, cosmic harmony. The Great Mother Creator, Gaulcováng (from gau – “to create”), has many manifestations, such as *Hába Guxsénse*, “Mother of the Eternal Fire,” and Málkwa-yang, “Mother of the Knowledge of Weaving.” Her children -- Lords of the Cosmos, Seokúkui and Seizankwa -- carry Gaulcováng’s Cosmic Egg balanced between two poles between them on their shoulders. When the Cosmic Egg shifts in balance between them, metaphorical earthquakes can result. The metaphysical may have physical consequences, so that right relations with one’s neighbors and the Earth (*natura naturans*) is essential to maintaining cosmic balance.

The cosmos is shaped like an egg in which there are the nine worlds that correspond to the nine months of human gestation (Tairona 2015).

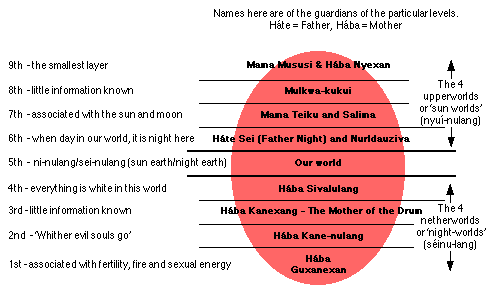


Fig. 6. Structure of the Tairona “Cosmic Egg”. Base on Reichel-Dolmatoff 1978 from Tairona 2015.

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