Case 7-AM,S- Colombia-Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta-Tairona-Owl-Tumbaga-1000-1500 CE  

Figs. 1-5. Colombia-Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta-Tairona-Owl-Tumbaga-1000-1500 CE

**Case no.: 7**

**Accession Number:**

**Formal Label:** Colombia-Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta-Tairona-Owl-Tumbaga-1000-1500 CE

**Display Description:**

Pre-Colombian Tairona owl. This figure was produced using the authentic lost wax casting with tumbaga, an alloy of gold/copper/silver. This figure is from north-east Colombia in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. It was made by the Tairona indigenous people 1000-1500 CE.

**LC Classification:** F1434.2

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

**Geographical Area:** Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta**,** Colombia. Indigenous peoples names are:Kankuamo (*Umunukunu)* and Kogi (*Gonawindua).*

**GPS Coordinates:** **10o57’N, 73 o 48’W**



Fig. 6. 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.

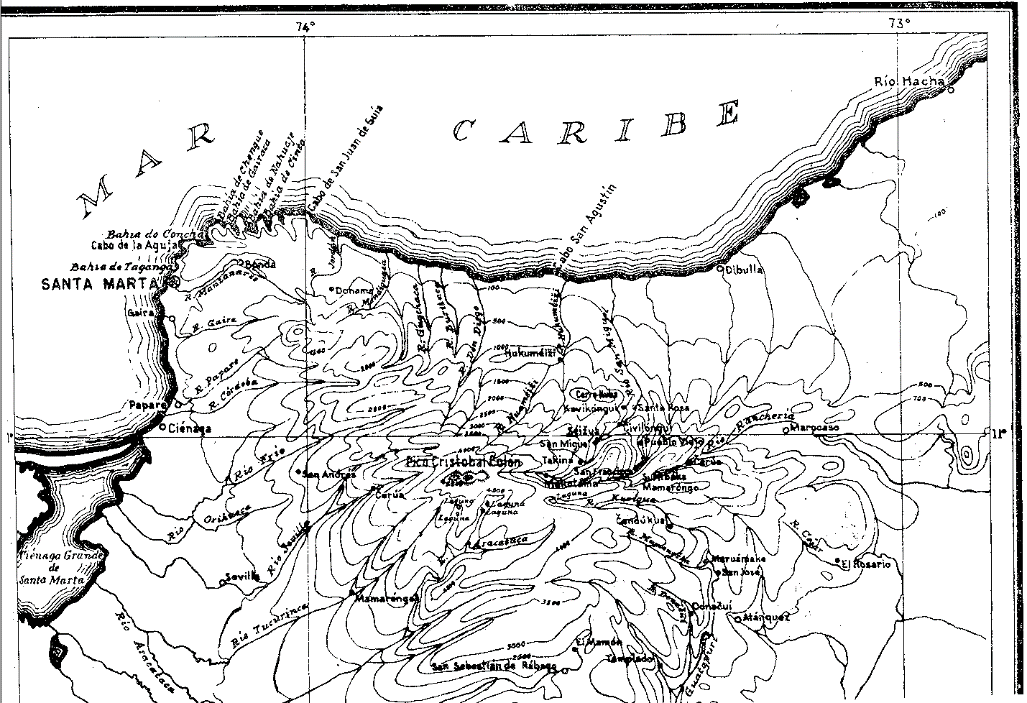


Fig. 5. Topographic map of the Sierra Nevada of NE Colombia. From Reichel-Dolmatoff 1950.

**Cultural Affiliation:** Tairona, Chibcha Language.

The name "Tairona" was derived by Konrad Preuss from a Tairona word *térú*, meaning "older brother" (Preuss, 1926: 43). Reichel-Dolmatoff associates the name with *teirúna* or *terún*a meaning in the Kogi and Ica language "people, progenitors" (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1953a). The Chibcha language attribution is inconclusive.

**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:** W 1.5 in H 1.8 in

**Weight:** 21.5 gm

**Condition: original**

**Provenance:**

All our tumbagas are legally exported, and under the laws of Colombia and United States of America, this does not represent any harm to the Colombian patrimonium.-

**Discussion:**

Tairona spirituality in its Kogi version is based on *aluna*, cosmic harmony. The central figure of Kogi religion is the Universal Mother or Gaulcováng (from gau – “to create”), is the creator at the beginning of time of the “Cosmic Egg” that encompasses the universe. The Universal Mother, has many manifestations, such as **Hába Guxsénse**, “Mother of the Eternal Fire,” and Málkwa-yang, “Mother of the Knowledge of Weaving.” (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975; 1985; 1987; 1990). The Kogi Cosmic Egg is composed of nine worlds that correspond to the nine months of human gestation (Tairona 2015).

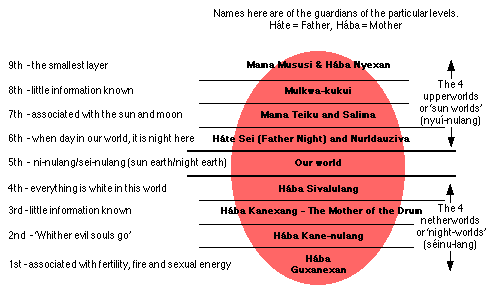


Fig. 7. Structure of the Kogi Cosmic Egg. Based on Reichel-Dolmatoff 1978, from Tairona 2015.

This egg-shaped universe has nine superimposed levels, and humankind occupies the middle one of these. The four upper levels (nyui-nulang, sun worlds) each have their own suns. The sun of the third level is Teiku, who lives there with his “family” of celestial beings, planets, and constellations. The principal divinities are the Universal Mother’s sons—Seokukui, Seizankwa, Kuncavitabueya, Aldauhuiku, and Mulkuexe who balance the Cosmic Egg on their lances that are carried on their shoulders. These two lances are symbolized architecturally in the Kogi domiciles and can be seen protruding from the roofs.

Tairona spirituality in its Arhuaco version is based on *Kunsamü*, a sacred, pre-existent, universal law that aims to preserve equilibrium and harmony among all things. The father-creator Kakü Serankua, in the beginning, molded Chundúa in Iku, the language of the Arhuacos, the highest snow-covered peak (named by the Spanish “Pico de Cristobal Colon” to de-sacralize it) of the central massif (named by the Spanish “Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta” to re-sacralize it) Umunukunu in Iku. Umunukunu is thought to be the “Heart of the World” and the “Origin of Life”. Kakü Serankua also created the first gods, and the first men -- the Elder Brothers – the Taironas -- and bestowed upon them the duty of protecting the earth. The Umunukunu are akin to their bodies, with the highest peak corresponding to their head, the lagoons and lakes below to their heart, the rivers and streams to their veins, the layers of soil to their muscles, and the scrublands to their hair.

Combining the spirituality of the Kogi and the Arhuaco we can see that a duality is implied by their common ancestor, the Tairona, in which there was probably both a Mother Creator and a Father Creator. Duality may be seen in many of the gold artifacts of the Tairona suggesting a complex interweaving of complimentary ideas and visual themes

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