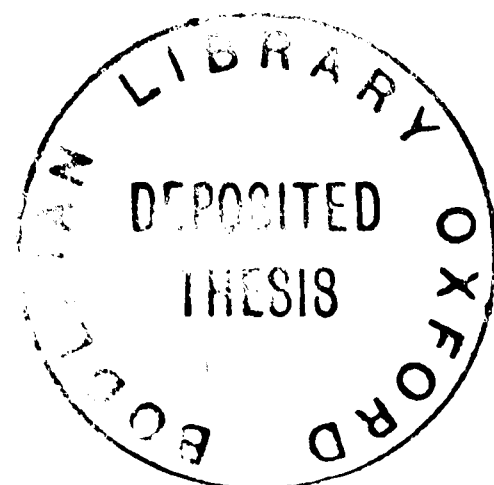


**THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PRE-HISPANIC PAST OF COLOMBIA:
COLLECTIONS, MUSEUMS AND EARLY ARCHAEOLOGY, 1823– 1941**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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SHORT ABSTRACT

This study examines the construction of the pre-Hispanic past of Colombia from the 1820's to the 1940s. It describes and analyses the reception, dissemination and appropriation of knowledge about ancient Colombian societies. It analyses the works by Colombian and foreign antiquarians, savants and archaeologists and the formation of Colombian pre-Hispanic collections in the *Museo Nacional* in Bogotá and in three major European Museums : the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin, the British Museum in London and the *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadero* in Paris. The study shows the ways Colombian archaeological objects were viewed in the course of this history. At its outset, during the Colonial period, Colombian pre-Hispanic objects were first seen as “Idols of the devil”; in Europe, they were initially considered as curiosities and as works of art. During the nineteenth century, archaeological objects began to be valued and interpreted by Colombian and foreign scholars and antiquarians as

antiquities and also as art objects. How Colombia was presented and represented in the National Museum in Bogotá and in international exhibitions during the second half of the nineteenth century is described and analysed, and how pre-Hispanic artefacts came to form part of a representation of Colombia nationally and internationally. The final chapters deal with the first four decades of the twentieth century, when the pre-Hispanic period received a new degree of recognition in Colombia with the enactment of official measures for the protection of antiquities, the building of archaeological collections in the National Museum in Bogotá and in research done by foreign and Colombian archaeologists, which began to define archaeological areas scientifically. The final chapter examines the background for the establishment of the Colombian scientific tradition in archaeology during the 1930's with the creation of the *Servicio Arqueológico Nacional*, the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional* and two archaeological museums, the *Museo Arqueológico Nacional* and the *Museo del Oro*.

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LONG ABSTRACT

This study examines the construction of the pre-Hispanic past of Colombia from the 1820's to the 1940s. It describes and analyses the reception, dissemination and appropriation of knowledge about ancient Colombian societies. The attitudes adopted first by the Spaniards and subsequently by the creoles with respect to the great diversity of objects produced by the indigenous societies which they found in their temples and houses, at funeral sites and offering places are described and analysed. These attitudes were essentially marked by two elements that were intertwined, greed for gold, and religious ideas about Evil. As in other parts of America, these objects were re-interpreted as being "Idols of the Devil". Only at the end of the eighteenth century, did writings by certain Colombian savants and naturalists produce a new curiosity towards objects and monuments from the past, which very timidly came to be looked upon by a handful of learned and enlightened men as valuable antiquities and objects deserving scientific attention.

During the nineteenth century, this study analyses the work of Colombian and foreign antiquarians, savants and archaeologists on ancient monuments and objects. The process of building attitudes to, and views about, the pre-Hispanic era began in the 1840's with the work of a few scientists and historians, and also with descriptions by Colombian and foreign travellers who discovered pre-Hispanic sites or objects and published details of their findings. Although this body of knowledge was no more than fragmentary, interest in the pre-Hispanic period grew mainly in two regional centres, Bogotá and Medellín, where academic references from Europe clearly affected the mentality of a group of Colombian historians, scientists and collectors interested in the country's ancient history. The commercial importance and international contacts of both places were important factors in the rise of the antiquarian and the collector. An atmosphere around the mid nineteenth century which favoured a romantic identification with the pre-Hispanic period and literature on indigenous themes are described. That Muisca society had been a higher civilization was concluded from the existence of a supposed lunar Calendar, and the discovery of the remains of an ancient temple. At the same time, scientific interest in the metallurgical technology of Muisca objects sought to support the idea that Colombia had its roots in a civilization similar to those of Mexico and Peru.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a grave-plundering boom in Antioquia and in the Quindío region, as emigrants from the central and mountainous regions of Antioquia began to settle frontier lands. Some *Antioqueños* began to collect and preserve pre-Hispanic objects, and saved gold objects from being melted down. The most important archaeological

collection to be built up in Antioquia belonged to the businessman Leocadio María Arango, who employed a rigorous discipline for cataloguing and caring for his private museum. During this period, European museums of anthropology housed within natural history and art museums expanded their ethnographic and archaeological coverage, and aimed to provide a complete view of the different cultures in the world. They began to collect ancient American objects and among them, Colombian archaeological objects. Using their internal archives, this study describes and examines the aims and process of building Colombian archaeological collections in three museums, the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin, the *British Museum* in London and the *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadero*, now the *Musée de L'Homme* in Paris. These were representative of three different European approaches towards collecting ancient American objects, and they hold the largest Colombian pre-Hispanic collections in Europe.

During the 1880-1900 period, a centralizing Conservative trend emerged in Colombia, and the 1886 Constitution stated clear goals of guaranteeing order and stability on the basis of a stronger national executive and the Catholic religion as an educational force. A new phase arose in the study of the historical past, which is described and analysed. Works of the colonial chroniclers were re-published, and several Colombian scientists and antiquarians published works in which they attempted to reconstruct aspects of Muisca and Quimbaya society. The first archaeological references to sites in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta were published, and the first dig by a Colombian was carried out at San Agustín. This study shows that the principal Colombian antiquarians and

scientists in the nineteenth century who set out to rediscover evidence about the country's pre-Hispanic past had close international links. Time spent in Europe was important in developing their enthusiasm for the ancient past. French influences had a particularly significant effect on these precursors of Colombian archaeology.

The thesis also examines the problems that arose in the search for ways to represent Colombia in the National Museum in Bogotá and in international exhibitions, and how the pre-Hispanic past came to form part of the ways in which the nation was represented. The National Museum is described and analysed, originally a natural history museum and a school of mines founded in 1823 under the direction of a group of scientists brought from France. The main purpose of the museum in its early days was to promote the natural sciences as an essential basis for progress and to create a cabinet of natural products and curiosities in Bogotá; thus the capital of Colombia could imitate the displays in European nations. However, the hope of founding a scientific centre with foreign teachers did not last long. Financial problems and the vast gap between the ideals of the Republican leaders and the social, political and economic realities of the day prevented the government from meeting its obligations and paying the foreign scientists, who left the country. Between 1840 and the 1880's the museum underwent many vicissitudes and changes of location, and it eventually declined to a mere store for relics and curiosities. From 1867 onwards, the National Museum came under the recently-founded National University. The interest shown by intellectuals at the University led to its revival and a greater emphasis on ethnology. The National Museum's directors,

influenced by the trend of the day for European museums to build up large archaeological collections, and at a time when archaeological objects were more and more looked upon as “documents” that scholars could interpret, proposed that archaeological objects found in the country should normally be deposited in the museum. These directors deplored the fact that Colombia was a supplier for foreign institutions, of both natural history specimens and pre-Hispanic objects, while Colombian institutions had no chance of promoting scientific research through acquiring collections. The series of World Exhibitions which began with the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London in 1851 had an impact on certain leading Colombian figures, who were concerned that Colombia should be respected and recognised on the world stage as “a civilised nation.” If Colombia’s participation would serve to show off the Republic’s progress, to ensure that the country “took its rightful place in the concert of nations”, and Colombians would also in the process become informed about inventions or discoveries that could benefit the country. Despite good intentions, the government could never pay the necessary attention to organising Colombian participation in these festivities. It was often the individual initiative of Colombians living in Europe that enabled Colombia to be represented at all. The 1889 Paris Universal Exhibition was the first time that Colombia's pre-Hispanic past was exhibited in a large-scale event such as a World Exhibition as an integral part of the essence of the country, and this marked a fundamental departure from previous decades, when what was shown were predominantly “products of the republic”. A new time-scale was beginning to be accepted in the conception of the country's past : that past was now not merely the four centuries which had elapsed since the Spanish Conquest.

Spain's commemoration of the four hundredth anniversary of the "Discovery of America" in 1892 is described because it was an important event in which the Colombian Conservative government took a keen interest. Colombia set up an official commission to organise the preparatory work for the Madrid Exhibition in 1892 and for the Chicago World Fair in 1893. The central feature of the Colombian exhibit in Madrid was the "Quimbaya Treasure", consisting of 122 gold objects obtained from two tombs at La Soledad, Filandia, acquired by the government in 1891. The reasons here were political and diplomatic. The "Quimbaya Treasure", the most important collection of Colombian pre-Hispanic goldwork yet discovered, was eventually to be presented to the Queen Regent of Spain, María Cristina. This was a gesture of thanks to the Spanish Crown for the long and detailed study Spain had to carry out in the arbitration requested by Colombia and Venezuela to settle the old and complex border dispute between the two countries. The celebrations commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the "Discovery of America" in 1892 serve to underline the ambiguity that existed between the way Colombia was represented nationally and internationally. The country's pre-Hispanic past was spectacularly exhibited in Spain, yet back in Colombia these same celebrations had a markedly Hispanic and Catholic tone.

The final two chapters deal with the first four decades of the twentieth century when the pre-Hispanic period emerged into political life in Colombia with the enactment of official measures for the protection of antiquities. The native inhabitants became a subject of interest as part of the *historia patria*, and

preserving and caring for American antiquities was preached as a duty by the Academy of History, founded in 1902. Colombia's National Museum enjoyed a marked revival, and by 1915 it had built up an archaeological collection consisting of 500 gold, pottery and stone objects. The interest that had been aroused amongst European academics in Americanist research into archaeology, ethnology, and linguistics became stronger during the first decades of the twentieth century, when a new generation of professional archaeologists and ethnologists came to the fore sponsored by archaeology and ethnology museums. Paul Rivet, a leading figure in the *Société des Americanistes de Paris*, published several articles of fundamental importance about pre-Hispanic Colombian goldwork, and Theodor Konrad Preuss who worked in Colombia from 1913 to 1919, published his work on San Agustín. John Alden Mason, sponsored by the Field Museum of Natural History of Chicago, investigated Tairona remains in 1923 on the spurs of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. During the 1920s, a renewed interest in the ancient remains of the Muisca arose in Colombia, and a group of artists who broke away from European rules and, influenced by Mexican mural painting, made representations of Muisca mythology in their works. They were called *Los Bachués*.

The final chapter examines the period from 1930 to 1941, a period of accelerated social and political change which saw a number of initiatives in the field of museums and archaeological research. The *Escuela Normal Superior* was established as a professional training institute which prepared future researchers. The *Servicio Arqueológico Nacional* was set up, which promoted

fieldwork and Colombia received the influence of Paul Rivet, the founder of the *Musée de L' Homme* and General Secretary of the *Institut d' Ethnologie* of Paris. The government sponsored the creation of the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional* as an official research centre. Two museums were founded, the *Museo Arqueológico y Etnográfico* linked to the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional*, and the *Banco de la República* began a collection devoted initially to prevent goldwork objects leaving the country, which became the *Museo del Oro*.

The thesis shows the process involved in the emergence of consciousness about Colombia's pre-Hispanic past between the 1820's and the 1940's which involved three central elements: collecting, scientific activity, and the search by Colombian scientists, intellectuals and politicians for ways of showing the world that Colombia was a "civilised" nation. These three elements became intertwined during this long period which witnessed transition from antiquarianism to the rise of prehistory and academic archaeology, and the process of defining cultural areas from a historical and cultural standpoint.

Just as collecting archaeological objects in Colombia was an essentially private activity during the period of study, so studies of the remains of the past were undertaken by scientists, researchers and antiquarians very much on their own. Scientific activity in Colombia met with social approval but there was little or no support from the state. This was mainly due to political instability, but also to the fact that the sciences were considered only marginally useful. There were for a long time no societies or professional associations. Naturalists, doctors or

metallurgists who combined archaeological enthusiasm with political, diplomatic or military activities are analysed.

Until well into the twentieth century, Muisca and Quimbaya gold objects were the best known, the most studied and the most sought-after both by Colombian antiquarians and by European museums. They virtually represented the pre-Hispanic societies of Colombia. Finally, the thesis shows that the revaluation of pre-Hispanic material culture has been of the greatest importance for Colombia during the twentieth century. Attitudes of Colombians towards pre-Hispanic societies has changed republican national identity and the way Colombians view their own society.

To my mother, in Memoriam

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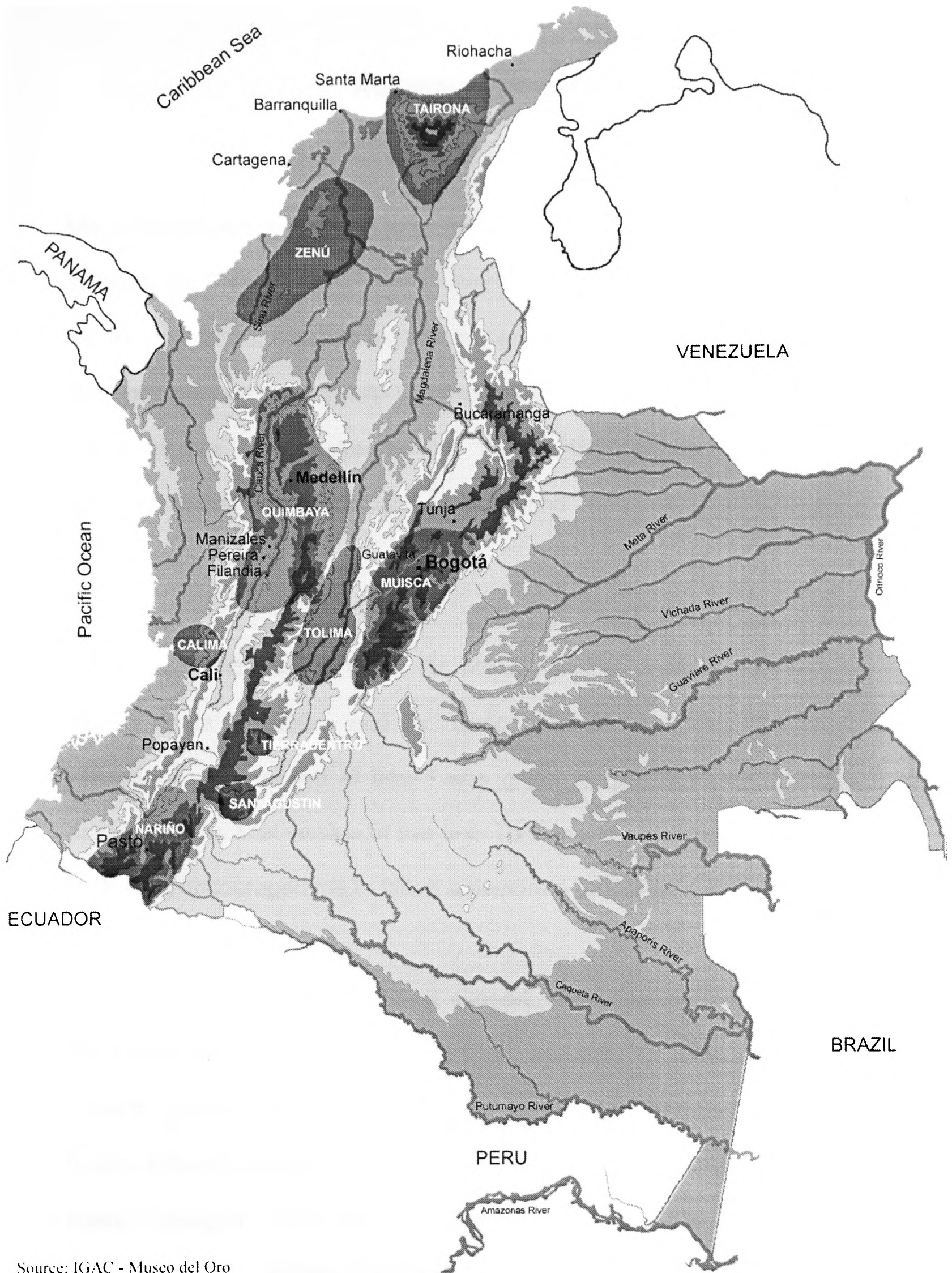
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MAP 1. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREAS OF COLOMBIA



Source: IGAC - Museo del Oro

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To my family, for their encouragement and love.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BA.....	Boletín de Arqueología
BHA.....	Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades
GC.....	Gaceta de Colombia
RIEN.....	Revista del Instituto Etnológico Nacional

ARCHIVES

AGHA	Archivo Gregorio Hernández de Alba
AMHP	Archives of the Musée de l'Homme, Paris
AMNC.....	Archives of the Museo Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá
AMO	Archives of the Museo del Oro, Bogotá
AMVB	Archives of the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin
BLAA	Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango, Bogotá
MVB.....	Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin
MHP	Musée de l'Homme, Paris

MAPS

Archaeological Areas of Colombia

Archaeological Map of Colombia, 1938

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INTRODUCTION

This study examines the construction of the pre-Hispanic past of Colombia from the 1820's to the 1940's. The basic aims are to: first, to identify and describe the reception, dissemination and appropriation of knowledge about ancient Colombian societies; second, to study the factors that have shaped the interpretation of Colombia's pre-Hispanic past.¹

During the period under study, descriptions and interpretations of the ancient past in Colombia were based in two main sources, the chroniclers' accounts and material culture, the latter being the most reliable source.² Since Colombia's pre-Hispanic societies lacked written records, objects were the "documents" for interpreting the past. The task of antiquarians, savants and archaeologists was to infer the culture of extinct societies from the material evidence. The interpretation was dependent on the data available, in other words, objects which had been excavated or looted. Thus, this thesis examines

¹ During the 19th century, the present-day *República de Colombia* was known by various different names. After independence in 1819, the *República de Colombia*, commonly called *Gran Colombia* was a grouping of the former colonial territories of the *Virreinato de la Nueva Granada*, the *Capitanía General de Venezuela*, and the *Audiencia de Quito*. During the rest of the century, present Colombia (which included Panama) had the following designations: from 1830 to 1858, *República de la Nueva Granada*; from 1858 to 1863, *Confederación Granadina*; between 1863 and 1886, *Estados Unidos de Colombia*; since 1886 *República de Colombia*. The terms 'Colombia' and 'Colombians' will be used to avoid confusion.

² The chroniclers' accounts described the societies which the Spaniards encountered in the sixteenth century; the millenary history of what happened in the territory of Colombia before the arrival of the Spaniards has had to be inferred from material culture.

the building of Colombia archaeological collections in Colombia and in three major European museums.

All human groups experience curiosity about the past. The past has always excited curiosity, and theories have always abounded as to its meaning.³ For much of human history, however, this interest has been satisfied by myths and legends concerning the creation of humanity and culture. Among indigenous groups, oral traditions and myths are held to preserve the history of human activities over many generations. In Western Judaeo-Christian thought, the Biblical tradition encoded in Genesis was for centuries the explanation of the origins of the world and of man in particular. In the nineteenth century, with the advances of Geology and the advent of Darwin's theory of evolution, archaeologists began to rediscover and reinterpret ancient human history.⁴

Archaeology has been defined in many and various ways.⁵ But the various aims, procedures and natures of archaeological research have all constituted a form of intellectual inquiry into the past. The history of archaeology has been divided into broad stages according to the means of recording, storing and

³ M. Shanks and C. Tilley, *Re-Constructing Archaeology*, (Cambridge, 1987), p. 7.

⁴ The French archaeologist Boucher de Perthes' work in the Somme Valley, France in the 1840's proved the "continuity of man's technical and the technological development by the same laws which have been in force since the first dawn of creation." B. de Perthes, quoted in W.R Chapman, "Pitt Rivers and the Typological Tradition", in G. Stocking, (ed.) *Objects and Others, Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, (Madison, 1985), p. 20.

⁵ The British archaeologist Grahame Clark defines it as "the systematic study of antiquities, as a means of reconstructing the past." The Mexican archaeologist Ignacio Bernal defines it as "the scientific search which, by discovering and studying the material remains of vanished peoples, seeks to learn about human behaviour through what is left of the fruits of their thinking minds and their shaping hands", I. Bernal, *A History of Mexican Archaeology*, (London, 1980), p. 9. North American New Archaeology defines it as a "social science that tries to explain what has happened to specific groups of human beings in the past and to generalize about the processes of cultural changes". B. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological thought*, (Cambridge, 1989), p. 19.

communicating interpretations about the past. Antiquarianism, which is conventionally dated from the fourteenth century, is considered the first approach to interpreting the material past and the antiquarian tradition persisted over many centuries.⁶ Renaissance scholars sought to understand and try to emulate as best they could the glorious achievements of antiquity.⁷ The main activity of antiquarism was the description and recording of monuments and objects as well as the classification of objects into typologies. Excavations were carried out without any concern for or awareness of chronology, apart from what was known from written records.⁸ The Mexican archaeologist Ignacio Bernal thus defines the aims and nature of the work of antiquaries:

Archaeology begins with the antiquary, the pre-archaeologist, who seeks out an object either for its beauty or because it is a strange and interesting survival from the past. He has on occasion served political, religious or simply commercial interests. We might say that the antiquary is an archaeologist before the advent of the stratigraphic method, before the study of the objects themselves came to be replaced by the study of a total culture, and of them within it as one of its manifestations. (...) The notion of looking at objects and monuments as though they were written records, and attempting to use them to solve historical problems is a very old one.⁹

The systematic study of Prehistory began in Europe in the early nineteenth century and came to involve two movements.¹⁰ The first originated in Denmark in 1816 and employed new techniques for dating archaeological finds using

⁶ Antiquarian is used in its dictionary meaning: "Pertaining to the study or collection of antiques or antiquities", *Oxford Concise Dictionary*, (Oxford, 1994).

⁷ I. Hodder, *Reading the past*, (Cambridge, 1986), p. 36.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 47 – 48. M. Shanks and C. Tilley, *Re-Constructing Archaeology*, p. 11.

⁹ I. Bernal, *A History of Mexican Archaeology*, p. 7.

¹⁰ The term Prehistory was defined by Tournal in 1833. G. Daniel, *The Origins and Growth of Archaeology*, (Harmondsworth, 1967), pp. 24 – 25.

seriation and stratigraphy. The second, which developed in France and Britain, pioneered the study of the Palaeolithic period, and was concerned primarily with question of human origins. It came into being in the wake of the introduction of an evolutionary perspective in geology by Charles Lyell in 1833 in his *Principles of Geology* and in the natural sciences with the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in 1859.¹¹ Accordingly, Palaeolithic archaeology tended to model itself on the natural sciences, and introduced the idea that human beings had a millenary history in the world, replacing the medieval paradigm of a history lasting only a few thousand years derived from the traditional biblical account. The study of the prehistory can be distinguished from antiquarianism by its concern with the context of material objects; the association of human and cultural remains located in a particular stratum. As Ian Hodder observes: "As soon as the context of an object is known, it is not totally mute. Clues to its meaning are given by its context, and the interpretation of meaning is constrained by the interpretation of context."¹² Lastly, academic archaeology introduced the concept of culture, and provided the link between artefacts and people: Cultures were assumed to represent peoples and societies and were the basic object of study for the first academic archaeologists. Once classified, artefacts could be described in terms of diffusion of ideas, migration and adaptation.¹³ Academic archaeology introduced changes in the nature, aims and research methodology which contributed to the differentiation of the work of archaeologist from that of their predecessors.

¹¹ B. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological thought*, p. 73.

¹² I. Hodder, *Reading the past*, p. 5.

¹³ M. Shanks and C. Tilley, *Re-Constructing Archaeology*, p. 11.

Archaeological interpretation has tried to explain what happened to specific groups of human beings in the past. Unlike historians, archaeologists do not generally have direct access to written texts. Instead, archaeologists have inferred human thought and behaviour from material remains.

For the purpose of this thesis, I will use Bruno Latour's approach to the process of gathering collections and its relation to the emergence of science. Characterizing sciences' long process of maturation, Latour suggests that the collecting of objects was one of the major elements in the emergence of science. In that sense, a history of the development of science would be "the history of the mobilisation of all which could be moved and shipped back home for a universal census."¹⁴ Archaeological objects and works of art could be extracted from their original context and transported to foster scientific research or aesthetic valuation. Latour's view is essential to an understanding of the contribution of institutional spaces, the museums, where collections were stored and classified, to the institutionalization of science. A "general mobilisation of the world" towards museums justified the professional activity of archaeologists, antiquarians and aesthetes in charge of the accumulation, classification, conservation, research and exhibition of objects from the past.

Archaeological objects, however, were not perceived only from a scientific point of view. Objects which were clearly born of aesthetic intentions, decorative, formal, stylized and unmistakably the products of careful labour and technical

¹⁴ B. Latour, *Science in Action, How to follow scientists and engineers through society*, (Bristol, 1987), p. 224.

skill were valued for their beauty as “works of art”. Within an aesthetic valuation of pre-Hispanic objects in Colombia and in Europe , the guiding principle behind most collections was that of “high quality”. Their accumulation was not systematic, it involved choosing “good” pieces which were considered to embody the finest design and craftsmanship of their kind. Often displayed as individual pieces, pre-Hispanic objects increasingly became a source of wonder and enigma.

Finally, another attitude towards archaeological objects has also prevailed: that which perceives them as representatives of invisible and unknown pasts. K. Pomian states that, since the fifteenth century, European attitudes towards the past, towards unexplored regions of the world, unknown societies, strange fauna and flora, the *invisible* in Pomian’s definition, were clearly related to two central activities: the collecting of antiquities and voyages to the New World.¹⁵ In the opposition between the visible and the invisible, natural curiosities and objects “which were painted, sculpted, carved, shaped and decorated” represented the *invisible*:

Textiles, gold objects, feathers, idols, fetishes, specimens of flora and fauna, sea shells, stones (...) Regardless of their original status, these objects were collected not because of their usefulness but because of their meaning, as representatives of the invisible.¹⁶

During the nineteenth century, the past began to be *visible* in Colombia. Alexander Von Humboldt reintroduced ancient America to Europe after his

¹⁵ K. Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities, Paris and Venice 1500 – 1800*, (Cornwall, 1990), p. 30.

¹⁶ K. Pomian, “Coleção” in *Enciclopedia Einaudi*, vol. 1, (Porto, 1984), p. 77.

scientific journey through Spanish America, 1799 – 1804.¹⁷ He publicized the pre-Hispanic monuments of the Muisca, the former inhabitants of the high plateau of Cundinamarca and Boyacá.¹⁸ Even though Humboldt's travels and subsequent fame had a profound impact upon the cultural life of New Granada, a real interest in and curiosity about pre-Hispanic societies becomes apparent only in the 1850's in three developments. First, pre-Hispanic objects began to be considered antiquities that should be preserved, a notion encouraged by leading Colombian scientists. Second, a romantic literary trend enhanced mythological of the roots of the Colombian nation in its indigenous past. Finally, the *colonización antioqueña* of the region of Antioquia and Caldas, was accompanied by a keen and unrestricted search for gold in pre-Hispanic funerary sites. The objects were dug up and sold by *guaqueros* and some private Colombian collections were established. Although most collections were private, Colombian antiquarians and scholars exerted themselves to gain access to these "documents" from the past.

The study of ancient American material culture and the building of pre-Hispanic collections in Europe was one facet of *Américanisme* defined as the "scientific study of America and its inhabitants from the most ancient times to the present."¹⁹ French *Américanisme* and its German equivalent *Altamericanistik*

¹⁷ A. Humboldt, *Researches concerning the institutions and monuments of the ancient inhabitants of America with descriptions and views of some of the most striking scenes in the Cordilleras*, 2 vols. (London, 1814).

¹⁸ During the period under study, the pre-Hispanic inhabitants of Cundinamarca and Boyacá were called by some authors Muisca and by others Chibcha. Further linguistic research established that Chibcha was the language and Muisca was the name given to the inhabitants of the area. In this work, I will use the name used by the authors in their works.

¹⁹ "Status de la Société des Américanistes de Paris" *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, vol. VI, Paris, (1909), p. 5. Also see *Compte-Rendu du Congrès International des Américanistes*, First

adopted an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to the study of America though research undertaken by historians, ethnologists, archaeologists and linguists. In Great Britain, archaeological collections were intended to be a source of record and research into mankind and were important in the education of the nation.²⁰

Initially, amateurs and antiquarians and some decades later, archaeologists studied and classified their collections and sought to define Colombian pre-Hispanic cultures on the basis of the types of objects that they had acquainted to. Colombian archaeological objects passed through several stages in the course of this history. At its outset, during the Colonial period, Colombian pre-Hispanic objects were first seen as “Idols of the devil”, and in Europe, they were initially considered as curiosities and as works of art. During the nineteenth century, archaeological objects began to be valued and interpreted by Colombian and foreign scholars and antiquarians as antiquities and also as art objects. It was not until the twentieth century, with research done initially by foreign professional archaeologists and then by Colombian archaeologists that archaeological objects found in excavations were used in defining archaeological areas. This was to provide the groundwork for later research whose aim was chronological and regional classification.

Session, vol. 1, (Nancy, 1875), p. 7. By 1892, the Americanists had already held Congresses in Nancy, 1875; Luxemburg, 1877; Brussels, 1879; Madrid, 1881; Copenhagen, 1883; Turin, 1886; Berlin, 1888; and Paris, 1890.

²⁰ H. Balfour, “The Relationship of Museums and the Study of Anthropology” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. XXXIV, London (1904), p. 14.

A fundamental work in the field of Colombian archaeological history which placed emphasis on describing ancient monuments and objects is Luis Duque Gómez's *Monumentos Históricos y Arqueológicos*, a two-volume work devoted to pre-Hispanic and colonial monuments.²¹ In the article "Etnohistoria y Arqueología" published in the first volume of the *Historia Extensa de Colombia*, he included historical data about archaeological studies.²² The work by Priscilla Burcher de Uribe *Raíces de la Arqueología en Colombia* describes the works of the chroniclers and those of a selection of Colombian antiquarians and scientists who described and interpreted evidence of the pre-Hispanic societies.²³ In the related field of the history of Colombian anthropology, Jaime Arocha and Nina de Friedmann have published *Un Siglo de Investigación Social, la Antropología en Colombia*, a series of articles devoted to anthropological research : studies of negro communities, perception of the Indians in Colombian social thought and the relationship between the state and anthropology.²⁴ Arocha has also written "Antihéroes en la antropología en Colombia: su rescate", an article which provides a framework for the history of the science in Colombia in the twentieth century, as does the works on foreign archaeologists and ethnologists in Colombia of Carlos Uribe.²⁵ Focussing on the period when anthropology and archaeology became institutionalised and

²¹ L. Duque Gómez, *Colombia, Monumentos Históricos y Arqueológicos*, 2 vols. (Mexico, 1955).

²² L. Duque Gómez, "Etnohistoria y Arqueología" in *Historia Extensa de Colombia*, vol. 1, (Bogotá, 1965), pp. 15 - 454.

²³ P. Burcher de Uribe, *Raíces de la Arqueología en Colombia*, (Medellín, 1985).

²⁴ J. Arocha and N. Friedmann, *Un Siglo de Investigación Social, la Antropología en Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1984).

²⁵ J. Arocha, "Antihéroes en la antropología en Colombia: su Rescate", in *Nueva Historia de Colombia*, vol. IV, Bogotá (1989) pp. 247 - 256; C. Uribe, "Pioneros de la investigación arqueológica en Colombia: Konrad Theodor Preuss" in *Boletín Museo del Oro* no. 15, Bogotá (1986) pp. 3 -11; "Pioneros de la antropología en Colombia: el padre Rafael Celedón" in *Boletín Museo del Oro* no. 17, Bogotá (1986) pp.

professionalised between 1930 and 1960, Milciades Chavez has written *Trayectoria de la Antropología Colombiana, de la Revolución en Marcha al Frente Nacional*.²⁶ Outstanding essays on the history of anthropology from the colonial era to the twentieth century are those by Roberto Pineda Camacho, which approach cultural constructions and also currents of thought in the development of anthropology in Colombia.²⁷ In the field of Colombian museums, the *Museo del Oro, 50 Años* exhibition catalogue provides a general account of the development of Colombian archaeology and of the history of the *Museo del Oro* from 1939 to 1989.²⁸ A systematic work is the documentary compilation by Marta Segura on the *Museo Nacional*, which gives an exhaustive chronological account of the development of the museum, its locations and its directors.²⁹

This study intends to offer an overall view of the nature of the interest shown in the pre-Hispanic era and in the building of Colombian archaeological collections in the period between the creation of the first Colombian museum, the National Museum founded in 1823 as a scientific centre and the establishment of a Colombian scientific tradition in archaeology and ethnology with the creation of the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional* in 1941. Though ethnology, ethnohistory and physical anthropology are closely related to archaeology, and although it is

3 - 31; “Un antropólogo sueco en Colombia: Gustav Bolinder, in *Boletín Museo del Oro* no. 18, Bogotá (1987) pp. 3 – 9.

²⁶ M. Chavez, *Trayectoria de la Antropología Colombiana, de la Revolución en Marcha al Frente Nacional*, (Bogotá, 1986).

²⁷ R. Pineda Camacho, “Reliquias y Antigüedades de los Indios, Precursores del Americanismo en Colombia”, in *Journal de la Société des Americanistes de Paris*, no. 83, Paris (1997), pp. 9 - 36; “Demonología y Antropología en el Nuevo Reino de Granada, Siglos XVI-XVIII” in *II Seminario de Antropología de la Religión* (Bogotá, 1999), pp. 10 - 60.

²⁸ Banco de la República, *Museo del Oro, 50 Años*, (Bogotá, 1989).

²⁹ M. Segura, *Itinerario del Museo Nacional de Colombia, 1823 - 1994*, 2 vols., (Bogotá, 1995).

particularly difficult to draw distinctions between them, I will not discuss ethnohistoric and ethnological works, nor will I be examining the literature on the conquest of Colombia. Chapter 1 deals with colonial attitudes towards and interpretations of pre-Hispanic Colombian objects, considered as “Idols of the Devil”, and the meaning of ancient American objects in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Chapter 2 examines nineteenth century Colombian scientists, amateurs and antiquarians interested in the pre-Hispanic period, and the descriptions by foreign travellers and scientists. It also describes the search for gold and Quimbaya objects in Antioquia, the work and thought of *antioqueño* scientists and antiquarians, and the establishment of private collections built during the second half of the nineteenth century. Chapter 3 shows how Colombia was presented and represented in the National Museum in Bogotá and in international exhibitions during the second half of the nineteenth century, and examines how pre-Hispanic artefacts came to form part of a representation of Colombia both nationally and internationally. Chapter 4 examines the building of Colombian archaeological collections during the nineteenth century at the *Museum für Völkerkunde*, Berlin, the British Museum, London and the *Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadero*, Paris. The aims, methods and sources of acquisition of Colombian collections by these museums are detailed and analysed. Chapter 5 deals with the shift in Colombia from antiquarian and amateur approaches to a period in which the pre-Hispanic past emerged into public life with official measures taken towards the protection of antiquities and the building of archaeological collections in the National Museum in Bogotá during the first decades of the twentieth century. It treats also the

archaeological research by the German archaeologist Konrad Theodor Preuss in San Agustín, and the work of the North American John Alden Mason in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Chapter 6 examines the establishment of a scientific tradition in archaeology with the creation of the *Servicio Arqueológico Nacional*. It describes the establishment of the *Escuela Normal Superior* as a professional training institute which prepared future researchers in archaeology and ethnology, and the founding of the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional*. Two archaeological museums were also created at this time : the *Museo Arqueológico y Etnográfico*, linked to the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional*, and the *Banco de la República* collection which eventually became the *Museo del Oro*.

CHAPTER 1

THE COLONIAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Centuries of Amnesia: The Gilded Image and the “Idols of Devil”

The astonishment, curiosity and fascination that the Spaniards' armour, lances and silver Christ figures produced in the sixteenth century inhabitants of America was matched only to the European's first sight of men and women who glistened in the tropical sun, decked from head to foot in gold, feathers and multi-coloured beads. This was a confrontation between two different concepts of the world, two systems of thought, two ways of life. In the area known today as Colombia, gold, pottery and stone objects, rather than monumental constructions as in Mexico and Peru, were the visible ways of representing a complex philosophy of life and death. The societies that the Europeans encountered had created a symbolic, iconographical and visual universe of their own, represented mainly in the form of gold objects. These had two central aims: firstly, to adorn the bodies of the chieftains and shamans in life and to form part of their funeral attire, and secondly, as votive offerings to the gods. They were symbolic objects that typified religious and cultural ideas and principles for the whole society. The confrontation between the European and American symbolic worlds during the Spanish Conquest and part of the colonial

era was clearly stated in the interpretations each side placed on these sacred objects.

Right from when they first arrived in America, the Spaniards realised how necessary it would be to write down, record and narrate the different events of the Conquest, the features of American nature, and the lives of the *naturales*.¹ The prevailing interest of the chroniclers was to prove the rights of the Spanish Crown to the lands that had been conquered, and as they were unable to conceive worlds different from their own, they compared the Spanish view of things with the indigenous structures.² They went about recording what caught their attention, what struck them as being particularly novel, and anything that could be of material value to the Crown.

The conquistadors, chroniclers and missionaries put together their experiences, things they had witnessed and things they had heard, and the result was a story that was a combination of oral and personal experiences. They enquired about

¹ With this in mind, the Crown created the post of official chronicler in 1526, and in 1571 this official became known as the Major Chronicler attached to the Council of the Indies, whose duty was to gather and record American information. The most important chroniclers for the territory of New Granada include Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *Historia General y Natural de las Indias*, (1535), Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, who is credited with having written *Epitome de la Conquista del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, (1538), Pedro Cieza de León, *Crónica del Perú*, (1553), Friar Pedro Aguado, *Recopilación Historial de Santa Marta y del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, (1582), Juan de Castellanos, *Elegias de Varones Ilustres*, (1589), Friar Pedro Simón, *Noticias Historiales de las Conquistas de Tierra Firme de las Indias Occidentales*, (1627), Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita, *Historia General del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, (1668), Friar Alonso de Zamora, *Historia de la Provincia de San Antonio del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, (1701), Juan Rodríguez Freyle, *El Carnero*, (1636), and Antonio Julián, *La Perla de América, la Provincia de Santa Marta*, (1787). Important collections of documents are *Colección de Documentos Inéditos sobre la Geografía y la Historia de Colombia*, by Antonio B. Cuervo (editor), 4 vols, (Bogotá, 1891 - 1894) and *Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de Colombia* by Juan Friede (editor), 10 vols, (Bogotá, 1955 - 1960).

² M. Rostworoski de Diez Canseco, *Señoríos Indígenas de Lima y Canta*, (Lima, 1978), p. 16, quoted in H. Tovar Pinzón, *Relaciones y Visitas a los Andes, S. XVI*, 4 vols., (Bogotá, n.d.), vol. II, p. 27.

the cultural, political and linguistic diversity of American societies, and vividly described whatever was strange to them, as Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo said in 1514:

Reynos i provincias i de tan extrañas gentes i diversidades, costumbres y ceremonias i idolatrias... tanta diversidad de lenguas i de habitos, de costumbres en los hombres y tanta multitud de arboles y de animales asi domesticos como salvajes i tan fieros al igual que montañas, vegas, campiñas, minas y lagos de todo genero.³

The attitudes adopted first by the Spaniards and subsequently by the creoles with respect to the great diversity of objects produced by the indigenous societies which they found in their temples and houses, at funeral sites and offering places, were essentially marked by two elements that were intertwined, namely greed for gold, and religious ideas about Evil. As in other parts of America, these objects were re-interpreted as being “Idols of the Devil”, and they were accordingly systematically destroyed, exorcised, melted down and confiscated from their owners.⁴ During the Conquest, the Caribbean region was the first area where the plundering of tombs and offering sites took place. In 1533, Pedro de Heredia and his men looked on the Sinú temples, which were adorned with gold objects, as “Houses of the Devil” where conversations were held with the devil himself:

Fuimos a dar a un pueblo que se dezia el Cenú a donde se tomó un yndio que tenia el cargo del oro del cacique (...) hallamos mas de veinte mil pesos de oro fino que hallamos en un buhio (...) que llamaban los

³ G. Fernández de Oviedo, quoted in H. Tovar Pinzón, ‘La Magia de la Diversidad en el Nuevo Mundo’, in G. Sánchez and M. E. Wills, *Museo, Memoria y Nación*, (Bogotá, 2000), p. 191.

⁴ R. Pineda Camacho, “Demonología y Antropología en el Nuevo Reino de Granada, Siglos XVI - XVIII”, in *II Seminario Antropología de la Religión*, (Bogotá, 1999), p. 11.

yndios el buhio del diablo, a donde estaba una hamaca muy labrada, (...) y encima de la hamaca donde dezian que se venia a echar el diablo, y verdaderamente hablan los yndios con el diablo y por hay en los pueblos buhios para ello e yndios que se llaman piaches para hablar con ellos.⁵

The riches of the funeral objects made in gold that had been deposited in the burial mounds which were so clearly visible in the landscape aroused even more greed. According to Heredia the natives told them to dig in a mound of earth which was a burial ground of theirs, where they took out more than ten thousand pesos worth of fine gold.⁶

The Spaniards were greatly surprised at the bodily ornaments of the Taironas who lived in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, and who friar Pedro de Aguado described as being heavily adorned :

Traen sus personas muy adornadas con piezas y joyas de oro : los varones, orejeras de oro colgadas de las orejas, que cada una pesa quince y veinte pesos (...) y caricuries en las narices (...) y grandes chagualas que son como patenas y mediaslunas en los pechos y al cuello se ponen muchos géneros de cuentas hechas de huesos y de caracoles y de piedras verdes. Las mujeres traen además muy grandes brazaletes y ajorcas de oro y en las piernas, grandes vueltas de chaquira y cuentas de oro o de hueso.⁷

In 1530, the Governor of Santa Marta, don García de Lerma, who received forty pounds of fine gold from the Taironas in the Buritaca Valley, decreed that his personal permission was required before any Tairona tombs could be opened.

⁵ “Relación de Pedro de Heredia, 1533” in H. Tovar Pinzón, *Relaciones y Visitas a los Andes, S. XVI*, vol. II, p. 371.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

⁷ P. Aguado, *Recopilación Historial*, (1582) (Bogotá, 1956), vol. 1, p. 202.

This was in order to safeguard the rights of the king, and a *Cédula Real* in 1572 ordered that half the gold that was found in the Sinú region should be handed over to the Crown.⁸

It was not only in the funeral attire or the temples that the Spaniards perceived the influence of the devil to be present, as they felt it was also evident in the face painting and in Indian houses and villages. Among the Malibus who lived in the Tamalameque region in the mid-Magdalena Valley, “the figure of the devil appears on their faces and on their bodies.”⁹

Discussion arose in the very earliest days of the Conquest about whether it was legitimate to expropriate and plunder, and the granting of royal licences led to controversy amongst the Spaniards in New Granada:

Haber dado las licencias para sacar piezas ha sido gran prejuicio para los naturales y han sido alborotados porque durante este tiempo han andado muchos indios huidos y ausentados de los pueblos y de sus casas por miedo no les tomasen e molestasen con tormentos como se ha hecho para les sacar el oro (...) Los indios están de paz y sirven y dan sus demoras y tributos y cávales sus santuarios y tómales sus haciendas y no es justo ni nuestra majestad se sirve y es cargo de conciencia cuanto más que es ávido o se ha usado muchas veces estase con tales licencias.¹⁰

⁸ G. Reichel Dolmatoff, *Arqueología de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1997), pp. 7 - 8.

⁹ “Descripción de la Villa de Tenerife, 19 May 1550”, in H. Tovar Pinzón, *Relaciones y Visitas a los Andes*, S. XVI, vol. II, p. 333.

¹⁰ “Indios de Bosa, Investigación sobre los Malos Tratos que les daban con motivo de la extracción de oro en el corregimiento de Ontibon de la Real Corona contra el Licenciado Miguel Dias (c.a. 1550)”, in H. Tovar Pinzón, *Relaciones y Visitas a los Andes*, S. XVI, vol. III, pp. 153 - 154.

A royal decree issued before 1551 banned the searching for and digging up of graves and burial grounds, but because the *Real Audiencia* in Santa Fé was short of funds to pay its officers their salaries, it authorised certain individuals to dig up these graves and burial grounds, although the Indians were not allowed to take part.¹¹

From the legal point of view, appropriating jewels, gold and other goods which the Indians had hidden because they were afraid of the Spaniards or of having them stolen was looked on as theft. Once the *Real Audiencia* had been set up in Santa Fé in 1550, the gold objects, feathers, snails and other items which were used as offerings were considered to be true objects of idolatry in which the devil himself played a part. They were therefore felt to represent very real obstacles to the evangelising process, as can be seen from the *Cédula Real* of 1563, under which Francisco de Santiago was given the task of eradicating idol worship in the Indian villages of Fontibón and Ubaque, on the outskirts of Santa Fé de Bogotá, and punishing offenders by putting them in prison :

El cacique de Ubaque y Fontibón andaban aparejando y juntando indios de repartimientos comarcanos(...) para hacer fiestas gentílicas que ellos estaban acostumbrados a hacer antes de que estuviesen bajo nuestro amparo, en las cuales había grandes idolatrías (...) y en donde quiera halláredes cualesquier caciques, capitanes e indios haciendo algunas borracheras y santuarios, quitareís luego todos dichos ídolos, ritos y ceremonias(...) y a los que así hallareís (...) sean caciques, capitanes e indios como ladinos y chontales, los prendereís los cuerpos y presos y a buen recaudo enviareís a la cárcel real desta Corte.¹²

¹¹ H. Triana y Artoveza, *Las Lenguas Indígenas en la Historia Social de la Nueva Granada*, (Bogotá, 1987), p. 218.

¹² F. De Santiago, "Autos en razón de prohibir a los Caciques de Fontibón, Ubaque y otros no hagan sus fiestas, borracheras y sacrificios" in E. Londoño, *Revista de Antropología y Arqueología*, vol. VII, nos. 1 - 2, Bogotá, (1991), pp. 145 - 146.

A decade later, a *Cédula Real* of 3 June 1577 repeated that warnings and flattery could be used by the Court in Santa Fé against chieftains and Indians in order to “rid them of pagan practices and idolatry.” With this in mind, it ordered the President and judges to urge the Indians to hand over their objects of worship. Once received, the officials had to make a choice: materials that were worthless to the Spaniards were burned as a warning to the idol worshippers, while it was agreed that gold objects, “which you know have to go and be converted for public profit”, should be collected, “so that they should have neither offerings nor idols nor make sacrifices in their temples.”¹³

This peremptory order stipulated that chieftains would have to hand over all their “idolatry”, or be whipped and punished. A visit was accordingly arranged to the Boyacá region. The officers, together with priests from the area who were responsible for teaching the doctrine, visited Tunja and the surrounding area, and also the Sogamoso valley. The objects they collected were classified in two categories: those that were only worth throwing into the flames and destroying on site, and those that would have to be sent to the capital to be melted down, like the gold objects, or assessed, like the emeralds. Objects in the first group, consisting of sea snails, vessels, pitchers, blankets, idols made of cotton and wood, stuffed macaws, human-shaped figures made of wood or cotton, head-dresses of different kinds of feathers and the clothing they wore when “they were singing to the devil in their temples”, were burned in public.¹⁴ The second

¹³ V. Cortés, “Visita a los santuarios indígenas de Boyacá”, *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, vol. IX, Bogotá, (1960), p. 203, and V. Cortes, “Objetos Votivos en la Provincia de Tunja”, *Actas del XXXIII Congreso Internacional de Americanistas*, 2 vols. (San José, 1959), vol. II, p. 399.

¹⁴ V. Cortés, “Visita a los Santuarios indígenas de Boyacá”, pp. 212, 244 - 245.

group consisted of emeralds and gold objects or *Tunjos*, which are triangular, schematic figures made of gold, tumbaga and copper, representing men, women, sexless anthropomorphic figures, animals and objects for personal use. These were placed in lakes, rivers, caves, homes and temples, as votive offerings. As a result of this visit to Boyacá, the sum of 1,724 and a half pesos in gold and a large quantity of small emeralds were handed over in Santa Fé de Bogotá.¹⁵

This case illustrates the background of a long-term cultural practice which has prevailed in Colombia since Colonial times up to now regarding pre-Hispanic goldwork objects found in funeral sites. First, the religious approach of extirpation of idolatries which justified these practices during colonial times, was transformed and legitimised during the early Republican period, as we will see later on by the profit value of possession of gold. No distinction was made both during Colonial times and during the nineteenth century between gold obtained from mines, from rivers or from pre-Hispanic burial sites. The destiny of pre-Hispanic goldwork objects was to be melted down and to be sold by gram of gold. Second, the division made in this *Visita* between the objects which had a profit value, the *tunjos* and the emeralds which were kept and the second group, the sea snails, pottery vessels, cotton and wooden objects as well as feathers which were destroyed has also been a common practice among *guaqueros* since the nineteenth century. Generally, pottery objects, textiles and objects made of wood and stone found with goldwork objects in funerary sites

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

have been considered by *guaqueros* as a secondary category of objects. Only quite special pottery objects have not been destroyed and have survived until the present day.

However, one of the sites that the Spaniards found particularly attractive, not only as a place where “idol worshipping” went on but also as a source of gold booty, was Lake Guatavita. The chieftains made offering to this lake, especially at times when a new chieftain was acclaimed :

En aquella laguna se hiciese una gran balsa de juncos aderezábala con todo lo mas vistoso que podían... desnudaban al heredero en carnes vivas, lo untaban con una lija pegagosa y espolvoriaban con oro en polvo y molido, de tal manera que iba cubierto todo de este metal. Hacia el indio dorado su ofrecimiento echando todo el oro que llevaba en medio de la laguna y los demás caciques que lo acompañaban hacían lo propio, lo cual acabado, batían la bandera (...) y partiendo la balsa a tierra comenzaba la grita, gaitas y fotutos con muy largos corros de baile y danzas a su modo. Hacia el indio con la cual la ceremonia recibían al nuevo electo y quedaba reconocido por señor y príncipe. De esta ceremonia se tomó aquel nombre tan celebrado de el Dorado que tantas vidas y haciendas ha costado.¹⁶

When it became known that the Spaniards had reached the high plains, the natives, as was their custom, offered large quantities of gold objects to this and other lakes, so that they could be protected from the calamity of the Spanish invasion.¹⁷ These stories roused the interest of the Spaniards and also their greed for the riches in the lake; they believed they had found “El Dorado”. An extremely large quantity of gold and offerings of other materials appears to

¹⁶ J. Rodríguez Freyle, *El Carnero*, (1636) (Bogotá, 1994), pp. 80 – 81.

¹⁷ Offerings in the lakes followed a special ritual as the ceremony “Running the Earth”. This was a journey that started out from different points and passed four sacred lakes, Guasca, Siecha, Teusacá, Ubaque and ended up at Guatavita. *Ibid.*, pp. 102 -103.

have been obtained from the lake at Guatavita. According to the records of the first explorer, Lázaro Fonte, who was one of Jiménez de Quesada's captains, he did retrieve some booty, but Hernán Pérez de Quesada managed to lower the water level by three metres and he removed between 3,000 and 4,000 gold *castellanos*, 13.8 to 18.4 kilogrammes of gold.¹⁸ The first attempt to remove precious objects from Guatavita Lake with Crown approval was undertaken by Antonio de Sepúlveda, who obtained a Royal Contract in 1562 which stipulated that he would be solely responsible for all costs and risks inherent in the operation :

Lo que se concierta con vos, Antonio de Sepúlveda sobre lo que se sacase, así en oro como en plata, perlas, piedras y otras cosas preciosas o de cualquiera estimación que sean de la laguna que llaman de Guatavita (...) en el Nuevo Reyno de Granada o del montecillo o pueblo que dicen que es guaca o santuario (...) Habéis de obligar que pondréis toda la costa que fuera menester, así de esclavos, y otras gentes, comidas y todas las herramientas y pertrechos para el beneficio de dicha laguna sin que nos obligemos a pagar cosa alguna.¹⁹

According to the chronicler Juan Rodríguez Freyle, this venture brought more problems than rewards, as only twelve thousand pesos worth of gold was found.²⁰ During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as we shall see later on, various national and international attempts were made to extract gold from the lakes at Guatavita and Siecha.

¹⁸ R. Lleras, "Las Ofrendas Muisca en la Laguna de Guatavita", in *El Mar, Eterno Retorno*, (Bogotá, 1998), p. 23.

¹⁹ "Capitulación que se tomó con Antonio de Sepúlveda sobre la Laguna de Guatavita y el Montecillo della, Año de 1562", in A. B. Cuervo, *Colección de Documentos Inéditos sobre la Geografía y la Historia de Colombia*, 4 vols., (Bogotá, 1894), vol. 4, pp. 135 - 136.

²⁰ J. Rodríguez Freyle, *El Carnero*, p. 105.

The repeated interest shown by the Spanish Crown in ensuring that the conversion of the Indians was an effective enterprise can be seen not only in the *Cédulas Reales* and warnings calling on everyone to “get rid of idol worshipping”, but also in the measures adopted for teaching Spanish to the Indians since it was felt that the use of vernacular languages had a strong bearing on the continued survival of ancient religious practices.

The great variety of languages had been one of the main obstacles facing the Spaniards, and ever since the time of the Conquest, the Crown had stated that the discoverers should always take interpreters or “language speakers” along with them :

Los que fueren a descubrir por mar y tierra procuren llevar algunos indios e intérpretes (...) y por ese medio hablen y platiquen con los de la tierra procurando entender sus costumbres, calidades y forma de vivir, informándose de la religión que tienen y que ídolos adoran, con que sacrificios y manera de culto.²¹

The use of interpreters lasted right through the Colonial era until the latter part of the eighteenth century, whenever commissioners from the *Real Audiencia* in Santa Fé had to visit Indian towns, villages and settlements, so that complaints by the natives could be “heard truthfully without them being tricked or deceived.”²² In view of these linguistic barriers, decrees were issued in 1550 so that the colonial authorities could take the necessary steps for teaching

²¹ “Recopilación de las Leyes de los Reinos de las Indias”, quoted in H. Triana y Artoveza, *Las Lenguas Indígenas en la Historia Social de la Nueva Granada*, pp. 207 - 208.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 243.

Spanish. Dominican and Franciscan friars arriving in New Granada after 1549 were required to teach the Indians the Spanish language.²³

However, the colonial authorities and priests quickly realised that teaching the gospel in Spanish was a slow process. In the case of children, they would have to wait a long time until they were older, and with adults and the elderly, it depended on how willing they were to learn, since there would not be a large enough body of priests as teachers. On the other hand, in certain languages the Indians themselves were able to solve communication problems. It was accordingly decided that Indians should be preached to in a “general language” that was widely understood in the particular territory. In the Kingdom of New Granada, Chibcha and Quechua were established as the general languages that were to be used for teaching the Christian doctrines and were officially recognised by the Spanish Crown. The Chibcha language had been looked on as the general one by the colonial authorities and settlers ever since the early years of Spanish domination, and the Crown started a course in the San Luis Seminary School in 1581 for teaching that language to the priests who were responsible for spreading the gospel. The first teacher was the Creole priest Gonzalo Bermúdez, and classes began on 6 May 1582 in Bogotá Cathedral.²⁴ However, problems soon arose with the religious orders, and the post was vacant between 1586 and 1588. Bermúdez nevertheless remained as the teacher of the general language for forty years. From then on, Jesuits were

²³ J. Friede, *Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de Colombia*, 10 vols. (Bogotá, 1960) vol. 10, p. 276.

²⁴ H. Triana y Artoveza, *Las Lenguas Indígenas en la Historia Social de la Nueva Granada*, pp. 263 - 264.

the teachers of Muisca until 1666. No information is available from that date onwards to establish when it was taught for the last time.²⁵

However, numerous manuscripts were written on teaching the language, and in 1617 the Dominican provincial friar Gabriel Jiménez issued ordinances that directed the doctrine teachers from the Dominican religious order to teach the doctrine in Chibcha. He entrusted the Bogotá friar Bernardo de Lugo, a teacher of the doctrine who had a good knowledge of the language, with the task of writing a grammar and confessional procedures.²⁶ At the same time as these measures for the teaching the Christian doctrine in indigenous languages were being adopted, work was going ahead in promoting the teaching of Spanish through the opening of schools and colleges for the children of chieftains and leading personages, so that they could be taught to read and write in Spanish. The Spaniards were of the opinion that if vernacular languages were retained, this enabled the Indians to continue with their idol worshipping and ancient superstitions:

Importa mucho que todos los indios sepan la lengua castellana, así con más facilidad y copia de ministros puedan ser adoctrinados y enseñados, para que se les quiten las ocasiones de idolatrías y otros vicios y cosas en que se distraen por medio de la lengua.²⁷

The process whereby the indigenous groups on the Cundinamarca and Boyacá high plains were converted to speaking Spanish was a relatively rapid one. By

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 263 - 271.

²⁶ See B. de Lugo, *Gramática en Lengua General del Nuevo Reyno llamada Mosca*, (Madrid, 1616).

²⁷ "Cédula Real 1590", quoted in H. Triana y Artoveza, *Las Lenguas Indígenas en la Historia Social del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, p. 224.

the beginning of the seventeenth century, Tunja was already completely bilingual, while in Santa Fé, “the language of the inhabitants was mixed.”²⁸

The Spaniards were concerned that idol worshipping amongst the indigenous communities should be rooted out because in their view these practices and the use of the native languages were more than a resistance strategy by the Indian population. A report addressed to the King of Spain written in 1687 by Juan de Valcarcel into the persistence of traditional rites and customs amongst the population of the Cundinamarca and Boyacá regions and more specifically in the province of Tunja, considered that the Indians were guilty of idol worshipping involving propitiatory rites, predictions and worshipping the devil in the form of man because they made offerings to ugly figures, “since the devil does not like beautiful things.”²⁹ This report, which is currently to be found in the Archive of the Indies in Seville, had the following to say :

Notoria es la expresa adoración de ídolos que forman de oro, cobre, palos y piedras vistiéndolas de algodón o de otra materia de ambos sexos, de figuras abominables o feas que por la razón que bien tienen lo hermoso es aborrecido por el demonio. A estas las esconden en cuevas y lugares inasequibles. Cuida de ellos un viejo jeque o mohán por cuya mano se hacen los ofrecimientos de metales, mantas y plumas de color.³⁰

The process of total *hispanización* was reinforced in the late eighteenth century by means of a *Real Cédula* dated 16 April 1770 addressed by Carlos III to all authorities in Spanish America, in which it was ordered that Spanish

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

²⁹ *Informe de Juan de Valcarcel, 1687*, in C. Langebaek, “La Idolatría en el Altiplano Cundiboyacense”, *Revista de Antropología y Arqueología*, no. 11, Bogotá, (1995), pp. 192 - 193.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

would be the only language which could be used and spoken. This *Real Cédula* also looked for the extinction of the use of all indigenous languages as a way of avoiding Indian uprisings.³¹

1.2. The First Preserved Collection from the *Nuevo Reino de Granada*

A case of “eradication of idolatry” in the late seventeenth century enabled the first known collection of anthropological objects from the *Nuevo Reino de Granada* to be preserved. A Peruvian Augustinian missionary, friar Francisco Romero, went on an evangelising mission to the “nation of the Arhuaco Indians” in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. He had been on his way to Europe, but when he was making for Riohacha from Tamalameque, in the “town of the kings”, Valledupar, the Inspector Juan Cuadrado de Rivera told him that “idol worshipping” was still going on amongst the Indians in the nearby mountains. Father Romero, roused by apostolic zeal, set about not only preaching to the Indians but also destroying their temples and idols.

Romero found that the Indians “worshipped idols in the form of the devil”, and built temples, which they called *Cansas Marias*, in which to put them.³² Romero described his searches for the temples :

En una rancheria llamado Mayapar estaba el primer templo de idolatría (...) y registrándolo yo, en dicho escrutinio hallamos tres ídolos de madera que se formaban de dos figuras de formas no conocidas (...) con

³¹ H. Triana y Artoveza, *Las lenguas Indígenas en el Ocaso del Imperio Español*, (Bogotá, 1993), p. 33.

³² C. Uribe, “Destrucción de Templos Indígenas en la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta”, *Boletín Museo del Oro*, no. 40, Bogotá, (1996), p. 26.

diversos bonetes llenos de plumas y otros instrumentos de idolatría como flautas y chirimias. Y habiendo sacado del templo todo lo referido, pasamos a destruirlo, el cual quedo por los suelos.³³

When he had completed his apostolic mission and destroyed ten temples, Friar Romero returned to Valledupar with “figures of unknown and absolutely horrendous animals, figures of men who were also terrible and horrific, and a number of head-dresses with countless feathers, (...) flutes, whistles and calabashes.”³⁴

The Inspector Juan Cuadrado de Rivera ordered that all these objects should be burned in public in the square in Valledupar on 3 August 1691. However, not everything was consumed by the flames. Romero tried to complete a collection of arrows and other types of weapons which he intended to take to Europe, possibly to show that he had gone deep into lands where “idol worshipping” still survived, and therefore obtain funds for continuing with his missionary work. What makes this visit unique is that three centuries later, the German archaeologist Henning Bischof found two masks and three small wooden statues that Friar Romero had taken to Europe, in the Missionary - Ethnological Museum in the Vatican.³⁵ The priest presumably took them over when he returned in 1692, and perhaps handed them over to the Holy Congregation for *Propaganda Fide* in Rome. The manuscript of a work written by Romero, *Llanto Sagrado de la América Meridional que busca alivio en los reales ojos de*

³³ “Destrucción de Cansamarías de los Indios Aruacos, Santa Marta, 1691”, in *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³⁵ H. Bischof, “Una colección etnográfica de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia, Siglo XVII”, in *Atti dei XL Congresso Internazionali degli Americanisti*, 2 vols. (Genova, 1974), vol. 2, p. 391.

nuestro Católico y siempre tan monarca Señor don Carlos Segundo Rey de las Españas, was passed to publishers in Milan, and published it in 1693, with a number of illustrations showing the temples or *Cansas Marías* and recording the so-called “masks of the devil”. These illustrations were published by Colombian naturalist and historian Joaquín Acosta in the nineteenth century.³⁶

The first news of these masks, which were initially thought to be Mexican on the basis of descriptions that existed in the *Museo Borgiano alla Propaganda Fide*, was published by G.A. Colini in 1885.³⁷ Later, the American archaeologist Marshall Saville, following Colini, also later described them as Mexican.³⁸ Bischof’s analysis was based on a comparison of three sources: an engraving that had been preserved in the Missionary - Ethnological Museum, the engraving published in the *Compendio Histórico de la Conquista y Colonización de la Nueva Granada* by Joaquín Acosta, and a group of masks from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta that were taken in 1919 by the archaeologist Konrad Theodor Preuss to the *Museum für Volkerkunde* in Berlin. From these, he came to the conclusion that they were the objects taken by Friar Romero from the south west slope of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.³⁹

³⁶ J. Acosta, *Compendio Histórico del Descubrimiento y Colonización de la Nueva Granada en el Siglo Décimo Sexto*, (Paris, 1848), Illustration no. 4.

³⁷ See G.A. Colini, “Collezioni etnografiche del Museo Borgiano” in *Bolletino della Società Geografica Italiana*, vol. XXIIM, Rome, (1885).

³⁸ See M. Saville, *The Wood Carver’s Art in Ancient Mexico*, (New York, 1925).

³⁹ H. Bischof, “Una colección etnográfica de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia, Siglo XVII”, p. 394.

1.3. “Franciscan Friars” at San Agustín

A century later, in 1758, one of the most important archaeological sites in Colombia, San Agustín, was described by the Franciscan friar Juan de Santa Gertrudis. He was having problems with his mission in the north west part of Amazonia, and he decided to travel to Santa Fé to talk to the Viceroy. Together with four Sibundoy indians, he faced various hardships as he crossed the Caquetá region, but eventually they reached the village of San Agustín, which boasted five Indian houses. There he met another priest, from the Third Order in Popayán, who told him that he was in the area in order to dig for *guacas* or Indian tombs around the ancient monuments in the surrounding area. He had already dug up nineteen tombs in the search for gold, but apart from pottery items, all he had found had been a small gold ear adornment. The next day, Friar Juan reached the site of the monuments. He describes the statues in the following terms :

Hay tres obispos de medio cuerpo hasta la rodilla de piedra, con la mitra (...) Sólo uno tiene los brazos y en la mano izquierda empuñaba báculo pastoral y con la mano derecha daba la bendición (...) a unos quince pasos están otros tres descabezados (...) de aquí fuimos a otro monumento. Son cinco frailes franciscanos observantes, de las rodillas para arriba labrados en la misma piedra que los obispos. Dos están con las manos plegadas y puestas dentro de las mangas(...) Los otros dos están en ademán de quien predica.⁴⁰

This first known description of the site clearly shows a mentality where the ideas of good and evil still pervaded, a view in which the external world was totally

⁴⁰ J. Santa Gertrudis, *Maravillas de la Naturaleza* (1775), (Bogotá, 1956), pp. 292 - 293.

dominated by the Franciscan framework. As far as Friar Juan was concerned, as these monuments were older than the Franciscan order, they could only have been made by the devil :

Yo me persuado que el demonio los fabricaría (...) Por los oráculos e ídolos que habrían de venir los hijos del sol y habrían de conquistar aquella tierra y así creo que el demonio les fabricaría aquellas estatuas y les diría : Hombres como éstos, o de éste traje, serán los que gobernarán ésta tierra.⁴¹

The views and attitudes described above show that even as late as the eighteenth century, the ideas that had inspired the biblical interpretation, where pagan gods were identified as being demons, still held strong. Thus it was that the world of demons came to be a rival one to God's universe. And that is why offering up sacrifices to idols was the same as offering sacrifices to demons. Viewed this way, the relation between religious practices and the objects or monuments led to a discourse where the "idol" was looked upon as being the symbol of the devil's action, and was hence considered to be a source of evil. Those "idols" which had a "public profit" value attached to them because they were made from precious metals were nevertheless melted down, and the respective profits subsequently swelled the coffers of the Crown in New Granada. It is therefore hardly surprising that for a period of more than three hundred years, the people of the time took no interest in preserving pre-Hispanic objects. The evangelising process and the clear evidence that idol

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

worshipping was still going on were the reasons why the only pre-eighteenth century collection from New Granada was preserved.

1.4. “Wonders From Distant Lands” : American Collections in European Cabinets of Curiosities during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

A number of important pre-Hispanic collections from elsewhere in America reached Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. These objects were evidence of what had been discovered and conquered, and were looked upon as “wonders from distant lands.” It was not only archaeological objects that the Spaniards took with them to Europe, as there were also the Taino Indians from the Island of Hispaniola that Columbus took as a gift for the Catholic Kings, and the Totonaco chieftains, together with their women, whom Hernán Cortés took to Spain:

Son gente algo morena. Ambos sexos se perforan el lóbulo de las orejas y llevan pendientes de oro y pedrerías; los varones, además agujerean todo el espacio comprendido entre el margen extremo del labio inferior y las raíces de los dientes de abajo y a la manera que nosotros engastamos en oro las piedras de nuestros anillos, así ellos incrustan en aquel hueco una ancha lámina(...) No recuerdo haber visto nunca nada tan feo, ellos creen, por el contrario que no hay nada más elegante bajo la capa del cielo.⁴²

The first recorded collection of pre-Hispanic objects resulted from the Spanish Conquest of Mexico. In 1519, Hernán Cortés sent two circular plates of gold

⁴² P. Mártir de Angleria, quoted in J. Alcina Franch, *Arqueólogos o Anticuarios, Historia Antigua de la Arqueología en la América Española*, (Madrid, 1995), p. 22.

and silver, shields, helmets, ornaments, necklaces and bracelets of pure gold, fans, and crests of variegated feathers to Charles V from Veracruz. These presents sent by Moctezuma were exhibited in Madrid, Toledo and Valladolid, and were then taken to Flanders.⁴³ Albrecht Durer saw the objects sent by Cortés in 1520. His reaction was as follows :

I saw the things which have been brought to the King from the new golden land; a sun all of gold a whole fathom broad, and a moon all of silver of the same size, also two rooms full of the armour of the people there (...). All the days of my life I have seen nothing that has gladdened my heart so much as these things, for I saw amongst them wonderful works of art and I have been amazed at the subtle talent of these men in strange lands.⁴⁴

Moctezuma's treasure is believed to have not just been what was sent in 1519, but also to have included objects sent later on, such as 260 objects that were received in 1522, the most notable of which were 84 items of featherwork, cloaks and leather garments, and gold and jade objects. A further 149 objects, some 128 of which were of gold or feathers with gold adornments, were listed in the despatch sent by Cortés to the King in late 1522.⁴⁵

What happened to all these objects which arrived in Europe between 1522 and 1530 ?

One answer is that Charles V gave large numbers of these American objects

⁴³ P. Cabello Carro, *Coleccionismo Americano Indígena en la España del Siglo XVIII*, (Madrid, 1989), p. 24; E. Hill Boone, *Collecting the Pre-Columbian Past*, (Washington, 1993), p. 315.

⁴⁴ A. Durer, quoted in P. Mason, "From Presentation to Representation: Americana in Europe", in *Journal of the History of Collections*, 6 no. 1, Oxford, (1994), p. 4.

⁴⁵ J. Alcina Franch, *Arqueólogos o Anticuarios, Historia Antigua de la Arqueología en la América Española*, p. 30.

away as presents. He gave his aunt Margaret of Austria 78 Mexican objects, and she in turn gave gifts to her relatives. Some objects were kept in Ambras Castle, and subsequently found their way to the Vienna Ethnological Museum.⁴⁶ Others enriched private collections which centuries later would come to form part of the collections in museums in other European countries. This is what happened with turquoise mosaics, wood sculptures covered with mosaics of different stones, like malachite, jadeite, beryl and iron pyrites. The Luigi Pigorini Museum in Rome houses two masks and the hilts of sacrificial knives, and the National Museum in Copenhagen has two sculptures, one of which represents the head of Tlaloc. Several magnificent examples of this Mixtec art, including two notable human masks and one animal mask, are currently in the British Museum.⁴⁷

During the sixteenth century, European nobles and scholars created *Wunderkammern*, cabinets of curiosities, closets of rarities based on the idea of a universal representation of the works of man and nature.⁴⁸ In Rome, the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher defined the museum as “a gallery in which the rare and most exquisite things of the world are conserved.”⁴⁹ Kircher, as did many other scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, “commonly believed in a connection between Egyptian and Mexican art and writing”. The Bolognese

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ O. Impey and A. MacGregor (ed.), *The Origins of Museums*, (Oxford, 1985), p. 1.

⁴⁹ A. Kircher, Letter from Cocumella, 9 September 1672, quoted in P. Findley, *Possessing Nature*, (Berkeley, 1994), p. 50.

botanist and zoologist Ulisse Aldrovandi, 1522 - 1605, acquired Mexican mosaics for his museum of natural history and ethnology.⁵⁰ Antonio Giganti, 1535 - 1588, had in his encyclopaedic museum in Bologna two parts of a pre-Columbian codex, two feather head-dresses from Florida and nine stone idols from America, a stone knife with wooden handle “with which they sacrificed”, a stone axe, a series of bows and arrows, and an obsidian razor.⁵¹

In Britain, indigenous American materials were collected by John Tradescant, such as an “Indian idol made of feathers in the shape of a dog”, and “musical instruments”, all of which were classified by Tradescant as “rarities.”⁵² Ethnographical objects such as “Amazonian crowns” and “hamaccoes” were also in his collection.⁵³

As we have seen, the pre-Hispanic objects that went to Europe were predominantly Mexican; featherwork, pieces encrusted with turquoise mosaic, and stone carvings. Peruvian objects, by contrast, were almost completely absent in the early collections. Brazilian featherwork and Tupinamba objects and hammocks were also displayed in Europe.⁵⁴ It is estimated that of the thousands of American objects taken to Europe before the eighteenth century,

⁵⁰ E. Hill Boone, *Collecting the Pre-Columbian Past*, p. 317.

⁵¹ L. Laurencich-Minelli, “Museography and Ethnographical Collections in Bologna during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries” in O. Impey and A. MacGregor (ed.), *The Origins of Museums*, p. 18.

⁵² *Museum Tradescantium or a Collection of Rarities Preserved in South Lambeth near London by John Tradescant*, (London, 1656), p. 42.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 53. Of these objects, only one cotton hammock has been recorded in the Ashmolean Museum. A. MacGregor (ed.), *Ashmolean Museum. Tradescant's Rarities, Essays on the Foundation of the Ashmolean Museum 1683 with a Catalogue of the Surviving Early Collections*, (Oxford, 1983), p.138.

⁵⁴ C. Feest, “European Collecting of American Indian Artefacts and Art”, in *Journal of the History of Collections*, 5 no. 1, Oxford, (1993), p. 4.

only a small percentage has survived until the present day. According to Christian Feest, the objects that still exist are those which entered either Cabinets of Curiosities or educational or religious institutions.⁵⁵

1.5. New Attitudes Towards the Past in the Late Eighteenth Century

The late eighteenth century was a time of major change in the cultural and scientific environment of the *Nuevo Reino de Granada*. The Royal Public Library was opened in Santa Fé de Bogotá in 1777. The idea of setting up a public library in Bogotá has been attributed to Francisco Antonio Moreno y Escandón, *Fiscal Protector* of the *Audiencia* and member of the Superior Board of Applications. The first books came from the library that the Jesuits, who had been expelled from all the Spanish colonies in 1767, had opened in Santa Fé and in the schools they ran in the provinces, and consisted of no fewer than 4,182 volumes.⁵⁶ The newspaper *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé* first came out in 1791, and was edited by the Cuban Manuel de Socorro Rodríguez, one of the first directors of the Library. Apart from teaching Hebrew, Greek, French, Italian and Portuguese, Rodríguez promoted the study of the Muisca language, using Father Lugo's Grammar, which he had been given by José Celestino Mutis. He rescued the indigenous name *Cundinamarca* in his articles in the *Papel Periódico*, and also the figure of Sogamoso, High Priest of the Muisca. Rodríguez dedicated a tri-lingual epitaph to him, in Achagua and Muisca, the Spanish version of which can be translated as follows:

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁶ G. Hernández de Alba, *Historia de la Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1977), p. 3.

Aquí yace el gran Sogamoso, compasivo y amante Pastor de rebaño: el mejor hombre de Cundinamarca : la corona y la honra de la nación: el amigo de los hijos del Sol y que al fin adoró las luces del Sol eterno.⁵⁷

In addition to the *Papel Periódico*, the first issue of the *Correo Curioso*, which was run by Jorge Tadeo Lozano, came out in February 1801. Various cultural gatherings and groups were formed in Bogotá between 1790 and 1810, to discuss literary subjects and political and philosophical ideas: the most notable of these *Tertulias* were the *Entropélica*, in which the most prominent figure was Rodríguez himself, and *El Arcano de la Filantropía*, which was headed by Antonio Nariño, who had translated and printed the seventeen articles of the Rights of Man and the Citizen into Spanish in 1793. Nariño was imprisoned and sent into exile for translating the Rights of Man and his property and goods were confiscated. In the inventory that was drawn up of his goods, apart from books and a number of paintings, he had “a golden monkey made by Indians.”⁵⁸ The third literary and political circle was *La Tertulia del Buen Gusto*, which met in the house of the lady of letters, Latin scholar and naturalist Manuela Sanz de Santamaría. Apart from being the leader of the circle, she also took on the task of setting up and classifying a valuable natural history collection with the help of her two sons. The importance of this lies not only in the objects she had, but also in that it was perhaps one of the first collections to be brought together in New Granada on the basis of museological criteria. It was greatly admired by Alexander von Humboldt in 1801.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ *Papel Periódico de Santa Fé*, (7 June 1793).

⁵⁸ G. Hernández de Alba (comp.), *El Proceso de Antonio Nariño*, vol. IV, (Bogotá, 1980), p. 200.

⁵⁹ H. Schumacher, *Sudamerikanische Studien. Drei Lebens und Culturbilder, Mutis, Caldas, Codazzi, 1790 -1890*, (Berlin, 1884); *Mutis, un Forjador de la Cultura*, 2nd edition, (Bogotá, 1984), pp. 142 - 143.

The work *La Perla de América, Provincia de Santa Marta*, by the Jesuit priest Antonio Julián, was published in Madrid in 1787. This work is still of interest to ethnologists and archaeologists, and shows the author's curiosity and interest in pre-Hispanic objects. He put forward an interesting theory about the El Dorado legend:

La primera Provincia de la Tierra Firme y de la América meridional que poblaron los españoles fue la de Santa Marta.(...) Allí comenzaron los conquistadores a ver y tomar el gusto por el oro(...) Al paso que crecía el oro en manos de españoles se aumentaban las noticias y rumor del oro que había en lo más interior de la Provincia (...) hay varios cerros, montes y valles llenos de oro, más el cerro por antonomasia, llamado El Dorado, por la primacia de antigüedad en haberse llevado las atenciones de los conquistadores, de haberles ofrecido las doradas primicias de los tesoros de América Meridional y de haberse merecido la voz común y fama de El Dorado, es el Cerro de Tayrona (...). Es cosa cierta haber sacado de la Provincia de Santa Marta los primeros conquistadores mucho oro, el haberse hallado en el valle y cerro de Tayrona vestigios de fraguas de oro y de plata y joyería (...) Lo cierto es que el Cerro de Tayrona hasta ahora es celebrado, deseado y codiciado en la Provincia de Tayrona como el Dorado.⁶⁰

The importance of this discourse by Julián lies in that, leaving aside the notion of booty that spurred the Spaniards on to hunt for the “riches of the Mountains”, he showed great admiration as he described the Tayrona objects found in tombs, which he called “marvels”, and considered worthy of being preserved in a museum:

Tuve el gusto de ver algunas de las piezas o alhajas de estos sepulcros (...) Eran dos leoncitos de oro y dos columnitas de mármol blanco (...) todo tan bien formado todo labrado con tanto primor y finura (...) Basta decir que eran unas y otras piezas dignas de un museo, por su antigüedad, por su belleza y primor.⁶¹

⁶⁰ A. Julián, *La Perla de América, la Provincia de Santa Marta*, (1797), (Bogotá, 1980), pp. 51 - 54.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Apart from stating that these objects should be part of a museum, Father Julián showed great interest in the technology the Indians had used, and wondered about the techniques that had been used for making them :

Como las labraban? Unos dicen que con instrumentos de piedra, otros de macana, que es un leño fortísimo. Pero con qué cuchillo o martillo, con qué cincel o gubia o sierra ? (...) Dicen que todas las dichas piezas o alhajas eran fundidas no mas. Pero el primor, finura y pulidez de ellas y singularmente las de filigrana, evidencian lo contrario. En fin hay quien diga que con instrumentos de oro, o de plata en defecto del hierro y del acero hacían semejantes labores (...) y suplían con oro y plata lo que les faltaba de hierro.⁶²

However, the explanation as far as Julián was concerned was that in the mountains behind Santa Marta, the Taironas knew of a herb which softened and moulded metals, similar to that used by a certain monk from Milan.

Julián also described “the mountain dead” that were found in the ranges that surround the city of Ocaña, where “dead Indians without any corruption whatsoever” had been discovered. In Julian’s views, these were “uncorrupt saints”. One of these bodies was jealously watched over in a house in Ocaña that father Julián had not had the opportunity to visit. However, one mummy he did get a chance to look at and describe was that of an “uncorrupt Indian” which was kept in the Viceroyal Palace in Bogotá by the Viceroy Pedro Messia de la Cerda. He was Viceroy of New Granada from 1761 to 1773 and had ordered that one of these “dead bodies” be brought from Ocaña to Bogotá, where he

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

showed it off to his friends, together with a fine gold pin and an emerald from Muzo.⁶³ Julián described the Viceroy's mummy in the following terms :

Era un indio según la traza y fisonomía (...) estaba en cuclillas abrazando con las manos cruzadas las piernas hacia las rodillas (...) No echaba mal olor, era un cuerpo disecado (...) los médicos de su Excelencia llamaban “ carne momia “ y así quedó en palacio por entonces.⁶⁴

The Viceroy seemingly kept these curious things not out of personal interest but rather so that they could be presented to the King of Spain as “something precious from his royal dominions”.

Father Julián's views on the Tairona objects and the displaying of the Ocaña mummy appear to be the first recorded time when pre-Hispanic objects had been looked upon as “antiquities”, worthy of being preserved and displayed in a museum. Furthermore, giving official standing to the “uncorrupt mummy” and displaying it in the Viceroy's Palace was an event of special interest. When the Natural History Museum was opened in the recently-founded Republic on 4 July 1824, one of the most important objects in that first Colombian museum was a “mummy discovered near Tunja”. It is also noteworthy to note that that the mummy which was examined by Viceroy Messia de la Cerda's doctors should have been seen as a scientific object worthy of study. It is no mere coincidence that the Viceroy's personal doctor was none other than the great naturalist José Celestino Mutis, 1732 - 1808, whose presence and work in the *Nuevo Reino de*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Granada were fundamental in consolidating the scientific spirit in the country through his teaching in the college of El Rosario from 1762 onwards, and above all through his work as director of the Botanical Expedition.

1.6. The Scientific Spirit and the Background for Setting Up a Museum

During the eighteenth century there was much increased scientific activity in Spanish America. The expedition which was organised in 1736 by the Academy of Sciences in Paris was led by Charles-Marie de la Condamine, Louis Goudin and Pierre Bouger, set out to resolve the controversy between Isaac Newton and his opponents as to whether the globe slightly bulged at the Equator or at the two poles.⁶⁵ The expedition not only had financial backing from the Spanish Crown but also included two young Spanish officers, Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa. When the French expedition ended in 1744, the two Spaniards stayed on for twelve years, during which time they undertook research into astronomy, hydrography, cartography, and even archaeology.⁶⁶ Ulloa drew up a series of precise instructions for collecting American archaeological and ethnographic objects in Guatemala, Mexico and Peru which would be destined for the *Gabinete Real de Historia Natural* in Madrid.

⁶⁵ C. M. de la Condamine, *Journal du Voyage fait par ordre du Roi a l'Equateur servant d'introduction a la mesure des trois premiers degres du Meridien*, (Paris, 1751), pp. 85, 127-8 and C.M. de la Condamine, *Relation abregée d'un voyage fait dans l'interieur de l'Amerique Meridionale*, (Maestrich, 1778), pp. 50 - 51.

⁶⁶ See J. J. and A. de Ulloa, *Relación Histórica del Viaje de América Meridional*, (Madrid, 1748), and J. Juan and A. de Ulloa, *Noticias Secretas de América*, (London, 1826).

This scientific interest was developed and consolidated in New Granada through the work of José Celestino Mutis, who set about studying and examining the flora as soon as he arrived there in 1760, and established a botanical school which would provide the youth of the country with a suitable source of scientific instruction. During the period when Antonio Caballero y Gongora was Viceroy, Charles III set up the New Granada Botanical Expedition by the *Cédula Real* dated 1 November 1783, and appointed Mutis its first botanist and astronomer.⁶⁷ Over a period of thirty three years, between 1783 and 1816, the Expedition formed a herbarium consisting of some 20,000 plants; more than 6,000 illustrations were drawn of the flora of New Granada's flora species, and collections were made of different woods, shells, minerals and skins, as well as producing a series of oil paintings showing animals from the *Nuevo Reino de Granada*.⁶⁸

An Astronomical Observatory was built in 1802, an unprecedented symbol of scientific progress. The Expedition and Mutis thus encouraged a group of brilliant Creoles to undertake scientific research. Pedro Fermín de Vargas, Francisco Antonio Zea, Jorge Tadeo Lozano and Francisco José de Caldas,

⁶⁷ It was scientific developments at the Botanical Gardens in Madrid that led to botany being looked on as the scientific discipline *par excellence* for developing knowledge and one way of controlling and managing the exploitation of natural resources in the colonies. With this in mind, three major expeditions were organised so that American flora could be discovered and studied: the Botanical Expedition to Peru and Chile, (1777), the one to the *Virreinato de Nueva Granada*, (1783), and the Royal Expedition to Mexico (1787-1800). M. Lucena Samoral, "Las Expediciones Científicas en la época de Carlos III, (1759-1788) in Ateneo de Madrid, *La Ciencia Española en Ultramar*, (Madrid, 1991), pp. 56-59.

⁶⁸ F. J. de Caldas, "Artículo Necrológico del Señor José Celestino Mutis", in E. Posada, *Obras de Caldas*, (Bogotá, 1912), pp. 281-282. About the Botanic Expedition to Nueva Granada see J. C. Mutis, *Diario de Observaciones de José Celestino Mutis 1760-1790*, (Bogotá, 1883); E. Pérez Arbelaez, *José Celestino Mutis y la Real Expedición Botánica del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, (Bogotá, 1983); E. Valenzuela, *Primer diario de la Expedición Botánica del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, (Bogotá, 1983); G. Hernández de Alba, (ed.) *Historia documental de la Real Expedición Botánica del Nuevo Reino de Granada después de la muerte de su director J.C.M.*, (Bogotá, 1986).

prominent members of the Botanical Expedition, were later to devote themselves to the independence movement. Before his death in 1808, Mutis sent a document to Viceroy Amar y Borbón containing a plan for developing the natural sciences, which included the setting-up of a museum so that “the sciences and useful knowledge can be reborn.”⁶⁹ Mutis’s death and political crisis forced the members of the Botanical Expedition to abandon science and the academy. The Spanish re-conquest of 1816 wiped ended these important activities, and the books, optical instruments, painting tools and furniture at the Botanical Institute were auctioned. The herbariums and the illustrations, oil paintings and descriptions of New Granada flora and fauna were taken to Madrid in 1817, as were Caldas’s maps and writings; 6,617 illustrations of the flora of Bogotá reached the Botanical Gardens in Madrid, while eighteen boxes containing specimens of “zoology, mineralogy and ethnology” were sent to the *Real Gabinete de Historia Natural*.⁷⁰ When the Spanish historian Paz Cabello Carro was looking in the *Real Gabinete de Historia Natural* in Madrid for archaeological or ethnographic objects collected by Mutis, she found two registers on a list with a note reading “From Santa Fé, Mutis”. The description of the first object was a “seed necklace or bracelet used by women as adornment”, while the second one read “Oblong red and black seeds”. Cabello Carro located the seed necklace, which she says is not particularly important. She also pointed out that a consignment which arrived in Madrid in 1817 after Mutis had

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ F. Vesga, *La Expedición Botánica*, (Bogotá, n.d.), p. 157.

died included a box containing various “curiosities” which have not yet been found or identified.⁷¹

One of the most outstanding members of the Expedition, Francisco José de Caldas, devoted his life to the study of physical and astronomical phenomena, geography and the practical application of knowledge. It is to Caldas that we owe the second description of San Agustín, which is in marked contrast to the one given by Friar Juan de Santa Gertrudis some forty years earlier. Caldas stressed the evidence for a society with a high degree of religious and social complexity, which manifested itself in its artistic skills :

San Agustín está habitado por pocas familias de indios y en sus cercanías se hallan vestigios de una nación artística y laboriosa que ya no existe. Estatuas, columnas, adoratorios, mesas, animales y una imagen del sol desmesurado, todo de piedra, en número prodigioso, nos indican el carácter y las fuerzas del gran pueblo que habitó las cabeceras del río Magdalena.⁷²

Apart from Caldas and this description of San Agustín, Father José Domingo Duquesne was a pioneer of late eighteenth century interest in the archaeological symbolism and religious beliefs of the Muiscas. Born in Bogotá in 1747, he received his education at St. Thomas University, and became the parish priest in the villages of Gachancipá and Lenguazaque, where he was able to experience and observe the lives of the indigenous inhabitants. There, he collected a number of objects that had been used as offerings and had been

⁷¹ P. Cabello Carro, *El Coleccionismo Americano Indígena en la España del Siglo XVIII*, pp. 136 - 137.

⁷² F. J. de Caldas, “Estado de la Geografía del Virreinato de Santa Fé de Bogotá con relación a la economía y al Comercio”, *Semanario del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, (Bogotá, 1942).

found in a cave, and made his own interpretations of them. Apart from attempting to show that the Muiscas had a highly complex calendar, he also pointed to how important the number twenty was in their theory of the universe.⁷³ Duquesne had the following to say about the Muisca calendar :

El calendario muisca (...) lo gravaban en piedras por medio de figuras simbólicas. Mantengo en mi poder una que lo expresa según mi modo de pensar y tengo el honor de servir a la historia con este descubrimiento. (...) Esta simbolizada en esta piedra la primera revolución del siglo muisca (...) el círculo interior representa las veinte lunas del año muisca vulgar cuyos signos todos se intercalan en el espacio del siglo. El círculo segundo expresa los años muisca a que corresponde la intercalación de cada signo.⁷⁴

Duquesne's main contribution was to interpret the calendar signs in the light of the culture they related to instead of that of his own religious beliefs, together with his view that they were archaeological objects, "antiquities". No longer were they considered to be "idols" or fetishes, since the calendar signs were evidence of the cosmological and religious principles of a society. Thus, Duquesne opened a path of interpretation of a culture different from his on the basis, first, of his observations of the cultural and religious practices of the indigenous inhabitants of two villages of the high plateau of Cundinamarca. Secondly, he had assumed that the figures which were sculpted in certain stone matrixes used by the Muiscas for metallurgical work were the signs of the cycles of a calendar.

⁷³ See J. D. Duquesne, "Sacrificios de los Muiscas y Significación o Alusiones de los Nombres de sus Víctimas" (1795) in *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*, no. 68, Bogotá, (1884), pp. 313 - 316.

⁷⁴ J. D. Duquesne, "Disertación sobre el Calendario de los Muiscas", in J. Acosta, *Compendio Histórico de la Conquista y Colonización de la Nueva Granada en el Siglo Décimo Sexto* (Paris, 1848) pp. 414 -

The idea of the existence of a Muisca Calendar introduced by Duquesne and legitimised by Humboldt, as we will see further on, prevailed during the nineteenth century. Only in 1892, did the antiquarian and historian Vicente Restrepo, through comparisons and analogies between Duquesne's interpretations of Muisca signs and his own research based on chronicles, show that there was no such calendar.⁷⁵ The figures which appeared on the stones were employed in a technique developed by the Muiscas for the production of objects in series. Nevertheless, Restrepo defended Duquesne's intelligence which he said, was dominated by his "brilliant imagination", though he proved that the calendar was only Duquesne's "fantastic invention."⁷⁶

1.7. The German Scientific Traveller, Alexander Von Humboldt

In 1801, Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland arrived in Santa Fé during their scientific journey of 1799 - 1804. Humboldt was extremely interested in seeing the scientific work that was being done by Mutis and his disciples. He marvelled at Mutis' botanical library, which he compared to the library of the Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society in London. The interest was mutual, since the news of Humboldt and Bonpland's arrival in Bogotá aroused great expectations in the Viceroyalty's learned and enlightened circles. Archbishop-Viceroy Antonio Caballero y Góngora sent his personal carriage to

415.

⁷⁵ V. Restrepo, *Crítica Arqueológica a los trabajos del Dr. José Domingo Duquesne*, (Bogotá, 1892).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

meet them on the outskirts of the city, together with the city notables, and they entered Bogotá in the company of more than sixty people on horseback.⁷⁷

In his *Researches concerning the institutions and monuments of the ancient inhabitants of America with descriptions of the views of some of the most striking scenes in the Cordilleras*, Humboldt stressed the importance of indigenous monuments in three regions of America: Mexico, Peru, and the monuments of the Muisca Indians, Ancient Inhabitants of the Bogotá Plateau. He presented a set of plates accompanied by commentary depicting Mexican and Inca ruins, Mexican codices, the Aztec Calendar Stone and the Calendar of the Muiscas. Among the “most remarkable picturesque views of the new continent”, two of the sacred and mythical places for the Muiscas were illustrated, the Cataract of Tequendama and Lake Guatavita. The purpose of the book was to dispel the complete scepticism of previous historians of America by providing tangible evidence of “the works of art belonging to a people highly advanced in civilization which excite our admiration by the harmony and beauty of the forms and by the genius with which they are conceived.”⁷⁸ He wanted to demonstrate the existence of native sources which could be employed to reconstruct the pre-Hispanic history of Spanish America, which no longer consisted only of the “gigantic constructions of Cuzco, the pyramids with steps and the worship and symbolical writings of the Mexicans.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ A. von Humboldt, ‘Lettre de Contreras a Ibagué, 21 September 1801’, in E.T. Hamy, *Lettres Americaines d’Alexandre de Humboldt, 1798 - 1807*, (Paris, 1904), p. 126.

⁷⁸ A. von Humboldt, *Researches concerning the institutions and monuments of the ancient inhabitants of America with descriptions of the views of some of the most striking scenes in the Cordilleras*, vol. 2, p. 35.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Humboldt described and analysed the astronomical and religious interpretations of the Muisca by Father Duquesne, with which he became acquainted in Bogotá in 1801 through a manuscript he was shown by José Celestino Mutis. Humboldt compared Duquesne's interpretation of the Muisca Calendar and the numbering system with other astronomical systems from Mexico and pre-Hispanic Peru, and the astronomical cycles of Asiatic peoples. Humboldt emphasised not only that the Muisca calendar was one of the "American monuments", but also that the calendar was a symbol of a "civilised" though unknown society:

A stone, covered with hieroglyphic signs of the lunar calendar (...) is a monument so much the more remarkable as it is the work of a people, whose name is almost entirely unknown in Europe and who have been hitherto confounded with the wandering tribes of the savages of South America.⁸⁰

This confirmation by Humboldt that the "stone covered with hieroglyphic signs" represented a lunar calendar was a reason advanced for the legitimation of the Muisca as a "civilised" society. (Figure 1). Furthermore, Humboldt on the basis of analogies which he established between the nomenclature of the cycle of months and years of the Mexican and Muisca systems and the calendars employed in China, Tibet and Japan, asserted that a communication between Asia and America was fully proved.⁸¹

Humboldt established that the Muisca, who lived on the high plains of Cundinamarca and Boyacá and who, apart from having a calendar, were

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

sedentary and engaged in agriculture, fitted the model for a “civilised” society. The relationship between “civilisation” and environment was used by Humboldt to establish in his *Personal Narrative of Travels* why pre-Hispanic American societies had flourished only on the high mountains. For Humboldt, it was only these “civilised” societies who settled in the highlands that had a history :

Great empires, the regular organisation of a sacerdotal hierarchy and the culture which that organisation favours in the first ages of society have existed only on the high mountains of the Western world. In Mexico, we see a vast monarchy enclosing small republics; at Cundinamarca and Peru, we find pure theocracies (...). Only civilised nations have a history. The history of the Americans is necessarily no more than that of a small portion of inhabitants of the mountains. Profound obscurity develops the vast country which stretches from the eastern slope of the cordilleras towards the Atlantic.⁸²

The widespread dissemination of Humboldt’s works in Europe and the need which he stressed for further comparative studies to be undertaken of American monuments, edifices and sculptures had a profound effect on Colombian and foreign naturalists, geographers, antiquarians and those who were merely curious about the pre-Hispanic world in the nineteenth century. Also, the dichotomy between “civilised societies” which inhabited the mountains and the “non-civilised” inhabitants of the lowlands, was a persistent idea among Colombian scientists, naturalists and politicians during both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The German geologists Wilhelm Reiss and Alphons Stubel, the geographer Alfred Hettner, the zoologist Otto Burger and the archaeologist and ethnologist

⁸² A. von Humboldt and A. Bonpland, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America during the years 1799 - 1804*, vol. III, (London, 1853), p. 76.

Konrad Theodor Preuss, the Italian geographer Agustin Codazzi, for whom Humboldt was “the light” all consciously followed in his footsteps in their scientific travels in Colombia.

It was not strange that for more than three hundred years men were not concerned about conserving and preserving pre-Hispanic objects, since at the time these were looked upon as being “imbued with a malignant aura”, and were considered to be “idols of the devil”.⁸³ This explains why no collecting spirit for Pre-Hispanic objects ever developed in New Granada. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century, and the speeches and discourses by Father Julián, Caldas, Duquesne and Humboldt, that any curiosity began to develop for objects and monuments from the past, which very timidly came to be looked upon by a handful of learned and enlightened men as “antiquities” and “scientific objects”.

⁸³ R. Pineda Camacho, “ Demonología y Antropología en en Nuevo Reino de Granada, Siglos XVI–XVIII “, p. 59.

CHAPTER 2

TRAVELLERS, SCIENTISTS AND ANTIQUARIANS, 1820 - 1900

The building and organising of a new state after Independence in 1819 took up all the energies and occupied the minds of the leaders of New Granada. Symbols, flags and coats-of-arms sprang from the enthusiasm generated by the change. Although Bolívar and the leaders of the incipient republic seldom if ever explicitly used the pre-Hispanic past as a source of inspiration for the new republic, a portrait of Bolívar shows him embracing the native America, a mother nature figure adorned with a crown of feathers. Certain provisional coats-of-arms and medals during the Wars of Independence portrayed Indian women. The 11 November 1811 coat-of-arms of Cartagena de Indias showed an Indian woman with a crown of feathers, a quiver and an arrow in her left hand, and her feet recently released from heavy shackles.¹ Some years later, the 1819 Gran Colombia provisional coat-of-arms repeated this representation of a native woman as a symbol of the new republic.² Nevertheless, that of New Granada designed by Lino de Pombo in 1834 which incorporated a condor and a pomegranate, all indigenous features were left out.³

¹ Coat-of-Arms of the State of Cartagena, 11 November 1811, in E. Ortega Ricaurte, *Heráldica Colombiana*, (Bogotá, 1952), p. 25.

² Provisional Coat-of-Arms of Gran Colombia, 1819, *Ibid.*

³ Coat-of-Arms of New Granada, 1834, p. 27.

The process of building attitudes to, and views about, the pre-Hispanic era in Colombia began in the 1840's and was based on the work of a few scientists and historians, and also on descriptions by Colombian and foreign travellers who discovered pre-Hispanic sites or objects and published details of their findings. Although this body of knowledge was in many cases no more than fragmentary, the very descriptions themselves show that there was interest in ancient monuments and objects. It was also during this period that a few amateurs began to build up archaeological collections. These two elements, the first attempts of historical reconstruction of the pre-Hispanic past and material evidence in the form of pre-Hispanic objects, were to determine ideas and views about ancient Colombian societies during the nineteenth century.

Interest in the pre-Hispanic past grew up mainly in two regional centres, Bogotá and Medellín. These were the cultural, political and economic centres where three decisive factors coincided : firstly, there was the possibility of receiving academic training in Europe, something which clearly permeated the minds and mentality of Colombian historians, scientists and collectors who were interested in the country's ancient history. Secondly, the commercial importance and international contacts that existed in both places were an important factor in the rise of the antiquarian and the collector; finally, in the case of Medellín, there was the interest in gold mining and the boom in *guaquería* in Antioquia and Caldas.⁴

⁴ C. E. Piazzini, 'Historia de la Arqueología en Antioquia: Contextos Teóricos y Sociales', (Thesis, Universidad de Antioquia, 1995), p. 20.

Even though no strictly scientific interest was shown in finding evidence of the country's indigenous past during the early years of the Republican era, Francisco de Paula Santander set up a Museum of Natural History and a School of Mines in 1823, as a scientific and educational centre for showing the "productions of the Republic" and for the formation of a new scientific generation to replace the "sabios" who had perished during the independence era. The historical context for this museum, which was to become the National Museum will be described and analysed in Chapter 3.

The establishing of this museum and school was an integral part of the Republican project to promote education. As Vice-President of the Republic, Santander opened public schools in all main cities, in convents, in parishes, and in villages "formerly for Indians", all based on the idea that "public education is the basis and foundation of representative government and one of the first advantages that peoples should obtain from their independence and freedom."⁵

In addition to the Museum of Natural History and the School of Mines as centres for scientific instruction, Santander founded the Public Universities of Quito, Bogotá and Caracas in 1826. He also ordered that a National Academy be formed for knowledge of the sciences. In his speech at the opening ceremony, Santander proposed that this Academy, which would follow the European models, "should devote itself to the practical sciences and abandon the sublime

⁵ Laws dated 6 August 1821 relating to the application of education in Minor Convents in *Congreso de Cúcuta de 1821, Constitución y Leyes*, vol. 21, (Bogotá, 1971), p. 99; to the setting up of schools for girls in convents, pp. 102 - 104; to the setting up of Education Schools or Houses in the Provinces, pp. 104 - 107; and to the establishment of primary schools for children of both sexes, pp. 108- 113.

theories and profound calculations of mathematics and other sciences.”⁶ This Academy disappeared when Gran Colombia broke up in 1830, but was reinstated by Santander in 1832, although it subsequently disappeared as a result of the political situation of the time.⁷ The problems which existed in the early years of the Republic in setting up academic institutions obviously had a bearing on the little interest that was shown in the remains of the pre-Hispanic past.

2.1. The Antiquarian Curiosity of Travellers

During the period after Independence a number of foreign travellers who visited the country expressed degrees of antiquarian curiosity, and there are signs that archaeological objects began to circulate on a small scale as gifts and presents. Colonel John Potter Hamilton, the first diplomatic agent of the British government in Colombia who was in the country between 1823 to 1825, was one example of antiquarian curiosity. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pedro Gual, gave him a “gold idol of the Indians”, while José Ignacio Paris gave him a small gold snake, both objects having come from Lake Guatavita.⁸ In Cartago, when he had let it be known that he was interested in acquiring native objects, he was given ornamental gold objects and a limestone necklace, and he was offered a pottery figure belonging to a woman who used it as a toy to entertain

⁶ GC no. 273, (31 December 1826).

⁷ F. Safford, *The Ideal of the Practical, Colombia's Struggle to Form a Technical Elite*, (Austin, 1976). p. 65.

⁸ J. P. Hamilton, *Travels in the Interior Provinces of Colombia*, 2 vols., (London, 1827), vol. 1, p. 159.

her little children, who had broken its foot.⁹ On a visit to Zipaquirá, he was given another “gold idol”, which had been part of group of no fewer than sixty objects that had been unearthed just a few days earlier.¹⁰

One common excursion at that time for foreign visitors and scientists was to Lake Guatavita, the sacred Muisca offering site. They generally went out on the lake on a raft, while some knowledgeable local person related mythical and poetic accounts of the consecration ceremony for Muisca chieftains, based on the chroniclers’ texts.¹¹ The colonial idea that booty was to be obtained from the treasures found at indigenous offering sites and burial grounds still persisted during the early years of the Republican era, even in the most eminent circles. Thus it was that a company headed by José Ignacio París, in which the British Captain Charles Stuart Cochrane and none other than Vice-President Francisco de Paula Santander had shareholdings, attempted once more to drain the lake between 1823 and 1824. This company tried to make a channel in the mountain, to let the water from the lake run off; the gradient was not steep enough and rocks and water came crashing down. Captain Cochrane himself spent a month living in a hut built by París so that he could control and supervise the work of digging an underground tunnel, which it was hoped would lower the water level in two or three days.¹² The water level in the lake fell by ten inches, but after Cochrane left Guatavita, the channel filled up again and the attempt, was not as successful as had been hoped. This republican attempt,

⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 190.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 199.

¹¹ C. S. Cochrane, *Journal of a Residence and Travels in Colombia during the Years 1823 and 1824*, (London, 1825), pp. 199, 205.

¹² J. P. Hamilton, *Travels by the Interior Provinces of Colombia*, vol. 1, p. 194.

similar to that undertaken by Antonio de Sepúlveda in 1562 with the aim of searching for treasure, clearly showed that the modest, late eighteenth century approaches to native monuments and antiquities had not yet reached the minds of those in the high political circles in the new state. Vice-President Santander himself not only invested in the company that was set up to drain the lake, he also attended a party arranged by Cochrane at which the main attraction was, in the words of the Captain himself, a representation of the novel technology they hoped to use at Guatavita :

As the draining of the far-famed Lagoon of Guatavita at this time engrossed public attention, I fitted a large siphon, which was to discharge the water from a vessel, intended to represent the Lagoon of Guatavita, into another vessel, placed below the level of the former, and at a tolerable distance (.....). I distributed plans of the Lagoon and calculations of the expense of clearing by a siphon and the time necessary to do it.¹³

Cochrane, who was a hunting enthusiast, had come across numerous native burial grounds while riding over the Bogotá grasslands, and he asked the *Superintendente* de Bogotá for permission to inspect these. This permission was granted immediately, on the condition that if he found any treasure, he was to pay 5% of what he found to the state. With this official authorisation in his hands, he opened up various graves, but found nothing but pottery objects, which led him to assume that gold items were only deposited in Lake Guatavita:

All the graves I opened yielded nothing but earthenware, called by the natives *loza*, from which I am led to believe that on the death of an

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

Indian, all his riches were thrown into the Lake of Guatavita, in honour of the Deity.¹⁴

Apart from this Guatavita venture in the early years of the country's independent existence, though previously the civil and ecclesiastical authorities had been entitled to objects of value that were found in native tombs and burial grounds, a law dated 13 June 1833, "on findings of treasure", stipulated that in order to "encourage all branches of industry and promote the development of national wealth", any gold, silver and precious stones that were found in Indian burial grounds, tombs, places of worship and other Indian sites, should belong to those who discovered them.¹⁵ This law was the basis for the grave plundering that lasted for the rest of the century.

2.2. European Speculations During the Early Republican Period

In 1835, a number of highly bizarre speculations about Muisca society appeared in Paris in a work entitled *Origine Japonaise, Arabe et Basque de la Civilisation des Peuples du Plateau de Bogotá*, by the French savant M. de Paravey, as part of the *Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne*. Basing himself on the analogies that von Humboldt had drawn between the Muisca Calendar and Asiatic astronomical systems, and also the work done by the German botanist and doctor Philipp-Franz von Siebold in Japan, Paravey assumed that the ten-day cycles in the alleged Muisca calendar and the Muisca names of the days, *Ata*, *Bosa*, *Mica*, *Mhuyca* and *Hisca*, were pronounced similarly and had similar –ca

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 253 - 255.

¹⁵ Law dated 13 June 1833, in República de Colombia, *Codificación Nacional de Todas las Leyes de Colombia desde el Año 1821*, (Bogotá, 1925), p. 123.

endings to the ten-day period in the Japanese calendar described by von Siebold.¹⁶ The alleged possible Arabic origin of the Muisca was also no more than speculation based on linguistic analogies : from *Nemqueteba*, the name of Bochica, one of the myths relating to the origin of the Muisca. Paravey took the word *Nemque-Theba*, related it to *Tur-Mequé*, and then in turn related this to *Mecque* or *Mecah*, the famous holy place in Arabia where the sun and the moon were also worshipped.¹⁷ The supposed Basque origin was also based on linguistic analogies, between the Muisca word for the number twenty, *gué*, and the Basque word for it, *aguei*, and with the Basque words *Marca* and *Comarca*, which he related to Cundinamarca.¹⁸

2.3. The Revival of the Pre-Hispanic Past

It was not until the late 1840s that texts about pre-Hispanic objects and monuments and interpretations of these by scientists and antiquarians began to be published. Greater emphasis was placed on the idea first put forward by von Humboldt that Muisca society had been a “civilization”. Now the Calendar was not the only indicator of a society comparable with those that had existed in ancient Mexico and Peru. In 1847, the antiquarian Manuel Vélez Barrientos argued in the Parisian *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* that the vestiges of a pre-Hispanic Muisca monument might be comparable to those of European

¹⁶ M. de Paravey, *Mémoire sur l'Origine Japonaise, Arabe et Basque de la Civilisation des Peuples du Plateau de Bogotá d'après les Travaux Récents de M. de Humboldt et Siebold*, (Paris, 1835), pp. 4 - 5.

Von Siebold travelled to Japan and acquired ethnographical collections which were bought by the German King Wilhem I for the Museum of Leyden.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

and Asian civilisations: namely the temple of *El Infiernito*.¹⁹ The vestiges found and described by Vélez were a double series of twenty nine cylindrical columns, each with a perfect diameter, standing in a straight line. It was also during this period that two works by the Colombian scientists Joaquin Acosta and Ezequiel Uricoechea, of immense value to historical and archaeological studies, were published in Europe.²⁰ At the same time, epics about the conquest of the Muiscas and the Inca state were published in Colombia, which portrayed the subjugation of those pre-Hispanic societies by the “*feroces Iberos*” in a typically romantic manner. Finally in this period, there is evidence that two archaeological collections existed: one of these had been built up by the naturalist Romoaldo Cuervo, who established a small museum in the Bogotá Hospice, and the other belonged to the antioqueño antiquarian Manuel Vélez Barrientos.

2.3.1. The Antiquarian Manuel Vélez Barrientos and *El Infiernito*

The first document written in the nineteenth century that went beyond the idea of enrichment and showed for the first time a certain degree of archaeological knowledge can be credited to Manuel Vélez Barrientos, who investigated monuments in Boyacá and Antioquia and was one of the first Colombian collectors of pre-Hispanic objects. It was in 1846, while he was travelling

¹⁹ M. Vélez, “Notice sur les Antiquités de la Nouvelle-Grenade”, in *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Paris*, vol. VIII, Paris, (1847), p. 98. This article was published in Colombia under the title “El Dorado: Noticias sobre las Antigüedades de la Nueva Granada por el Señor D. Manuel Vélez”, *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*, no. 76, Bogotá, (1 October 1884), pp. 54 - 58.

²⁰ J. Acosta, *Compendio Histórico de la Conquista y Colonización de la Nueva Granada en el Siglo Décimo Sexto*, and E. Uricoechea, *Memoria sobre las Antigüedades Neogranadinas*, (Berlin, 1854).

through Boyacá region, that Vélez discovered the ruins of a pre-Hispanic monument. Touring the Villa de Leyva area, he found the vestiges of the temple, namely, the columns described above.²¹ The people of the region, according to the author, had traditionally interpreted everything that might have belonged to “idol-worshipping nations” and had therefore given the ruins of this temple the name *El Infiernito*. The stone work itself and the fact that the stones used in building this temple had had to be carried over long distances led Vélez to the conclusion that the society which knew how to work stone in this way must have achieved a certain level of civilisation and intelligence.²²

Vélez put forward the idea that societies had existed in Colombia which were “very much older and more civilised” than those the Spaniards encountered at the time of the Conquest. He also argued that the monuments at San Agustín were the work of older peoples than the Pijaos and the other groups that the Spaniards had come across in the region, who had been notorious for their bloody and barbaric confrontations with the Spaniards. He also described how in the Valley of Medellín the Spaniards had found a small, poor and very ignorant tribe, which could in no way have been connected with the perfection that could be seen in the gold objects discovered in a grave that he had seen plundered in 1833, the year of the law mentioned above :

J'ai vu retirer d'un de ces tombeaux pour trois mille castellanos d'or en bijoux fort curieux. Il est donc présumable qu'avant le temps de la Conquête de l'Amérique par les Espagnols, il avait existé déjà dans ces

²¹ M. Vélez, “Notice sur les Antiquités de la Nouvelle-Grenade”, p. 98.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

localités des peuples puissants et riches, que des causes difficiles à déterminer avaient affaibli ou fait complètement disparaître.²³

Although the main contribution made by Vélez, which became known as through a letter he sent to Jean Baptiste Boussingault which was published in the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Paris* in 1847, was the revelation of the Muisca monument of *El Infiernito*, two other important features marked of Vélez' work. It was the first time since independence that acceptance was given to the idea that the country's pre-Hispanic ancestors could have produced fine and admirable works, and it also put a value on pre-Hispanic objects made of materials other than gold. Vélez greatly admired the perfectly-preserved mummies he had seen in a cave, because of the fine cotton fabrics they were wrapped in and because their tomb had been carved out of solid rock.²⁴ He built up a collection which consisted of gold objects found in Antioquia, the most outstanding of which were *poporos* or containers for the lime that was part of the process of chewing coca, breastplates, nose ornaments and zoomorphic shaped objects, stone and pottery spindles, textiles and miscellaneous pottery, wood and bone objects.²⁵ Vélez went to live in Europe in 1856. Before he departed, he wished to leave his collection in Bogotá. As a "good patriot", he thought of donating it to the National Museum, but he was afraid that it would there get lost.²⁶ Vélez recalled with great nostalgia in 1882 that after twenty-seven years in Europe, travelling all the time and without a fixed home, he had lost much of his collection; part of it had been stolen, and he had given away

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

²⁵ *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*, no. 78, Bogotá, (October, 1884), p. 54.

²⁶ Manuel Vélez to Liborio Zerda, Paris, 16 October, 1882 in L. Zerda, *El Dorado, Estudio Histórico, Etnográfico y Arqueológico de los Chibchas*, (Bogotá, 1883), p. 97.

other objects to his friends; he had lost what was left during the Franco-Prussian war when his house had been converted into a barracks.²⁷

2.3.2. Romantic Liberals

This incipient awareness of pre-Hispanic societies gained strength in the minds of a group of academics and scientists when Radical Liberalism came on the scene. After 1849, the reforms promoted initially by José Hilario López sought to create a New Granada that would destroy the social structure inherited from the colonial era. The Radicals established the legal framework for a new political and social system in the country, a society that would now be governed by free exchange of ideas, individual liberty, religious tolerance, and the sovereignty of the people. With these major social reforms went an enthusiasm for poetry, and for the French romantic novel with a social background which idealised the primitive world and spoke of harmony with nature. As Jaime Jaramillo Uribe has stated, even ordinary people came to read the works of French romanticism; liberal and conservative newspapers alike published such works in serial form. José María Samper, one of the outstanding representatives of that romantic generation, confessed how the works of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Alphonse de Lamartine and Victor Hugo had enriched "*la luz de mi alma.*"²⁸

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 98 - 100.

²⁸ J. M. Samper, quoted in J. Jaramillo Uribe, *El Pensamiento Colombiano en el Siglo XIX*, (Bogotá, 1964), p. 175.

The atmosphere around the middle of the century favoured a romantic identification with the pre-Hispanic native world, and there duly appeared a group of epics with indigenous themes. *Aquimen-Zaque o la Conquista del Reino de Tunja* by Próspero Pereira Gamba came out in 1858, a poem about “las antiguas tradiciones del pueblo de Hunza i del feroz Ibero, para llorar el trágico destino, que sobre Akimen i su corte vino.”²⁹ Pereira Gamba claimed that he had been looking for a theme that would appeal to the intelligence rather to vanity, he was tired of requests from ladies to write lyric poetry.³⁰ Based on a reading of the chronicles of Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita, Fray Pedro Simón and Alonso de Zamora, Pereira Gamba recreated Aquimen as an Indian hero in contrast to the Spanish antiheroes who subjugated his people. Aquimen, chieftain of Tunja, narrates to the Spaniards the history of his kingdom and its age-old mythology. The arrival of the Catholic religion is recreated by Pereira Gamba by a letter arriving from Charles V, with the news that there was only one God and that the Dominican friars had been entrusted with the task of spreading the Christian faith. Thereupon, according to the author, work gets underway on building churches on the ruins of the ancient Muisca places of worship. Aquimen’s people yield to the Spaniards and the chieftain is sentenced to death. Pereira Gamba shows how the *El Dorado* legend served to increase the Conquistadors’ greed for gold, and acted as a spur for the expedition by Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada to the central part of the country. In the last of the poem’s twelve sections, the Conquest of Tunja is compared with that of Peru and Mexico, and the Spaniards are reproached for their excessive avarice.

²⁹ P. Pereira Gamba, *Akimen-Zaque o la Conquista de Tunja*, (Bogotá, 1858), p. i.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. ii.

Pereira also wrote another novel, *Calarká*, which he dedicated to a famous Quimbaya chieftain, though this was never published. He was not only interested in the mythical recreation of pre-Hispanic societies. In 1857 he gave his readers a definition of a new science, anthropology :

La antropología es la ciencia del hombre, el estudio de la humanidad. Ella abraza la parte física, la orgánica, la moral, la intelectual, la social. (.....) Ella se deriva de las eternas reglas que rijen el Universo, desde los principios de la física que se enseñan a conocer i clasificar la materia, hasta los axiomas de la religión que descubren los misterios del alma y los últimos destinos de la humanidad. (.....) La antropología es sin duda el epílogo del gran libro de la naturaleza i la emanación fecunda i practica de las mas recónditas verdades del cristianismo.³¹

This incipient interest of Pereira's in anthropology from a Christian point of view led in 1888 to the foundation of the Philanthropic Society for the Protection of Colombian Aborigines under his leadership. Its aims included introducing the "Christian civilisation" amongst indigenous groups, and also promoting and encouraging immigration by foreigners.³²

In the realm of romantic literature, Felipe Pérez took inspiration in 1856 from the Conquest of Peru and published *Huayna Capac, Atahuallpa and Jilma*, "a series of historical novels which can be looked on as being a sketch of the last decades of the Inca Empire."³³ In these works, which extolled and praised the

³¹ P. Pereira Gamba, "Antropología", in *El Album*, no. 23, Bogotá (16 January 1857), pp. 73 - 74.

³² Resolution signed by Government Minister Carlos Holguín, 18 May 1888, in *Anales de la Instrucción Pública de Colombia*, no. 71, vol. XII, Bogotá, (June, 1888), pp. 436 - 437. The Society for the Protection of Aborigines, whose President was Pereira Gamba, supported a group of Tunebo natives in a land claim which had not been successful despite the work done in favour of the natives by the local prelate. The Society managed to get the land restored to the natives. In *Ibid.*, pp. 434 - 435.

³³ F. Pérez, *Huayna Capac*, (Bogotá, 1856), p. 3.

Inca rulers and state, Pérez specifically compared Huayna Capac to Louis XIV, the “Sun King” :

Huayna Capac era un gran rey superior en un todo a su país, el cual comprendía con esa facilidad que es peculiar a los hombres de su genio y que si en vez de vivir y reinar en el reino americano, hubiera vivido y reinado en el mundo europeo, habría sido príncipe a lo Luis XIV y la historia nos hablaría de él como de un verdadero hombre de estado.³⁴

2.3.3. “Getting to Know the Country and Admiring the Antiquities”

During the 1850s, one of the priorities was getting to know the country, its riches, and the customs, appearance and features of its inhabitants. Colonel Joaquín Acosta in 1848 published his work *Compendio Histórico del Descubrimiento y Colonización de la Nueva Granada* in Paris. Acosta, who was a chemist, geographer and historian, had travelled to Europe in 1825 to study natural sciences with support from Vice-President Santander’s government. In Paris, von Humboldt had presented him to the astronomer François Arago and the physicist Gay Lussac, and he studied at the French Institute of Sciences.³⁵ On his return to Colombia, Acosta held various official posts in the government, and was responsible for the Astronomical Observatory and the National Museum from 1832 to 1837. He attempted to bring together all the published documentation relating to the discovery and conquest of New Granada, together with accounts that had not been published at the time, such as the chronicles of Juan Rodríguez Freyle and Pedro de Aguado. He wrote a history that “would instruct the young” about what happened in New Granada between

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³⁵ S. Acosta de Samper, *Biografía del General Joaquín Acosta*, (Bogotá, 1901), pp. 109, 111.

the time that Columbus arrived in America and the death of Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada in 1579. A careful and detailed reading of the chronicles convinced Acosta that, quite apart from the fact that these accounts were incomplete and contained errors and inaccuracies, they “were full of fables that swamped the essential facts.”³⁶ He nevertheless praised the work of certain chroniclers, such as Juan de Castellanos, whom he considered to be outstanding because of his geographical descriptions and because of his memory, which enabled him to retain the images of his youth.³⁷

The major contribution made by Acosta in his work was not just the arduous historical task of drawing up an annotated bibliography of both published and unpublished works by the chroniclers. As one of the appendices to his work he published Father Duquesne’s *Disertación del Calendario de los Muisca*, which had hitherto only circulated in manuscript form. He also included a short article entitled *Nota sobre algunas piedras Muisca*, written by the Secretary of the Geographical Society of France, Edmé François Jomard, an antiquarian and a great friend of Acosta. This short note described the collection of objects from Cundinamarca that Jomard had acquired in 1840, and which contained a further six stones with signs similar to those that von Humboldt had said represented the Muisca calendar. This remarkable note by Jomard anticipated the criticisms made in 1892 by Vicente Restrepo about the alleged Muisca calendar. After comparing the signs carved on the stones in his collection with Father

³⁶ J. Acosta, *Compendio Histórico del Descubrimiento y Colonización de la Nueva Granada en el Siglo Décimo Sexto*, p. v.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

Duquesne's illustrations reproduced by Humboldt and Acosta, Jomard posed the following question:

Si estas piedras son calendarios ¿Cómo es que figuras enteramente semejantes representan días diferentes de la semana?³⁸

Despite Jomard's very reasonable doubt, the idea that the Muisca calendar was a symbol of "civilisation" nevertheless continued to exercise the minds of many people who were interested in Colombia's pre-Hispanic societies until 1892, when Restrepo, as mentioned earlier, finally dismantled this idea through his careful research into Muisca symbology.

Joaquín Acosta was acquainted with the works of William Prescott on the Conquest of Peru and Mexico, and Acosta thought that Prescott was intending to write the history of the Conquest of New Granada.³⁹ With this in mind, Acosta offered Prescott all his materials, books and notes, together with a map he had drawn of New Granada at the time of the discovery of America before writing his *Compendio*, but Prescott "deceived him", to coin Acosta's own words, and announced that the new work he would undertake was to be a history of Phillip II.⁴⁰

³⁸ E. F. Jomard, "Nota sobre algunas piedras muisca" in *Ibid.*, p. 419.

³⁹ Acosta was referring to Prescott's works *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, (New York, 1843), and *History of the Conquest of Peru*, (London, 1847).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

Two years later, in 1850, after reading the description by Manuel Vélez of the *El Infiernito* temple, Acosta visited the site and drew a sketch of the temple.⁴¹ Unlike Vélez, who had put forward the idea that *El Infiernito* was an extremely old monument, Acosta was of the opinion that the temple had been built by the Muisca a few years before the arrival of the Spaniards. Based on descriptions given by both Vélez and Acosta, Jomard, declared this ancient New World monument worthy of further exploration.⁴²

The second scientific work which was published during the period was Ezequiel Uricoechea's *Memoria sobre las Antigüedades Neogranadinas*.⁴³ In this pioneer archaeological study of Colombia published in Berlin in 1854, Uricoechea first set out to reassess the chroniclers' ideas about the barbarism of pre-Hispanic societies, on the basis of an analysis of the social life, rites, customs and habits of these societies which, for Uricoechea, were the features that would determine the extent of the "peoples' civilization."⁴⁴ His second aim was to draw

⁴¹ J. Acosta, "Ruines Découvertes près de Tunja dans l'Amérique Centrale", in *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Paris*, vol. XIII, Paris, (1850), p. 301.

⁴² E. F. Jomard, "Explication d'une planche relative au monument de Tunja, Nouvelle Grenadé", in *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Paris*, vol. XIV, Paris, (1850), pp. 425 - 426.

⁴³ Ezequiel Uricoechea, 1834 - 1880, a naturalist and a philologist, was one of the great Colombian scientists of the nineteenth century. An orphan who had been born into a wealthy family, he was sent by his elder brother at the age of thirteen to the United States, where after finishing High School he graduated as a doctor from Yale University. He travelled to Europe, where he obtained a doctorate in chemistry and mineralogy from the University of Göttingen, Germany. In 1854, the year he graduated from Göttingen, he published his *Memoria sobre las Antigüedades Neogranadinas*. After studying astronomy and meteorology at the Brussels Observatory and geography in several parts of Europe, he returned to Colombia in 1857 and for a decade was in charge of chemistry and mineralogy at the *Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario*. In 1859 he founded the *Sociedad de Naturalistas Neogranadinos* which was only in existence for a period of two years, from 1859 to 1861. This society followed the model of European scientific societies and boasted many notable savants of Europe amongst its correspondents. Uricoechea settled in Europe in 1867. This second period saw a change in his research interests, as he abandoned his naturalist and chemical studies and devoted himself to linguistics and philology. He promoted the publication in Paris of the first collection of American Indian languages, *La Colección Lingüística Americana*. He was elected to a chair of Arabic at Brussels University in 1878, and as a teacher and orientalist visited Beirut with his students, where he died in 1880.

⁴⁴ E. Uricoechea, *Memoria sobre las Antigüedades Neogranadinas*, pp. 1, 3.

the attention of Colombians and foreigners who visited the country to the remains of the antiquities. Uricoechea wondered why, if they marvelled at European or Egyptian or Roman monuments, Colombians should not consider those in their own country in the same manner. His reading of the works of the chroniclers and of Humboldt, Acosta and Vélez, and also the large collection of documents brought together by Lord Kingsborough on Mexican antiquities and the work by Mariano Eduardo de Rivero and Johann Jacob von Tschudi on Peruvian antiquities, was fundamental to the young Uricoechea in his *Memoria sobre las Antigüedades Neogranadinas*.⁴⁵ Uricoechea discussed the origins of American man; he pointed to theories about the origin of Muisca society based on the theories of Paravey who, as already mentioned, had speculated about the possible origins of the inhabitants of the Bogotá highlands; making a comparative analysis of Japanese, Basque and Arabic characters and hieroglyphics and those in the Muisca calendar.⁴⁶ Uricoechea is cautious about Paravey's hyperimaginative hypothesis and leaves the reader in some doubt about his theories.

In the *Memoria*, Uricoechea confirmed Humboldt's views, with new data. In addition to the calendar, he considered the *El Infiernito* temple, as described by Vélez and Acosta, to be a Muisca monument; for the European antiquarians of the day such a construction was, like the calendar, a clear indication of a "civilised" society. The main contribution that Uricoechea made in this work was

⁴⁵ L. Kingsborough, *Antiquities of Mexico Comprising Facsimiles of Ancient Mexican Paintings and Hieroglyphs*, 9 vols., (London, 1831 - 1848), and M. E. de Rivero and J. D. de Tschudi, *Antigüedades Peruanas*, 1 vol. and atlas (Vienna, 1851).

⁴⁶ M. Paravey, *Mémoire sur l'Origine Japonaise, Arabe et Basque de la Civilisation des Peuples du Plateau de Bogotá*, pp. 5 - 6.

nevertheless a chapter on metallurgical technology, as represented in the *Tunjos*, the gold votive offerings of the Muiscas.(Figure 2). He described the techniques employed in making, casting and moulding these, in making the wire and joining the parts, and how a mould was used for casting, thus anticipating the re-discovery of the lost wax technique. Uricoechea sensed the system:

Me parece, pues, que el único modo que podían emplear era horadar, en forma cilíndrica, el barro o arena que servía de matriz, hacían un cañuto, i en éste echaban oro derretido.⁴⁷

He showed how false the hypotheses of other authors had been when they stated that the Muiscas cast gold cold using certain vegetable agents, as Father Antonio Julián had claimed. He carried out chemical analyses of two *tunjos* and showed the proportions of gold, copper and silver in the alloys used, comparing them with the native Colombian gold described by the French scientist Jean Baptiste Boussingault.⁴⁸ Uricoechea attempted to use this evidence to show that the Muiscas were an example of a “civilisation” that had been degraded by the Spanish Conquest :

Si tenemos restos de este pueblo que más fuertes que sus criadores han resistido por tres siglos de vicisitudes, hagamos el último esfuerzo para salvarlos del entero olvido. Ya que no me es dado llenar en él todo mis deseos, renovar un interés hacia estos pueblos, ya por años adormecido, sacar su nombre victorioso de entre los escombros de la ruina, sea lo mui poco que mis débiles fuerzas contribuyen, un estímulo para mis compatriotas i la ofrenda más grandiosa que puedo dar a las cenizas de los primeros habitantes de nuestra patria.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ E. Uricoechea, *Memoria sobre las Antigüedades Neogranadinas*, p. 42.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 44 - 45. The analysis of the two artefacts was also described in the article “Analysis of Two Gold Idols of the Aborigines of New Granada” in *The American Journal of Science and Arts*, vol. XIX, (May, 1855), pp. 243 - 246.

⁴⁹ E. Uricoechea, *Memoria sobre las Antigüedades Neogranadinas.*, p. v.

Uricoechea's view, that the origins of nationhood were to be found in an intelligent people, the Muisca, is repeated in many later studies by Colombian and European researchers, as we will see later on. However, in his opinion, which was similar to that of Humboldt, the inhabitants of the lowlands still remained in a state of barbarism or savagery :

Cuando tratamos de la civilización americana, no debemos juzgar ésta por la de los grupos o pueblos nomádicos que se encontraban en las selvas pero sí por la que habían alcanzado los moradores de Méjico, Cuzco i Bogotá.⁵⁰

This dichotomy made by Uricoechea between the “civilised” societies who were established in the highlands and who lived by agriculture in sharp contrast to the “barbarous” nomadic groups which inhabited the lowlands, was a permanent idea among Colombian scholars and historians until the consolidation of academic archaeology and anthropology in Colombia in the 1930's, when scientific ethnological research promoted the study of the social, political and economical organization of lowland groups and their religious and symbolic traditions, and demonstrated that there was no “barbarism” in their cultural systems.

2.3.4. *El Museo del Hospicio*

During the same period, Father Romoaldo Cuervo Rubiano, a naturalist and chaplain at the *Hospicio de Bogotá*, built up a Muisca collection and opened a

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

small museum at his house in Bogotá.⁵¹ According to the Brazilian diplomat Miguel María Lisboa, the collection consisted of a “series of idols and amphorae of the Muisca which give a very good idea of the civilisation of those natives compared with other tribes in South America.”⁵² This museum had been built up by Father Cuervo with great zeal and dedication and represented a major financial effort. He received no support whatever from the government or from private individuals, according to José Joaquín Borda, who attributed to the lack of interest by the state the loss of valuable objects belonging to the ancient inhabitants :

Algunos hombres sabios se han levantado de cuando en cuando para dar luz a las oscuras tradiciones, para sacar de entre la tierra restos monumentales de aquellos pueblos; pero ¿qué fruto podrían lograr si en nadie han encontrado apoyo para encontrar tan bella empresa, si han tenido que ceder a la pobreza, i dejar, aunque a pesar suyo, en la oscuridad, tantos hechos con qué embellecer la historia, tantos descubrimientos para las ciencias? A excepción de estos hombres, los demás han mirado con descuido cuanto atañe a la civilización de nuestros antiguos indígenas.⁵³

Father Cuervo, who knew Manuel Vélez Barrientos, was, like him, an enthusiastic amateur archaeologist. Vélez himself, who as mentioned above had been afraid to donate his archaeological collection to the National Museum before he set out for Europe, had left a wooden bench and several pottery objects from Antioquia and Cundinamarca in Father Cuervo’s museum.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Manuel Vélez Barrientos to Liborio Zerda, Paris, 16 October, 1882, in L. Zerda, *El Dorado, Estudio Histórico, Etnográfico y Arqueológico de los Chibchas*, p. 97.

⁵² M. M. Lisboa, *Relação de uma Viagem a Venezuela, Nova Granada e Equador*, (Brussels, 1866), p. 236.

⁵³ J. J. Borda, “Un Museo”, in *El Álbum*, no. 6, Bogotá, (29 June 1856.), p. 47.

⁵⁴ Manuel Vélez Barrientos to Liborio Zerda, Paris, 16 October 1882, in L. Zerda, *El Dorado, Estudio Histórico, Etnográfico y Arqueológico de los Chibchas*, p. 100.

Who was Cuervo, and where did the objects in this museum come from? Why did Vélez trust a small and private museum like Cuervo's more than the National Museum at the time?

José Romoaldo Cuervo, 1802 - 1871, had studied philology, theology and canon law and had been ordained as a priest in 1828. As Chaplain at the *Hospicio* or *Casa de Expósitos* in Bogotá, he lived in a small, modest house adjacent to the Hospice building, where he converted the living room into an area for displaying native and natural history objects, while the yard became a sort of Botanical Garden. The archaeological collection, "one of the most varied we have come across and which could have attracted attention in any country and could have been displayed at European exhibitions", according to José Caicedo Rojas, who was later to be director of the National Museum from 1881 to 1884, consisted of woven blankets, ornaments, weapons, twelve *tunjos* or anthropomorphic votive offerings of varying shapes and sizes, as well as mummies found in graves.⁵⁵

A detailed list of the objects that made up the collection was sent by the German Minister in Bogotá, Hermann Albert Schumacher, to the Royal Museums Administration in Berlin in 1874. Apart from performing his official duties, Schumacher, who was the German Minister in Bogotá between 1872 and 1875, undertook exhaustive research into the lives and work of three great scientists of Colombia, José Celestino Mutis, Francisco José de Caldas, and

⁵⁵ J. Caicedo Rojas, "Algunos Recuerdos del Presbítero José Romoaldo Cuervo" in *El Repertorio Colombiano*, vol. I, no. 2, Bogotá, (August, 1878), pp. 112 – 113.

Agustín Codazzi.⁵⁶ The intention behind the information that Schumacher sent was obviously that Father Cuervo's collection should be acquired by the *Königliche Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin. According to descriptions of the time, it included the following "antiquities":

Dos momias, setenta y tres ídolos en cerámica, sesenta y siete jarras y ollas con decoraciones, treinta y seis vasijas de cerámica algunas con trabajo en relieve, tres instrumentos musicales, ocho collares de conchas y uno de serpentina tallada, treinta y tres armas de piedra, piedras con la forma del calendario descrito por Alexander von Humboldt con diseños un tanto extraños, veintidós objetos en oro provenientes de Guasca, Guatavita, Cáqueza y Sogamoso.⁵⁷

These origins of the archaeological objects confirm that a major part of Father Cuervo's collection was Muisca, as Miguel María Lisboa had said. Apart from the "antiquities", Cuervo's collection included ethnographic objects: two alligator-tooth necklaces, two wooden seats and one made of palm, a straw and reed hat, and two woolen blankets with decoration.⁵⁸

Unlike other private collections that were built up in the late nineteenth century in Colombia with objects which had been bought, Father Cuervo's had been acquired on his research trips around the country. Cuervo visited the Carare and Opón regions, the Orinoco and several times went down to the lower part of

⁵⁶ H. A. Schumacher, *Sudamerikanische Studien, Drei Lebens und Culturbilder, Mutis, Caldas, Codazzi, 1790 – 1890*. Subsequent editions are H. A. Schumacher, *Biografía del General Agustín Codazzi*, San Fernando de Apure, 1916; H. A. Schumacher, *Codazzi, un Forjador de la Cultura*, (Bogotá, 1988); H. A. Schumacher, *Mutis, un Forjador de la Cultura*, (Bogotá, 1986); H. A. Schumacher, *Caldas, un Forjador de la Cultura*, (Bogotá, 1986).

⁵⁷ Hermann Albert Schumacher to the General Royal Museums Administration in Berlin, Berlin 4 November 1874, in Acta Schumacher, 1814/74 AMVB. Translation by the author, MVB.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

the Tequendama Falls.⁵⁹ Father Cuervo made five trips to the *Llanos de San Martín*, and came back from these with many varieties of plants, seeds, stones, and birds, and native objects for his museum.⁶⁰ In 1871, on one of these trips to the *Llanos* he was accompanied by the Spanish diplomat and writer José María Gutiérrez de Alba.⁶¹ The Government had decided that explorers should be sent out into the jungles and the *Llanos* to gather samples of products that might be exported and for exhibition in the 1871 National Exposition. The exploratory commission to the *Llanos* was made up of Father Cuervo, Gutiérrez de Alba, and two young men, both later prominent in the Colombian scientific world, Carlos Michelsen and Nicolás Saenz. They gathered samples of products which could be used as export products, and Saenz and Michelsen won a gold medal at the 1871 National Exposition for the textiles and fabrics they collected on the trip.⁶² Unfortunately, Father Cuervo succumbed to “malignant fevers” on this trip; he died on 3 August 1871.

The *Königliche Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin tried to buy the collection in 1874 but, as Hermann Schumacher wrote to Museum Director Adolf Bastian, an actor who was passing through Bogotá got in first and offered Father Cuervo’s

⁵⁹ On one occasion, he was accompanied by the French Minister Baron Gros and Mr. Adams, the British chargé d’affaires, when according to José Caicedo Rojas, although various other people were with them, only the two diplomats accompanied Father Cuervo on this dangerous excursion. They reached the bottom of the deep precipice by sitting inside a sort of knapsack hanging from ropes and they travelled around that region which was “unknown to other mortals” in *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁶¹ José María Gutiérrez de Alba, an agent of the Spanish Government who had the mission to explore the possibilities for renewed relations with Colombia, spent nearly two of the fourteen years he lived in Colombia between 1870 and 1884 travelling around the country. His main calling was not so much diplomacy as writing, and the main purpose of his trips was to gather material for a book he intended to publish. E. Sánchez, “José María Gutiérrez de Alba”, manuscript.

⁶² J. M. Gutiérrez de Alba “Impresiones de un Viaje a América”, vol. 7, manuscript; C. Michelsen, N. Saenz, *Exposición Nacional. 20 de Julio 1871. Informe de los exploradores del territorio de San Martín*, (Bogotá, 1871).

heirs \$1,000 instead of the \$666 that the Berlin Museum had offered.⁶³ Schumacher felt that “the loss of the calendar stones was tremendous”, and he paid to have them photographed in front of a mirror so that the Berlin Museum could have a record of all the symbols that were engraved on them.⁶⁴

2.4. The Chorographic Commission and Pre-Hispanic Remains

During this same period, the Chorographic Commission, the mid-century scientific expedition, 1850 - 1859, set about its work. Led by the Italian geographer Agustín Codazzi, this project produced more than 130 maps and it also drew up a geographical and social description of each of the twenty-seven provinces it visited. The Commission was the most important state-sponsored scientific expedition of the nineteenth century, in terms of both the scope of the geographical task undertaken and the resulting recording of economic, historical and social information. It was also fortunate to be able to have the services of exceptional draughtsmen and painters resulting in 177 illustrations by Carmelo Fernández, Enrique Price and Manuel María Paz which form part of the official *Album* of the Chorographic Commission.⁶⁵ Twenty five of these illustrations portray pre-Hispanic objects and native groups of the time.⁶⁶

⁶³ Hermann Schumacher to Adolf Bastian, New York, 16 March 1875, in Acta Schumacher, 620/75 AMVB.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ From this original *Album* which was deposited at the Biblioteca Nacional in Bogotá, only one hundred and fifty one have survived until the present day. Nevertheless, other collections made by the Commission, such as fifty five watercolours by Henry Price and six by Manuel María Paz on San Agustín are kept in Medellín and in Bogotá. E. Sánchez, *Gobierno y Geografía: Agustín Codazzi y la Comisión Corográfica de la Nueva Granada*, (Bogotá, 1998), p. 566.

⁶⁶ See J. Ardila, C. Lleras, *Batalla contra el olvido*, (Bogotá, 1985), where the whole collection is published. See also Beatriz Gonzalez “ Colombia en cuatro tiempos: Carmelo Fernández 1809-1887” , in *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico*, vol. XXVIII, no. 28, Bogotá, (1991).

As a result of the work done in Antioquia, Codazzi expressed his admiration of the “elegant and symmetrical urns and vases” made of gold, and the “bowls, amphorae and pitchers made of sundry types of pottery” that were found in native graves. This appraisal by Codazzi not only of gold objects but also of pottery ones indicated to him “great industrial progress and a high degree of artistic taste” in peoples who were outstanding in the arts, where the “remains of their civilisation corroborate the idea of their notable culture.”⁶⁷ Codazzi pointed to the variety of sites chosen for burying the dead and the varied forms of burial, especially stressing the importance of a tomb which looked like an “underground temple”, on the Pajarito site, Yarumal. A range of objects was found there, “idols, gold ornaments, human figures in different postures, large urns, instruments, lamps, censers and also plaster moulds for the gold pieces that had to be cast.”⁶⁸ Codazzi paid particular attention to the large amount of pre-Hispanic gold that was obtained from the graves, pointing to how “more than one hundred pounds of finished gold” had been obtained from one small dig near Sonsón. He deeply regretted the fact that most of the gold objects were melted down, and that the pottery utensils which had been removed from the graves were used in kitchens. He inferred from his observations that the peoples who lived in that region in pre-Hispanic times had been truly notable, and he stressed their creative genius :

La multitud de alhajas ricas que en todos estos parajes se han sacado y aún se sacan con provecho comprueba no solamente la grande

⁶⁷ A. Codazzi, “Antigüedades Indígenas”, in F. Pérez, *Geografía y Política de los Estados Unidos de Colombia*, vol. II, (Bogotá, 1862), pp. 76 - 77.

⁶⁸ A. Codazzi, “Jeografía Física i Política de la Provincia de Antioquia”, in *Gaceta Oficial*, no. 1710, Bogotá, (23 March 1854), p. 267.

población aborigen que ocupaba el país el tiempo de la Conquista sino también por las manufacturas, la industria y por la simétrica delicadeza de los relieves, un ingenio artístico y geométrico.⁶⁹

At the same time, the Government contracted the secretary of the Chorographic Commission, Manuel Ancízar, to gather information to produce a statistical and geographical dictionary of New Granada, the rather different resulting text was published with the title *Peregrinación de Alpha*. A sharp observer and energetic researcher, he gathered information from the provinces of Ocaña, Pamplona, Santander, Socorro, Soto, Tundama, Tunja and Vélez. He showed sensitivity towards pre-Hispanic objects and archaeological remains. On the first Chorographic Commission journey in the company of Codazzi, Ancízar came across a group of native burial grounds north of Zipaquirá on the road from Simijaca to Lake Fúquene and on opening up one of the graves, he found *morallas* or imperfect emeralds, stone beads, the remains of a skeleton, and a clay pot.⁷⁰ Near the settlement of Saboyá, he analysed the native inscriptions on *Piedrapintada*, a petroglyph which Ancízar considered “a very curious and unusual native monument”, a rock covered with “hieroglyphics painted as if with a brush in indelible ink.”⁷¹

The Commission visited San Agustín in 1857, and Codazzi carefully investigated forty statues and shrines which he recorded in a detailed report, describing each one in great detail; he drew also a map showing the precise location of each. Manuel María Paz, a Commission draughtsman, also drew

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

⁷⁰ M. Ancízar, *La Peregrinación de Alpha por las Provincias del Norte de la Nueva Granada*, (Bogotá, 1853), pp. 28 - 29.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 72 - 74.

thirty eight illustrations of the statues, shrines and monuments in the San Agustín Valley. One of the illustrations of a statue is shown in Figure 3. Codazzi's central hypothesis about San Agustín was that it was a sacred site, a sanctuary for religious worship, where the statues were symbols for eternity:

Estas sociedades tenían una teogonía completa i destinaban determinados lugares al culto de ídolos sedentarios i a la mansión permanente de los sacerdotes (...) Tal es el espléndido marco en que está engastado el valle de San Agustín, separado del resto de la tierra como un santuario misterioso, i aún podría decirse que invijilado por las moles estupendas que, cual centinelas de la eternidad, se levantan a su alrededor.⁷²

According to Codazzi's theory, San Agustín was a shrine where only priests and their neophyte followers for initiation rites might live, as indicated by the position of the statues and the individual shrines in the valley.

The account by Codazzi was widely read. European scholars were becoming more and more interested in San Agustín. José María Gutiérrez de Alba, in his travels around the country, visited San Agustín and attempted to carry out his own archaeological digs. He copied the lithographs made by the Chorographic Commission, and attempted to complete and correct some of Codazzi's observations. In 1869 the German geologists Alphons Stübel and Wilhelm Reiss, searching for a rich old mine known as *La Plata* which had been totally destroyed in 1583, themselves came across San Agustín. Stübel considered it to be "the only place in all Colombia where remains of pre-Columbian art are to

⁷² A. Codazzi, "Antigüedades Indígenas", in F. Pérez, *Geografía y Política de los Estados Unidos de Colombia*, vol. II, p. 84.

be found.”⁷³ Seeing the head of a statue sticking up out of the ground, after three days’ work, they succeeded in digging it out. Twenty-three natives were needed to lift it. Stübel made drawings of some statues, and took some photographs which were later deposit in the Cartographic Museum of Leipzig.⁷⁴

2. 5. The Search for Gold and Quimbaya Artefacts

Greed had as usual accompanied the search for gold by the Spanish conquistadors who arrived in the Antioquia region from the Sinú area, where they had gained experience in locating pre-Hispanic graves because tombs in that part of the country were commonly burial mounds that could be recognised easily from a distance, as stated in Chapter 1. The plundering in the Sinú region had been so intensive that the Spaniards had set up two temporary camps in the Villa Rica de Madrid and Zenú, and established a foundry that was used for melting down ancient gold objects.⁷⁵ The Sinú tombs had been practically cleared out by the middle of the sixteenth century, and so the Spaniards switched their attention to the gold mining areas on the Upper San Jorge River and in Antioquia. In this region they found native graves containing large quantities of gold on the slopes leading down to the River Cauca; the Treasury account books in Santa Fé de Antioquia listed gold objects as *oro de joyas* or *oro de caracuries*.⁷⁶

⁷³ Letter from Alphons Stübel, Popayán, 13 February 1869, in “Cartas de Alphons Stübel: Colombia”, *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico*, vol. 31 no. 35, Bogotá, (1994), p. 60.

⁷⁴ K.T. Preuss, *Arte Monumental Prehistórico, Excavaciones hechas en el Alto Magdalena y San Agustín, Colombia* (Bogotá, 1931), p. 7.

⁷⁵ R. West, *Colonial Placer Mining in Colombia*, (Ann Arbor, 1952), p. 66.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

2.5.1. The Nineteenth Century *Guaqueria* in the Region of Antioquia

During the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a new grave-plundering boom in Antioquia and in the Quindío region as emigrants from the central and mountainous regions of Antioquia began to settle these frontier lands. As had happened in the sixteenth century, the settlers searched for gold. Grave-plundering became an established activity, as Agustín Codazzi noted when he travelled through Antioquia in 1852 :

Es muy considerable la cantidad de oro que se extrae de las tumbas de los indios, a cuyo trabajo se ocupa con predilección gran número de antioqueños y casi se puede decir que forma la única industria sistemáticamente establecida, con sus maestros y baquianos, cuya experiencia hereditaria hace las veces de la famosa vara mágica para el descubrimiento de tesoros.⁷⁷

Whole families led an itinerant life dedicated themselves to the “art of the gravedigger”, as the doctor, historian and amateur archaeologist Manuel Uribe Angel wrote:

Forman especies de tribus nómadas con sus jefes, sus hábitos y sus costumbres aparte. Provistos de herramientas y de víveres, cambian de domicilio, se retiran de sus lugares por épocas a veces dilatadas y hacen de sus exploraciones investigaciones y trabajos una existencia enteramente peculiar. Como todo el que anda a rastro de riquezas, su vida es entusiasta y abundante en ilusiones, con frecuencia desvanecidas y reemplazadas por una realidad tormentosa.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ A. Codazzi, “Jeografía Física y Política de las Provincias de Antioquia” in *Gaceta Oficial*, Bogotá (23 March 1854), p. 267.

⁷⁸ M. Uribe Angel, *Geografía General y Compendio Histórico del Estado de Antioquia en Colombia*, (Paris, 1885), p. 499.

Grave plundering was legal and socially accepted, because of the 1833 law which granted right of ownership to anybody who discovered pre-Hispanic objects. The trade itself and also the different working systems and techniques involved were handed down from generation to generation, and grave plunderers developed ways of identifying the most common types of soil and relief, using mapping symbols that showed the type of ground on the basis of its colour and texture.⁷⁹ Uribe Angel lamented the fact that the grave plunderers' ambition extended no further than gold and that all other objects were of little importance to them. He hoped that "if science should come to be in harmony with profit", in other words, if there was an interest in digging scientifically and not just in searching for personal gain, archaeology would boast many valuable discoveries.⁸⁰

Andrés Posada Arango, who was with Uribe Angel a pioneer in research into the pre-Hispanic societies in the Antioquia region, recognized that it was thanks to this greed-motivated "industry" that gold artifacts had been found in "native graves":

La multitud de joyas o adornos de oro que de ordinario contienen las sepulturas de los indios de Antioquia las ha hecho un objeto de codicia, y el descubrirlas y vaciarlas es hoy una industria. Esta circunstancia es la que ha facilitado el conocerlas un poco.⁸¹

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 500 - 504.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 500.

⁸¹ A. Posada Arango, *Ensayo Etnográfico sobre los Aborígenes del Estado de Antioquia en Colombia*, (Paris, 1871), p. 20.

Legends and stories about the riches that were to be found in pre-Hispanic tombs in the Quindío region spread throughout Antioquia. Jesús Arango Cano, who spent his whole life in grave-plundering activity, wrote in his memoirs :

Unos g.uaqueros perdidos en las montañas de Quindío se habían encontrado la laguna del indio Maravélez, y en las aguas cristalinas de esta laguna flotaba una totuma de oro que no se dejaba tocar porque estaba encantada y si alguno la tocaba pitaba como un toro y desaparecía. En esta laguna, el rey Calarcá había depositado todo el oro de su imperio.⁸²

Whole families set out in search of *guacas*. They built huts to live in. They had problems getting supplies, and the climate was unhealthy. The gold they found was very often not enough to pay the costs of the sickness and disease they suffered from. When grave plundering fever was at its height, small speculators known as *gasteros* began to finance these activities.⁸³ Small companies were set up consisting of two grave plunderers and one *gastero*, and when there were several such companies in a particular town or area, they often shared the rights to tombs that had already been located, a phenomenon called *tamboreo*.⁸⁴ With this working method, grave plunderers from different companies would all work on the dig, and what was found would be shared out equally amongst everyone.

This process, which typically involved all sorts of private and individual agreements and arrangements between these treasure hunters, was the method used for removing the Quimbaya artefacts which formed collections

⁸² J. Arango Cano, *Recuerdos de la G.uaquería en el Quindío*, 2 vols., (Bogotá, 1924), vol. I, p.11.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

both in Colombia and in European museums from pre-Hispanic tombs in the Antioquia, Caldas and Quindío regions.

How were these grave plunderers able to practise their trade when the tombs were located on private property, and why did the owners of this property allowed them to do it?

According to Arango Cano, the owner of the land was asked for his permission, and if he granted this, it was on condition that they “covered up” the holes that they had dug; the owner of the property also generally charged them a quarter of the value of what they managed to find, as well as stipulating that he or his representative should be present. The land owners naturally did not trust the grave plunderers, who sometimes removed what they found in the tombs without paying the owner the agreed amount.⁸⁵

The grave plunderers’ system of values and beliefs mixed a desire to obtain valuable artifacts with strategies aimed at protecting them from the curses, images of fire and strange sounds that were supposedly the results from desecrated graves.⁸⁶ According to Arango Cano, one *guaca* in the town of La Tebaida in Quindío “lit up every year”:

En el mes de abril de cada año se vé la llama de una guaca, esta llama es pálida y sumamente hermosa, mide aproximadamente cuatro metros de base por cinco metros de altura, terminando en forma de cono. Aparece instantáneamente y dura aproximadamente un minuto. (.....)

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸⁶ C.E. Piazzini, ‘Historia de la Arqueología en Antioquia: Contextos Teóricos y Sociales’, p. 25.

Esta luz se vé en las primeras horas de la noche. (.....) En el lugar donde ardía descubrimos muchas guacas bonitas y profundas.⁸⁷

Uribe Angel, however, who was a great connoisseur of Antioquia *guacas*, considered that the popular idea of “gold burning in the graves” was due not so much to the gold itself but rather to the fact that bones containing lime phosphates decompose under the influence of humidity, resulting in phosphoric hydrogen forming. This gas ignites when it comes into contact with air and gives off a weak, bluish light, and these were the “fires” that the pre-Hispanic gold hunters saw, which did indeed indicate the site of a grave containing bones, but not necessarily one with any gold in it.⁸⁸

Some grave plunderers adopted a sedentary lifestyle and set about clearing and acquiring land. The settler could sell the gold objects he found in the tombs, and thus have funds available for acquiring the working tools and provisions he needed. Most pre-Hispanic gold objects that were obtained in this manner were melted down, as the antiquarian and mineralogist Vicente Restrepo records : “very rich graves in which the natives had been buried with their idols” had been plundered since colonial times, and “sadly, the vast majority of the curious objects well worth studying that had been removed had been melted down or dispersed.”⁸⁹ Some *Antioqueños* nevertheless did begin to collect and preserve pre-Hispanic objects, and saved some gold objects from being melted down. Private collectors like Luis N. Botero, Daniel Botero, Eduardo Villa, Vicente

⁸⁷ J. Arango Cano, *Recuerdos de la Guaquería en el Quindío*, vol. II, p. 77.

⁸⁸ M. Uribe Angel, *Geografía General y Compendio Histórico del Estado de Antioquia en Colombia*, p. 497.

⁸⁹ V. Restrepo, *Estudio sobre las Minas de Oro y Plata en Colombia*, First Edition, (Bogotá, 1884), Third Edition, (Bogotá, 1952), p. 28.

Restrepo, Tulio Ospina and Manuel Uribe Angel were known in Medellín, along with José María Restrepo and Gregorio Gutierrez González in Sonsón, Tomás Henao and Santiago Vélez in Manizales, and Valeriano Marulanda in Pereira.⁹⁰

2.5.2. *El Museo de Don Leocadio*

The most important archaeological collection to be built up in Antioquia was the one that belonged to the businessman Leocadio María Arango, 1831 - 1918, who came from a wealthy *Antioqueño* family; he inherited a large fortune from one of his aunts when he was barely six years old. He showed a scientific bent for mineralogy, entomology and “antiquities” from his student days, and began to collect all kinds of mineral samples and pre-Hispanic objects.⁹¹ He was a shareholder in the *El Zancudo* Mining Company, and owned the Amarú and Mina de Oca gold mines in Remedios.⁹² He prospered more and acquired a further six gold mines in Remedios and Segovia; he also founded the Medellín Agricultural Bank, and together with his children was co-founder of the Central Bank of Medellín.⁹³ From 1867 onwards, he owned a number of stores in Medellín, where he sold imported merchandise of “refined good taste”, and he

⁹⁰ A. Posada Arango, *Ensayo Etnográfico sobre los Aborígenes del Estado de Antioquia en Colombia*, p. 2, and República de Colombia, *Catálogo de los Objetos que Presenta el Gobierno de Colombia a la Exposición Histórico-Americana de Madrid*, (Madrid, 1892), p. 16.

⁹¹ L. F. Molina, *Empresarios Colombianos del Siglo XIX*, (Bogotá, 1998), p. 119.

⁹² *El Zancudo* company, which was founded in 1851, was the most important private business organisation in Antioquia in its day, because of the technological innovations it introduced for mining minerals and also because it built up the most substantial national capital in Western Colombia; in R. Brew, *El Desarrollo Económico de Antioquia desde la Independencia hasta 1920*, (Bogotá, 1977), p. 156. The most important properties owned by this company were the El Zancudo silver mine and two smelting companies.

⁹³ L. F. Molina, *Empresarios Colombianos en el Siglo XIX*, pp. 121 - 122.

became the local representative of a number of English, French, Swiss and American commercial and industrial companies.⁹⁴

Alongside his business interests, he built up a valuable and extraordinary archaeological collection, often bartering objects from his stores. He set up a network of buyers for this throughout the towns and villages of Antioquia and in certain parts of Cauca, and gave them the task of purchasing “antiquities”. Arango wrote thousands of letters to his commissioners, spreading the idea of how important his scientific mission was, and instilling in them the idea that these objects were valuable: at first, some had refused to help him, and had written back asking “what for?”⁹⁵ Arango recorded that during the civil war of 1876, some reluctant combatants stayed behind in the mountains “working at digging graves” to avoid military service; he regretted that when they came across pottery vessels they left them behind in the graves and only rescued them if people offered them a reward beforehand.⁹⁶ The archaeological collection that he built up over a period of fifty years with “pleasure and patience” became a private museum of national and international acclaim, kept in his house in San Benito district of Medellin. He displayed gold, pottery and

⁹⁴ Store belonging to don Leocadio’s heirs was described in the following terms in 1918: “Medellín Jewellery Store, Colombia. Successors to the old firm of Leocadio María Arango and Sons, founded in 1867. The present house was established by Mr. David E. Arango, a son of the founder, who has been able, owing to his many high qualities, to keep the high reputation of the original firm which was the first of its kind properly organised in Medellín. Best articles are imported from England, France, Switzerland and the United States. Sewing machines, gramophones, sole agent in Antioquia for the Standard Sewing Machine Company, Columbia Phonograph Company, Tavannes Watch Company, makers of the “Cyma” watch, and the Longines Watch Company”, in *El Libro Azul de Colombia*, (New York, 1918), p. 241.

⁹⁵ L. M. Arango, *Catálogo del Museo*, (Medellín, 1905), p. 11.

⁹⁶ Leocadio María Arango to Adolf Bastián, Medellín, 10 July 1877, in *Acta betreffend die Reisen von Direktor Professor Dr. Bastian, 1875 - 1880, Pars 1B 10, AMVB.*

stone pre-Hispanic objects in four rooms.⁹⁷ The collection, which was greatly admired by foreign visitors, was arranged by categories on “black velvet”, to highlight the value of the gold lime containers, nose ornaments, ear ornaments, breastplates, pins, plates, and animal figures.⁹⁸ A visit to this collection gave visitors a sense of “admiration and illustration” with regard to the level of intelligence, skill and civilisation of these “ancient races.”⁹⁹ Arango established rigorous discipline for cataloguing and caring for his museum. In 1905 he printed a catalogue describing the shapes and features of each object in it, with dimensions and details of where the particular object had been found, and drawings of the most representative objects. An excellent record is therefore available of the magnificent collection that he built up as a “hobby”, as Arango himself said, consisting of 246 gold objects, two of silver, 160 of stone, and 2.600 pottery items.¹⁰⁰ Two outstanding Quimbaya goldwork objects from his collection, a lime-flask and a pendant in the form of a shaman are shown in Figure 4.

Arango therefore comes across as an unprecedented antiquarian in both Antioquia and Colombia in a period when pre-Hispanic gold objects were generally melted down and grave plunderers destroyed pottery because they were only interested in gold. He is also remembered as a collector who built up an organised, classified museum on the basis of contemporary museum criteria, and who was not tempted by offers to purchase his pottery collection from the

⁹⁷ P. de Espagnat, *Souvenirs de la Nouvelle Grenade*, (Paris, 1901), p. 281.

⁹⁸ J. Brisson, *Viajes por Colombia en los Años 1891 a 1897*, (Bogotá, 1899), p. 72.

⁹⁹ O. Fuhrmann and E. Mayor, *Voyage d'Exploration Scientifique en Colombie avec 732 Figures, 34 Planches Hors Texte et Deux Cartes*, (Neuchatel, 1914), p. 43.

¹⁰⁰ L. M. Arango, *Catálogo del Museo*, pp. 9 - 10.

organisers of Colombia's display at the 1892 American-Historical Exhibition in Madrid and the 1893 World Exhibition in Chicago. The *Antioqueño* antiquarian and metallurgist Vicente Restrepo, who was in charge of acquiring the archaeological collections that would be exhibited at those two international events, said that Arango's collection was "the finest and most complete in Colombia". Arango did not sell his collection, and only allowed photographs to be taken of the most important objects in it for exhibition in Madrid and Chicago.¹⁰¹

By only allowing photograph albums of his collection to be taken to Madrid and Chicago, giving no more than a glimpse of what the collection really consisted of, Arango safeguarded it for Colombia. The archaeological collections belonging to Vicente Restrepo and other members of his family which were part of the official Colombian display were sold off to American museums when the Chicago Exhibition ended, as we shall see in Chapter 3.

At a time when European museums were interested in building up American collections, and were especially interested in Quimbaya objects, Arango treated requests for information about his collection in 1877 from Professor Adolf Bastian of the *Museum für Volkerkunde* in Berlin with the greatest caution. Bastian always expressed a keen interest in Arango's magnificent collection, and asked for a list, which Arango never sent.¹⁰² His ultimate aim, of course,

¹⁰¹ V. Restrepo, "Informe al Presidente de la Comisión de las Exposiciones de Madrid y Chicago", 13 June 1892, in *Informe que el Ministro de Fomento Presenta al Congreso de Colombia en sus Sesiones Ordinarias de 1892*, (Bogotá, 1892), p. 32.

¹⁰² Leocadio María Arango to Adolf Bastián, Medellín, 10 July, 1877, in *Acta betreffend die Reisen*

was to acquire the collection. In 1897, the German teacher Fritz Regel, who had sent objects to the Berlin Museum, mentioned in a letter that the lowest price that could be offered for this collection was 240,000 marks, but negotiations between Arango and the Berlin Museum never took place, and the magnificent collection therefore remained in Colombia. Regel did manage to send 98 photographs of objects in the Arango collection to Berlin as a record.¹⁰³

The fear that the Arango collection might be sold outside Colombia was expressed in 1905 by the *Antioqueño* Academy of History; there was a need for the upper echelons of officialdom to safeguard it for the Antioquia :

No es extraño que el museo del Sr. Arango sea mejor conocido en el extranjero que entre nosotros, y que a nadie, sea Gobierno o agrupación científica, le haya asaltado el temor de que en cualquier momento y debido a nuestra vituperable desidia, esa valiosa colección arqueológica pueda salir de Antioquia para el exterior. (.....) El Museo de don Leocadio María Arango debe, pues, adquirirse a todo trance para el Departamento de Antioquia.¹⁰⁴

This plea by the Academy of History was not heeded at the time. Years later, shortly before his death in 1918, Arango was on the point of selling his collection to the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, but fortunately for Colombia he died before the transaction could be completed. In 1922 the Antioquia Provincial Assembly agreed to acquire the collection for the

Direktor Professor Dr. Bastian, 1875 - 1880, AMVB.

¹⁰³ Fritz Regel to the Director of the Museum of Ethnography, Berlin, Iena, 29 July 1897, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 18, January 1897 - April 1898, no. 976/97, AMVB.

¹⁰⁴ S. Hoyos, "El Museo de Don Leocadio", en *Repertorio Histórico*, Año 1, no. 3, Medellín, (April, 1905), pp. 165, 170.

Department, but it was not able to do so because of lack of funds.¹⁰⁵ The *Banco de la República* finally purchased the goldwork collection in January 1942 for the *Museo del Oro*.¹⁰⁶ The pottery collection was sold in 1957 by one of Arango's grandsons, Juan Bravo, to the University of Antioquia, for the University Museum.¹⁰⁷

2.6. Colombian Scholars and Americanist Studies

Expanding the interest he had shown in his youth in Muisca metallurgy, and encouraged by his scientific travels around Colombia, Ezequiel Uricoechea proposed in 1871 to begin publication in Paris of the first series of books dealing with American Indian languages, the *Biblioteca Linguística Americana*. The collection aimed to bring together documents for studying the origin and history of American man through a comparative study of languages.¹⁰⁸ The first volume of the collection was on the Chibcha language, the *Gramática, Vocabulario, Catecismo y Confesionario de la Lengua Chibcha*, in which he criticised the purely phonetic or lexicological methodology used by philologists and adopted an analytic grammatical method which combined sounds with forms as a source for a comparative analysis of languages.¹⁰⁹ He justified starting the collection with the Chibcha language on the grounds that the Muisca were “the most

¹⁰⁵ I. Cerezo, “Museo Leocadio María Arango”, in *Boletín del Instituto de Antropología*, vol. II, no. 7 Medellín, (May, 1960), p. 158.

¹⁰⁶ The Banco de la República paid \$26.000 for the collection, based on a valuation carried out by General Manuel Bálcazar and Professor Justus W. Schottelius, AMO.

¹⁰⁷ I. Cerezo, “Museo Leocadio María Arango”, p. 159.

¹⁰⁸ E. Uricoechea, “Prospecto de la Colección Linguística Americana”, in *Diario de Cundinamarca*, no. 235, Bogotá, (20 August 1870), pp. 28 - 29.

¹⁰⁹ Uricoechea was the first scholar to establish the difference between the Chibcha language and the Muisca society in this work.

powerful of the nations that inhabited Colombia and also the first one to get wiped out.”¹¹⁰ His main purpose was to “make a dead language known by providing a modern grammar of it based on philological progress”, with the critical use of various manuscripts and other publications.¹¹¹ In addition to linguistic analyses, Uricoechea described the political and religious organisation of the Muisca and linguistic differences within their territory, especially the Duit dialect, which was spoken in the Duitama region.¹¹² He also stressed the linguistic diversity that was to be found in Colombia, “where several hundred languages are spoken, and more than ten are now dead.”¹¹³ Much of the value of the work is that it brought together ancient texts, making it easier for researchers to consult them, which was Uricoechea’s central purpose.¹¹⁴

In 1871, the doctor and naturalist Andrés Posada Arango, 1839 - 1923, published an *Ensayo Etnográfico sobre los Aborígenes del Estado de Antioquia en Colombia* in Paris, together with an Atlas containing 130 drawings of archaeological objects, which he had previously presented to the French Anthropological Society on 3 August 1871. Posada had gone to school in Medellín and had then studied medicine in Bogotá, after which he settled in

¹¹⁰ E. Uricoechea, *Gramática, Vocabulario, Catecismo y Confesionario de la Lengua Chibcha según Antiguos Manuscritos Anónimos e Inéditos, Aumentados y Corregidos*, (Paris, 1871), pp. XIII, XIV.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. XLIV, XLV.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. XV, XXXIV.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. XII.

¹¹⁴ Apart from the *Gramática*, Uricoechea published the *Vocabulario Páez-Castellano, Catecismo, Nociones Gramaticales y dos Pláticas conforme a lo que escribió el Señor Eugenio del Castillo y Orozco*, (Paris, 1878), as the second volume in his ‘Colección Linguística Americana’. This was written by Father Rafael Celedón, with an introduction and appendix by Uricoechea himself. Although Uricoechea had collected vocabularies of the Tama, Ceona, Saliva and Achagua languages on his travels around Colombia, he never managed to publish them. The series continued to be published after Uricoechea died, and got as far as Volume XXV, published in Paris in 1903. Worthy of special mention is the *Gramática de la Lengua Kággaba*, (Paris, 1886).

Paris, where he was a member of European scientific societies like the Anthropology Society and the Practical Medicine Society in Paris, the French Botanical Society, and the Medical and Surgical Academy in Madrid. On returning to Medellín, he practised medicine in the hospitals, and was a teacher at the University of Antioquia.

In his work, after describing the general geographical features of Antioquia, he went on to stress that archaeological research should be based on what he called the “remains and marks in graves” that had been left behind by the pre-Hispanic native societies, before these, in the author’s own words, “disappeared once and for all.”¹¹⁵

Posada Arango attempted to classify pre-Hispanic Colombian societies on the basis of the evolutionary classification established by Sir John Lubbock for ancient societies in Europe and Asia. He was quite cautious in his approach :

Nuestros indígenas habían dejado ya muy lejos la edad paleolítica, más no por eso presentaban, ni todos los caracteres de la edad neolítica, puesto que ya estaban muy adelantados en la metalurgia. (.....) La piedra era la base de sus instrumentos y no podían pertenecer a la edad de bronce porque no se ha hallado entre ellos ninguna arma metálica, como sucedía en Europa en la época correspondiente. Para ser exacto, era preciso admitir que se hallaban en una edad intermedia, en un período de transición.¹¹⁶

Based on his interpretation of gold and pottery objects, Posada Arango was the first to stress the decorative function of the vast majority of Quimbaya gold

¹¹⁵ A. Posada Arango, *Ensayo Etnográfico sobre los Aborígenes del Estado de Antioquia en Colombia*, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

objects, which “varied depending on the rank or wealth of the individual”, something that has been proven subsequently by research into the use and function of Quimbaya objects, where notable differences of rank can be recognized in the different types of body ornaments. Posada said that this body decoration generally consisted of gold helmets that covered the entire head and gold nose and ear ornaments, necklaces and bracelets, and that these were set off by bright and colourful feathered plumes.¹¹⁷ The other major group of objects, according to the author, consisted of urns, bottles hooks, and a whole host of human or animal figures, especially lizards, birds and fish.¹¹⁸ Just as Ezequiel Uricoechea had done in his *Memoria sobre las Antigüedades Neogranadinas*, Posada Arango described with great admiration the metallurgical techniques used in the past, which had enabled the Quimbaya to melt and pour gold, alloy it, beat it, spin it, weld it and engrave it.¹¹⁹

While Ezequiel Uricoechea was engaged in his Americanist linguistic studies, he attended the First Americanists’ Congress in Nancy in 1875, as Colombia’s delegate. There he presented a work by the French anthropologist Paul Broca about two series of skulls from ancient native burial grounds near Bogotá. The first series consisted of five adult skulls and one from a child; they had been taken to France in 1869 by Mr. Henri Belle, a secretary at the French Embassy in Bogotá.¹²⁰ The second group belonged to Uricoechea, himself, and they were

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ P. Broca, “Mémoire sur deux séries de crânes provenant d’anciennes sepultures indiennes des environs de Bogotá”, in *Compte-Rendu du Congrès International des Américanistes*, First Session, vol. 1, (Nancy, 1875), p. 370.

possibly skulls he had found with Guillermo Pereira Gamba in 1867 at La Picota, on the banks of the Tunjuelo river.¹²¹ By analysing the skulls, Broca established that people from the area around Bogotá did not belong to the “same race”, since one group had dolichocephalic skulls, and the other group brachycephalic ones.¹²²

Uricoechea published in 1877 in the French journal *La Nature* an article about a group of Muisca goldwork objects which belonged to the Museum at St. Germain-en-Laye, and which had been taken from Bogotá by the naturalist Francois-Désiré Roulin contracted by the Colombian government as a teacher in the School of Mines and the Natural History Museum in the 1820’s. (Figure 5). Uricoechea again stressed Muisca metallurgical technology in the article : a study of Colombian metallurgical alloys would be the key to obtaining information about the relationships that existed between ancient societies.¹²³

2.7. *Patria* and Religion (1880 - 1900)

The political romanticism and federalism of the radical liberals had clearly entered a period of crisis in 1880. A centralizing Conservative trend therefore emerged, and the 1886 Constitution, which stated clear goals of guaranteeing order and stability on the basis of a stronger national executive and the Catholic religion as an educational force and a means of social control. It was against

¹²¹ E. Uricoechea, *Gramática, Vocabulario, Catecismo y Confesionario de la Lengua Chibcha según Antiguos Manuscritos Anónimos e Inéditos, Aumentados y Correjidos*, p. XV.

¹²² P. Broca, “Mémoire sur deux séries de crânes provenant d’anciennes sépultures indiennes des environs de Bogotá”, p. 380.

¹²³ E. Uricoechea, “Antiquités Chibchas de la Colombie”, in *La Nature*, (Paris, 1877), pp. 350 - 351.

this social and cultural background, based on a combination of the positivism or social evolutionism of Herbert Spencer and the neo-thomism of Monseñor Rafael María Carrasquilla, the Rector of the Colegio del Rosario, a conservative, Hispanicist and Catholic atmosphere, that a new phase arose in the study of the historical past. Works of the chroniclers were re-published, the *Historia General del Nuevo Reino de Granada* by Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita in 1881, the *Noticias Historiales de las Conquistas de Tierra Firme de las Indias Occidentales* by Friar Pedro Simón in 1882, and the important documentary compendium edited by Antonio Basilio Cuervo, published in four volumes between 1891 and 1894 under the title *Colección de Documentos Inéditos sobre la Geografía y la Historia de Colombia*. This contained a wealth of hitherto inaccessible documentation on the Conquest and colonial era.¹²⁴

An interest in folklore, grammar and philology also developed during this period, and as Malcolm Deas has written, “all of this is connected with the past”. He notes that the pioneers who first depicted the everyday customs of Colombia, Rufino José Cuervo, the writer of the first *Cuadro de Costumbres*, and Ramón Torres Méndez, the first artist to publish scenes from local everyday life, were both conservatives.¹²⁵

Several Colombian scientists published works during this period in which they reconstructed aspects of Muisca and Quimbaya society. The first archaeological

¹²⁴ A. B. Cuervo, *Colección de Documentos Inéditos sobre la Geografía y la Historia de Colombia*, vol. I, *Geografía y Viajes Costa Atlántica*, (Bogotá, 1891); vol. II, *Costa Pacífica, Provincias Litorales y Campañas de los Conquistadores*, (Bogotá, 1892); vol. III, *La Hoya del Orinoco durante la Colonia*, (Bogotá, 1893); vol. IV, *Casanare y el Caquetá durante la Colonia*, (Bogotá, 1894).

¹²⁵ M. Deas, *Del Poder y la Gramática*, (Bogotá, 1992), p. 50.

references to sites in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta were published, and the first dig by a Colombian was carried out at San Agustín.

The Conservatives organised a Permanent Scientific Commission, which was to continue the work done by the Chorographic Commission of 1850 - 1859, with the emphasis being placed on research into ethnology and archaeology. In the fine arts, the *Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes* was opened in 1886, while the First Annual Exhibition was also held, this latter being the first exhibition in Colombia of fine arts. Behind both these initiatives was Alberto Urdaneta, an artist, photographer and political cartoonist, who founded and directed the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*, which came out between 1881 and 1887. He published engravings by the Spaniard Antonio Rodríguez in every issue, including illustrations of pre-Hispanic objects. Urdaneta had one part of his studio devoted to archaeology and ethnography, and he also had a small collection of stone axes, and bows and arrows from Casanare, the Llanos and the Guajira.¹²⁶ The *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* became a medium for making work on pre-Hispanic societies known and also for publishing engravings of “native antiquities.”¹²⁷

¹²⁶ L. M. Girón, “El Museo - Taller de Alberto Urdaneta”, in *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*, Nos. 114 - 116, Bogotá, (29 May 1888), p. 317. See also P. Moreno de Angel, *Alberto Urdaneta*, (Bogotá, 1972).

¹²⁷ The articles on subjects connected with archaeology and ethnology that were published in the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* were as follows: L. Zerda, “Comunicación de Manuel Vélez Barrientos sobre su Colección Arqueológica”, no. 40, (5 May 1883), pp. 258 - 260; “El Culto a los Animales en las Diferentes Razas de la Especie Humana”, no. 79, (15 November 1884), pp. 117 - 120; “José Domingo Duquesne”, no. 66, (15 May 1884), pp. 278 - 279; “El Tequendama y el Mito Chibcha”, no. 45, (20 July 1883), pp. 338 - 340; “Estudio de las Momias y de las Ceremonias Fúnebres de Algunos Pueblos”, no. 86, (1 March 1885), p. 226; no. 87, (15 March 1885), pp. 238 - 245; no. 88, (1 April 1885), pp. 260 - 263; and “Notas sobre el Origen de los Indios Americanos”, no. 89, (15 April 1885), pp. 277 - 279; no. 90, (1 May 1885), pp. 292 - 295; no. 91, (15 May 1885), pp. 308 - 311; no. 92, (1 June 1885), pp. 324 - 327; no. 93, (15 June 1885), pp. 340 - 343; no. 94, (1 July 1885), pp. 355 - 359; no. 95, (24 July 1885), pp. 373 - 376. Other authors who published articles about the pre-Hispanic past were L. M. Girón, “Antiguos Achaguas”, no.

2.7.1. The Permanent Scientific Commission

President Rafael Nuñez set up the Permanent Scientific Commission in 1881, with goals that were certainly ambitious: to undertake studies in botany, geology, mineralogy, zoology, geography and archaeology throughout the Republic, and at the same time to collect and classify plants, rocks, minerals, animals and archaeological objects which could contribute to “progress in natural studies and resolving ethnological questions” connected with the history of both the Republic and the world.¹²⁸ It was envisaged that the products and species that were collected would form part of the Colombian display at the 1884 Universal Exposition in New York, and that the drawings, plans, antiquities and reports should then become the property of the Government, so that they could be displayed in the National Museum in Bogotá.¹²⁹

The wide scope of the law which set up the Commission was nevertheless modified in a subsequent decree, which stated that, given that it was not possible to carry through such an extensive plan at that time, the Commission’s activities would be restricted to establishing the location of any metal, coal and petroleum mines that might be discovered, and to building up the necessary collections, with accurate and detailed news of mining discoveries and of the facilities available for exploiting them and exporting the products abroad.¹³⁰ With

28, (1 October 1882), pp. 56 - 59; no. 29, (28 October 1882), pp. 75 - 77; and R. Guerra Azuola, “Un Monumento de los Muisca”, no. 8, (15 January 1882), pp. 120 - 122.

¹²⁸ Law 39 of 1881, in *Anales de la Instrucción Pública*, vol. II, no. 9, Bogotá, (June, 1881), p. 349.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ “Comisión Científica”, Decree no. 628 dated 18 August 1881, in *Memoria del Secretario de Instrucción Pública correspondiente al Año de 1881*, (Bogotá, 1882), pp. 145 - 146.

this in mind, the Government named the naturalist José Carlos Manó as Director, and he was given the responsibility of establishing the location of any mineral, coal or petroleum deposits that might be discovered and drawing up scientific reports on them. The poet and novelist Jorge Isaacs was taken on as Commission Secretary - Writer, and apart from helping Manó to write the necessary reports “in a clear and methodical manner”, he had the job of describing the natural environment in the regions visited, the customs of the inhabitants and also the “extent of their moral and intellectual progress” as a result of any public education that they had had access to.¹³¹ The other members of the team were Francisco J. Tapia, who was taken on as sketcher and botanist, Lázaro María Jirón, assistant, and Rubén J. Mosquera, assistant to Isaacs.¹³² Before work started, the Public Instruction Minister Ricardo Becerra said, in the document “Instructions for the Scientific Commission”, September 1881, that even if the aim of the Commission was to follow in the footsteps of Agustín Codazzi and Manuel Ancizar and the Chorographic Commission, he also cut back the scope of the work even more:

La Comisión no revestirá otro carácter que el de una exploración relativamente rápida de las riquezas más fácilmente explotables de nuestro territorio y el de la científica colección y clasificación de estas riquezas con destino a su exhibición en el extranjero y en el Museo Nacional.¹³³

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹³² Contract between Ricardo Becerra, Public Instruction Secretary, and Francisco J. Tapia, Rubén J. Mosquera and Lázaro M. Jirón, in *Memoria del Secretario de Instrucción Pública correspondiente al Año de 1881*, *Ibid.*, p. 152. The remuneration that the government would pay each member of the Commission, every six months in advance, was as follows: as Director, Juan Carlos Manó was to receive \$3,600 pesos per year, while Secretary - Writer Jorge Isaacs was to receive \$3,000 per year, the sketcher - botanist Francisco J. Tapia \$1,800, Lázaro María Jirón \$1,200 pesos, and Rubén J. Mosquera \$720 pesos per year.

¹³³ R. Becerra, “Instrucciones para la Comisión Científica”, in *Ibid.*, pp. 152 - 153.

The Government also banned members of the Commission from publishing or making known the results of their research without specific authorization, and asked the Archbishop of Bogotá, Vicente Arbelaez, to ensure that the ecclesiastical authorities and missionaries lent the Commission full support in its activities.¹³⁴ To help it in its work, the Commission took published works about the Chorographic Commission with it, and also measuring instruments and chemical reagents. As Secretary - Writer, Isaacs prepared himself for the expedition by taking advice from Manuel Ancizar, the still surviving author of the *Peregrinación de Alpha*.¹³⁵

Work got under way in Magdalena state, where Manó set about investigating the coal seams found at El Cerrejón in the Guajira. Differences of opinion soon arose, as well as competition between Manó and Isaacs. Manó drew up a report about the El Cerrejón coal seams. Isaacs asserted that the seams described extended as far as the eastern shore of the *Ciénaga* de Santa Marta, some 250 kilometres away from the site described by Manó.¹³⁶ This enraged Manó, and caused a breakdown in communications between the two men. Manó's two assistants, Tapia and Girón, abandoned their work and returned to Bogotá, taking with them some of the working materials.¹³⁷ The Commission split. Isaacs carried on with only his clerk to help him, and traveled deep into Guajira territory and up into the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. In research and

¹³⁴ Circular from Vicente Arbelaez, Archbishop of Bogotá, Bogotá, 4 October 1881, in *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹³⁵ J. Isaacs, *Estudio sobre las Tribus Indígenas del Estado de Magdalena*, Introduction, (Bogotá, 1951), p. 21.

¹³⁶ J. Isaacs, "Carboneras de Aracataca", 23 January 1882, in "Comisión Científica Nacional, Segundo Informe Oficial", Santa Marta, 5 April 1882, in *Anales de la Instrucción Pública*, vol. IV, no. 19, Bogotá, (April, 1882), pp. 87 - 88.

¹³⁷ J. C. Manó, "Estudio de los Tres Reinos en el Territorio de la República", in *Ibid.*, p. 89.

investigation work that lasted eleven months, between November 1881 and September 1882, Isaacs gathered together data that were extremely important from the linguistic, ethnographic and archaeological point of view. He produced virtually complete vocabularies of the native groups in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, gave a detailed description of a number of petroglyphs that were found in Magdalena province, and collected archaeological and ethnographic objects for the National Museum :

He podido recorrer comarcas de la Sierra nunca descritas, he estudiado a fondo las costumbres y carácter de los restos de naciones populosas en remotos tiempos, poseo ídolos de esos pueblos, no estudiados, desconocidos antes, ochenta y cuatro dibujos, jeroglíficos y símbolos copiados de sus adoratorios (.....). Solo las alhajas de piedras rarísimas, laboradas y perforadas en forma sorprendente de que llevaré muy bellas muestras al Museo Nacional son una revelación del origen de esas naciones.¹³⁸

Although it had been envisaged that the Commission would gather objects for the 1884 Universal Exposition in New York, this exhibition was cancelled by its American organizers.¹³⁹

As a result of his experiences with the native communities in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Isaacs proposed that measures be introduced which would favour their political status, so that the *corregidores* of San Sebastián and San Miguel would henceforth be natives, drawn from the communities themselves.¹⁴⁰ In one of his reports, he described the methods used for

¹³⁸ *Ibid* , p. 113.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

governing, protecting, “civilising” and evangelising the natives on the Sierra were nothing short of deplorable:

La situación actual de aquellas tribus de la Nevada de las cuales no ha conocido el país hasta hoy ni los nombres verdaderos, el modo de gobierno que se les da, la forma en que se les protege, civiliza y atrae al cristianismo, todo eso es desconsolador y bochornoso para la República. Y lo es más, si cabe, para nuestra decantada civilización. De los “civilizados” que se titulan en la Sierra Nevada jactanciosamente, sólo han tomado los indígenas más inmediatos, vicios y lepra.¹⁴¹

These statements by Isaacs, along with the publication in 1884 of his work *Estudio sobre las Tribus Indígenas del Estado de Magdalena, antes Provincia de Santa Marta*, in the journal *Anales de la Instrucción Pública*, won him a sharp rebuke from Miguel Antonio Caro, one of the most learned Colombian philologists and was later to become President of the Republic.¹⁴² Caro attacked Isaacs’ ideas, calling his work far from scientific, more like “a compendium of poetic outlines, long transcriptions, comments and quotations.”¹⁴³

Caro energetically refuted Isaacs’ remarks on evolution, which he had put forward when writing about one of the figures carved on a petroglyph he had found in the Sierra:

Los partidarios de la teoría darwiniana podríamos suponer que la figura número doce, mitad simia y de rostro muy raro, es la representación que

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁴² Miguel Antonio Caro, 1845-1909, Vicepresident of Rafael Nuñez was acting President between 1892 and 1898.

¹⁴³ M. A. Caro, “El Darwinismo y las Misiones”, in *Anales de la Instrucción Pública*, vol. XI, no. 60, Bogotá, (1887), p. 49.

tuvo el animal, terrible como se vé, que precedió al hombre en la escala de perfeccionamiento.¹⁴⁴

In his devastating criticism of Isaacs's work in the article "*Darwinismo y las Misiones*", Caro found it was deplorable how a true poet had been converted as if by magic into a disciple of Darwin :

Aún puesta a un lado la creencia católica y la fé cristiana en general de este pueblo de Colombia, desde el punto de vista puramente darwiniano, tampoco podemos tolerale, ni se lo toleraría el mismísimo Darwin, la significación que el señor Isaacs le atribuye a esa figura (.....). No podemos suponer que esta hipótesis cientista tenga ningún fundamento histórico ni tradicional.¹⁴⁵

Caro went on to say that it was disgraceful that a journal like *Anales de la Instrucción Pública* in a Christian country should have allowed a work to be published which so clearly and openly advocated acceptance of Darwin's theory.¹⁴⁶ Caro also criticised the recommendations Isaacs had made to the Government on "civilising activities" in native territories; Caro felt these should be entrusted to "educated administrators" and "missionaries of great virtue":

Aparte de los trabajos de biógrafos y naturalistas competentes, la obra en los territorios salvajes no sólo pide administradores cultos y filántropos y la labor de etnógrafos y arqueólogos, requiere de misioneros de aptitudes probadas, de virtudes eximias, de mansedumbre y perseverancia admirables.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ J. Isaacs, "Estudio sobre las Tribus Indígenas del Magdalena", in *Anales de la Instrucción Pública*, vol. 8, no. 45, Bogotá, (September – December, 1884), p. 261.

¹⁴⁵ M. A. Caro, "El Darwinismo y las Misiones", p. 61.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ J. Isaacs, "Estudio sobre las Tribus Indígenas del Magdalena", p. 266.

Caro found that in his comings and goings in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Isaacs had completely forgotten his Catholic faith; he had not shared “the light of Christianity” with the natives.¹⁴⁸

This heated controversy that erupted in 1887 clearly illustrates prevailing attitudes which were governed by religious dogmatism. For Conservatives in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the “*Patria*” and the Catholic religion were two inseparable concepts.

2.7.2. *El Dorado*: Historical, Ethnographic and Archaeological Study of the Chibchas

All the same, interest in researching pre-Hispanic societies and divulging knowledge about them continued during the 1880s, through the work of the doctor Liborio Zerda, who followed the suggestions made by German ethnologist Adolf Bastian who had visited the country in 1875 and 1876 and acquire information about the native societies that had lived in Colombia. Zerda systematically listed them, with descriptions and interpretations of archaeological objects and first published his work in instalments under the title *El Dorado* in the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*. It was published in full in 1883.¹⁴⁹

Liborio Zerda, 1833 - 1919, trained as a doctor, and was a teacher of physics and medical chemistry at the National University; he was Minister of Public

¹⁴⁸ M. A. Caro, “El Darwinismo y las Misiones”, p. 77.

¹⁴⁹ L. Zerda, *El Dorado: Estudio Histórico, Etnográfico y Arqueológico de los Chibchas*, (Bogotá, 1883).

Instruction in 1893, Head of the Natural Sciences and Medicine Faculty in Bogotá, and one of the founders of the Academy of Medicine and Natural Sciences.

Following to the currents in prehistorical studies that were in vogue in Europe at the time, which had arisen from Palaeolithic studies and which classified societies on the basis of their material culture, and using the hypotheses put forward by Sir John Lubbock, Zerda attempted to place pre-Hispanic Colombian societies into one of the three divisions of European pre-history: the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age.¹⁵⁰ The Bronze Age was characterized by the mining and smelting of metals. For Zerda, the fact that gold, copper and silver had been mined in ancient Colombia and objects had been made from alloys of these metals and finely finished, meant that those societies undoubtedly belonged to the Bronze Age :

La incipiente civilización industrial que caracteriza las tribus y naciones del Nuevo Reino de Granada en la época de la Conquista corresponde indudablemente al principio de la Edad de Bronce de los primitivos pueblos del continente europeo y a la época de perfeccionamiento de los instrumentos de sílex, aplicables entonces a las artes manuales y a la agricultura, es decir a la terminación de la época neolítica o de piedra pulimentada.¹⁵¹

Zerda described the ways that copper had been used in ancient Colombia, and emphasized that various instruments made of this metal had been found. He viewed copper as being the crucial metal, “because it replaced wood and stone for making instruments of war and agricultural instruments”, and because by

¹⁵⁰ J. Lubbock, *Prehistoric Times*, (London, 1865) and *The Origin of Civilisation*, (London, 1871).

¹⁵¹ L. Zerda, *El Dorado: Estudio Histórico, Etnográfico y Arqueológico de los Chibchas*, p. 21.

using it in alloys with gold and silver, the pre-Hispanic societies had given it varied industrial and artistic uses.¹⁵²

Besides attempting to place ancient Colombian societies into one of the pre-historical categories defined by contemporary European writers, one of Zerda's most important contributions was to demonstrate that pre-Hispanic objects could be viewed as "documents", and could be used to study the societies that had made them, and to make hypotheses about a historical reconstruction of those societies.

Zerda particularly stressed the importance of a Muisca gold raft, which had been found in Lake Siecha in 1856 and was in the form of a "cast gold disc", on which there were ten human figures made of gold, the one in the centre being larger than the rest and wearing a sort of skullcap of a chieftain surrounded by nine smaller figures.¹⁵³ This raft, an engraving of which was published in the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*, belonged in 1883 to the German Consul in Bogotá, Salomon Koppel (Figure 6). The raft represented the offering and acclamation ceremony for the future chieftain, and Zerda looked on it as reliable evidence which confirmed beyond any shadow of doubt the reality of the *El Dorado* ceremony that the chroniclers had described :

Indudablemente representa la ceremonia religiosa del Cacique de Guatavita rodeado de sacerdotes indios sobre la balsa de juncos que los conducía al centro de la laguna en el día de la oblación. La figura más pequeña que está adelante del Cacique probablemente representa

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

algún dignitario o miembro de la familia real, encargado de llevar los objetos que debieran ser arrojados en la laguna como ofrenda.¹⁵⁴

Zerda devoted much of his work to describing and interpreting various objects which he called “*arte de la joyería indígena*”. Since the inhabitants of Cundinamarca had no system of hieroglyphic, as the ancient Egyptians had, nor symbolic painting like the Aztecs, “the only means they had of perpetuating their political and religious history” was through figures made of gold. Zerda thus was the first to define the metallurgical work of the ancient societies of Colombia as “the basis of their objective history.”¹⁵⁵

2.7.3. Antioqueño Antiquarians and Scholars : Vicente Restrepo and Manuel Uribe Angel

In Antioquia, a second great antiquarian and antiquities enthusiast after Manuel Vélez Barrientos was Vicente Restrepo Maya, 1837 – 1899. At the suggestion of a French friend of his father’s in Medellín, he had received his secondary education at the *Ecole Chrétienne* at Passy, in Paris, and had afterwards specialised in mineralogy and metals in France; he had complemented these studies with visits to the mines in Freiburg, Germany. He returned to Colombia in 1857 and set up a chemical laboratory, assay office and gold foundry in Medellín, in conjunction with his brother, Pastor.¹⁵⁶ The laboratory made great progress in smelting methods, resulting in savings for the gold miners. Both the

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁵⁶ V. Restrepo, *Apuntes Autobiográficos con Comentarios y Notas del Padre Daniel Restrepo*, (Bogotá, 1939), p. 22.

laboratory and the foundry prospered. Restrepo did not just devote himself to metallurgical work. Together with his brother Pastor and Ricardo Wills from Bogotá, he opened the first photographic studio in Antioquia. As well as a series of pictures of orchids, they published *cartes de visite* with photographs of Quimbaya objects.¹⁵⁷

His collector's instinct first showed itself when he sent a classified collection of minerals and rocks from Antioquia to the 1871 National Exhibition, together with a *Memoria sobre el Oro de Antioquia*, for which he was awarded one gold medal and two bronze.¹⁵⁸ Over the period of seventeen years that he ran the chemical laboratory, a period when, as he said himself, "all the gold that was produced in Antioquia passed through my hands", his primary interest lay in researching mining prospects and gold and silver mining techniques. Second came his hobby, his enthusiasm for pre-Hispanic objects, and through this, an interest in pre-Hispanic societies.

Based on the knowledge he had gathered throughout his working life and on intensive bibliographical research in the chroniclers and the reports of Viceroy, Governors and foreign travellers, in 1884 he published his *Estudio sobre las Minas de Oro y Plata en Colombia*. Restrepo said that the metallurgical riches of Antioquia had been exploited since pre-Hispanic times using similar techniques to those that were employed until well into the nineteenth century :

¹⁵⁷ E. Serrano, *Historia de la Fotografía en Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1983), p. 105.

¹⁵⁸ V. Restrepo, *Apuntes Autobiográficos con Comentarios y Notas del Padre Daniel Restrepo*, p. 42.

El suelo de Antioquia, el más quebrado de todo el territorio de Colombia, es rico en minerales en toda su extensión. Sus montañas están cruzadas por un sinnúmero de filones y las hoyas de sus ríos forman una serie no interrumpida de aluviones auríferos. (.....) Los aborígenes de Antioquia explotaron las minas de oro conocidas hoy, aunque no disponían para el trabajo sino de imperfectos instrumentos de piedra y madera. Para sacar el oro de las vetas abrían un hoyo o pozo vertical, de forma circular, hasta cortar el filón, bajando algunas veces a grandes profundidades.¹⁵⁹

In addition to his interest in making mining possibilities in Antioquia and in Colombia known, Restrepo built up a valuable archaeological collection. Unlike Leocadio María Arango, who often obtained objects for his collections by exchanging “antiquities” for merchandise from his store or through his network of buyers in Antioquia, Caldas and Quindío, Restrepo acquired a large number of the objects in his collections through other collectors, such as Tomás Henao in Manizales and Valeriano Marulanda in Pereira.¹⁶⁰ However, his brother Próspero in Medellín helped him acquire objects both for himself and for other antiquarians and collectors, such as Gonzalo Ramos Ruiz in Bogotá.¹⁶¹

After his years managing the chemical laboratory and the metal foundry in Medellín, Restrepo spent two years in Paris with his family from 1875 to 1877, so that his children might study in France, he was especially concerned for his

¹⁵⁹ V. Restrepo, *Estudio sobre las Minas de Oro y Plata en Colombia*, First Edition, (Bogotá, 1884), Third Edition, (Bogotá, 1952), p. 27. Restrepo gave the first edition of this work to the government, to distribute it in different parts of the country and also to Colombian consulates abroad, with a view to encouraging mining activities in Colombia. The book was widely acclaimed abroad, and was translated into English, French and Italian. See V. Restrepo, *A Study of the Gold and Silver Mines of Colombia*, (New York, 1886), *La Miniere d'Or e d'Argento della Republica di Colombia*, (Rome, 1890), and *Etude sur les Mines d'Or et d'Argent de la Colombie*, (Brussels, 1908). According to his son Ernesto, after reading this work “everyone wanted to be a shareholder in mines”, so much so that the author himself had to moderate and channel the excessive “gold fever”. See E. Restrepo Tirado, Prologue to the Third Edition, *Estudio sobre las Minas de Oro y Plata en Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1952), p. 20.

¹⁶⁰ V. Restrepo, *Catálogo de los Objetos que Presenta el Gobierno de Colombia a la Exposición Histórico-Americana de Madrid*, p. 16.

¹⁶¹ Vicente Restrepo to Próspero Restrepo, Bogotá, 21 February 1883, in Marceliano Restrepo, (1840 - 1929), family correspondence, Fondo Marceliano Restrepo e Hijos, Biblioteca Pública Piloto, Medellín.

son Ernesto, who was later to become a historian and a researcher with a strong interest in archaeology. After returning to Colombia, Restrepo settled in Bogotá, where he embarked on a political career, initially representing Antioquia on the Council of Delegates, and later on as the Minister of Treasury, and Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹⁶² He settled in Bogotá in 1877 and developed an interest in Muisca society. As mentioned earlier, he wrote his important work *Crítica a los Trabajos Arqueológicos del Dr. José Domingo Duquesne* in 1892. Vicente Restrepo began his criticism of Father Duquesne's works about the Muisca calendar by saying that Duquesne "had had the honour of establishing the foundations of Colombian archaeology", and that it would have been a pleasure for him to have been able to say that Duquesne's work was perfect, and that "the Muisca calendar is no mere invention of honourable fantasy."¹⁶³

In his criticism, Restrepo firstly criticized Father Duquesne's sources of information. Duquesne had said that it had been his native parishioners who had "passed on the information he was honoured to reveal to science."¹⁶⁴ Restrepo argued that the Spanish Conquest had resulted in the Muisca being completely subjugated; none of them managed to remain in "such isolation as would have allowed them to retain their language, their beliefs and their traditions."¹⁶⁵ Restrepo did not believe in the knowledge of the natives :

¹⁶² V. Restrepo, *Apuntes Autobiográficos con Comentarios y Notas del Padre Daniel Restrepo*, p. 64.

¹⁶³ V. Restrepo, *Crítica Arqueológica a los Trabajos del Dr. José Domingo Duquesne*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁴ J. D. Duquesne, "Disertación sobre el Calendario de los Muisca", in J. Acosta, *Compendio Histórico del Descubrimiento y Colonización de la Nueva Granada*, p. 407.

¹⁶⁵ V. Restrepo, *Crítica a los Trabajos del Dr. José Domingo Duquesne*, p. 4

Cuando el Doctor Duquesne sirvió como cura de almas en algunas poblaciones de indios, no encontró en ellas sino pobres gentes ignorantes que nada podían enseñarle de los conocimientos de sus antepasados (.....). Las generaciones que se habían sucedido en el transcurso de dos siglos y medio habían acabado por olvidarlo todo hasta su propia lengua.¹⁶⁶

Duquesne's real sources had been the printed chronicles of Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita's *Historia General del Nuevo Reino de Granada* and the *Historia de la Provincia de San Antonio del Nuevo Reino de Granada* by Father Alonso de Zamora, and manuscripts available in the late eighteenth century about the Chibcha language. To disprove Duquesne's idea that the signs represented the days of the week on a calendar, Restrepo and his son Ernesto studied a number of Muisca inscriptions, and this led them the conviction that the Muisca "had no knowledge of any kind of writing, either figurative, symbolic or ideographic."¹⁶⁷ Restrepo asserted that the origin of Duquesne's Muisca calendar idea lay in an accident : he had found a small stone carved in the form of a pentagon, with a number of raised figures on it, but these had nothing at all to do with a calendar.

Restrepo completely disproved the idea that a Chibcha calendar had existed, through it had been a recurring theme throughout the nineteenth century, something which proved the high degree of "civilisation" the Chibchas had attained. Restrepo blamed not only to Father Duquesne but also Alexander von Humboldt, because of the vast amount of publicity he had given to the idea. In

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10

the prologue to his next work, *Los Chibchas antes de la Conquista Española*, he wrote as follows :

Tuvo el estudioso canónigo doctor José Domingo Duquesne un siglo de celebridad no merecida por haber inventado una serie de novedades relativas a este pueblo. Atribuyóle el uso de los quipos, de los jeroglíficos, de cifras numerales, de un complicado calendario en el que se enlazan tres años diversos de doce, veinte, y treinta y seis meses lunares, etc. (.....). No brilla el genio del barón de Humboldt en lo que escribió (.....), prodijó y divulgó muchas de las fantasías de Duquesne y aún las aumentó.¹⁶⁸

Restrepo aimed to reassess the two previous works on Muisca society, those of Joaquín Acosta and Ezequiel Uricoechea, and to improve on them. Immersed in an end-of-century Hispanicist ambience, Restrepo found the information that had been preserved about the Chibchas “not as scanty” as Joaquín Acosta had claimed in his *Compendio Histórico del Descubrimiento y Colonización de la Nueva Granada*, nor were “the chroniclers to blame if their traditions were confused and mixed with fable.”¹⁶⁹ Restrepo also felt that Ezequiel Uricoechea had been wrong to assert in his *Memoria sobre las Antigüedades Neogranadinas* that the conquistadors had wished to stamp out the seeds of native civilisation and “had succeeded in virtually leaving them in darkness.”¹⁷⁰

Unlike previous researchers into Muisca society, Restrepo had access to other chronicles that had been republished in the final decades of the nineteenth century in Madrid and Bogotá, and which formed the basis for his work: the

¹⁶⁸ V. Restrepo, *Los Chibchas antes de la Conquista Española*, (Bogotá –Paris, 1895), p. iii - iv.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Elegias de Varones Ilustres de Indias and the *Historia del Nuevo Reino de Granada* by Juan de Castellanos, and the *Epítome de la Conquista del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, attributed to Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada published in Madrid.¹⁷¹ In Colombia, various works were published during the second half of the nineteenth century, including *El Carnero* by Juan Rodríguez Freyle, in 1859, previously known in several manuscript sources, and the *Historia General del Nuevo Reino de Granada* by Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita, and Friar Pedro Simón's *Noticias Historiales de las Conquistas de Tierra Firme de las Indias Occidentales*.¹⁷²

With these sources and the possibility of comparing them and of analyzing sources used by each one of the chroniclers, Restrepo was able to build up a detailed history of the Muisca which he published as *Los Chibchas antes de la Conquista Española* in Paris and Bogotá.

In 1891, Vicente Restrepo had been appointed President of the Proto-History Sub-Commission by the Government, and he brought together the archaeological collections that were to be exhibited at the Madrid and Chicago Exhibitions of 1892 and 1893. He duly recorded, catalogued and photographed one hundred and thirty five archaeological objects of his own and belonging to his children, the National Museum, and private collectors. These photographs

¹⁷¹ J. de Castellanos, *Elegias de Varones Ilustres de Indias*, (Madrid, 1874), with a second edition in 1886; G. Jiménez de Quesada, *Epítome de la Conquista del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, (Madrid, 1882).

¹⁷² J. Rodríguez Freyle, *El Carnero, Conquista i descubrimiento del Nuevo Reino de Granada de las Indias Occidentales del Mar Océano i fundación de la ciudad de Santa Fe de Bogotá, primera de este reino donde se fundó la Real Audiencia i chancillería*, (Bogotá, 1859); L. Fernández de Piedrahita, *Historia General del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, (Bogotá, 1881); P. Simón, *Noticias Historiales de las Conquistas de Tierra Firme en las Indias Occidentales*, (Bogotá, 1882 - 1892).

and the corresponding text formed the basis of the *Atlas Arqueológico* that he published at the same time as the *Chibchas antes de la Conquista Española* in Paris in 1895.¹⁷³

Another pioneer researcher into the pre-Hispanic societies of Antioquia was Manuel Uribe Angel, 1822 – 1904. He studied medicine and surgery in Bogotá, went to France to specialise. On his return to Medellín, he worked as a doctor in the hospitals, particularly helping the “desperately poor”, and devoted much of his time to charity work. He was a teacher at the University of Antioquia, a member of the Colombian *Academia de la Lengua*, Governor of Antioquia and Senator of the Republic. His speciality was the history and geography of Antioquia, and he published his *Geografía General y Compendio Histórico del Estado de Antioquia en Colombia*.

Uribe Angel devoted a whole chapter in this work to describing what he called “the history of indian graves”. He believed that studies of the tombs themselves, the way the corpses were arranged, and the objects that were found in those tombs, were “the only documents we have to guide us, so we can discover with any reasonable hope of success evidence relating to the social, moral and political state of the aborigines.”¹⁷⁴ He stressed the need for the “collection of historic objects” that had been found in Colombian graves to be preserved, in

¹⁷³ V. Restrepo, *Atlas Arqueológico*, (Paris, 1895).

¹⁷⁴ Uribe Angel defined the word *Guaca* as a “grave or place for worshipping idols”, a term that was used in Antioquia to refer to the places where natives were buried, in M. Uribe Angel, *Geografía General y Compendio Histórico del Estado de Antioquia en Colombia*, p. 496.

view of the exodus of pre-Hispanic “documents” from the Antioquia region to European museums that was by then taking place :

Los museos de Europa tienen y ansían tener algunos de estos documentos, los extranjeros inteligentes los buscan con ahinco, y nosotros, por regla general, los hemos despreciado y destruido sin darles la importancia que merecen.¹⁷⁵

Uribe Angel included a collection of illustrations as an appendix to his work, drawings of gold and pottery objects and petroglyphs.

What is nevertheless surprising is the contradictory way Uribe Angel interprets pre-Hispanic objects, in view of his statements about the societies that produced them. Without explicitly referring to any source, he described the pre-Hispanic inhabitants of the Antioquia region as belonging to three groups, which he called nations, namely the Cacios, Nutabes and Tahamies, “who show signs of having been on one of the very lowest and humblest levels of civilisation, on the basis of their social customs.”¹⁷⁶ These societies lived “in the tops of trees, sometimes in the jungle, and in miserable, isolated huts or in villages of little importance.”¹⁷⁷ His description of each of these “nations” was based on moral categories. The Cacios, who inhabited the jungles of Chocó, went around naked and were “wild beings who could boast nothing more than the brutal instincts that come from the influence exerted by the desires of the flesh.”¹⁷⁸ The Nutabes, who had inhabited the central part of the State of Antioquia, were

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 504.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 510.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 505.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 508.

“fierce and valiant fighters, agile, slender and formidable in battle.”¹⁷⁹ Finally, the Tahamies were “gentle and kind by nature, and more willing to build a social life.”¹⁸⁰ He appears to have believed they had been in such a low state that they had not even been able to develop a language :

Por lo poco que nos alcanza sobre algunos vocablos de su idioma, comprendemos que éste se hallaba todavía en completa penuria y escasez de voces. Tenían muchos nombres compuestos, la mayor parte con significación apenas material, había falta completa o casi absoluta de palabras de sentido moral y metafísico.¹⁸¹

It was nevertheless these peoples, who had virtually no language and who “lived in trees”, that Uribe Angel describes who used gold for making their “jewels and adornments”. He also says that they were capable of “the art of shaping earth”, of making pottery in the form of utensils and strange figures which he compares with “objects of the same kind made by the ancient Egyptians that can be seen in museums of archaeology.”¹⁸² He also somewhat contradictorily asserts that they had a complex social and political organisation, one that was “much more sound, robust and resistant than that of the Muisca”¹⁸³

The lax way in which Uribe Angel interpreted and classified the societies that had inhabited the Antioquia region in pre-Hispanic times was the result of his

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 509.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 513.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 516.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 509.

patent prejudices about indian societies: for him, the discovery of America had been a “tremendous movement of social regeneration.”¹⁸⁴

2.7.4. The Scientific Rediscovery of San Agustín and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta

In 1892, the General and scientist Carlos Cuervo Márquez visited San Agustín. Not satisfied with giving a mere description of what he saw, he became the first explorer to carry out small scale excavations on the sites recorded by Codazzi in 1857, and he subsequently published his own account of the location of the statues, shrines and high reliefs.¹⁸⁵ Unlike Codazzi, who believed that the archaeological remains at San Agustín were the work of the Andaquies who had lived in the San Agustín region at the time of the Conquest, Cuervo Márquez held the view that the San Agustín remains were not the work of the Andaquies but of an earlier group which had already disappeared by the time of the Spanish Conquest. The author based his argument on the fact that chroniclers like Fray Pedro Simón, who had visited the Timaná region, said absolutely nothing about this site; he therefore assumed that the conquistadors had not heard of it and that it was likewise unknown to the people of the region at the time of the Conquest.¹⁸⁶ Cuervo Márquez stressed the monumental

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 519.

¹⁸⁵ Carlos Cuervo Márquez, 1859-1930. He had studied natural sciences at the National University. He visited Tierradentro and San Agustín in 1887, and published *Prehistoria y Viajes* in 1893, a second edition came out in 1920 with two volumes, entitled *Estudios Arqueológicos y Etnográficos*. He was Minister of Public Instruction and Foreign Affairs, Minister in Rome, Venezuela and Buenos Aires, and Ambassador to Brazil and México. He was member of the Colombian and Venezuelan Academies of History and of the Society of Americanists of Paris.

¹⁸⁶ C. Cuervo Márquez, *Estudios Arqueológicos y Etnográficos*, 2 vols., (Madrid, 1920), vol. 1, p. 230.

nature of the statues and high reliefs as sources of “great wonder and admiration for the archaeologist and traveler.”¹⁸⁷

Cuervo Márquez located and described twenty-six major figures - statues and shrines - with accompanying measurements and drawings. This was the first really systematic inventory of these figures, and proved to be extremely useful for subsequent studies. Apart from describing the San Agustín monuments and statues, Cuervo Márquez raised a number of queries in his work and put forward a series of hypotheses about the origin of the San Agustín civilization.

This Colombian pioneer of archaeological research at San Agustín believed that the San Agustín culture had not developed separately and in isolation, but that it had once been part of a much wider cultural group. On the evidence of similar sculptures, he suggested a Peruvian origin, associated with the first Quechua empire. He used a comparative analysis of San Agustín and the Quechua ruins at Pueblo Viejo, Manta, Manabí and Santa Elena to back this argument up.¹⁸⁸ He reinforced it with the presence of Quechua names like *Guachicano*, *Puachicos* and *Guacallo* in the San Agustín region, something which he argued could only be explained by migrations from “low, hot lands, probably near the sea” : some of the San Agustín monuments show representations of fish.¹⁸⁹

As well as San Agustín, an archaeological site with stone monuments, Cuervo Márquez included a brief outline in his work of some remains of the Taironas,

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

who inhabited the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, based on descriptions by the engineer Leoncio Atuesta who in 1886 had found the remains of an ancient indian village on the banks of the Gaira River, close to Santa Marta. Atuesta had found “a stone table of outstanding artistic beauty, which according to his calculations weighed almost half a ton.”¹⁹⁰ Cuervo Márquez’s report is important not so much for the description of Sr. Atuesta’s findings, as because he had the foresight to see that if a people had been able to produce work of this kind, there should be other evidence of equal or even greater significance to be found not far from the same site. He therefore called for studies to be undertaken into the remains of Tairona society :

El estudio de estas ruinas es del más alto interés para la arqueología colombiana, por ser las únicas de construcción en piedra de la época precolombina que actualmente existen en nuestro territorio.¹⁹¹

Cuervo also described a nearby temple, twenty three metres long and fourteen wide, of which the foundations and part of the walls still remained. These had been built of stones superimposed one on top of the other, and there was a large stone in the middle which the author speculates “was used to receive offerings or to make sacrifices.”¹⁹²

Cuervo cites descriptions by Friar Pedro Aguado, as evidence that the Taironas had been highly-skilled goldsmiths, adept at working jasper, carnelian

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 237.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 239 - 240.

and other varieties of quartz, which they carved into bead.¹⁹³ Cuervo Márquez was thus the first researcher to give a sketch of what Tairona society must have been like :

Una población rica, industriosa y comercial cuyos artifices trabajaban con habilidad el oro y el cobre; que sabían labrar la piedra, aún la más pura roca; que levantaban edificios de mampostería, que tenían un sistema religioso con templos para sus dioses y con sacerdotes para el culto; todo lo cual revela un estado social regularmente avanzado.¹⁹⁴

For the author, this evidence of the Taironas showed that they were “a culture that was vastly superior to the Chibchas”, the nation which had always been looked upon until then as the “most cultured” race to have inhabited what came to be known as Colombia in pre-Hispanic times.¹⁹⁵

Unlike other Colombian scientists who had attempted to reconstruct aspects of pre-Hispanic societies from descriptions by the chroniclers and from archaeological objects, Cuervo Márquez introduced two new elements which were to be of vital importance to subsequent archaeological studies: firstly, the study and description of archaeological sites on the basis of fieldwork done by the researcher, and secondly, the importance that he placed on the two archaeological sites whose main features were monumental stone constructions and statues, San Agustín and the remains of the ancient Taironas in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. These were to be the subject of the studies by the first two professional archaeologists to excavate in Colombia in the early years of

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 234 - 235.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.237.

the twentieth century, the German Konrad Preuss at San Agustín, and the North American John Alden Mason in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

The Sierra Nevada was much visited by foreign scientists during the latter part of the century, amongst these the eminent French geographer Elisée Reclus. Other scientific travellers who visited the Sierra and referred in their travellers' tales to living native societies and collected a few archaeological objects which would subsequently end up in archaeology and ethnography museums in the countries they came from were Count Joseph de Brettes and the German geographers Wilhelm Sievers and Alfred Hettner.

Reclus, who was born in 1830 and was later forced for political reasons to leave France and travelled through the United States and Central America, arrived in Colombia in 1855, where he became fascinated with the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. This fascination gave him the idea of setting up an agricultural exploration settlement on the Sierra, although this failed when he went down with yellow fever. He described this failed attempt in his work *Voyage à la Sierra Nevada de Sainte Marte: Paysages de la Nature Tropicale*, which was published in Paris in 1861.¹⁹⁶ Reclus published two geographical works of immense importance, *La Terre*, an inventory of geographical and geological knowledge which was published in Paris between 1867 and 1868, and *La Nouvelle Géographie Universelle*, which was published in nineteen volumes between 1875 and 1894.

¹⁹⁶ A second edition of this work came out under the title *Voyage à la Sierra Nevada de Sainte Marte*, (Paris, 1881). Other publications by Reclus relating to his stay in the country were *Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1893), translated and annotated with the author's authorisation by F. J. Vergara y Velasco.

Hettner, after studying for a doctorate in Dresden, came to Bogotá in 1882 as tutor to the son of the British Ambassador to Colombia, J. P. Harries-Gastrell, who returned to Great Britain one year later. Hettner decided to stay on in Colombia, and visited the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. He spent much of his time in Colombia studying the Bogotá Cordillera, and the results of his scientific research were published under the title *Die Kordillere von Bogotá: Ergebnisse von reisen und studien*, in 1892.¹⁹⁷

Count Joseph de Brettes spent six years in Colombia, and much of his exploration work was done on the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. The Colombian government gave him a contract to undertake a geographical and economic exploration mission in Magdalena, after which, according to a report dated 26 September 1892, Magdalena Governor Ramón Goenaga confirmed that the government was pleased with the results obtained by the Count, which included eighty two astronomical and trigonometric observations for calculating the positions of various water courses, and the discovery of five lakes and eight Arhuaco native population centers.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ A. Hettner, *Die Kordillere von Bogotá: Ergebnisse von reisen und studien*, (Gotha, 1892). He also published an account of his travels in Colombia in the work *Ueber seine Reisen in Columbien*, (Leipzig, 1888).

¹⁹⁸ J. de Brettes, "Chez les Indiens du Nord de la Colombie, Six Ans d'Explorations", in *Le Tour du Monde*, Année IV, Paris, (1898), p. 82.

2.7.5. 1892: The Academic Visibility of the Quimbaya

In 1892, on occasion of celebrations in Madrid commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America and the Americanist's Congress in Huelva, Vicente Restrepo's son, Ernesto Restrepo Tirado, Colombian delegate to both events, published his *Ensayo Etnográfico y Arqueológico de la Provincia de los Quimbayas en el Nuevo Reino de Granada*. This was the first descriptive and interpretative work to give Quimbaya society a academic visibility both in Colombia and abroad. Whereas some accounts of Muisca society had been published by Father José Domingo Duquesne in 1795, Ezequiel Uricoechea in 1854 and Liborio Zerda in 1883, Restrepo Tirado's work was the first attempt to describe the Quimbaya society on the basis of a rigorous handling of sources in the chronicles and an interpretation of gold and pottery objects. Previous works by Posada Arango and Uribe Angel were more concentrated on the former inhabitants of Antioquia but did not refer to the Quimbaya.

Restrepo Tirado began his work by describing the geography and natural history of the region, after which he analysed the religion, history, customs and agriculture of the "Province of the Quimbayas", using the chronicles of Pedro Cieza de León and Friar Pedro Simón. He devoted a special chapter to "Quimbaya Goldwork". Like Andrés Posada Arango, Restrepo Tirado relied more on archaeological information obtained from graves than on what the chroniclers said :

Las crónicas, es cierto, nos hablan de la tribu de los Quimbayas, nos dicen que aquella fue una nación poderosa y rica, guerrera e industrial, nos dan uno que otro detalle de sus costumbres y de sus creencias, pero más datos sacamos de uno de sus cementerios y de los objetos que de la lectura detenida de cuanto ellos se ha escrito.¹⁹⁹

Restrepo concluded that the Quimbaya only knew and worked two metals, their native gold and copper. Gold, “the noble metal *par excellence*”, which they sometimes smelted by itself and at other times in alloys with copper, was the means of preserving “the stamped images of their chieftains” for posterity. Citing the descriptions of the chroniclers, Restrepo stressed how important the use and function of goldwork was for the Quimbaya :

El oro brillaba en medio de sus fiestas, en sus escasos vestidos y sobre su cobriza piel, y en épocas de guerra cubría la cabeza, el pecho y los brazos de sus jefes en forma de cascos, pectorales y brazaletes. Sus estandartes resplandecían a la luz del sol cubiertas de laminas delgadas de oro que brillaban como estrellas, mientras carreteles, cascabeles y otras alhajas producían un ruido metálico. Entre los mil ruidos que producían sus pitos y fotutos en el momento del ataque, resaltaba el sonido agudo que despedían los silbatos de oro.²⁰⁰

This work by Restrepo and that of his father on the Muisca in 1895 were the last ones published in Colombia during the nineteenth century about the pre-Hispanic Colombian world, and brought to a close a century in which archaeological studies had focussed on reappraising Muisca and Quimbaya societies.

¹⁹⁹ E. Restrepo Tirado, *Ensayo Etnográfico y Arqueológico de la Provincia de los Quimbayas en el Nuevo Reino de Granada*, (Bogotá, 1892), p. v.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Authors cannot be immune to the influences of their social setting, and each of the principal Colombian antiquarians and scientists in the nineteenth century who set out to rediscover evidence about the country's pre-Hispanic past also had, close links with the outside world. This was true of Joaquín Acosta, Ezequiel Uriceochea, Vicente Restrepo, Andrés Posada Arango and Manuel Uribe Angel. Time spent in Europe was important in developing their enthusiasm for the ancient past. French influences had a particularly significant effect on these precursors of Colombian archaeology. It was not mere chance that Posada Arango chose a session of the French Anthropological Society in 1871 as the setting for presenting his work on Antioquian societies, nor was it a matter of coincidence that the works of Acosta, Restrepo, Uribe Angel and Posada Angel were published in Paris at a time when Americanist studies were just beginning.

This foreign influence permeated the minds of those scientists and antiquarians, and spurred them on to preserve the gold objects they had access to, and to build up collections of the pottery objects which the grave plunderers placed no importance whatsoever on.

CHAPTER 3

COLOMBIA, FROM PRESENTATION TO REPRESENTATION: FROM PRODUCTS OF THE REPUBLIC TO ANTIQUITIES, 1823 - 1893

Another problem that had to be faced was how the country should present itself in the National Museum in Bogotá, and in the international exhibitions that were held with increasing frequency during the second half of the century. These exhibitions gave the country the opportunity to show itself off to the world; they were visited by vast numbers of people. They posed the difficult question of how to represent Colombia. The commemoration of the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America in 1892 involved another attempt to meet this challenge.

This chapter examines the problems that arose in the search for a way to represent Colombia in the National Museum in Bogotá and abroad during the nineteenth century. It describes and analyses how the pre-Hispanic past came to form part of the ways in which the nation was represented.

3.1. The National Museum in Colombia : In Search of National Representation

Soon after the struggle for Colombian independence had been won in 1819, the naturalist Francisco Antonio Zea made plans for setting up a natural history museum and a school of mines as a scientific and educational centre as already mentioned. Zea, who had been a member of the Botanical Expedition and had close links with Mutis and Caldas, had been imprisoned for suspect loyalty in 1795 and sent to Spain, where he had remained in prison in Cadiz for two years. On his release his talents were recognized and in 1804 he was appointed director of the Botanical Gardens.¹ Zea was sent in 1820 by Bolivar to Europe to work for the diplomatic recognition of the new Republic. He was given the additional task of recruiting scientists for a school of mines and a natural history museum in Bogotá. The museum was to be modelled on the lines of the Natural History Museum in Paris, so that knowledge of the sciences could be disseminated amongst the youth of Colombia and the government be properly advised on mining matters. For leaders of the incipient republic like Zea and José Manuel Restrepo, now Secretary of the Interior and a former contributor to Caldas's *Semanario*, promoting scientific and technical knowledge was a priority. European scientists were to be contracted, to replace the scholars who had perished during the Independence period.² Humboldt recommended two learned men to Bolívar:

¹ F. Vezga, "Memoria sobre la Historia del Estudio de la Botánica en la Nueva Granada presentado respetuosamente a la Sociedad de Naturalistas Neogranadinos", in E. Uricoechea, *Contribuciones de Colombia a las Ciencias y a las Artes*, (Bogotá, 1860), p. 88. See also R. Botero Saldarriaga, *Francisco Antonio Zea*, (Bogotá, 1945).

Me atrevo a recomendar a la gran bondad de su excelencia los portadores de estas líneas, dos jóvenes sabios cuya suerte y éxito me interesan mucho : El Sr. Rivero y el Sr Boussingault (...), distinguidos químicos y mineralogistas, quienes serán los fundadores de la Escuela de Minas que su excelencia con tanta sabiduría establecerá en Cundinamarca.³

In Paris, Zea subsequently contracted the Peruvian mining engineer and naturalist Mariano Eduardo de Rivero, who had studied at the Royal School of Mines in France to be director of the museum and the school of mines. Zea also hired the French chemist and mineralogist Jean Baptiste Boussingault, the medical doctor, naturalist and painter François-Désiré Roulin, and the zoologists Joustin Marie Godot and Jacques Bourdon of the Natural History Museum in Paris.⁴

Rivero and Boussingault disembarked at La Guaira, in March 1823, and took advantage of the overland journey to Bogotá to take barometric measurements, collect mineral samples and make various scientific observations. At Santa Rosa de Viterbo in Boyacá, they found a “beautiful example of cosmic iron” for the museum.⁵ The new spirit of illustration can be clearly seen in the notice of 1823, announcing the setting up of the School of Mines:

² F. Safford, *The Ideal of the Practical, Colombia's Struggle to Form a Technical Elite*, p. 101.

³ Alexander von Humboldt to Simón Bolívar, Paris, 29 July 1822 in E. Posada, *Apostillas para la Historia*, (Bogotá, 1926), p. 347.

⁴ GC no. 101, (21 September 1823).

⁵ It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the ‘Santa Rosa aerolite’, which weighs 411 kg., could be transported to Bogotá. However, scientific travellers who knew of its existence inspected it when they passed through Santa Rosa. The members of the Chorographic Commission expressed in 1853 their concern at not being able to send to the museum “this beautiful gem, before it sinks into oblivion or is melted down by some greedy person who mocks the sciences and museums”. M. Ancizar, *La Peregrinación de Alpha por las Provincias del Norte de la Nueva Granada*, pp. 269 - 270.

AVISO A LA JUVENTUD

Desde que Colombia enarboló el estandarte de la libertad, siempre ha deseado propagar los conocimientos de las ciencias exactas en estos hermosos países; pues está bien convencida que este es el único medio de asegurar su independencia y de disipar las densas sombras que por tantos siglos habían ocultado al genio americano la luz de la verdadera filosofía. Si la juventud americana ha regado con su sangre los fértiles campos de su suelo, con cuánta más razón no se ocupará ahora en adquirir conocimientos necesarios para su prosperidad y para su gloria? Penetrado el congreso de unas ideas tan liberales y filantrópicas, ha decretado que se establezca en la capital de la República, una escuela de minería para instruir cierto número de jóvenes en todos los ramos de esta ciencia.⁶

3.1.1. The Natural History Museum and the School of Mines

The Natural History Museum and the School of Mines were founded by a decree dated 28 July 1823. The main purpose of the museum in its early days was to “promote the natural sciences” as an essential basis for “progress in agriculture, arts and trade, which are the three cornerstones on which the happiness of peoples is built.”⁷ With the idea that all “products of the Republic” should be brought together in a museum in the capital, the government ordered superintendents, governors, priests, judges, politicians and mayors to send “curious things such as minerals, animals, birds, insects, reptiles, fish, shells” to the museum so that in a few years’ time, all the products of the Republic could be brought together in the capital. Thus “the capital of Colombia will come to rival the displays in European nations.”⁸

⁶ GC no. 103, (5 October 1823).

⁷ GC no. 101, (21 September 1823).

It was envisaged that Rivero would teach mineralogy, geology and mining at the School of Mines, and that Boussingault would be the teacher of general and analytic chemistry and metallurgy; Roulin would teach elementary mathematics, descriptive geometry, mechanics and drawing, and the Colombian botanist, Juan María Céspedes, botany and agriculture. Finally, Bourdon would be the collector of animal life and Goudot the collector of botanical specimens.⁹ The programme of studies was to be divided into two years. In the first year, students would study geometry, trigonometry, drawing, mineralogy, chemistry and physics; in the second the subjects would be geology and mining, subterranean works, analytic chemistry and metallurgy. It was envisaged that after being in the school for two years, students would go out and visit and work in mines in different parts of the country, and practice scientific observations in the field.¹⁰

The executive power would “pay the expenses involved in setting up the Museum and the School of Mines from the public funds.”¹¹ The Museum Director was assigned an annual salary of four thousand pesos, a sum equivalent to the salary of the Vice-President of the Republic.¹² Rivero offered a thousand pesos a year from his salary to the Museum and the School of Mines, for the purpose of “spreading enlightenment in Colombia.”¹³

⁸ GC no. 144, (18 July 1824).

⁹ GC no. 112, (7 December 1823).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² GC no. 99, (7 September 1823).

Enthusiasm and enormous expectation surrounded the setting up of the Museum, which was opened in the presence of Vice-President Santander on 4 July 1824 in the former premises of the Botanical Expedition, next to the Astronomical Observatory. The economic priority of the day, mining, and the scientific emphasis on natural history, determined the nature of the museum's first collections. It held a collection of minerals imported from Europe : pieces of meteoric iron, insects, mammals, reptiles and fish, scientific instruments, fragments of bone, possibly from a mastodon, and a single mummy "found near Tunja with the cloak well preserved."¹⁴ When Colonel John Potter Hamilton, visited the museum, Rivero showed him the mummy, and Colonel Hamilton was very impressed by how well it was preserved and by the shroud it was wrapped in.¹⁵

Rivero went on scientific excursions to Guatavita, to the salt mines in Zipaquirá, to the Muzo emerald mines, and to the Llanos of San Martín and the Meta River, accompanied by the French naturalists. According to Colonel Hamilton, Rivero returned to Bogotá, with objects obtained from Indians in the region, a hammock, tiger skins, and traps that the Indians used for fishing.¹⁶ In 1825, Rivero explored the upper reaches of the Magdalena River and reached Timaná and San Agustín. In 1851, Rivero with von Tshudi published an account of travels in the Andes accompanied by an atlas with illustrations of many antiquities they had encountered during their travels. Although this work was

¹³ *Ibid.*, and C. S. Cochrane, *Journal of a Residence and Travels in Colombia during the years 1823 and 1824*, p. 16.

¹⁴ GC no. 144, (18 July, 1824).

¹⁵ J. P. Hamilton, *Travels through the Interior Provinces of Colombia*, p. 203.

mostly devoted to Peru, it contains the first illustrations of San Agustín statues, as well as a drawing of one of the ceremonial structures as it then appeared, along with a short text describing the monuments.¹⁷ Rivero thought that this site was Muisca, as he recalled in the description of a ceremonial structure :

Representa el diseño de una mesa cuadrada formada por arenisca. (...) Esta mesa parece haber sido destinada por los antiguos Muyscas para los sacrificios ofrecidos a sus deidades y existe en las ruinas cerca de Timaná.¹⁸

The government's determination to support the museum can be clearly seen in the large number of decrees and notices aimed at perfecting the way it was run. Scholarships were awarded to young men from all over the country, study programmes were revised, and the obligations of both teachers and students were set out.¹⁹ As we have seen, collection priorities at the time centred around "the Products of the Republic" represented by minerals, natural history specimens and plants.

However, the hope of founding a scientific centre with mainly foreign teachers did not last long. Rivero asked for permission to exploit a number of mines, and as sufficient capital was not available in Colombia, he asked the government to give him a year's leave to go to London and set up a company with British capital.²⁰ Rivero was given this temporary leave, and while he was away, the

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹⁷ M. E. de Rivero and J. J. Von Tschudi, *Antigüedades Peruanas*, one vol. and Atlas (Viena, 1851).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Atlas, Illustration III, p. 325.

¹⁹ Decree dated 28 July 1823 in *GC* no. 101, (21 September 1823); Decree dated 26 November 1823 in *GC* no. 112, (7 December 1823); Notices in *GC* no. 114, (18 July 1824), no. 115, (25 July 1824); *GC* no. 127, (30 January 1825).

²⁰ *GC* no. 115, (25 July 1824).

Colombian mathematician and lawyer Jerónimo Torres was named temporary Director.

In February 1825, seven months after the Museum and School had opened classes began in mathematics and chemistry. The equipment for the chemistry laboratory and the instruments for physics that had been ordered from Europe did not arrive until then.²¹ Torres as temporary Director led the institute with great energy and enthusiasm, and in 1825 thirty students were given classes in experimental chemistry; 295 entomological species were classified, 115 plant species were deposited in the herbarium, and the natural history collector doubled the size of the museum's collection, adding numerous birds, amphibians and fish.²²

From 1825 historical objects began to be added to the initial collection: battle trophies from the Wars of Independence, such as standards and banners of the defeated armies and medals.²³ The most important was the gold crown adorned with diamonds and pearls that Bolívar had been given in Cuzco, which he had sent to the Congress of Colombia as a "patriotic tribute."²⁴ Antonio José de Sucre sent a cloak from Bolivia which had belonged to Atahualpa's wife, which he declared was an "ancient monument worthy of the Museum in the capital of Colombia from the time when the troops of our country avenged the blood of the

²¹ GC no. 172, (30 January 1825).

²² GC no. 223, (22 January 1826).

²³ GC no. 236, (23 April 1826).

²⁴ GC no. 229, (5 March 1826).

innocent Incas and liberated their former Empire.”²⁵ Sucre also sent the standard that Pizarro had used in the conquest of Peru in 1533.²⁶ A start was thus made in building up a new category amongst the museum’s collections, since it was no longer a place to house just to “Products of the Republic”. Commemorative objects from the independence campaigns, the cornerstone of the new republic now came to form part of what was represented in the museum.

Rivero resigned from his post as Director in 1826. He went to Peru, to set up a museum in Lima that had been first proposed in 1822. Between 1826 and 1836, he formed an important selection of natural and cultural objects, and the formal establishment of the Natural History Museum was decreed in 1836.²⁷ The Bogotá Natural History Museum was therefore the pioneer in the region. However, the financial problems resulting from the Wars of Independence and the vast gap that existed between the ideals of the Republican leaders and the social, political and economic realities of the day prevented the government from meeting its obligations and paying the foreign scientists. The mineralogy and zoology curriculums were merged in 1827, and it was decided that these should be taught by the museum director, Bourdon and Goudot presumably ceased teaching.²⁸

²⁵ GC no. 222, (15 January 1826).

²⁶ GC no. 203, (4 September 1825).

²⁷ L.G. Lumbreras, “Tres Fundaciones de un Museo para el Perú”, in A. Castrillón-Vizcarra, *Museo Peruano: Utopia y Realidad*, (Lima, 1986), p. 122.

Roulin went back to France in 1828 after trips made with Rivero and Boussingault to study the course of the river Meta.²⁹ According to Ezequiel Uricoechea and as already mentioned, Roulin took with him to France a collection consisting of nine Muisca goldwork objects: a breastplate with an anthropomorphous representation, two anthropomorphic votive figures, an ear ornament, zoomorphic votive figures, and a ceremonial representation of a *yopo* tray, all of which subsequently came to form part of the collection at the Museum of Antiquities in Saint-Germain-en-Laye (Figure 5).³⁰

Boussingault had links with the activities of the Colombian Mining Association, an English company which invested in the Marmato and Vega de Supía gold mines in Antioquia and in the Santa Ana silver mine in Mariquita.³¹ Boussingault stayed in Colombia until 1833, going on scientific trips, observing active volcanoes, undertaking geological and geodesic studies, and working with the Colombian Mining Association.³²

Though the French team did not create a new Colombian scientific generation, as was the hope of Zea, Restrepo and Santander in 1823, their contribution, especially that of Boussingault, was important in geology and mining.

²⁸ Decree dated 15 June 1827 in *Codificación Nacional de todas las leyes de Colombia desde el año de 1821 hecha conforme a la ley 13 de 1912 por la Sala de Negocios del Consejo de Estado*, vol. III, (Bogotá, 1924), pp. 178 - 179.

²⁹ Part of Roulin's stay in Colombia is described in his work F. D. Roulin *Histoire Naturelle et Souvenirs de Voyage*, (Paris, n.d.).

³⁰ E. Uricoechea, "Antiquités Chibchas de la Colombie", pp. 350 - 351.

³¹ M. Deas, *Vida y Opiniones de Mr. William Wills*, 2 vols., (Bogotá, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 22 - 26.

³² See J. B. Boussingault and F. D. Roulin, *Viajes Científicos a los Andes Ecuatoriales traducido por Joaquin Acosta y precedido por algunas notas de geología de él mismo*, (Paris, 1849) and *Mémoires de J. B. Boussingault*, 5 vols., (Paris, 1892 - 1903). Boussingault made research of the goitre in Colombia

The circulars asking for donations for the Museum would appear to have had some success. An account by the French diplomat Auguste le Moyne in 1829 describes the museum that included pre-Hispanic objects :

Dans une des maisons d'une rue retirée se trouvaient réunis une bibliothèque nationale, un musée et un observatoire avec un jardin botanique; (...) Parmi les objets rassemblés dans le musée qui occupait une seule chambre, les plus curieux étaient des échantillons de minéralogie, des armes, fétiches, et poterie des anciens indiens, (...) et en fin l'étendard du conquérant Pizarre dont le Pérou avait fait don a Bolivar.³³

Despite the departure of the foreign scientists, chemistry and physics continued to be taught by Colonel Joaquín Acosta, museum director from 1832. After studying in France, and on his return to Colombia, Acosta held various official posts and was in charge of the Astronomical Observatory and the museum from 1832 to 1837. During Acosta's administration, the museum became the *Museo Nacional*, dropping the former name of *Museo de Historia Natural*.

Acosta's drive and hard work resulted in improvements in the museum, its collections being both enriched and better organised. He attended visitors in person on the last Sunday of every month, when the Museum was open to the public. The traveller John Steuart relates how in 1836 the Museum had already been divided up, and now occupied two rooms. The first one had native and foreign minerals, fossils, granites, precious stones on display, while the second

published as “Examen de las causas que producen el coto en las Cordilleras de la Nueva Granada” in *GC* nos. 527, 533, (1831).

contained specimens from the animal kingdom. Pizarro's standard, the cloak that was worn by Atahualpa's wife and "relics."³⁴ It can be assumed that the "relics", according to Acosta were "clay idols of the ancient Indians", had been sent to the museum by mayors and priests around the country in response to the requests and circulars that the government had sent out with a view to adding to the collections.³⁵ As mentioned before, the law of 13 June 1833 stipulated that to promote national wealth all precious stones and metals found in Indian burial chambers belonged to those who had discovered them, but some sent their discoveries to the museum.

During the Acosta administration, around 200 new objects were added to the museum's collections. Many of these were the result of donations, but some were acquired from the museum's own funds.³⁶ When Acosta left the Museum in 1837, it marked the end of the first period in the Museum's history, during which the dual nature that its founders had stamped on it in 1823 predominated, namely that it should be a scientific and educational centre on the one hand, and a display of "Products of the Republic" on the other.

Between 1840 and the 1880's the museum underwent many vicissitudes and changes of location, and it eventually declined to being no more than a mere store for "relics" and "curiosities". In 1842, the government sold the house and

³³ A. Le Moyne, *Voyages et Séjours dans l'Amérique du Sud, La Nouvelle Grenade, Santiago de Cuba, La Jamaïque et L'Isthme de Panamá*, 2 vols., (Paris, 1880), vol. 1, p. 173.

³⁴ J. Stuart, *Bogotá in 1836-7, Being a Narrative of an Expedition to the Capital of New Granada, and a Residence there of Eleven Months*, (New York, 1838), pp. 131 - 132.

³⁵ "Informe de Joaquín Acosta al Secretario del Interior i Relaciones Exteriores", in *Gaceta de la Nueva Granada*, no. 126, Bogotá, (10 December 1837).

the collections were transferred to a room in the building occupied by the Secretaries of the Interior and War. There was a pressing need to reduce expenses.³⁷ From 1845, during the first government of President Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, new impetus was given to scientific development, and as in 1823 when the Museum was established, Mosquera hired foreign teachers for the universities and transferred the Museum to more suitable premises, the *Edificio de las Aulas*. The French doctor Eugenie Rampón, a teacher of pathology at the university, took on the task of organising the mineral collections, which he classified “after a period of arduous work lasting more than a year”; implying that the mineral collection was not insignificant.³⁸

In 1854, during the civil war which brought down General José María Melo, the *Edificio de las Aulas*, where the Museum and Library were housed, was converted into barracks for a year, with consequent damage and pilfering. Barely a year earlier, a decree dated 22 August 1853 had set out new regulations governing the National Museum and guaranteeing that its collections would be protected.³⁹

During this period, nevertheless, the Museum received from the Chorographic Commission, thirty eight volumes from the botanist José Jerónimo Triana, consisting of a herbarium for the Museum’s Natural History collection and the

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Gaceta de la Nueva Granada*, no. 562, Bogotá, (19 June 1842).

³⁸ E. Uricoechea, *Contribuciones de Colombia a las Ciencias i a las Artes*, p. 9.

³⁹ Decree dated 22 August 1853 in *Codificación Nacional de todas las leyes de Colombia desde el año de 1821*, vol. XV, (Bogotá, 1929), p. 695.

corresponding catalogue and indices, while from Agustín Codazzi it received fossilised bones and geological samples and minerals.⁴⁰

From 1867 onwards, the National Museum came under the recently-founded National University.⁴¹ From that date, the person in charge of the museum was the National Librarian, who was obliged to show round anybody who wanted to see it on Thursdays between eleven o'clock in the morning and three o'clock in the afternoon, to publish a catalogue of the objects that were to be found there, to account for all new acquisitions, and to reclaim objects which had been allowed to be removed from the museum but which had not been returned on time.⁴² The interest shown by intellectuals at the National University can be clearly seen in the extensive report that Rafael Eliseo Santander sent in 1868 about the history and state of the museum to University Rector Manuel Ancízar. Santander wrote that between 1824 and 1853, the Museum had been built up collections that were well classified, to such an extent that in 1846 the Museum “was in a state of progress and improvement”, and that according to a report that same year by an official commission, the Museum housed “in addition to mineral objects, collections of insects, curious antiquities, commemorative trophies, coins, portraits, and in short, a thousand objects worth being preserved with the utmost care.”⁴³

⁴⁰ “Informe de Rafael E. Santander al Rector de la Universidad Nacional”, in *Anales de la Universidad*, vol. 1, Bogotá, (October, 1868), p. 114.

⁴¹ The “Universidad Nacional de los Estados Unidos de Colombia” had in its initial period, schools of law, medicine, natural sciences, engineering, arts, literature and philosophy. The National Museum intended to have a close relationship to the School of Natural Sciences. Law 66, 22 September 1867, in *Codificación Nacional de todas las Leyes de Colombia desde el año de 1821*, vol. XXIII, 1867 - 1868, (Bogotá, 1933), p. 157.

⁴² F. Pombo, *Breve Guía del Museo Nacional*, (Bogotá, 1881), p. 7.

⁴³ “Informe de Rafael E. Santander al Rector de la Universidad Nacional”, p. 114.

The Museum was now falling apart, and was in a deplorable state :

NO EXISTE EL MUSEO NACIONAL porque a la verdad, no debemos continuar dando ese pomposo nombre a los restos, mutilados unos, maltratados otros, de lo que antes fuera el museo colombiano (...) En suma, lo poco que ha quedado si bien es interesante, escasamente servirá para poder formarse una idea de lo que fue el museo, siquiera en los días de su creación. Y a pesar de todo, es preciso que con lo poco que haya quedado se renueve la tarea de revivir el Museo Nacional.⁴⁴

Santander appealed to Colombian scientists, “those people who are seen in civilised countries and for whom science is a religion, whose lives are devoted to that religion of theirs, to gather together the fragments left behind by the storm and tempest of revolution.”⁴⁵ Manuel Ancizar on leaving the university in 1871, left a report to the new Rector of a visit he had made to the Museum. The situation outlined by Rafael Eliseo Santander in 1868 had not changed. Ancizar proposed that the Museum should become an ethnological one and should acquire skulls, mummies and aboriginal artefacts, “classified by race and tribe with suitable wording in each group and in the catalogue”; gradually “a fine and precious archive can be built up of our ancient history.”⁴⁶ Certain well-known intellectuals and academics had already shown an interest in reviving it, with a greater emphasis on ethnology matters, as José Joaquín Borda had proposed in 1856 :

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ M. Ancizar, “Informes de Comisiones”, in *Anales de la Universidad*, no. 25, Bogotá, (January - February, 1871), p. 9.

En todos los tiempos y en casi todos los países, se han mirado, no diremos con curiosidad sino más bien con veneración, los recuerdos de la antigüedad, los restos de las generaciones pasadas. Las corporaciones de sabios y los pueblos enteros penetran con cierta especie de fanatismo a los Museos, esos templos donde se transmiten a la posteridad los despojos de las artes y ciencias de los antepasados (...) En dónde están los recuerdos de aquellas razas venerables de indígenas que antes de la conquista cubrían el suelo hoy habitado por nosotros, y ocupaban el tercer lugar entre los pueblos civilizados del Continente americano? ⁴⁷

Foreign visitors sometimes complained of the inconvenience resulting from the country's archaeological heritage being in private hands rather than in public museums. As Charles Saffray noted in 1869:

Il faut s'adresser à des particuliers, faire des démarches sans nombre, supporter des présentations sans fin pour être admis à contempler les antiquités en bois, en pierre, en terre et en tumbaga, en or, qui ont échappé au zèle des pêtres espagnols et à l'avarice des conquérants.⁴⁸

The museum and its collections had suffered grievously. As José Caicedo Rojas wrote in 1878, referring to the National Museum:

Durante cuarenta años hemos estado tan ocupados en el negocio de las guerras y politiquerías, que no hemos tenido tiempo para preguntar qué ha sido de este establecimiento de que la generación presente no tiene noticia.⁴⁹

3.1.2. A Symbol of a Civilised Nation

In 1879, to “replace the former National Museum which had vanished like smoke”, the government acquired a collection of exhibits from Nicolás Pereira

⁴⁷ J. J. Borda, “Un Museo”, pp. 46-47.

Gamba which included minerals, animals, indigenous objects and a herbarium which had been exhibited at the 1871 National Exhibition with shelving and furniture.⁵⁰ The Librarian Gonzalo A. Tavera, acting Museum director, considered this effort “worthy of applause and patriotism”; it provided the capital with an establishment like those found in “all learned and refined capitals.”⁵¹ Tavera also wanted a museum that could display a representative sample of inventions and machinery, and he asked Colombian consuls abroad for designs or samples of different kinds of machinery and apparatus, that could be examined by those interested in “the practical application of knowledge.”⁵² This request did not meet with much success : subsequent catalogues and records of Museum collections make no reference to these kinds of object. “Progress“, was not represented in the museum.

Tavera envisaged a collection of “patriotic monuments and historical antiquities”, worthy of a country that had immense natural riches, and where “rare and curious objects” and “historical gems and national productions” alike abounded. He proposed that both the government and private individuals should make an effort to restore this institution, “which had been the glory of our ancestors.”⁵³

⁴⁸ C. Saffray, “Voyage à la Nouvelle Grenade“ *Le Tour du Monde*, no. VIII, Paris, (1869), p. 90 .

⁴⁹ J. Caicedo Rojas “ Algunos Recuerdos del Presbítero José Romoaldo Cuervo” , p. 117.

⁵⁰ “Informe del Bibliotecario Nacional Gonzalo A. Tavera”, in *Anales de la Universidad*, no. 89 Bogotá, (February, 1879), p. 47.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁵³ “Informe del Bibliotecario Nacional Gonzalo A. Tavera”, in *Anales de la Universidad* , no. 91 Bogotá, (December, 1879), pp. 206 - 207.

As in the 1820's circulars, Tavera asked governors and the Archbishop to get officials and the clergy to collect objects and send them to the Museum.⁵⁴ According to Fidel Pombo, who would later in 1881 produce the first printed guide to the Museum, this praiseworthy move resulted in no donations at all : "the lack of security in national establishments, which were more often than not run by incompetent people, quite rightly led to a lack of trust."⁵⁵

In 1880, Miguel Antonio Caro, was appointed National Librarian, responsible for the National Museum. The botanist and writer Jenaro Valderrama, Museum Director from 1849 to 1853, wrote to the new Librarian about the disastrous state the museum, "about to collapse totally in dust and moths", adding that "such lack of care does no credit to a civilised country."⁵⁶ Caro reacted rapidly, and the result was a speech to Congress by the Secretary of Public Instruction. The museum was restored on its premises in the *Edificio de las Aulas*, and Fidel Pombo, Genaro Valderrama and Saturnino Vergara were employed to produce catalogues of the collections. Under the direction of Pombo, who was to be the leading light behind this revival in the museum's fortunes in the last years of the century, the Museum was divided into three sections: Natural History; History, Archaeology and Curiosities; and Paintings. The word "Archaeology" now appeared for the first time, referring to the section containing pre-Hispanic objects. This was certainly a revival:

⁵⁴ "Informe del Bibliotecario Nacional Gonzalo A. Tavera", in *Anales de la Universidad*, no. 92 Bogotá, (January, 1880), p. 269.

⁵⁵ F. Pombo, *Breve Guía del Museo Nacional*, p. 9.

Diariamente se aumenta el número de objetos curiosos de este establecimiento, que tan rico fue en otros tiempos y que casi había desaparecido. Su reorganización y mejora son prueba de verdadero adelanto, pues quizá Colombia sería el único país civilizado que no conserva un museo.⁵⁷

On May 20, 1881, Law 34 decreed that the name which should be used for this institution would be "*Museo Colombiano*" and its functions would be as follows :

En este museo serán colectados y cuidadosamente mantenidos todos los objetos que puedan enaltecer los recuerdos históricos de la Patria y que puedan estimular y favorecer el adelanto de las ciencias. Entre dichos objetos serán preferidos los de uso, retratos, armas y en general cuantas reliquias de los próceres de la Independencia puedan conseguirse, sin descuidar los de cerámica, piedra, madera y metales que sirvan como documentos para esclarecer la historia primitiva del país, así como también las muestras curiosas de vegetales, animales y minerales que puedan dar idea de la riqueza propia del territorio colombiano.⁵⁸

The Secretary of Public Instruction, Ricardo Becerra also favoured reviving the Museum and its collections. He sent out a circular to the State governments on 2 September 1881, requesting donations of archaeological, colonial, mineral and historical objects. The objects to which priority was to be given included archaeological ones, those "which represent the peoples of our country and the state their civilisation was in prior to the Conquest, and in particular those which can help shed light on the as yet obscure problems of Colombian ethnology", and historical items, representing "the history of the country, with this being understood as being not the history of our disastrous civil wars but rather that of

⁵⁶ Genaro Valderrama to Miguel Antonio Caro, Bogotá, 10 September 1880, Fondo Secretaría de Instrucción Pública, vol. 3, pp. 574 -574b, AGN.

⁵⁷ P. M. Ibañez, *Crónicas de Bogotá y de sus inmediaciones*, (Bogotá, 1891), p. 276.

⁵⁸ Law 34, 1881 in *Codificación Nacional de todas las Leyes de Colombia desde el año de 1821*, vol. XXXI, 1881, (Bogotá, 1950), p. 48.

the great period of Independence.”⁵⁹ Having a good museum was an unmistakable mark of “civilised nations” : museums “reveal the position each nation occupies on the scale of civilisation.”⁶⁰ This circular did produce results : records show that a good number of objects came into the museum’s collections between 1880 and 1900 as private donations.

The first guide published by the Museum in 1881 listed the collections it housed at the time of Becerra’s circular. In the history section, under “Historical Monuments and Notable Objects”, appear objects from the time of the Conquest, a coat of mail and spurs that had belonged to Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, and Nicolás de Federmann’s sword; from the colonial era came the coat-of-arms of the *Real Audiencia*, the keys to the gates of Cartagena, a sword which had belonged to Viceroy Amar y Borbón, the skull of Viceroy Solís, two pairs of embroidered velvet shoes that had belonged to the wife of Viceroy Amar y Borbón, and portraits of all the Viceroys and of some leading figures in the colonial era, including one of the “ Pacificador” General Pablo Morillo.

The portraits of “eminent personages” included of Christopher Columbus, José Celestino Mutis, Francisco José de Caldas, Alexander von Humboldt, and Philip III, Philip IV, Charles III and Fernando VII.⁶¹ There were three portraits of Simón

⁵⁹ R. Becerra, “Circular del Secretario de Instrucción Pública a los Gobiernos de los Estados”, Bogotá, 2 September 1881, in *Anales de la Universidad*, no. 12, Bogotá, (September, 1881), pp. 11 - 12.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ F. Pombo, *Breve Guía del Museo Nacional*, pp. 14 - 15.

Bolívar, a collection of Spanish standards and the banners of the liberating armies, bearing the legend "*Para la Libertad.*"⁶²

The "indigenous objects and curiosities" in the collections consisted of the cloak of Atahualpa's queen, and a feather blanket made by the Andaqui Indians, mentioned in almost all former descriptions. The archaeological collection was poor : some clay "idols" and vessels, and a stone chisel. There was a better selection of ethnographic artefacts, including boxes and quivers for holding arrows and darts, blow pipes and weapons that were used for hunting stags, bows, arrows, *macanas* and bamboo tips, darts, four vessels that contained curare, necklaces of coconut and seeds, a fish-tooth bracelet, feathers, straw baskets, and a chieftain's sceptre.⁶³

In the Natural History Section, which was classified by species, collections of mammals, birds, reptiles, fish and invertebrates were exhibited. Under mammals, the guide also referred to human remains and "curiosities": several human skulls, three indigenous mummies, and the freak fetus of two calves with a single head.⁶⁴ Colombian flora was represented by two herbariums, the first of which had been built up, as already mentioned, in 1856 by the Chorographic Commission botanist José Jerónimo Triana, consisting of 3,950 species.⁶⁵ The second herbarium was that acquired from Nicolás Pereira Gamba in 1879. There were no records of the collections that had been housed

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 12 - 13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

in the Museum when it opened in 1824. Finally, the art section contained a collection of thirty three oil paintings of religious subjects.⁶⁶

These collections were displayed to the public much as a cabinet of curiosities. Minerals, animal specimens and indigenous objects were mixed up with artefacts from the colonial era and others relating to the heroes of the Independence movement. All in total disarray, as the British traveller Rose Carnegie-Williams was to relate in 1882 :

The first object to be seen on entering this room was the skull of Solis, the Viceroy, grinning horribly. (...) Then came some bones of the mastodon, and huge tusks, a great bear's paw, the shells of armadillos (...). Some deformities in the shapes of calves were also exposed with two heads preserved in spirits. (...) On the centre table were three hideous mummies of dead Indians, (...) near them were two large stuffed tigers. (...) Then came a display of minerals with specimens of gold, quartz, emerald, sulphur and lava from the Ruiz volcano. (...) The saddle of Santander, the great general, was also exhibited, with spears, swords and other weapons belonging to the old indians; feathers, head-dresses and chains of teeth. (...) Here also was the bed of the General Bolívar on which he lay when an attempt to assassinate him was made but fortunately failed. Opposite this was a chest containing Indian idols made of stone and a very curious so-called almanac carved in stone which was used by the Muisca Indians.⁶⁷

This chaotic exhibition was now to be transformed and organised by Fidel Pombo, who was appointed Director in 1884 and remained in the post until his death in 1900.⁶⁸ His extraordinary devotion to duty and his open and democratic views make him perhaps the most important nineteenth century director. He

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 17 - 18.

⁶⁷ R. Carnegie-Williams, *A Year in the Andes or A Lady's Life in Bogotá*, (London, 1882), pp. 212 - 216.

⁶⁸ Fidel Pombo, 1837 - 1901, was the son of the lawyer and politician Lino de Pombo and brother of the poet Rafael Pombo. He studied engineering at Yale; professor of analitic and descriptive geometry,

was an able organizer, tenacious in preventing objects from the Museum's collections leaving. He edited the *Nueva Guía Descriptiva del Museo Nacional*, dedicated to the Museum's history and antiquities section, and in the journal *Anales de la Instrucción Pública* he published a lists and descriptions of the Natural History Section in monthly instalments. Pombo corresponded with the directors of museums in Latin America and the United States; he sent them his catalogues, and attempted to make exchanges. The Colombian legation in Chile optimistically assured him that it would be possible to exchange collections with Chilean museums.⁶⁹ Museums in Argentina, Costa Rica and Peru acknowledged the catalogues, and proposed exchanging publications.⁷⁰ The Curator of Minerals at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington suggested exchanging mineral species.⁷¹ Pombo strove to keep up-to-date with museum developments; he was convinced that getting the National Museum recognised abroad was a strategy for maintaining permanent and constant growth in the future.

He had a profound interest in archaeology, and wanted the Museum to house "all those ancient objects which belonged to the aborigines of Colombia", as a means of "ascertaining the customs and arts of the first inhabitants of the

mineralogy and zoology at the National University between 1870 and 1874. He ran a bookshop located on the Plaza de Bolívar which became a meeting place for engineers; the embryo of the Colombian Society of Engineering.

⁶⁹ Carlos Saenz, Colombian Legation in Chile to Fidel Pombo, Santiago, 30 September 1887, vol. 1, AMNC.

⁷⁰ Jerónimo Savagna, Director of the Museo Politécnico de la Provincia de Córdoba to Fidel Pombo, Córdoba, 15 July 1889; Anastasio Alfaro, Director of the National Museum of Costa Rica to Fidel Pombo, San José, 4 January 1890, vol. 1, AMNC.

⁷¹ F. W. Clarke to Fidel Pombo, Washington, 7 October 1893, vol. 1, AMNC.

country.”⁷² Colombian historians had compiled what they had been able to find in the chroniclers, but he felt that “the way to complete the picture of our ancient history is to search in objects for an explanation of the unknown.”⁷³ Influenced by the trend of the day for European museums to build up large archaeological collections, and at a time when archaeological objects were more and more looked upon as “documents” that scholars could interpret, he proposed that archaeological objects found in the country should normally be deposited permanently in the National Museum and that the government should provide a budget for scientific commissions.⁷⁴ The inevitable answer was that “the Public Treasury can only allow expenses that are vitally urgent.”⁷⁵

In 1886, the Museum Guide to the archaeological collection listed 49 ceramic objects, 11 made of stone and 2 of wood. It also records a collection of photographs of indigenous artefacts. Some of these had been published as engravings in the *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*; others were photographs of the collection of pre-Hispanic objects which the antiquarian of Danish origin Bendix Koppel had donated to the Leipzig Museum, and finally, there were photographs of gold objects, which including a *tunjo* and gauntlets, circular breastplates, belts, crowns, nose and ear ornaments which belonged to a certain José M. Mejía.⁷⁶

⁷² F. Pombo, *Nueva Guía Descriptiva del Museo Nacional de Bogotá*, (Bogotá, 1886), p. 119.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ J. Domingo Ospina, Director of Secondary Instruction to Fidel Pombo, Bogotá, 24 November 1887, vol. 1, AMNC.

⁷⁶ F. Pombo, *Nueva Guía descriptiva del Museo Nacional de Bogotá*, p. 129.

Ashamed of the small size and minor significance of this archaeological collection, Pombo was emphatic in urging the government to provide a budget for acquiring archaeological objects. He lamented that the representation of the pre-Hispanic world was so rudimentary that it did not allow either Colombians or foreigners to research it :

Se han ido encontrando muchas preciosidades de los aborígenes y se han ido perdiendo para el país las más veces en manos de simples especuladores en esta clase de objetos. Por esta circunstancia, la colección arqueológica del museo es menos que rudimentaria y su estudio le estará casi vedada a los colombianos. Dónde podrán encontrar nuestros estudiantes en los establecimientos de educación colecciones públicas y bien ordenadas que consultar ? Qué ideas se formarán los extranjeros investigadores que visitan un museo tan pobre en medio de tanta riqueza?⁷⁷

Pombo showed here the deep concern of a few nineteenth-century Colombian scholars. Like Ezequiel Uricoechea, he did not understand why Colombia was a supplier for foreign institutions of both natural history specimens and pre-Hispanic objects, while, Colombian institutions had no chance of promoting scientific research through acquiring archaeological collections. In 1890 he continued to argue that scientific archaeological expeditions should be undertaken with proper funds allocated to the museum, but his calls were not heeded.⁷⁸

Before the end of the century, a number of goldwork objects nevertheless reached the Museum, a Muisca gold breastplate, donated by the Ministry of

⁷⁷ Fidel Pombo to the Minister of Public Instruction, Bogotá, 14 August 1888, vol. 1. AMNC.

⁷⁸ F. Pombo, "Informe del Director del Museo Nacional al Ministro de Instrucción Pública", in Documentos, Fondo Secretaría de Instrucción Pública, (10 June 1890), p. 85. AGN.

Fomento. And “a few of the smallest and least deserving objects from the Quimbaya collection which the government of Colombia donated to Queen María Cristina of Spain in 1892.”⁷⁹ These small objects were probably a few small nose ornaments. There is no further description of them.

3.2. The Search for a Representation of Colombia on the World Stage

Starting with the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London in 1851, the wave of World Exhibitions rapidly spread beyond the pioneer countries, Britain, France and the United States. Conceived as displays *par excellence* of progress, as showcases for displaying and comparing the progress made by all different nations, the World Exhibitions were the reflection of a whole era when industry and commerce were the central features of Western civilisation.⁸⁰ These events offered nations which had not attained the highest levels of progress at least a modest participation.

In the Republic of Colombia, the series of World Exhibitions had some impact on certain prominent figures. They indeed wished that Colombia should be

⁷⁹ F. Pombo, “Informe del Director del Museo Nacional al Ministro de Instrucción Pública”, in Documentos, Fondo Secretaría de Instrucción Pública, (24 April 1894), p. 158, AGN.

⁸⁰ P. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas, The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, (Glasgow, 1988), p. 2. Historical works on these exhibitions are A. Demy, *Essai Historique sur les Expositions Universelles de Paris*, (Paris, 1907); J. E. Findling (ed.), *Historical Dictionary of World's Fairs and Expositions, 1851-1988*, (New York, 1990). A study of the participation of a Latin American country in these exhibitions is M. Tenorio-Trillo, *México at the World's Fairs, Crafting a Modern Nation*, (Los Angeles, 1996).

respected and recognised on the world stage as "a civilised nation."⁸¹ If Colombia took part in Exhibitions, it would serve to show off the Republic's progress, to ensure that the country "took its rightful place in the concert of nations"; Colombians would also in the process find out about "useful inventions or discoveries that could benefit our country."⁸²

In 1851 at the Crystal Palace in London, on the individual initiative of Rufino Cuervo, Colombia had exhibited three varieties of emerald, cacao, products derived from cassava and nutmeg as "products of the Republic."⁸³ In 1855 in Paris, Colombia displayed a number of other precious minerals besides emeralds, varieties of gold and silver, and also copper and iron. Coffee, tobacco and cinchona bark represented the plant kingdom, while the manufactured products displayed included cigars, lace, straw hats, gold jewellery and handicrafts of Pasto varnish.⁸⁴

Despite good intentions the government could never pay the necessary attention to organising Colombian participation in these "civilising festivities."⁸⁵ Congress sometimes allocated a budget, as it did in 1876 when it approved a sum of \$25,000 for taking part in the Philadelphia Exhibition to "let our industry and natural products become known to one of the greatest nations in the

⁸¹ F. Martínez, "Como representar a Colombia? De las exposiciones universales a la Exposición del Centenario, 1851 - 1910" in G. Sánchez and M.E. Wills, (ed.) *Museo, Memoria y Nación*, p. 318.

⁸² J. J. Triana, "Exposición de Paris, Notas del Cónsul General de la República sobre el concurso de Colombia" in *Memoria del Secretario de lo Interior y de Relaciones Exteriores*, (1878), p. 63.

⁸³ G.F. Ducombe and F. Harman, *Catalogue Officiel de la Grande Exposition des Produits de Toutes les Nations*, (London, 1851), p. 269.

⁸⁴ *Catalogue Officiel de L'Exposition de l'Industrie de Toutes les Nations*, (Paris, 1855), p. 224.

⁸⁵ "Exhibiciones Industriales y Artísticas en Londres" in *Memoria del Secretario de lo Interior y Relaciones Exteriores*, (Bogotá, 1870), p. xxxix.

world."⁸⁶ It was often, however, only the individual initiative of Colombians living in Europe that enabled Colombia to be represented at all. The eminent botanist José Jerónimo Triana, who was living in Paris, at the last moment managed to get together the Colombian entries for the Paris Exhibitions of 1878 and 1889. The excuse for the absence of any government representation in 1878 was the lack of time after the disruption of the civil war of 1876 -1877.⁸⁷ As Colombian Consul in Paris, Triana assembled whatever was to hand, on his own initiative and in a great rush, so that the name of Colombia "would not be let down on that occasion." He managed to obtain space for the Colombian display in the Guatemalan pavilion. Triana, as Colombian exhibitor, won a bronze medal for educational texts and a gold medal for his publications on botany, chiefly his research into the growing of cinchona bark. The government was gratified that the country had won two awards in "the great universal contest that has recently caught the attention of the civilised world."⁸⁸

A decade later, Colombia attempted to put on an outstanding display at the 1889 Paris Exhibition. The Congress approved a sum of \$30,000 for the purpose, and proposed that in addition to minerals and vegetable products, the country should exhibit its progress in the scientific and cultural fields.⁸⁹ However, the superintendent of the preparatory work for this Exhibition, Vicente Restrepo, felt that "the natural and artificial products" sent in "give no idea of our

⁸⁶ "Exposición de Filadelfia" in *Memoria del Secretario de lo Interior y Relaciones Exteriores*, (Bogotá, 1876), p. 121.

⁸⁷ *Memoria del Secretario de lo Interior y de Relaciones Exteriores*, (Bogotá, 1877), p. 83.

⁸⁸ J. J. Triana, "Exposición de Paris, Notas del Cónsul General de la República sobre el concurso de Colombia", p. 65.

⁸⁹ Law 101 of 1887, *Diario Oficial*, Bogotá, (14 June 1887).

spontaneous riches or of the progress we have made in the arts, sciences and other branches of human knowledge.⁹⁰ He recommended that the government should refrain from taking part in the Exhibition. Once again, it was Consul Triana who organised the Colombian exhibit, together with other Colombians living in Paris. In the display in the Uruguayan Pavilion in Paris, Colombia introduced the novelty of exhibiting the geographical, cultural and pre-Hispanic features of the country. To do this, Triana and his helpers had recourse to photographs, watercolours showing scenes from everyday life, maps and pre-Hispanic objects. A Historical and Geographical Atlas of Colombia by Manuel María Paz was exhibited, originating in the work done by the Chorographic Commission.⁹¹ For the first time, the natural history exhibits brought to international attention various varieties of butterfly, insect, bird and snake, representing what would nowadays be called the biodiversity to be found in Colombia. In the field of intellectual progress, the *Dictionnaire de la Construction et des Régime de la Langue Espagnole*, by the eminent philologist Rufino José Cuervo was displayed, along with Vicente Restrepo's own work, the *Estudio sobre las Minas de Oro y Plata*, and also text books that were used in Colombian schools.⁹² Manufacturing was represented by a hydraulic device built by a young Colombian engineer, lace, embroidery, and cups and plates made using Pasto varnish. There were also the inevitable emeralds, and different varieties of coffee and tobacco.

⁹⁰ "Exposición de Paris en 1889" in *Informe del Ministro de Fomento al Congreso de la República de Colombia en sus sesiones de 1890*, (Bogotá, 1890), p. 164.

⁹¹ "Rapport de M. Le Dr. Triana, Commissaire General de l'Exposition Colombienne" in *La Colombie à L'Exposition Universelle de 1889*, (Paris, 1889), p. 4.

and Veraguas regions, together with the corresponding scientific report and a series of photographs showing the excavation. Paintings of San Agustín statues were displayed in an album of watercolours by Manuel María Paz.⁹³ This was not the first time that Colombians had exhibited pre-Hispanic objects outside the country. In the previous decade, Ezequiel Uricochea had displayed a pre-Hispanic Muisca collection at the First Americanist Congress.⁹⁴ However, 1889 was the first time that Colombia's pre-Hispanic past was exhibited at a large-scale event such as a World Exhibition as an integral part of the essence of the country, and this marked a fundamental departure from previous decades, when what was shown were predominantly "Products of the Republic". A new time scale was beginning to be accepted in the conception of the country's past : that past was now not merely the four centuries which had elapsed since the Spanish Conquest.

3.3. The Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Discovery of America in Spain

Spain's commemoration of the Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Discovery of America was an important event in the rapprochement between Spain and the Latin American republics. The Four Hundredth Anniversary celebrations set out to be "the most important manifestation of Spanish relations with her former

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁹⁴ M.G. Romero, *Epistolario de Ezequiel Uricochea con Rufino José Cuervo y Miguel Antonio Caro*, (Bogotá, 1976), p. 125.

colonies in the nineteenth century.”⁹⁵ The Spanish Crown and the intellectual and academic world participated led by the *Ateneo de Madrid* and the Academy of History.⁹⁶ The Ninth Americanist Congress was also held in Huelva, from 7 to 11 October 1892.⁹⁷ The publication *El Centenario* called for links with America to be strengthened, "as a solution to national decadence and isolation: the New World will give the nation new vitality to go forth and build a New Spain."⁹⁸

The focus of the celebrations planned by the Spanish government was a great exhibition in Madrid, in which all the American republics would take part, and which would show in as much detail as possible the state the inhabitants of America were in the era of the conquest :

Se celebrará en Madrid una exposición de toda clase de objetos americanos que dé a conocer el estado en que se hallaban los pobladores de América en la época del descubrimiento de este continente y en las de las principales conquistas europeas hasta la mitad del siglo XVI agrupándose al efecto todos los objetos que concurran a dar idea del origen y progreso de la población americana.⁹⁹

The initial idea of displaying Latin American progress in industry, agriculture and modern manufactures had been set aside in 1890, as it would have competed

⁹⁵ S. Bernabeu, *1892 : El IV Centenario del Descubrimiento de América en España*, (Madrid, 1987), pp. 19, 23. The Americanist atmosphere of the time can be appreciated in various Spanish magazines, the most important of which were *La América*, *Crónica Hispanoamericana*, (1879 - 1886), *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, (1881 - 1921), *Revista Hispanoamericana*, (1881 - 1882), and *La Unión Iberoamericana*, (1886 - 1926).

⁹⁶ Between February 1891 and May 1892, 55 lectures were given under the general title "The American Continent". See S. Bernabeu, *1892, El IV Centenario del Descubrimiento de América en España*, p. 20.

⁹⁷ IX Americanist Congress, *Acta de la Novena Reunión*, (Huelva, 1892).

⁹⁸ S. Bernabeu, *1892 : El IV Centenario del Descubrimiento de América en España*, p. 25.

⁹⁹ "Reglamento General de la Exposición Histórico-Americana" in *Revista Ilustrada del Centenario*, 2 vols. Madrid, (1892), vol. I, p. 285.

directly with the recent World Exhibitions in Barcelona, 1888, and Paris, 1889. The Commission therefore decided to opt for a "Prehistoric Archaeological Exhibition which would represent America" through documents and objects from American and European collections.¹⁰⁰ Spain invited all the Latin American nations to set up preparatory commissions in each country and to appoint national delegates who would accompany the exhibits.¹⁰¹ For Spain, the exhibition was to be an opportunity to allow visitors to "see the whole written history of America with its monuments right from the most primitive of times."¹⁰²

Colombia set up a commission to organise the preparatory work for the Madrid Exhibition in 1892 and for the Chicago World Fair in 1893.¹⁰³ Vicente Restrepo as previously mentioned, was appointed as head of the "Protohistory Sub-Commission" in charge of the selection of objects for both exhibitions. Restrepo took a keen interest in Colombia's participation in the events, as it represented an opportunity for the country to show off its "civilised" past in the form of "the advanced state" of Muisca society and "the examples of progress in Quimbaya art", and also to contribute to "the scientific research movement promoted by

¹⁰⁰ Minutas de la Comisión General del Cuarto Centenario del Descubrimiento de América, 7 December 1890, Libro 15/1, Fondo 5.01, p. 43, Presidencia de Gobierno, Archivo General de la Administración, Alcalá de Henares.

¹⁰¹ The national delegates were illustrious figures in their respective countries, for example, the Mexican delegate was Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, Director of the National Museum of México and Nicaragua was represented by the poet Rubén Darío.

¹⁰² *Revista Ilustrada del Centenario*, vol. II, (Madrid, 1892), p. 140.

¹⁰³ The members appointed by the Colombian Government for this Commission by Decree dated 19 November 1891 were Carlos Martínez Silva, Gonzalo Ramos Ruiz, Vicente Restrepo, Nicolás J. Casas, Carlos Calderón, Arturo de Cambil and Julio E. Pérez, in *Informe que el Ministro de Fomento presenta al Congreso de Colombia en sus sesiones ordinarias de 1892*, (Bogotá, 1892), p. 25.

the learned men of Europe."¹⁰⁴ Restrepo wanted a major Colombian effort to redress the small number of scientific works that had been published on "the aborigines of Colombia." He felt it a disgrace that there were better collections in foreign museums than in Colombia:

De esto tenemos la culpa los colombianos que hemos descuidado los estudios arqueológicos y hemos dejado perder tantos objetos preciosos que debieran enriquecer hoy las reducidas colecciones del Museo Nacional.¹⁰⁵

Vicente Restrepo was well aware of the interest shown by European academics in Colombian pre-Hispanic objects and the value they placed on them. He brought together collections of goldwork, pottery and ethnographical artefacts belonging to himself, to his son Ernesto Restrepo Tirado, to his son-in law Bernardo Pizano, to Carlos Uribe, Nicolás J. Casas, and also the *Vicario* of Pasto, Manuel Santa Cruz. To show in Madrid a comprehensive picture of Colombia's pre-Hispanic societies, Restrepo prepared photograph albums showing pieces in the Leocadio María Arango collection and the National Museum in Bogotá. He also assembled seven photographic albums with descriptions of Muisca and Quimbaya objects, as well as a selection of objects from Antioquia, Cauca, Panama and Tolima, from anonymous private Colombian collections, and photographs of pre-Hispanic stone carvings. The

¹⁰⁴ "Informe de Vicente Restrepo al Presidente de la Comisión para la Exposición de Madrid" 22 February 1892, in *Informe del Ministro de Fomento al Congreso de Colombia en sus sesiones ordinarias de 1892*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁵ República de Colombia, *Catálogo de los Objetos que presenta el Gobierno de Colombia a la Exposición Histórico-Americana de Madrid*, p. 3.

albums also included illustrations already published in the works of Liborio Zerda, *El Dorado, Estudio Histórico, Etnográfico y Arqueológico de los Chibchas*, Manuel Uribe Angel, *Geografía General y Compendio Histórico del Estado de Antioquia*, as well as the Colombian objects included in *Kultur und Industrie Südamerikanischer Völker* by Alphons Stübel, Wilhem Reiss and Bendix Koppel.¹⁰⁶

On 15 July 1892, 23 boxes containing 640 “fine gold objects” and 332 made of *tumbaga* - an alloy of gold and copper -, 755 pottery items, 84 stone objects and 21 objects made of wood and bone, which had been viewed in Colombia by as many as six hundred people in Restrepo's home in Bogotá, were duly shipped from the port of Sabanilla in a Spanish steamer.¹⁰⁷ Restrepo was fully aware of the careful workmanship and the great technological skill employed in their making. For a great connoisseur of pre-Hispanic gold, however, it is at first surprising that he considered their aesthetics principally from a European point of view:

La impresión que se siente cuando se les vé por primera vez es la que fueron hechos después de la Conquista pues la elegancia y perfección de las formas los hacen aparecer como el fruto de una civilización tan avanzada como la española.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ “Informe de Vicente Restrepo al Presidente de la Comisión para la Exposición en Madrid”, p. 28.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

His son, Ernesto Restrepo Tirado was also in Madrid as one of the Colombian delegates to the Exhibition and the Congress of Americanists.¹⁰⁹ Restrepo Tirado stressed both aesthetics and technique:

Aquellos indios tenían la propiedad de transformar el oro de una manera inimaginable. Qué perfección en el modelado, qué elegancia en las formas, qué delicadeza en el pulimento de las alhajas ! Sabían fundir, soldar, hilar y bruñir el oro. Lo aleaban con cobre en distintas proporciones según el color que deseaban obtener. Conocían el estampado, el calado y hacían trabajos en filigrana.¹¹⁰

The central feature of the Colombian exhibit in Madrid was the "Quimbaya Treasure", consisting of 122 gold pieces obtained in two tombs at La Soledad, Filandia, in what is today Quindío Department.¹¹¹ In 1890, the Italian, Carlo Vedovelli-Breguzzo, director of a commercial firm in Bogotá, the *Museo Commerciale Italiano*, and member of the Geographical Society of Rome, published a catalogue of the collection illustrated with photographs.¹¹² Vedovelli

¹⁰⁹ The other Colombian delegates to the Exhibition were Julio Betancourt, Colombian Minister in Madrid, José Gaibrois, Commercial Colombian Attaché, Dr. Isaac Arias, physician from the Medicine Faculty in Bogotá; José Moreno, lawyer, Carlos Umaña and Manuel Santamaría, delegates and finally, Bendix Koppel, antiquarian.

¹¹⁰ E. Restrepo Tirado, "Colombia" in *El Liberal*, Special Edition, Madrid, (October, 1892).

¹¹¹ Archaeological and metallurgical descriptions and discussions about the "Quimbaya Treasure" can be found in A. Jouffroy, "Le Trésor des Quimbayas" in *Connaissance des Arts*, no. 76, Paris, (1958), pp. 88 - 93; J. Pérez de Barradas, *Orfebrería Prehispánica de Colombia: Estilos Quimbaya y otros*, (Madrid, 1966); C. Plazas de Nieto, "Tesoro de los Quimbayas y Piezas de Orfebrería relacionadas" in *Boletín Museo del Oro*, no. 1, Bogotá, (May - August, 1978), pp. 21 - 29; M. Cuesta Domingo and S. Rovira Llorens, *Los Trabajos en Metal en el Area Andina*, (Madrid, 1982); D.W. Lanthrap, J.S. Isaacson and C. McEwan. "On the Trail of the Finest Metallurgy of the Ancient New World: How old is the Classic Quimbaya Style?" in *Field Museum of Natural History Bulletin*, vol. 55, no. 10, Chicago (1984), pp. 11 - 19; J.F. Scott, "Relaciones del Tesoro de los Quimbayas con otros Estilos Andinos Septentrionales" in *Proceedings of the 46 International Congress of Americanists*, Amsterdam 1988, (Oxford, 1989), pp. 221 - 236. Also see W. Bray, "Ancient American Metalsmiths" *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, (London, 1972).

¹¹² Museo Commerciale Italiano de Bogotá, *Catalogue de la Collection Finlandia découverte dans deux sepulcres près de la ville de Cartago, République de Colombie, en Novembre de 1890*, (Bogotá, 1890).

described the collection as a “sacerdotal treasure”, which in his view was composed of crowns, idols, and sphinxes, similar in their artistic features to Egyptian objects.¹¹³ This collection differed from other archaeological finds in that it was not broken up when it was discovered by the grave plunderers, but was kept intact. According to Vicente Restrepo, the goldwork collection was acquired by the government in 1891.¹¹⁴ (Figure 7). It is perhaps surprising that while the Director of the National Museum in Bogotá, as we have seen, was clamouring for funds for scientific archaeological expeditions to build up collections to be exhibited to the Colombian public, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should have had funds available for this acquisition. The reasons were political and diplomatic. The Quimbaya Treasure, the most important collection of Colombian pre-Hispanic goldwork yet discovered, was eventually to be presented to the Queen Regent of Spain, María Cristina. This was a gesture of thanks to the Spanish Crown for the long and detailed study Spain had to carry out in the arbitration requested by Colombia and Venezuela to settle the old and complex border dispute between the two countries.¹¹⁵

The border dispute between Colombia and Venezuela dated back to colonial times, when the Captaincy General of Venezuela was separated from the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada in 1777. The early republican governments had attempted to mark out their borders on the basis of the colonial divisions. The

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 4. According to Vedovelli, the anonymous owners of the collection, after spending time and money to “excavate” this outstanding collection, asked him to offer it for sale for £ 24.000.

¹¹⁴ “Informe de Vicente Restrepo al Presidente de la Comisión para la Exposición en Madrid” p. 29.

¹¹⁵ *Informe del Subsecretario de Relaciones Exteriores al Congreso de la República*, (Bogotá, 1892), p. 18.

documents were full of omissions and geographical inaccuracies. After 1830, when Venezuela separated from New Granada, various attempts were made to reach a settlement. Relations deteriorated, and the two states broke off diplomatic relations for five years between 1875 and 1880, after Venezuela had founded a settlement named Guzmán Blanco in what Colombia considered her territory.¹¹⁶

Relations were restored in 1881 when Antonio Guzmán Blanco and Justo Arosemena signed an Arbitration Treaty, under the terms of which the issue would be submitted to the King of Spain, Alfonso XII. A "final verdict that is not open to appeal" would be obtained.¹¹⁷ Spain agreed to act as arbitrator in February 1883, a commission of experts was appointed to carry out the necessary studies in the Spanish archives. Colombia appointed Aníbal Galindo as her representative before the Spanish arbitration court; he was supported by the Minister Plenipotentiary in Madrid, Carlos Holguín.

On 16 March 1891, the Queen Regent, María Cristina, informed the parties of the award. The Colombian Minister in Madrid, Julio Betancourt, transmitted the following satisfactory message to Carlos Holguín, who was then Acting President of the country : "President of Colombia, Bogotá. Arbitration Award. Guajira, San Faustino, Arauca remain Colombia. Eastern Frontier: Orinoco,

¹¹⁶ F. Andrade "Demarcación de las Fronteras de Colombia" in *Historia Extensa de Colombia*, vol. XII, (Bogotá, 1969), pp. 392 - 399.

¹¹⁷ A. L. Guzmán and L. Arosemena, "Tratado sobre Arbitramiento Juris entre los Estados Unidos de Colombia y los Estados Unidos de Venezuela" 14 September 1881 in J.A. Uribe, *Anales Diplomáticos y Consulares de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1900), pp. 94 - 95.

Atapo, Rio Negro."¹¹⁸ The arbitration verdict was immediately objected to by Venezuela. It was against this background that the Colombian government acquired the "Quimbaya Treasure", to be first displayed "seriously and elegantly for national decorum," in the Colombian section of the American Historical Exhibition in Madrid in 1892.¹¹⁹

The Colombian government felt that mere expressions of gratitude to Spain were not enough, and after consulting the Venezuelan government, the government decided to give Spain a gift of friendship, as was customary in other arbitration cases, although the invitation to participate in this gesture was not accepted by Venezuela. The gift Colombia envisaged was a "Collection of Gold Antiquities" purchased as a result of a decision made by the Cabinet.¹²⁰ President Carlos Holguín was fully aware of the cultural and aesthetic value of the collection Colombia was presenting to Spain:

Se ha enviado a Madrid la colección más completa y rica en objetos de oro que habrá en América, muestra del mayor grado de adelanto que alcanzaron los primitivos moradores de nuestra patria.(...) Como obra de arte y reliquia de una civilización muerta, esta colección es de un valor inapreciable.¹²¹

The Treasure was again exhibited a year later, at the Ethnographical and Natural History Exhibition which opened in Madrid on 4 May 1893. On that date

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹¹⁹ B. Koppel, *Informe al Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores sobre el Congreso de Americanistas y la Exposición Histórica en España*, (London, 7 November 1892).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹²¹ C. Holguin, *Mensaje del Presidente de la República a las Cámaras Legislativas*, (Bogotá, 1892), p. 25.

the Colombian Minister Julio Betancourt officially presented the collection to the Queen Regent for display in the National Archaeological Museum.¹²² The donation of a collection of this nature was greatly appreciated in Spain : “ Words are not enough to express the deep sense of gratitude we Spaniards feel at this gesture of incomparable generosity.”¹²³

3.4. Colombia in the World Columbian Exhibition in Chicago

Colombia’s display at the 1893 World Columbian Exhibition in Chicago was particularly outstanding compared with the country’s previous offerings at these “civilising festivities”. Although the organising committee was the same as for Madrid as far as the archaeological collections were concerned, it had been decided that emphasis would be placed on the country’s mineral production, and so the committee entrusted delegates in Tolima, Caldas and Antioquia with the task of searching for seams of precious metals, gold, silver and emeralds.¹²⁴ For the first time in the history of these World Exhibitions, Colombia had its own pavilion, in a “majestic building with an iron and glass dome”, decorated with one of the symbols of Colombia, a condor, emblematic figures holding the flags of Colombia and the United States, and the national coat of arms.¹²⁵ Inside, the ground floor was notable for its greenhouses containing tropical plants and areas for exhibiting natural products, coffee, cacao, rubber and various types of

¹²² “Acta de Donación”, Legajo no. 182, (1893), América, Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.

¹²³ “Orfebrería de las Tribus Quimbaya y Chibcha” in *Revista Ilustrada del Centenario*, p. 341.

¹²⁴ *Informe del Ministro de Fomento al Congreso de Colombia en sus Sesiones Ordinarias de 1892*, p. 27.

¹²⁵ “Colombian Pavilion at the Chicago Exhibition”, in *El Correo Nacional*, Bogotá, (25 July 1893).

nuts, and for showing the whole silk textile production process, from silkworm cocoons right through to the finished fabric, a display which won “special praise” from the visiting public.¹²⁶ The minerals and archaeological and ethnographic collections were exhibited on the second floor.¹²⁷

The Colombian archaeological display in Chicago was the same as that at the American-Historical Exposition in Madrid the year before, apart from the 122 objects making up the “Treasure of the Quimbayas”, which had been donated by the Colombian government to Queen María Cristina of Spain and had accordingly stayed behind in Madrid.

When the exhibition ended, Vicente Restrepo, who had produced a hand-written catalogue of part of his own collections and of those of his son Ernesto and his son-in-law Bernardo Pizano, sold a part of these collections to the Field Museum of Natural History of Chicago.¹²⁸ Notable items in them were Muisca gold objects and the magnificent Quimbaya Incised Brownware Vessels, archaeologically associated with the collection that had remained in Madrid. However, according to Ernesto Restrepo Tirado, a further part of the collections that Restrepo had taken to Madrid was sold to the Smithsonian Museum.¹²⁹

The celebrations commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the

¹²⁶ C. Martínez Silva and E. de Narvaez, “Exposición de Chicago, Informe de los Comisionados Colombianos”, in *Diario Oficial* no. 9.321, Bogotá, (22 November 1893).

¹²⁷ J. Flinn, (Comp.), *Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition in the City of Chicago*, (Chicago, 1893), pp. 133 - 134.

¹²⁸ V. Restrepo, Hand-Written Catalogue, (n.d.).

discovery of America in 1892 serve to underline the ambiguity that existed between the way Colombia was represented nationally and internationally. The country's pre-Hispanic past was spectacularly exhibited in Spain, yet back in Colombia these same celebrations had a markedly Hispanic and Catholic tone.

Colombian leaders proposed to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary by making the date of Columbus' landfall, 12 October, a public holiday throughout the country, and by erecting statues of Columbus and Queen Isabela la Católica in Bogotá. The most important public venue in Bogotá, the *Teatro Nacional* should be re-named the *Teatro Colón*.¹³⁰ No attention was paid to the question of the nation's pre-Hispanic origins. The "Americanism" of the savants of Europe was shared by only a very small number of the population. It was perhaps restricted to those six hundred people who had admired the archaeological collections in Vicente Restrepo's house before they were despatched to Madrid, leaving behind only a few insignificant objects, photograph albums containing pictures of the Quimbaya Treasure and the reference catalogues deposited in the National Museum.¹³¹

With their eyes fixed both on Europe and on tombs in Colombia, Colombian antiquarians and academics, feeling a closer affinity with Europe than they did with the indigenous groups, mestizos, blacks and mulattoes that made up the majority of the population, sought to represent a "civilised nation". The scientific

¹²⁹ E. Restrepo Tirado, "Ensayo Etnográfico y Arqueológico de la Provincia de los Quimbayas en el Nuevo Reino de Granada", in *BHA*, Año VII, no. 80, Bogotá, (January, 1912), p. 465.

¹³⁰ "Ley 25 de 1892" in *Anales de la Cámara de Representantes*, Bogotá, (20 October 1892), p. 329.

¹³¹ F. Pombo "Informe del Director del Museo Nacional al Ministro de Instrucción Pública", (24 April 1894), p. 158.

and aesthetic validation that erudite European Americanism gave to relics of the Colombian pre-Hispanic world stimulated an interest among Colombian collectors and students in acquiring these examples of what was "civilised". In this context, it is however significant that the gift to the Queen of Spain did not consist of emeralds, which had been displayed at every international exhibition in which Colombia had taken part.

Several decades more were to pass before Colombian antiquarians and academics would set their eyes firmly on pre-Hispanic Colombia. In 1930, they began to establish the scientific discipline of archaeology, based on professional training and institutions devoted to the preservation of the nation's heritage, fostered and sponsored by the State, and which would enable the ancient past to be recognised and confirmed as part of the representation of the nation.

CHAPTER 4

COLOMBIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS IN EUROPEAN MUSEUMS

In Europe, the mid-eighteenth century had seen the gradual conversion of private collections into public museums, with the British Museum leading as the first great national museum founded in 1753. Museums of anthropology housed within natural history and art museums evolved throughout the nineteenth century. In Berlin, the *Königliche Museum für Völkerkunde* was founded in 1873, when the ethnographic department of the *Königliche Kunstammer* became a separate museum. In France, the Musée du Louvre opened an American Gallery in 1850, which included Mexican and Peruvian objects. These collections, and those collected by French scientific missions during the last decades of the century, were the basis for the creation of the American department of the *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadero* in 1878.

The following European museums have collected Colombian archaeological objects, basically goldwork and pottery artefacts, since the nineteenth century: In Britain, the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, Cambridge; the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Horniman Museum in London; The City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, and in

Scotland, the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh; in France, the *Musée du Trocadero*, which became in 1930, the *Musée de L'Homme*, and the *Musée des Antiquités*, Saint Germain-en-Laye; in Belgium, the *Musée Royal d'Art et d'Histoire*, Brussels; in Holland, the *Rijks Museum*, Leiden, and the *Koninklijk Institute voor de Tropen*, Amsterdam; in Germany, the *Museen für Völkerkunde* of Berlin, Bremen, Cologne, Hamburg, Freiburg and Munich; in Denmark, the Danish National Museum, Copenhagen; in Sweden, the Goteborg *Ethografiska Museum*, of Gothenburg and the *Ethografiska Museet* of Stockholm; in Switzerland, the *Museum für Völkerkunde*, Basle; the *Bernisches Historisches Museum*, Berne; the *Musée d'Ethnographie*, Geneva; the *Musée d'Ethnographie*, Neuchâtel and the *Rietberg Museum*, Zurich; and in Spain the *Museo de América*, in Madrid.¹ This study has chosen to examine the process of building Colombian archaeological collections in three museums, the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin, the *British Museum* in London and the *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadero*, now the *Musée de L'Homme* in Paris. These are representative of three different European approaches towards collecting ancient American objects, and they hold the largest Colombian pre-Hispanic collections.

¹ "Fichas de Registro Colecciones de Orfebrería Extranjeras", Museo del Oro, Bogotá.

4.1. Libraries of the Past : Colombian Archaeological Collections at the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin

In the early nineteenth century, as stated in Chapter One, the pre-Hispanic societies in Latin America aroused great scientific interest in Europe, particularly as a result of Alexander von Humboldt's travels and publications. In Berlin, archaeological and ethnographic objects acquired in the early years of the century were classified as "ethnographic materials" and placed in the *Königliche Kunstammer*.

In 1873, the government authorised the construction of a building which would house solely and exclusively ethnographic and archaeological collections from around the world. This became the *Königliche Museum für Völkerkunde*, and the ethnographic department at the *Königliche Kunstammer* was transferred to it, effectively becoming an independent museum.² From 1876, with the presence of Adolf Bastian, the museum could boast not only an intellectual founder but also a great organiser and collector. Bastian built up important American archaeological and ethnographic collections on research trips he made himself. He had had a wide academic background in the law, natural history and medicine, and throughout his long life, 1826-1905, was a great traveller. He spent twenty years outside Germany, travelling to many parts of the world, and on his trips he combined ethnological research with acquiring collections. One of the founders of ethnological studies in Germany, he was a

² M. Fischer, M. Gaida, "The History of the Mexican Collection in the Ethnographic Museum of Berlin", in *The Pre-Columbian Collection of Mexico in the Museum of Ethnography, Berlin*, (Berlin, 1993), p. 83.

member of the Berlin Geographical Society and its President from 1871 to 1873 and an active one of the German Ethnological Society, *Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*, was founded in 1869. He was also one of the founders of the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, the important organ of the *Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*.³

The *Königliche Museum für Völkerkunde* which Bastian founded and to which he devoted thirty years of his life, aimed to provide a complete view of the different cultures in the world. Its central purpose was to study cultures using the comparative genetic method, based on determining similarities and differences between objects. Phenomena would be grouped together on the basis of their relationship, and then compared with each other in order to establish whether they had a common origin.⁴ The results obtained using this comparative method would therefore enable human development to be measured.⁵ Viewed from this intellectual perspective, Bastian felt that it was absolutely essential that archaeological and ethnographic objects should be collected *en masse* before these “documents” disappeared; the museum had an obligation to preserve as much evidence as possible for future generations. All objects, no matter how insignificant they might seem, were collectable for Bastian. The museum was thus a “library” where objects were kept as if they were the “documents” of societies without writing. These were the intellectual

³ E. Tylor, “Obituary: Adolf Bastian”, in *Man*, nos. 75 - 76, London, (1905), pp. 138 - 143.

⁴ S. Westphal-Hellbusch, “Zur Geschichte des Museums”, in *Baessler Archiv*, Neue Folge, no. XXI, Berlin, (November, 1973), p. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p 5.

reasons behind the accumulating of artefacts from ancient America, amongst which were the pre-Hispanic Colombian collections.

German ethnology, and hence the museum received financial support from the government. It hoped to obtain useful information to improve man's capacity to adapt to different environments, especially to the tropics. The museum, and the study of its collections, would be "useful science" that would produce knowledge for administering the colonies.⁶ In 1889, Bastian managed to get the Museum recognized as one of the most important museums in the Empire, which meant that it boasted financial advantages that were not enjoyed by other museums in Germany.⁷

The interest shown by Bastian and his successors in ensuring that ancient America was well represented in this "library" can be appreciated from the size of the American archaeological collections, which today run to 120,000 catalogue entries, 47,000 of which relate to Middle America and Central America, and 73,000 to South America.⁸

The first Colombian collection on record acquired by the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin dates back to 1857, when the botanist Hermann Karsten sent in two gold objects from Lake Guatavita and donated a small ethnographic collection consisting of a female figure, stone instruments, coca leaves and a

⁶ *Ibid.*, and K. Koepping, *Adolf Bastian and the Psychic Unity of Man*, (Queensland, 1983), p. 20.

⁷ S. Westphal-Hellbusch, "Zur Geschichte des Museums", p. 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

lime-flask or *poporo*. All came from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.⁹ After graduating from the Philosophy Faculty at Berlin University, Karsten had set off on a twelve-year journey through Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador. After his stay in Venezuela, he arrived in Colombia in 1852 and in Bogotá he met the Colombian botanist José Jerónimo Triana. For part of the time, Karsten's journey through Colombia coincided with that of the Chorographic Commission. In 1854, he visited the area around Bogotá with Triana. Later on he explored the mountains of Quindío and the Cauca and Patía valleys. Apart from doing work on anatomy and plant physiology, he published the results of his fieldwork and a report on his journeys.¹⁰

During this initial period, one outstanding object came to form part of the collection, a cast gold Quimbaya lime-flask of a standing male from Antioquia, sold to the museum by a Sr. Valdivia (Figure 8).¹¹

4.1.1. Adolf Bastian's Journey Throughout Colombia

The first contact Adolf Bastian had with Colombia was in 1873, when he began to correspond with Hermann Albert Schumacher, German Minister in Bogotá between 1872 and 1875. Bastian had two interests in Colombia: first, to obtain

⁹ Acta betreffend der Erwerbung ethnologischer Gegenstände, vol. 2, August 1856 bis December 1872, Pars I.B., Amerika, no. 612/57, AMVB.

¹⁰ H. Karsten, *Géologie de l'ancienne Colombie Bolivarienne, Venezuela, Nouvelle Grenade et Ecuador*, (Berlin, 1886); *Die medicinischen Chinarinden, Neu Granada's*, (Berlin, 1858); "Reisebilder aus Columbien" in *Westermann's Monatshefte*, vol. 4, Berlin, (1858), pp. 1 - 35.

¹¹ Register VA 501, MVB.

archaeological objects for the museum in Berlin, and secondly, to obtain information about Indian languages.

Bastian requested from Schumacher information about objects that had been found in Lake Siecha.¹² This request was passed to the National University, which commissioned Liborio Zerda, who was teaching there, to write a report. Zerda wrote that in 1856 a private company set up by Joaquín and Bernardino Tovar, associates of Guillermo París and Rafael Chacón, had set about draining Lake Siecha. While they were digging a canal they had discovered a number of gold artefacts and emeralds.¹³ Amongst the goldwork was a raft representing the religious consecration ceremony for a Muisca chieftain, surrounded by his retinue.¹⁴ Spurred on by these finds of 1856, a private association led by Enrique Urdaneta had started new drainage works on the lake in 1873, but had encountered major problems. They dug a tunnel through 186 metres of the sandstone rock on one of the banks, but the depth of nineteen metres under the bed of the lake made breathing difficult inside it, and work came to a halt. Zerda was concerned that the main objective of this association was not “the scientific study of our antiquities”, but he hoped that once the lake had been completely drained, the people involved would have the intelligence to appreciate the scientific value of the objects they found “to ethnological societies and to the

¹² Letter from Schumacher to Bastian, Bogotá, 17 August 1873, in *Acta betreffend die Reisen von Direktor Professor Dr. Bastian, 1875 - 1880, Pars IB 10, AMVB.*

¹³ J. and B. de Tovar “Reflexiones sobre el Dorado y su Descubrimiento” in *La América*, no. 76, Bogotá, (9 April 1873), p. 303.

¹⁴ L. Zerda, “Antigüedades Indígenas”, in *Anales de la Universidad*, no. 61, Bogotá, (January, 1874), p. 186.

scientific world.”¹⁵ Zerda considered that the German request for information was a good opportunity to arouse in Colombia a greater interest in protecting archaeological objects.¹⁶ Schumacher shared Zerda’s concerns and asked Bastian for instructions as to how he should act.¹⁷ Schumacher had urged the Colombian Academy of Sciences to exert some sort of control over Urdaneta’s dubious company. Faced with the difficulty of finding locally people who would appreciate the archaeological importance of the objects discovered, he suggested to Bastian that German scientific institutions like the *Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*, might provide funds for making a photographic record of the objects and even for acquiring them, thus ensuring that their scientific interest would be preserved.¹⁸

Two recurring themes in the German interest in Colombian “antiquities” can be appreciated in Schumacher and Bastian : acquisitions made for the museum in Berlin would be justified by their scientific interest; large and important collections should be sought and purchased at relatively low costs.

Bastian had travelled throughout Peru and Mexico between 1851 and 1859. He returned to Latin America twenty years later, to the West Indies and to Central and South America. He visited much of Colombia between October 1875 and

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

¹⁷ Hermann Schumacher to Adolf Bastian, 27 August 1873, in *Acta betreffend die Reisen von Direktor Professor Dr. Bastian, 1875 - 1880*, Pars IB 10, AMVB.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

March 1876. His description of this journey was published in a three-volume work, *Die Culturländer des Alten America - Ein Jahr auf Reisen*.¹⁹

He landed at Buenaventura and travelled through the Cauca Valley, Caldas, Quindio, Antioquia, Cundinamarca and Boyacá. He aimed both to acquire collections for the museum and material for his own research into the customs and languages of living Indian societies. His priority was to collect “antiquities”. He travelled with no more than an assistant for company, with a train of mules containing what he collected. He had acquired an extensive knowledge of the locations of Quimbaya and Muisca settlement by reading the chronicles, and from reports from the German legation in Bogotá on local antiquarians and collectors. Although one of the main references for his journey was Humboldt’s works, Bastian did not set out to follow in his footsteps. He was not much interested in places like Lake Guatavita. It is surprising that he also failed to visit San Agustín, which was already well known through Codazzi’s drawings of the statues that Schumacher had sent to Germany. Really, Bastian clearly showed that his fundamental and very practical interests were firstly to acquire objects that he could take back with him to the Berlin museum’s “library”, or which German agents could send on to him relatively quickly, and secondly, to establish links with private collectors and scientists. During his journey, he managed to obtain extremely valuable information about “recently unearthed tombs” and to acquire important goldwork and pottery artefacts from the sites. The Ethnographic Museum in Berlin currently houses 122 pottery objects and

¹⁹ A. Bastian, *Die Culturländer des Alten America - Ein Jahr auf Reisen*, 3 vols., (Berlin, 1878 – 1889). A. Bastian, *Los países civilizados de la Antigua América - Viaje de un Año*, vol.1, Unpublished Translation. Henceforth, all quotes will be from this translation.

16 items of gold collected by Bastian on his journey. The outstanding Quimbaya objects collected by Bastian were a gold pendant and a nose ornament.²⁰ Also a Muisca zoomorphic figure and a tray with zoomorphic figures. (Figure 9).²¹

In Cali, he met Dr. Vicente Uribe, who had lived in the Chocó region and knew the languages of Chocoes and Andaguedas.²² Bastian asked him to send a complete study of the languages to Germany. Uribe sent in 1876 a work on the Embera language, its components and linguistic relations.²³

In the Cauca Valley, Caldas and Antioquia, Bastian engaged in what might now be considered grave plundering. On the outskirts of Palmira, he visited the *Hacienda Beringo* where a number of tombs had been found and made various acquisitions from these. In a tomb in La Paz, near Cartago, various square and round doors led from the entrance room to the burial chambers, where the dead lay side by side, the heads resting on low wooden benches. He also visited a group of tombs at Las Piedras, also near Cartago, where there were a number of different doorways, blocked off by stones, that led to the burial chambers. Around each doorway were a series of red and yellow signs. Places where tombs were to be found in this region could be recognised by subsidence in the ground.²⁴

²⁰ Register VA 2095 and VA 2116, MVB.

²¹ Register VA 2132 and VA 2127, MVB.

²² Uribe had spent some time in the Chocó region studying the traditions and languages of the Indian groups. L. Zerda, *El Dorado, Estudio Histórico, Etnográfico y Arqueológico de los Chibchas*, p. 55.

²³ José Vicente Uribe to Prof. Virchow, Cali, 6 April 1876, in Acta Betreffend die Reisen von Direktor Professor Dr. Bastian, 1875 - 1880, Pars IB 10, AMVB.

²⁴ A. Bastian, *Los países civilizados de la Antigua América - Viaje de un Año*, pp. 32 - 33.

Medellín was one of the most interesting destinations, because of the collectors who could be found there. These included the British mining engineer Robert White, a collector who sent objects to the British Museum. When White saw how enthusiastic and interested Bastian was, he sold him a group of objects that he had been keeping for the British Museum. White wrote to Sir Joseph Hooker in London:

When one sees a man so enthusiastic as he is and travelling in the way he does, one cannot help assisting him and I had to let Dr. Bastian have a few things which I was saving for you.²⁵

Why did White sell objects to Bastian for Berlin at that time a competitor of the British Museum?

An informal network of collectors and enthusiasts had developed in London and Berlin, and they exchanged information and supported or competed with each other in acquiring objects, depending on the circumstances. No legislation then existed in Colombia to protect the country's archaeological heritage. Law 12 of 1833 was still in force. The acquisition and sale to foreigners of archaeological objects was legal, for both Colombian sellers and foreigner buyers, and met with no social disapproval.

In Medellín Bastian also met Leocadio María Arango, who was just starting his pre-Hispanic collection. Arango gave Bastian two stone objects, and the start of a relationship which lasted for many years. Arango sent Bastian a small

²⁵ Robert B. White to Dr. Hooker, Medellín, 24 March 1876, Ethn. Doc. 1475, Museum of Mankind, London.

tumbaga figure as a gift in 1877, and in return asked him to send any duplicates they might have in the Berlin Museum of “any Assyrian, Persian or Egyptian item.”²⁶ Bastian always expressed a great interest in Arango’s magnificent collection, and asked for a list. Arango, as mentioned earlier, never sent one.

To gather information about indigenous languages in Antioquia, Bastian had a Spanish vocabulary printed in Medellín with blank spaces and copies were distributed to priests in the region. Andrés Posada Arango and Leocadio María Arango promised to help.²⁷ Robert White, using Bastian’s printed vocabulary book, recorded words used by the Noanamá Indians, which he presented as an appendix to a paper read to the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland in 1884.²⁸

On the journey from Medellín to Marmato, as the mules loaded with boxes were making their way along a track next to a precipice, Bastian heard a loud crash as one of the mules lost its footing. He could do nothing to help the animal. All the pottery objects he had collected up to that time were destroyed in the accident.²⁹ He made a number of acquisitions in Neira and Marmato to make up the loss.³⁰

²⁶ Leocadio María Arango to Adolf Bastian, Medellín, 10 July 1877, in *Acta Betreffend die Reisen Direktor Professor Dr. Bastian, 1875 - 1880, Pars IB 10, AMVB.*

²⁷ A. Bastian, *Los países civilizados de la Antigua América- Viaje de un Año*, p. 65.

²⁸ R. B. White, “Notes on the Aboriginal Races of the North-Western Provinces of South America”, *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. XIII, London, (1884), p. 258.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

In Bogotá, he met the antiquarian and collector Gonzalo Ramos Ruiz.³¹ The biggest and most important pre-Hispanic Colombian collection, acquired by the Berlin Museum in 1888, originally belonged to Ramos. Another important contact Bastian made was Bendix Koppel, a connoisseur of pre-Hispanic objects and amateur archaeologist who was subsequently to assist Bastian as an adviser on Colombian “antiquities”. Koppel had gone to Colombia as secretary in the Danish Consulate. Later, as honorary Danish Consul, he established a commercial house. By the time he left Colombia for Germany in 1883, he was also Consul of the United States and of the Netherlands. Koppel built up a magnificent collection, which he took with him to Germany and donated to the Leipzig Museum. Watercolours of it appeared in the two-volume book produced with Max Uhle, Alphons Stübel and Wilhelm Reiss, *Kultur und Industrie sudamerikanischer Völker*, published in Leipzig in 1889. Koppel appeared as an occasional Colombian delegate in Europe during the latter years of the century, at the Americanist Congress in Copenhagen, and then in Madrid in 1892. It was Koppel who suggested to Carlos Holguín that the donation of the “Quimbaya Treasure” to Queen Regent Maria Cristina should be expressly destined for an archaeological museum, so that the treasure would not risk being distributed to members of the Court.³²

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

³² F. A. Koppel, *Recuerdos de Frank A. Koppel a sus Nietos*, (Bogotá, 1942), p. 34.

4.1.1.1. The Golden Raft from Lake Siecha

In Bogotá, Bastian also met the banker Salomon Koppel, who had been the main founder and first director of the *Banco de Bogotá*.³³ He began conversations with Koppel about the golden raft that had been found in Lake Siecha in 1856. This raft, representing the consecration ceremony of a Muisca chieftain surrounded by his retinue was the only known portrayal of this ceremony, which took place on the sacred Muisca lakes in Cundinamarca. It had been acquired by the Bogotá collector Gonzalo Ramos Ruíz. In 1876, on instructions from the Berlin Museum, the German legation in Bogotá offered to buy the raft for 400 pesos.³⁴ Ramos did not want to sell it to the Berlin Museum; instead, he gave it to Koppel's wife. The German Consulate deeply regretted that the raft had been thus given away and that the Berlin Museum had perhaps lost it forever.³⁵ Bastian grieved about "giving up on the golden raft for ethnological science" and obtained a photograph taken that same year.³⁶ Bastian suggested to Koppel that the "fabulous object" would be a highly suitable gift for the Emperor. In return, the German government might give him a medal as an expression of its gratitude : "this antique can better serve science in the royal and public collection in Berlin than in a private house in Bogotá."³⁷ Bastian also expressed his concern "for the security of this object which is so interesting and so illustrative for our knowledge of the American past" ; he had

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

³⁴ Harassowitz, Secretary to the German Legation, to Adolf Bastian, Bogotá, 7 November 1876, in *Acta Betreffend die Reisen Direktor Professor Dr. Bastian, 1875 - 1880, Pars IB 10, AMVB.*

³⁵ Harassowitz, Secretary to the German Legation, to Adolf Bastian, Bogotá, 17 May 1877, in *Ibid.*, AMVB.

³⁶ Adolf Bastian to Harassowitz, 23 June 1877, in *Ibid.*, AMVB.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

witnessed only too often in Colombia how such important relics were looked on with indifference as “toys” or “curiosities”, while in Europe they were considered as scientific objects :

Objetos que en Europa darían motivo de un sinnúmero de exploraciones científicas y que podrían arrojar una profusión de luces en campos hasta ahora totalmente desconocidos, se contemplan con frecuencia como si no fueran nada, como una especie de juguete para niños, o a lo sumo como una curiosidad especial, que se coloca en una vitrina para mostrarla como diversión.³⁸

Knowing that the golden raft was in the safe hands of Koppel, Bastian felt sure that his family would know recognize its scientific importance, and would be sure to deposit it “where savants could work on it properly.” Koppel was not moved by Bastian’s political-scientific strategies at the time.³⁹

In 1883, Koppel, now Minister in the German legation in Bogotá reassured Bastian that his wife still had the golden raft, but “she is still not ready to dispose of it”. He added that should she decide to do so, it would be offered “exclusively” to the Berlin museum.⁴⁰

The raft was considered to be “one of the most important and most interesting gold antiquities of the Chibchas”, was in route to the Berlin museum after letters had been exchanged between Bastian and Koppel, and the latter had finally agreed to send it. However, it was lost in a fire in the warehouses at the port of

³⁸ Adolf Bastian to Salomon Koppel, n.d., in Acta Betreffend die Reisen Direktor Professor Dr. Bastian, 1875 - 1880, Pars IB 10, AMVB. Translation by the author, MVB.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Salomon Koppel to Adolf Bastian, Bogotá, 31 October 1883, in Acta Betreffend die Erwerbung zur Sammlung Randall - Bryce Wright - Sokoloski, no. 3014/83, AMVB.

Bremen.⁴¹ A lithograph of the raft was published in 1889 in *Kultur und Industrie Südamerikanischer Völker*. According to the authors, the lithograph was of a gold-coated silver reproduction that had been made by Valentín Fidalgo on the basis of “the original gold figure obtained from Lake Siecha, which had weighed 162 grammes and belonged to Salomon Koppel, and which had got lost while being transported to the Royal Museum in Berlin.”⁴² The reproduction made from a photograph of the original, had therefore become very valuable (Figure 10). It is probable that the reproduction was made from the photograph Bastian had had taken in Bogotá in 1876. The only other known nineteenth-century image of the raft is an engraving made in Alberto Urdaneta’s studio, reproduced in the *Papel Periodico Ilustrado* and in Liborio Zerda’s, *El Dorado, Estudio Histórico, Etnográfico y Arqueológico de los Chibchas* (Figure 6).

4.1.1.2. The Cuervo Collection

In Bogotá, Bastian also visited the philologist Rufino José Cuervo, and was impressed by his extensive library, which included many books in German, but also by his collection of Muisca archaeological objects. In a gesture of great generosity and as a tribute to von Humboldt, Cuervo gave Bastian three Muisca objects for the Berlin museum, on condition that they should have the following text placed with them: “The Bogotá citizens Angel and Rufino Cuervo donated these antiques to the *Königliche Museum* in Berlin in memory of Alexander von

⁴¹ Eduard Seler to Carl Fluhr, Berlin, 3 January 1899, *Acta Amerika*, vol. 19, May 1898 - July 1899, 1369/98, AMVB, and E. Seler, “Ueber Goldfunde aus Kolumbien” in *Congrès International des Américanistes, Compte Rendu de la Dixième Session*, Stockholm 1894, (Stockholm, 1897), p. 65.

⁴² M. Uhle, A. Stübel, W. Reiss and B. Koppel, *Kultur und Industrie Südamerikanischer Völker*, 2 vols., (Leipzig, 1889), vol. 1, Illustration 21.

Humboldt, 1876.”⁴³ Cuervo later wished to confirm that the Berlin museum had in fact do what he had stipulated, and asked his friend Ezequiel Uricoechea to check. Uricoechea confirmed that the name of the donor, “Mr. Cuervo, is well placed on a platinum plate.”⁴⁴ In 1879, Rufino Cuervo sent to the Berlin museum a second donation of two *Muisca* pottery vessels.⁴⁵

On the last part of his journey through Colombia, Bastian visited Tunja, Sogamoso and Villa de Leyva. He visited the *El Infiernito* archaeological site, described by Manuel Vélez and Joaquín Acosta as being a Muisca monument. On the basis of his travels over the high plains of Cundinamarca and Boyacá and his having seen Muisca objects, Bastian stressed the importance and immense interest of this society for comparative studies :

La cultura de los Chibchas que hasta ahora ha despertado poco interés puede ser caracterizada como una de las más interesantes para un estudio comparativo de la historia de la sociedad humana puesto que se ha conservado en ella una buena serie de rasgos primitivos arcaicos, que en una compleja transformación histórica se suelen perder súbitamente, pero que en este caso a causa de su casi total aislamiento fueron conservados.⁴⁶

Bastian was to do everything he could to obtain important Muisca collections for the Berlin museum. Before he left Bogotá, he gave a short lecture on the meaning and importance of Colombian pre-Hispanic history.⁴⁷ Liborio Zerda

⁴³ M. G. Romero, *Epistolario de Ezequiel Uricoechea con Rufino José Cuervo y Miguel Antonio Caro*, p. 165.

⁴⁴ Ezequiel Uricoechea to Rufino Cuervo, Paris, 4 November 1877, in *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁴⁵ The two vessels were registered with numbers VA 2831- 2832, *Acta Amerika*, vol. 6, 1879, no. 2776/79, AMVB.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

printed Bastian's talk, which reveals two important elements : firstly, the idea that ancient objects should be considered "documents", sources for European scientific research which would facilitate a historical reconstruction of life in the past ; and secondly, Bastian's central hypothesis about comparative studies for understanding mankind :

Estas ricas regiones contienen aún tesoros que la ciencia quiere descubrir: estos son los documentos auténticos de su historia antigua, historia que durante mucho tiempo ha sido mirada con descuido e indiferencia mientras que ahora empieza a llamar la atención de los sabios de Europa. (...). Careciendo estos pueblos de escritura, perecieron sin dejar un recuerdo de sus tradiciones que pronto se olvidaron. Para restablecer y restaurar esta historia borrada y perdida, no hay más que un sólo modo, un sólo expediente y éste consiste en la reunión de los únicos vestigios que han quedado de las antigüedades, conservadas todavía debajo de la tierra, ellas formarán reliquias preciosas para el estudio del género humano.⁴⁸

Encouraged by Bastian's ideas, Zerda, set himself the task of gathering information about indigenous societies on the basis of the interpretation of archaeological objects.

4.1.2. The 1880's Colombian Collections

During the 1880s, as a result of Bastian's Colombian travels and contacts, the Berlin museum acquired several valuable Colombian archaeological collections. The first of these was offered by Hermann Albert Schumacher, who sold the museum a group of exceptional Quimbaya necklace beads.⁴⁹ Then in 1882 a Herr Jürgens from Hamburg sold the museum a pottery vessel and 21 Muisca

⁴⁸ L. Zerda, *El Dorado, Estudio Histórico, Etnográfico y Arqueológico de los Chibchas*, p. xi.

⁴⁹ Register VA 664, MVB.

goldwork objects from El Socorro in Santander, which included necklace beads and a Muisca votive figure.⁵⁰ A year later, Oscar Bobisch, who had lived in Zipaquirá and who Bastian had met on his travels and had helped him to obtain Muisca objects, sold the museum a collection consisting of 19 objects, eight of them Muisca items from Lake Fúquene, the most outstanding of which was an anthropomorphous mask. There were also Quimbaya ear and nose ornaments from Manizales.⁵¹

That same year, 1883, Charles O'Leary, acting as an intermediary, offered to sell the museum a collection consisting of 29 pottery objects and 38 items of Muisca and Quimbaya goldwork, and some engraved stones. The most notable items in this collection are a Muisca breastplate and a Quimbaya anthropomorphic figure.⁵² The collection belonged to Percy Brandon, the Colombian representative of the Anglo-German tobacco firm Frühling and Goschen. Brandon, as we will see later also sold magnificent Quimbaya objects to the British Museum in London.⁵³

Other German scientific travellers took archaeological objects back and sold them to the Berlin museum, for example, the geographers Wilhelm Sievers and Alfred Hettner. Sievers offered the museum a Tairona pottery vessel and various fragments that he had found in a grave in the Sierra Nevada de Santa

⁵⁰ The Berlin museum paid 300 marks for this acquisition, *Acta Amerika*, vol. 7, September 1881 - December 1882, no. 1927/82, AMVB.

⁵¹ Oscar Bobisch to Adolf Bastian, Breslau, 25 September 1883, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 8, January - December 1883, no. 2448/83, AMVB.

⁵² Register VA 3122 and 3046, MVB.

⁵³ Charles O'Leary to Adolf Bastian, London, 7 July 1883, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 8, January 1883 - December 1883, no. 1516/83, AMVB. O'Leary handed the collection over in the General German Consulate in London, in exchange for a sum of £174.

Marta.⁵⁴ Hettner had been in Colombia from 1882 to 1884 and he sold the Berlin museum two pottery vessels and a group of Quimbaya beads in 1888.⁵⁵ By the end of the 1880s, the Berlin museum had acquired the most important Colombian pre-Hispanic collection of all, that of the Bogotá antiquarian Gonzalo Ramos Ruiz.

4.1.3. The *Ramos Ruiz* Collection

This collection was acquired by the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin in 1888, after six years of negotiations. Ramos Ruiz had devoted more than ten years to bringing together one of the most important Colombian archaeological collections of the period. The collection included 1.357 items, 243 of which were gold, 781 pottery and 66 stone; there were 260 spindle whorls and 6 skulls. Among the stone objects there were more than five varieties of what was still considered “the Chibcha Calendar”, as described by Father Duquesne and legitimised by Humboldt. Some of the most outstanding objects were Muisca and Quimbaya. Among the Muisca, were two *cercados*.⁵⁶ Also a representation of an anthropomorphic mask.⁵⁷ Among the Quimbaya objects were a golden crocodile and an anthropomorphic figure.⁵⁸ A note published in Bogotá compared the features of the Muisca goldwork artefacts in the collection with those of ancient Egyptian art, in relation to the treatment of the face:

⁵⁴ Wilhelm Sievers to Adolf Bastian, Hamburg, 1 November 1886, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 10, August 1885 - December 1887, no. 299/86, AMVB.

⁵⁵ *Acta Amerika*, vol. 1, December 1874 - March 1889, no. 567/88, AMVB.

⁵⁶ Registers VA 10172-10173 MVB.

⁵⁷ Register VA 10239 MVB.

⁵⁸ Registers VA 10144 and 10125 MVB.

Los trabajos de oro demuestran notable habilidad en las artes de la moldura y el modelo, aunque los rostros humanos revelan que se seguía el plan del arte egipcio, que se cuidaba mucho más que la significación del símbolo contenido en el rostro, que la expresión del rostro mismo.⁵⁹

Interpretation of Colombian pre-Hispanic goldwork made by amateurs often related it to Egyptian art, as we have seen with the Italian Vedovelli, who while offering the Quimbaya treasure for sale in 1890, referred to it as a “sacerdotal treasure” similar in its artistic features to Egyptian objects.⁶⁰

Ramos Ruiz tried to sell this unique and valuable collection to the Colombian government for the National Museum, but without success.⁶¹ Instead, he sold it in 1882 to Mr. William W. Randall, the U.S. Consul at Sabanilla, Colombia, for \$12.000 Colombian pesos.⁶² Mr. Randall wanted to make money out of it, and offered it in the United States to several institutions and private individuals, but did not manage to sell it.⁶³ In 1884, it was bought in London by Mr. W. C. Borlase, a member of the British Parliament.⁶⁴ The Collection was exhibited in the West Indian Department of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in October 1886, with the title “Unique Collection of American Gold Antiquities, Pottery and Stone implements illustrating the history and status of the early

⁵⁹ *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* no. 37, Bogotá, (1 April 1883), p. 211.

⁶⁰ Museo Commerciale Italiano de Bogotá, *Catalogue de la Collection Filandia découverte dans deux sepulcres près de la ville de Cartago, République de Colombie en Novembre de 1890*, p. 4.

⁶¹ *Papel Periódico Ilustrado* no. 37, p. 211.

⁶² At the time, \$12.000 Colombian pesos was equivalent to US\$10.000 or £2.020. Bendix Koppel to Adolf Bastian, London, 27 January 1887, in *Acta Betreffend die Erwerbung zur Sammlung Randall– Bryce Wright – Sokoloski*, no. 304/86, AMVB.

⁶³ W.W. Randall to Bendix Koppel, New York, n.d.; “The Ramos Ruiz Collection”, translation from article published in *La Luz*, Bogotá, 1883, in *Ibid.*, AMVB.

⁶⁴ Randall sold it to Borlase for £4.000. W.W. Randall to Adolf Bastian, London, 12 February 1884, *Acta Betreffend die Erwerbung zur Sammlung Randall– Bryce Wright – Sokoloski*, no. 304/86, AMVB.

inhabitants of Central America.” In an article in *The Times* the collection was described as follows:

This collection has not ever been exhibited in Europe, nor, indeed, elsewhere, and while unique is its character it is of exceptional interest as illustrating the manners and customs, mode of life, dress, form of superstition and religious observances of the races which preceded the Spanish Conquest. (...) It is also hoped that one day it may be exhibited in its entirety in some convenient museum where it may afford the student materials for developing the history of the people of whom it is so remarkable a memorial.⁶⁵

Bastian sent Professor Virchoro from the Berlin Museum to see the collection in London and to negotiate for it with Mr. Bryce Wright, a mineralogist and expert in gems and precious stones, who presented himself as “the largest ethnographical merchant in England”, who was the agent for the collection.⁶⁶ Bastian also asked Bendix Koppel in London at the time, to view it. According to Koppel, it was “unique, large and absolutely authentic.”⁶⁷ Mr. Borlase, the owner of the collection had economic problems, and mortgaged the collection for £1.800.⁶⁸ After lengthy negotiations, the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin acquired the collection for that sum on 4 May 1888.⁶⁹

The loss of this collection was regretted in Colombia, as can be seen from an article which appeared in the Bogotá newspaper *La Luz* in 1882, and an

⁶⁵ “American Antiquities at the Colonial Exhibition”, *The Times*, London, (5 October 1886) in *Ibid.*, AMVB.

⁶⁶ Bryce Wright to Adolf Bastian, London, (2 November 1886), in *Ibid.*, AMVB.

⁶⁷ Bendix Koppel to Adolf Bastian, London, (27 January 1887), in *Ibid.*, AMVB.

⁶⁸ Bryce Wright to Adolf Bastian, London, (22 November 1887), in *Ibid.*, AMVB.

⁶⁹ Payment Receipt, London, (4 May 1888) in *Ibid.*, AMVB.

anonymous letter sent to Ramos in 1883 by a Colombian living in New York.

The newspaper article reads as follows:

El señor Gonzalo Ramos Ruiz debe estar preparado porque él corre mayor peligro que ningún otro. Los indios perdonarían que Colombia se hubiese desprendido de las espadas de Bolívar, de la corona de Córdoba, de las banderas de Pizarro; ellos no tienen nada que ver con esas glorias, pero sí protestarán contra la venta de antigüedades que recuerdan a sus dioses, sus tradiciones, sus fiestas y en general la vida de su raza.⁷⁰

The second document, an anonymous letter, was sent by Ramos Ruiz to the National Museum Director José Caicedo Rojas, so that it would be published in Colombia :

Aunque yo no deba decir nada sobre la venta de su colección como buen patriota y amigo de usted, me será permitido deplorarla, mucho más sabiendo las circunstancias que obligaron a usted a hacerlo. Desde el momento en que ya a usted le era imposible conservarla, nuestro gobierno estaba en el deber de impedir que saliera del país y sin ahorrarse sacrificios, asegurarse su posesión para nuestro naciente Museo Nacional donde debía haber lucido siempre como la mejor y más importante adquisición siendo una valiosísima base para la formación de un completo museo arqueológico de inapreciable valor para el estudio de la industria y la civilización indígena de Colombia. (...) En esta labor, la ciencia ha sido deliberadamente ayudada por los gobiernos de los países que van a la vanguardia de la civilización y en prueba de ello están los magníficos museos de antigüedades con que hoy se enorgullecen en Londres, Paris, Roma, Madrid, Berlín. (...) Por desgracia nuestro gobierno está hoy tan pobre que está en incapacidad de estimular esta clase de estudios y al prescindir de hacerlo, como el presente caso, no podrá menos de deplorar siempre el haber dejado salir de Colombia la colección de Ramos Ruiz.⁷¹

⁷⁰ "Colección Ramos Ruiz" in *La Luz*, Bogotá, (3 November 1882).

⁷¹ "Colección Ramos Ruiz de Artes y Antigüedades Colombianas" in *Anales de la Universidad*, vol. V no. 27, Bogotá, (March, 1883), pp. 239 - 240.

4.1.4. Late Nineteenth Century Colombian Collections

After the Ramos Ruiz acquisition, the museum obtained one of the most outstanding objects in its goldwork collection in 1894, a Quimbaya cast gold lime-flask of a seated male. Bastian was offered this by the firm Schloss Brothers in London, at the suggestion of Bendix Koppel (Figure 11).⁷² Schloss Brothers told Bastian that the object belonged to a friend of theirs in Antioquia, and that in view of its magnificent state of preservation and its proven authenticity, the price was £ 200.⁷³ This unique object, and photograph, had been sent to London by the firm's correspondents in Antioquia, together with a document signed by the Governor of Antioquia, Abraham García:

Objeto que representa un individuo sentado sobre un trono y adornado con todas las insignias reales. Es de fábrica indígena y elaborado por los aborígenes de la América del Sur antes de la Conquista.⁷⁴

Bastian told Schloss Brothers that although the object was of great interest possibly in the same category as objects in the Quimbaya Treasure, "there is too much gold on it"; the museum could not agree to £ 200. After various letters, the museum eventually bought it for £150 in 1894.⁷⁵

The last collections acquired by the Berlin museum in the nineteenth century were obtained from Fritz Regel, C. Janszen and Benedict Schönfeld, and from Bogota, a Sr. Bravo.

⁷² Register VA 11429, MVB.

⁷³ Schloss Brothers to Adolf Bastian, London, 17 May 1894, in *Acta Amerika*, vol.15, 1 April 1894 - 31 December 1894, no. 645/94, AMVB.

⁷⁴ Schloss Brothers to Adolf Bastian, London, 29 May 1894 in *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Adolf Bastian to Schloss Brothers, Berlin, 2 July 1894, in *Ibid.*

The Berlin Museum sent professor Fritz Regel, who was in Colombia funds to make acquisitions.⁷⁶ A Quimbaya collection he purchased and sent to Berlin in 1897 consisted of 12 gold objects, nose ornaments, pendants, necklace beads and a mask; 43 pottery objects, vessels, pots, funerary urns and anthropomorphic figures. Mr. C. Janszen, who lived in Paris, offered the museum a collection of pottery objects “from the ancient Tairona civilisation” in 1899.⁷⁷ The museum still has 11 zoomorphic vessels and figures from this collection. Their importance lies in the fact that these objects and those donated by Sievers are the earliest items recorded in collections that have been studied for this thesis representing Tairona objects from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

Ernst Pelke wrote to the Berlin museum from Bogotá that he would be able to convince a Sr. Bravo to sell him a truly outstanding Muisca object. This was a Muisca *cercado* from Pasca, Cundinamarca, showing the figure of the chieftain, surrounded by two leading figures (Figure 12).⁷⁸ Pelke considered it an outstanding item, and said that he could get other similar objects “for the German fatherland before the English take them away from us.”⁷⁹ This *cercado* was considered by Eduard Seler to be “one of the most interesting finds to have been made on the Bogotá sabana”, and the interest expressed by the Berlin

⁷⁶ Fritz Regel to the Director of the Museum of Ethnology, Iena, 29 July 1897, in *Acta Amerika* vol. 18, January 1897 - April 1898, 976/97, AMVB.

⁷⁷ C. Janszen to E. Seler, Paris, 26 September 1899, in *Acta Amerika* vol. 20, August 1899 - December 1900, 1025/99.

⁷⁸ Register VA 13636, MVB.

⁷⁹ Ernst Pelke to the Museum für Völkerkunde, Bogotá, 6 March 1899, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 19, no. 1369/98, AMVB.

museum in acquiring it was due to the fact that it already boasted a good Muisca collection. When acquiring this *cercado*, Seler still recalled and regretted the disappearance of the raft from Lake Siecha :

Tenemos todavía bien presente en la memoria como una de las antigüedades en oro más importantes de los chibchas, el cacique de Guatavita en la balsa.⁸⁰

The last Colombian archaeological collection acquired in the nineteenth century was bought from Benedict Schönfeld of Hamburg, who had obtained it through friends in London. It consisted of two breastplates and one nose ornament made of gold, found in the Tolima region. The museum bought them, according to Seler, because they “would impress visitors.”⁸¹

The French magazine *La Nature* praised the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin as an exemplary museum :

Les objets exposés en vitrines de fer étaient éclairés au moins des deux cotés, abrités sous des vitrines à montures métalliques et à parois tout en verre; aucun spécimen ne demeure dans l’obscurité et les surfaces qui restent libres le long des murailles sont consacrées à l’exposition d’un grand nombre des cartes et de diagrammes. On s’est réservé l’espace suffisant pour une foule des modèles grandeur naturelle, représentant des individus des tribus diverses, habillés et armés à la mode des contrées auxquelles ils se rapportent, et entourés de modèles de canots.⁸²

⁸⁰ Eduard Seler to Ernst Pelke, Berlin, 3 January 1899, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 19, no. 1369/98, AMVB.

⁸¹ Eduard Seler to the Administrative Section of the *Museum für Völkerkunde*, 9 November 1899, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 20, 1152/99, AMVB.

⁸² D. Murray, “Le Musée Ethnographique du Berlin”, in *La Nature*, Paris, (1900), p. 3.

Most of the Colombian archaeological collections that reached the *Museum für Völkerkunde* were the result of purchases. The very few donations were an exception: the small Muisca collection donated by the philologist Rufino José Cuervo to honour the memory of Humboldt, and the botanist Karsten's donation.

The collections which were bought can be divided into five major categories. First come the objects which scientific travellers like Sievers and Hettner and the diplomat Hermann Schumacher picked up at random on their travels through Colombia and which they offered to the museum when they returned to Germany.

Secondly, we have the large collection that was built up with a clear purpose in mind by the museum's founder, Adolf Bastian, who gradually acquired it object by object from Colombian regions that he had selected in advance of his own travels, because he knew they were areas where he could find valuable archaeological objects. This case is unique in the three European museums studied. That the museum's own founder and future director should build up the collections that interested him *in situ* showed Bastian's firm resolve and dedication to the idea that Colombian pre-Hispanic objects should be well represented in his "library of the past", rather than the museum simply waiting for offers and donations to come along. There is a great difference between this approach and the process for acquiring Colombian archaeological collections

that existed at the British Museum in London and the *Musée du Trocadero* in Paris. They did wait for offers and donations.

Thirdly, there was the desire to acquire valuable private collections like the Ramos Ruiz collection, with which Bastian became obsessed and followed closely for six years through his contacts in both Bogotá and London, from the date when Gonzalo Ramos Ruiz sold it in 1882 to the American consul Randall until it was finally acquired by the Berlin *Museum für Völkerkunde* in 1888.

Next come the two major collections that the Berlin museum acquired in London, from Charles O'Leary and from the firm Schloss Brothers, which also sold Colombian collections to the British Museum. In the final years of the century Colombian pre-Hispanic objects were beginning to circulate as objects of recognized value amongst private individuals and business houses in London that had dealings with Colombia. The collection in London which Schönfeld offered to sell to the museum would also come into this category.

Finally there are collections which were offered by Germans who lived or who had lived in Colombia, and who Bastian himself had entrusted with the task of searching for objects, as was the case of Bobisch and Pelke. Jürgens and Janszen offered their collections to the Berlin museum by chance: they could equally well have offered them to any other German or European museum that was collecting American objects.

4.2. The Nineteenth Century Colombian Pre-Hispanic Collections at the British Museum, London

The British Museum, founded with the collections of the physician Sir Hans Sloane, had early included a section of "Artificial Curiosities", in which South America was represented by 13 items from Tierra del Fuego. The significant growth of the pre-Hispanic American collections began in the 1860s, with the activities of Augustus Wollaston Franks, Keeper of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities. Franks, educated at Eton and Cambridge, was a well known antiquarian and archaeologist.⁸³ His career in the Museum began in 1851, when the Keeper of Antiquities of the period, Edward Hawkins, appointed him to organize the prehistoric and medieval collections. In 1866 he became the first Keeper of the newly-created department which was to contain ethnographical collections for the purposes of comparative study.⁸⁴ His department was responsible for the collection of ethnographical and archaeological material and for the meticulous registration of the objects.

The most significant single collection received by the British Museum during the period was the Henry Christy collection of prehistory and ethnography. Christy, 1810 - 1865, was a partner in the firm Christy & Co. and a director of the London Joint Stock Bank. He became interested in ethnology and prehistory after going on a lengthy journey to Asia in 1850. The Exhibition of

⁸³ D.M. Wilson, *The Forgotten Collector: Augustus Wollaston Franks of the British Museum*, (London, 1984), p. 14.

⁸⁴ H. R. Braunholtz, "The Franks Collection of Oriental Antiquities", in *British Museum Quarterly*, 18, (1953), p. 103.

1851 influenced him, as did as Augustus Henry Lane-Fox's theories on the creation of ethnographic and archaeological collections.⁸⁵ Christy's collection had been organised on geographical principles compatible with those of the British Museum, in contrast to those of General Pitt Rivers, who had developed a typological classification based on form and technology.⁸⁶

Christy's collection included prehistoric objects from the Dordogne region in France found in his explorations of the Palaeolithic caves in the Vezère valley with the French archaeologist E. Lartet. He also collected antiquities from Scandinavia, Germany and Mexico, which he visited in 1856 with the British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor.⁸⁷

In 1862 the Christy collection contained pre-Hispanic artefacts classified by Christy as "implements and works of art."⁸⁸ Among them were 547 ancient Mexican objects: obsidian arrowheads and knives, pottery of several kinds, weapons, fishing and hunting implements and three masks covered with mosaic work of turquoise and obsidian.⁸⁹ Modern Mexican ethnographic objects were represented by pottery, baskets, rosaries, textiles and figures in wax.⁹⁰ There were 10 pieces of pottery from Peru. Arrows and clubs from Brazil,

⁸⁵ G. Stocking, Jr. *Victorian Anthropology*, (New York, 1987), pp. 5, 264. Lane Fox adopted the name Pitt Rivers in 1880 to fulfil the requirements of a will that made him master of a 25,000 acre state. W.R. Chapman "Arranging Ethnology, A. H. L. F. Pitt Rivers and the Typological Tradition" in G. W. Stocking Jr. (ed.) *Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, (Madison, 1985), p. 15.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁸⁷ "Obituary Notice of Henry Christy", in *The Geological Magazine*, no. XII, London, (1865), pp. 286 – 288.

⁸⁸ *Catalogue of a Collection of Ancient and Modern Stone implements and other weapons, tools and utensils of the aborigines of various countries in possession of Henry Christy*, (London, 1862), p. A.2.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 28 – 51.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 52 – 56.

Guyana and Venezuela were also recorded.⁹¹ Christy's aim in forming the collection was to use the existing cultures of "tribal peoples" to illustrate and supplement the gaps in European prehistory.⁹² For Christy, prehistoric antiquities were "the remains of human races which belong at a stage of civilisation and culture different from that in which they are found in historic times."⁹³

Christy died in 1865, of a lung infection caught while exploring caves in Belgium with a group of British geologists. The museum obtained his collection by bequest, on a decision of four trustees : the anthropologist Sir John Lubbock , Augustus W. Franks, Sir Joseph D. Hooker and Daniel Hanbury.⁹⁴ He left not only all his collections, but also a considerable sum of money to be used for purchases to augment his bequest after his death.⁹⁵ The Christy Fund was used for the acquisition, among many other items, of Colombian pre-Hispanic objects.⁹⁶

During the nineteenth century the British Museum acquired Colombian artefacts from various sources: private collections, donations, purchase from professional collectors and exchange. The earliest record of a Colombian object is from 1836, the acquisition of two nose ornaments in gold from the Quimbaya culture, followed by two human mummies, the first donated by W.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁹² H. J. Braunholtz, *Sir Hans Sloane and Ethnography*, (London, 1970), p. 38.

⁹³ *Catalogue of the Christy Collection of Prehistoric Antiquities and Ethnography*, (London, 1870), p.7.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4. Standing Committee of the British Museum, 11 November 1865, Subcommittee of Antiquities , 18 November, 1865, BMAL.

⁹⁵ M. Caygill, *The Story of the British Museum*, (London, 1981), p. 43.

⁹⁶ *Guide to the Christy Collection of Prehistoric Antiquities and Ethnography*, (London, 1868), p. 22.

Turner in 1838 and the second obtained in Gachancipá, Cundinamarca, by Robert Bunch in 1842.⁹⁷ Turner was Minister in Bogotá and Bunch in 1842 was Private Secretary to another British Minister, Mr. W. P. Adams. Bunch was to have a long diplomatic and entrepreneurial career in Colombia, from 1866 to 1872 as chargé d'affaires, then as Minister and Consul-General in Bogotá until 1878. The first mummy, a female, came from the Cantón of Leiva, in the province of Tunja, found in a cave with 13 other mummies.⁹⁸ The second mummy, a male, was also found in the Cantón of Leiva, near Gachantivá, Boyacá, with 27 other mummies.⁹⁹ Bunch also donated a mummy shroud made of cotton.¹⁰⁰ Both mummies were exhibited permanently in the Ethnographic Room of the department of Natural History and Antiquities.¹⁰¹

From the 1830s to the 1870s the Museum received a few more Colombian artefacts through donations and acquisitions. In 1836 two Quimbaya nose ornaments were registered, and in 1849 a collection was purchased from a Sr. Echeverri which included four goldwork objects and nine pottery Quimbaya objects; among them three important anthropomorphic figures.¹⁰²

In 1855, the British Vice – Consul in Bogotá, Edward Walhouse Mark, donated a Muisca anthropomorphic vessel from Bogotá and a basket-shaped vessel

⁹⁷ Regs. Am 1842 . 1112.1, Regs. Am 1842. 1113.1, British Museum.

⁹⁸ Reg. 1938-11-11-1, British Museum.

⁹⁹ Reg. 1842-11-12-1, British Museum.

¹⁰⁰ Reg. 1842-11-12-2, British Museum.

¹⁰¹ British Museum. *Guide to the Exhibitions Rooms of the Departments of Natural History and Antiquities*, (London, 1859), p. 104.

¹⁰² Reg. Am 1836.0303.1 and 1836.0303.2 ; Echeverri's Collection is registered under the accession numbers Am 1849.1126.1 to Am 1849.1126.3 and the pottery objects under the accession numbers Am 1849.1128.1 to Am 1849.1128.10, British Museum.

from Guatavita.(Figure 13).¹⁰³ Four years later, a collection of Quimbaya pottery vessels, jars and spindle whorls was purchased from a R. Ferro da Silva.

The first significant group of Pre-hispanic goldwork objects entered the Christy collection during the 1860s, acquired as a lot in the sale of a collection belonging to Mr. Walter Hawkins. It included the following Quimbaya objects :

Small sitting human figure with its hands on its stomach, two flat ornaments of base gold with loop for suspension and which has a face represented on one side of one hundred and forty-six small cylindrical beads of red gold and large flat nose ring of pure gold.¹⁰⁴

These artefacts had arrived in England in 1852 and had been collected in Neira, Antioquia, by Charles Carey, from “the tomb searchers who gain their living by this employment.”¹⁰⁵

In 1862, a collection of 13 vessels of reddish–grey pottery with representations of human figures and tripods from tombs in Chiriqui on the Isthmus of Darien, Panama, was purchased from the traveller William Bollaert. He had recorded “the accidental discovery of Indian graves in the Chiriqui district.”¹⁰⁶ A goldwork collection which included nose ornaments and tubes was purchased from Shadrach Syrett in 1865 and five years later, a group of three Muisca objects,

¹⁰³ Mark, a noted watercolourist was the British Vice-Consul in Santa Marta from 1843 to 1845 and in Bogotá from 1846 to 1855. During his stay in Colombia, he painted an album of one hundred and twenty eight outstanding watercolours of landscapes, portraits and customs of New Granada. See *Colombia, Acuarelas de Mark*, (1843 – 1856), *Un Testimonio Pictórico de la Nueva Granada*, (Bogotá, 1963), (Bogotá, 1976); Edward Walhouse Mark, *Acuarelas*, (Bogotá, 1997). The pottery vessel from Guatavita has the Reg. no. MB 8.3.5. 1855, British Museum.

¹⁰⁴ Reg. Am 04531, 04532, 04533, 04534, 04535, British Museum.

¹⁰⁵ Reg. Am 04531 Walter Hawkins manuscript document on the sale, British Museum.

¹⁰⁶ W. Bollaert. *Antiquarian, Ethnological and other researches in Nueva Granada, Ecuador, Perú and Chile*, (London, 1860), p. 61.

a breast plate with an embossed human head, a flat human figurine, snake figurine, a small fragment and two objects assumed to be from Chiriqui, Panama, were acquired from a Mr. Wareham.

The 1870s mark the beginning of a steady process of acquisition of Colombian objects by the British Museum. From Bogotá, Henry Chesterton, who collected axes found in burial places in caves in Cundinamarca, and Muisca objects from Tunja, Boyacá, sent in 1871 a funerary urn with skull, two Muisca pottery vessels and two gold objects, a human figurine and a flat figure of a snake.¹⁰⁷

The most important source of Quimbaya collections for the Museum was the presence in Medellín of the British mining engineer Robert B. White and his brother John Henry who sent valuable gold and pottery collections throughout the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. Robert B. White was born in the Isle of Wight and obtained a diploma as engineer from Queenwood College. In 1867, the State of Cauca signed a contract with him to establish a steam navigation company on the upper Cauca River. It was a failure. He went to Medellín and worked as a mining engineer for the Frontino Mining Company, and on contract with the Colombian government. He died in Amalfi, Antioquia, in 1907. His brother, John Henry White, 1846 - 1925, came to Colombia in 1870 to work with him in the navigation company and when the project failed, attempted to promote navigation on the River Patia. This failed as well, and the White brothers lost their entire fortune in the venture. John Henry was the first

¹⁰⁷ Registers. Am1871C1.7460 to Am1871C.7464, British Museum.

British Consul in Medellín, and he took charge of sending the collections to the British Museum. He held various official posts, including General Director of Roads in the Antioquia Province, and was a manager of the Frontino and Bolivia Gold Mines. He founded the town of Dabeiba, which honoured his memory by putting up a monument to him. He was described in the press of Medellín as an “*inglés antioqueñizado*.”¹⁰⁸

Robert B. White established a close relationship with August Wollaston Franks and with Sir Joseph Hooker, both trustees of the Christy collection.¹⁰⁹ During the period, as White himself stated, “in Colombia any one has the right by law of excavating Indian graves.”¹¹⁰

In 1872 a significant collection of Quimbaya pottery, gold and stone objects assembled by White was bought by Sir Joseph Hooker through the Christy Fund. Some years later, when White was to offer objects directly to the museum, A.W. Franks referred to to this 1872 accession :

Mr. White states that in the exercise of his duties he is constantly meeting with Indian antiquities excavated by the natives from Indian cemeteries and that he would be happy to send some specimens at his own cost to the British Museum.(...) Mr. Franks has long known Mr. White who used to act as agent for the Royal Gardens at Kew and he obtained for Sir Joseph Hooker a number of ancient vases which were added to the Christy Collection.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ L. Latorre Mendoza, *Historia e Historias de Medellín*, (Medellín, 1972), pp. 339 - 340; G. Arango Mejía, *Genealogías de Antioquia y Caldas*, 2 vols., (Medellín, 1973), vol. II, p. 601.

¹⁰⁹ Robert B. White to Dr. Hooker, Medellín, 24 March 1876, Ethno. Doc. 1475, Museum of Mankind, London.

¹¹⁰ R.B. White, “Notes on the Aboriginal Races of the North– Western Provinces of South America” in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Britain and Ireland*, p. 247.

¹¹¹ August W. Franks, Department of British Antiquities, 5 July 1887, Ethno. Doc. 2494, Museum of Mankind, London.

This Quimbaya collection of 39 pottery pieces, double and cylindrical vases, vessels, spindle whorls and figurines with anthropomorphic representations, an urn and 13 gold artefacts, which included a hollow gold human mask, a necklace, ear ornaments, pendants, nose rings and two necklaces of shell beads, were acquired by the Museum and registered as “R.B. White collections, purchased from Dr. Hooker through the Christy Fund, on 15 July, 1872.”¹¹² An outstanding double vase with geometric designs was one of the most important pottery objects (Figure 14).¹¹³

Franks had excellent relations with other European collectors and museum keepers. He travelled frequently to examine ethnographic and medieval collections in Europe.¹¹⁴ He exchanged objects. One example of such an exchange is a “Lozenge - shaped vessel with frogs made of pottery from Antioquia.”¹¹⁵ This exchange was with the German antiquarian Gustav Klemm. In 1873, a M. Boucard offered a Muisca vessel and in 1875, a Herr Egger a muisca gold pectoral.¹¹⁶

The Museum through the Christy Fund acquired in 1877 a group of 9 Quimbaya gold objects, among which was a helmet. It was described as follows :

¹¹² Regs. Am 8444 – Am. 1872C1.8444 to Reg. Am. 8513 – Am.1872C1.8513, British Museum.

¹¹³ Reg. 8444, Vega de Supia, 1872, British Museum.

¹¹⁴ British Museum Standing Committee, 14 November, 1874.

¹¹⁵ Reg. Am 5229, British Museum.

¹¹⁶ Regs. Am 1873C1.8981 and Am 1875C1.9561, British Museum.

Hemispherical cap of pale gold, ornamented with an embossed pattern of lines and dots, at each side two holes are pierced in the edge, probably for attachment.¹¹⁷

It also obtained zoomorphic objects and a pendant “in the form of a bird with extended wings”, bought in 1877 from Percy Brandon. In 1882, gold nose ornaments and a pair of ear ornaments and a breast plate with the figure of a lizard from Caramanta, Antioquia, collected by Sra. Rita Uribe de White, were registered.

In 1883, Robert B. White presented a paper at a meeting of the Anthropological Institute, in which he described the various techniques used in the work of pre-Hispanic goldsmiths :

The gold ornaments found in the tombs show that the Indians were acquainted with many ways of working gold. They melt it and cast it well. Many ornaments are made of beaten or drawn gold. Some are partly cast and partly hammered work and these are soldered together.¹¹⁸

He reported also on an extensive area of gallery mine shafts in Remedios, Antioquia, in which the “Indians worked quartz lodes for gold.”¹¹⁹ From these gallery mines, White collected stone axes described as “Greenish grey stones well shaped and polished with cutting edges.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Reg. MM+ 342, British Museum.

¹¹⁸ R.B. White, “Notes on the Aboriginal races of North Western Provinces of South America” p. 252.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

¹²⁰ Reg. Am + 1470-76, British Museum.

In 1883, W.D. Powles, director of silver mines at Santana and Frias, Tolima, sent two circular spindle whorls, and G.C. Champion a collection of 18 pottery vessels from Chiriquí, Panama.¹²¹ A particularly striking object, a life – size gold mask with a nose ornament and a headdress representation on the forehead, found near Cartago, Valle del Cauca was sent in through Eduardo Vásquez, the British Vice–Consul in Buenaventura. It was bought from the trading firm of Schloss Brothers in 1888.¹²² In 1889, a Quimbaya cast gold lime-flask of a standing male from Salento, Quindio, was acquired from Elkin Schloss of Manchester.(Figure 15).¹²³ White, besides collecting, attempted to interpret the “curiosities”. In a letter to Franks of 1888, he described two gold objects, one of which was bought by the British Museum from Schloss :

Amongst other curiosities recently exhumed from Indian graves near Salento state of Cauca, (...) I have been much struck by two gold images, one of which I enclose a rough sketch,(...) The other is a female very similar. (...) The figures are hollow well finished and burnished and each has a hole in the top of its helmet probably to receive a plume of feathers or a representation on gold of some such ornament. The helmets are similar to those which the Indians wore at the time of the Conquest and which are mentioned by several writers. The owner’s name is José María Mejía.¹²⁴

The museum registered this extraordinary object as follows:

Gold standing male figure forming a bottle, the opening being on the top of the head. In each ear are four rings and at the top of the head are two lines in relief, necklace round neck and bonds of similar design round

¹²¹ W.D. Powles exhibited some antiquities from the United States of Colombia at the meeting of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 8 April, 1879; *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. IX, London, (1880), p. 51.

¹²² Reg. Am 1888.0717.1, British Museum.

¹²³ Reg. Am 1889.0111.1, British Museum.

¹²⁴ Robert B. White to Augustus W. Franks, Bogotá, 13 July 1888, Museum of Mankind, London.

knees and ankles. In the septum of the nose, an ornament. In each hand, a branch.¹²⁵

The following year, 1889, the museum registered a gold human figure made of six articulated pieces, in which the body seemed to represent a skeleton; this had been collected by Lord Carlow. Three pottery objects were offered by W. Greenwell.

The 1892, a group of gold objects, which included a mask, a breast ornament, nose ornaments, ear ornaments and pendants, were presented by Franks himself to the museum. One of the nose ornaments is a Calima mask which consists of a thin sheet through which are pierced eyes and mouth, and at each side, there is a curved plate apparently intended to represent a plume.¹²⁶

In 1895, Franks presented to the museum two objects offered by Christy's : an anthropomorphic Muisca figure and a gold pectoral from the "Distrito de Guayaberos", described by the museum as follows :

Gold ornament, a flat plate representing a human head with rayed headdress, with wire loops to which have been hung circular discs.(...) The lower part shaped at the sides like bird heads, with similar wires attached.¹²⁷

In 1896 White sent his last consignment to the museum, a group of six pottery body-stamps, vessels with anthropomorphic male and female representations and a gold nose ornament, all from graves in the Caldas region. The same year

¹²⁵ The British Museum paid £80 to Elkin Schloss. Reg. Am 1889.1001.1, British Museum.

¹²⁶ Reg. Am.1892 C2.5809, British Museum.

¹²⁷ Reg. Am 1895 C3.16, British Museum.

a group of ten gold anthropomorphic and zoomorphic pendants, ear and nose ornaments, were purchased from G. H. Hunt, and in 1898, four discs with geometric patterns were acquired from Messrs. Sharp and Wilkins.¹²⁸ In 1899, one of the most important pre-Hispanic Colombian objects in the collection, a stone statue from San Agustín was acquired from Admiral Dowing.¹²⁹ This statue has recently been exhibited in the permanent galleries as a “treasure” of the Museum of Mankind.

During the nineteenth century, the growth of the Colombian collections in the British Museum was spasmodic and haphazard, depending mainly on occasional offerings and donations to the Museum and to the Christy collection. There was no systematic planning in this early growth, as was the case in the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin. Furthermore, the cultures and groups considered to make up the inhabitants of pre-Hispanic Colombia were somewhat crudely classified as the “Chibcha”, the “Quimbaya”, and “people from Antioquia.”¹³⁰ These groups were represented by the collections sent to the British Museum from Antioquia and Caldas, the Quimbaya and in a lesser quantity from Cundinamarca and Boyacá, the Chibcha or Muisca, for the simple reason that British collectors had been active in those places. All the collectors were British, diplomats and consuls like Robert Bunch and Edward Walhouse Mark, travellers such as William Bollaert and Admiral Dowing, mining

¹²⁸ The British Museum paid £16 to Messrs Sharp and Wilkins for four pieces of American gold ornaments from Colombia, British Museum Standing Committee, 14 May 1898 and £45 to Mr. G.J. Hunt for a gold plate and ornaments from graves in the Republic of Colombia. British Museum Standing Committee, 8 February, 1896.

¹²⁹ Reg. Am 1899, Stone Statue from San Agustín, British Museum.

¹³⁰ British Museum. *A Short Guide to the American Antiquities in the British Museum*, (Oxford, 1912), p. 33.

entrepreneurs such as Robert B. White and W. D. Powles, representatives of British firms like Percy Brandon and merchant houses like Schloss Brothers from Manchester. The only Colombians to figure in British Museum records were Sr. Echeverri in 1849, and Eduardo Vásquez, the British Vice – Consul in Buenaventura.

4.2.1. The Display of Ancient America in the British Museum

In the nineteenth century, archaeological and ethnographical collections in British public museums attempted to provide a representation of mankind as this was being formulated by the emerging sciences of anthropology and archaeology. Ethnographical collections were designed to record and a source for research about mankind, as well as evidence of Imperial power. In 1899, Charles Hercules Read, a Keeper at the British Museum and President of Section H, Anthropology, of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, asked for a closer relationship between anthropological research and the building of ethnographical collections:

While there is no doubt on the value of the knowledge as to religious beliefs and customs of the existing savages, it is surely of equal importance that anthropological and ethnological collections should be gathered with the same energy.¹³¹

He asked also for the creation of an ethnographical museum similar to the German and French ones:

¹³¹ C. H. Read, *Address to the Anthropological Section*, (Dover, 1899), p. 4.

Where, if not in England, should be found the completest collections of all the races of the Empire? It must be admitted, however, not only that we have no national collection of this kind, but that other nations are ahead of us in this matter.¹³²

Henry Balfour, Keeper of the Pitt-Rivers Museum, considered that ethnographical and archaeological museums and collections “played an important part in the education of the nation”, and justified their importance as a source of knowledge of “the great variety in the conditions of culture observable amongst the peoples and tribes of various regions which supplies us with the most valuable material for tracing the developmental history of human culture in general.”¹³³ The British Museum, which had the most important collection, only rivalled by that of General Pitt-Rivers, considered its ethnographical and archaeological collections a source of information on “the peoples of the whole uncivilized world, their beliefs, habits and productions”, and a means of recording them before “civilization spreads over the earth.”¹³⁴ In 1899, Pitt Rivers, as one of the contributors to the *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, a publication edited by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, contributed to the section on archaeology. He stated how important it was to have comparative archaeological approaches to European and American remains:

Much information is wanted respecting the archaeology of savage and barbarous countries (...) In South America, relics of the stone age are

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³³ H. Balfour, “The Relationship of Museums and the Study of Anthropology” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. XXXIV London, (1904), p. 14.

¹³⁴ British Museum, *Handbook to the Ethnographical Collections*, (London, 1910), p. iii.

more abundant and a bronze period is recognized in the central regions of America. When it is considered that the Palaeolithic implements of Europe have only attracted the attention of archaeologists during the last thirty years, it is not surprising that in uncultivated countries so little should be known of the relics that are hidden beneath the soil.¹³⁵

There was a lack of clarity about the meaning of pre-Hispanic American objects in the British Museum, which can be illustrated by the changes in the display of the collections during the period. In 1886, the Museum rearranged the Ethnographic Gallery according to a mixed geographical and typological scheme that favoured scholarly rather than aesthetic appreciation of the objects. Both ethnographical and pre-Hispanic American objects were displayed in the Gallery alongside of objects from all parts of the world except China and Japan.¹³⁶ The American objects were arranged from North to South in parallel lines.

In 1890, an “American Room” was opened, the first exhibition space within the Museum devoted exclusively to the “Antiquities of Ancient America: North America, West Indies, Mexico and New Granada.”¹³⁷ From 1890 until 1919, this new room indicated a clearer rationale about pre-Hispanic civilizations, separating ancient America from prehistoric objects from other areas, which were displayed in the “Prehistoric Saloon”: Indian antiquities, British Neolithic Stone-Age, British Bronze Age, Foreign Neolithic Stone-Age, Foreign

¹³⁵ J.G. Garson and C.H. Read, (ed.) *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* (London, 1899), p.176-177.

¹³⁶ British Museum, *A Guide to the Exhibition Galleries of the British Museum*, (London, 1888), p. 226.

¹³⁷ British Museum, *A Guide to the Exhibition Galleries of the British Museum*, (London, 1890), p. xi.

sepulchral antiquities, African stone implements, Japanese stone implements, Lake-dweller antiquities and Early Iron-age period.¹³⁸

The conceptions about pre-Hispanic objects were evolutionist : the contents of the American Room were perceived as divided into two categories: firstly, the objects considered to be within the Stone-Age context, which placed them in a prehistoric category:

The ancient remains (...) are mostly , in one sense, prehistoric, as they are probably anterior to the Spanish Conquest (...) It may be noticed how closely the stone implements and weapons resemble those of the old world.¹³⁹

The American Room of the British Museum continued to display pre-Hispanic American objects until 1919, when the space was re-allocated to the Egyptian and Assyrian Galleries. The pre-Hispanic collections were now exhibited as between 1859 and 1888 in the Ethnographic Gallery, mixing again pre-Hispanic and ethnographical material.

Even if the reasons are not fully clear for returning to the former arrangement in the Ethnographical Gallery, blending the “Antiquities from Ancient America”, the Mosaic Aztec masks, the Peruvian pottery, the Quimbaya and Muisca gold objects with Ethnographical items, this change represented a shift in the meaning of American pre-Hispanic cultures in the Museum. As far as Colombian pre-Hispanic artefacts are concerned, it is evident that the Muisca

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. ix, x.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

and the Quimbaya were for British archaeologists, connoisseurs and aesthetes, the near total representation of ancient Colombian cultures.

4.3. The Nineteenth-Century Colombian Pre-Hispanic Collections at *the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadero, Paris*

In France, interest in America's pre-Hispanic past and the building up of archaeological collections were all part of the general emergence of *Américanisme*, the study of America from an inter-disciplinary perspective. Americanist research in France flourished and became a specialist subject after the *Société des Américanistes de Paris* had been formed in 1896; that same year, the *Société* began to publish the *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, which has appeared regularly ever since. However, a notable interest in studying America had first become apparent in France in the 1850s, and this was reflected in the formation of the *Société Américaine de France*, which dated from 1857 and later changed its name to the *Comité d'Archéologie Américaine*. The act of foundation of the Society indicates its interest in a range of American subjects:

Une société d'archéologues, de géographes et de voyageurs s'est réunie (...) à l'effet pour fonder à Paris une société américaine spécialement instituée dans le but de contribuer aux progrès de l'ethnographie, de la linguistique, de l'archéologie et de l'histoire naturelle du Nouveau Monde.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ *Annuaire de la Société Américaine de France*, 2 vols., Paris, (1873), vol. 2, p. 155.

In 1873, the *Société Américaine de France* set itself three specific objectives : firstly, the publication of works by French authors about American archaeology, and of native language grammars and dictionaries; secondly, the teaching of American history, archaeology and linguistics courses; and finally, fostering museums and collections of objects from the New World.¹⁴¹

The first objects from South America to reach an official French collection, the *Cabinet du Roi*, were Peruvian, and had been sent by Joseph Dombey in 1785. Dombey's trip was part of the second eighteenth –century scientific expedition to South America promoted by France, following the Paris Academy of Sciences's expedition to Quito, 1735 -1745, to measure the meridian arc of the equator, led by Charles Marie de la Condamine. The main aim of the second expedition, 1777 - 1785, was to record and collect natural history specimens in Peru. Dombey, trained as a botanist, was curious enough to carry out archaeological digs at Chancay and Pachacamac, and the 78 boxes of specimens that he sent back to France included an archaeological collection :

Un certain nombre de vases en terre noire finement lustrée et des formes généralement insolites et parfois bizarres; des ornements et des objets de toilette en or et en argent, diadèmes, épingles dites topos, épiloir, stilet; des statuettes d'or, d'argent, de terre culte; (.....) et divers outils ou instruments, haches en cuivres, pierres polies et trouées.¹⁴²

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the *Musée des Antiquités de Saint-Germain-en-Laye* received a collection of Colombian Muisca goldwork objects from Francois

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 159.

¹⁴² E. T. Hamy, *Les Origines du Musée d'Ethnographie*, First Edition, Paris, 1890, (Second Edition, Paris 1988), pp. 18 - 19.

Desirée Roulin in the 1830s. The antiquarian and geographer Edmé-François Jomard, who was President of the French Academy of Geography, also possessed a Colombian collection, the most notable items in which were some stone matrices used for making series of figures, of the kind that were considered at the time to be “Muisca calendars.”¹⁴³

Adrien de Longpérier, another antiquarian and a curator of the Louvre encouraged donations and the acquisition of American collections by the Museum. These were displayed from 1850 onwards in a special pavilion inside the Museum. The exhibition was made up of nine hundred Mexican and Peruvian objects, basalt, granite and jade sculptures, pottery objects decorated with human and animal figures, jade, agate and obsidian necklaces, bracelets and breastplates, and everyday items such as mirrors, needles and weights.¹⁴⁴ In the exhibition catalogue, Longpérier described the objects as coming from unknown civilisations. The objects were nevertheless a fascinating enigma for him :

L'Amérique, ce monde relativement nouveau pour les Européens, possède de nombreux et splendides monuments d'un passé presque entièrement inconnu. Les grandes édifices, les statues colossales, les pirâmides immenses qui existent au Mexique, dans le Yucatán et au Pérou, sont autant de témoins d'une civilisation avancée, quoique d'une essence particulière.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ E. F. Jomard, “Nota sobre Algunas Piedras Muisca”, p. 419.

¹⁴⁴ A. de Longpérier, *Notice des Monuments exposés dans la salle des Antiquités Américaines, Mexique et Perou*, (Paris, 1850), pp. 17 - 36.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

In 1874, the French Ministry of Public Instruction set up a commission to promote scientific expeditions, and as the Ministry had nowhere suitable to house objects collected, the Ministry's Director of Sciences and Letters, Oscar de Watteville, proposed a museum which was to be independent of the natural history and fine arts museums which already existed in Paris. Objects collected by travellers would be preserved there and put on public display in a didactic manner, set within their context. This proposal led to the creation of the *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadero* being founded in 1878.¹⁴⁶

As a prelude to what the future museum would be like, Watteville organised a temporary exhibition in 1878 in the Palace of Industry, devoted to material from America, Asia and Africa. The American collections exhibited included the sizeable collection that Charles Wiener had obtained in Peru and Bolivia, made up of close on 3.000 objects, the Alphonse Pinart collection from Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela and Peru, Jules Crevaux's collection of items from the Guayanas, and a collection that was the result of excavations by Léon de Cessac at Ancón in Peru.¹⁴⁷ Edouard André, who had recently returned in November 1876 from his mission to Ecuador and Colombia, displayed ornithology and botany collections and a reconstruction, with the aid of photographs of the statues at San Agustín and archaeological objects from Cuenca, in Ecuador.¹⁴⁸ The future ethnography museum had the clear aim of

¹⁴⁶ N. Dias, *Le Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadero, 1878 - 1908*, (Paris, 1991), pp. 163 - 166.

¹⁴⁷ "Inauguration du Musée Ethnographique des Missions Scientifiques", Paris, 25 January 1878, in E. T. Hamy, *Les Origines du Musée d'Ethnographie*, p. 287.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 58 - 59.

being different from the Physical Anthropology section that existed in the Natural History Museum :

Dans le Musée d'Anthropologie, l'homme est étudié en lui-même et comme créature. Dans le Musée d'Ethnographie, au contraire, c'est comme créateur qu'il est étudié. Ce sont ses efforts pour vaincre les forces de la nature, pour améliorer sa situation, pour atteindre le progrès, qui sont mis sous les yeux du public d'abord, les savants ensuite; ce sont ses armes, ses vêtements, son habitation, ses moeurs et ses usages, en fin, qui sont mis en lumière.¹⁴⁹

When this temporary exhibition ended, the ethnographic and archaeological collections that had been on display went on to form part of the 1878 Universal Exposition in the Trocadero Palace, in a room set aside for French scientific missions in a new section devoted to the ethnography of non-European peoples. The work of organising and classifying collections for the Universal Exposition was undertaken by Ernest Théodore Hamy, 1842-1908, who played the same central role in developing anthropology, archaeology and French museology in late nineteenth century France as Adolf Bastian did in Germany. Hamy, trained as a doctor, became a member of the Paris Anthropology Society in 1867. The meetings of this group, and his contacts with the anthropologist Paul Broca, the Scottish geologist Charles Lyell - the author of *Antiquity of Man*, published in 1863 - and the anthropologist Armand de Quatrefages, all helped generate in Hamy an interest in prehistoric archaeology and palaeontology, which he set out in his work *Précis de Paleontologie Humaine*.¹⁵⁰ The search for

¹⁴⁹ O. de Watteville, "Rapport au Ministre de l'Instruction Publique, des Cultes et des Beaux-Arts", Paris, 2 November, 1877, in *Ibid.*, p. 282.

¹⁵⁰ E.T. Hamy, *Précis de Paleontologie Humaine*, (Paris, 1870).

knowledge about life in prehistoric times led him to look for formal and technical analogies in objects from native societies :

L'enquête ethnologique que nous avons précédemment instituée, a propos des habitants de nos contrées pendant l'âge des mammoths nous a conduits à les rapprocher à certain des tribus océaniques. Ces analogies par cela même que les sauvages, quelque séparés qu'ils soient par le temps, par l'espace et par la race, se trouvent sous le poids des mêmes nécessités naturelles.¹⁵¹

He was collection assistant in the anthropology laboratory and naturalist assistant at the *Musée d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris*, where he was a disciple of the anthropologist de Quatrefages, who was later to become, with Hamy, the promoter of the future Trocadero Ethnographic Museum.

The notion that an "ethnographic object" differed from antiquities, works of art and natural history had been introduced into France by Edmé-François Jomard in 1831, when he defined an ethnographic collection as being one made up of objects obtained through geographical exploration :

L'état actuel des sciences géographiques appelle la formation d'une collection spéciale, ethnographique, destinée à recevoir les produits des voyages lointains et qui sont propres à éclaircir les moeurs et les usages des nations et des peuplades peu connues.¹⁵²

Jomard stressed the function of the object in his definition of an "ethnographic object", in other words, its practical and social use :

¹⁵¹ E. T. Hamy, quoted in N. Dias, *Le Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadero, 1878 - 1908*, p. 209.

¹⁵² J. F. Jomard, "Rémarques sur le But et l'Utilité d'une Collection Ethnographique", Paris, 1831, in E. T. Hamy, *Les Origines du Musée d'Ethnographie*, p. 125.

Il est principalement question des objets considérés sous le rapport de l'utilité pratique et sociale, de leur usage économique et technologique, c'est-à-dire, des progrès dans l'industrie appliquée aux besoins ordinaires de la vie.¹⁵³

Jomard's ideas were taken up by Hamy, who conferred testimonial value, the value of a "document", on ethnographic objects. Like Bastian, he considered that such "documents" could provide enlightenment about societies that no longer existed. In the French approach, however, ethnographic objects included both archaeological objects and those from contemporary native societies. An object only had "document" value if could be fitted into a classification system. Objects would serve to illustrate the different categories in the system, indicators of a particular stage of evolution.¹⁵⁴ What Hamy was attempting to do when he built up collections in the *Musée du Trocadero* can therefore be compared with the work of Bastian at the Ethnography Museum in Berlin, to bring together stylistic variations of particular objects to build up series of studies which could be systematically studied. Hamy was a tireless worker who combined his work at the new ethnographical museum with research and the publication of large numbers of articles in scientific journals and works of anthropology.¹⁵⁵

In October 1878, before the Universal Exposition ended, the French government formed a commission on the future ethnographic museum.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁵⁴ N. Dias, *Le Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadero, 1878 - 1908*, p. 99.

¹⁵⁵ Among his most important works, Hamy published *Mémoires pour Servir à l'Histoire des Découvertes Géographiques et Ethnographiques en Océanie*, (Paris, 1878); *Questionnaire de Sociologie et d'Ethnographie*, (Paris, 1889), *Nouveaux matériaux pour servir à l'étude de la paléontologie humaine*, (Paris, 1892), and *Les Races Américaines*, (Paris, 1902).

Members included the architect Eugène Viollet le Duc, Hamy, and Charles Wiener, and work got under way on finding a building. The one chosen was the Trocadero Palace. Hamy's experience in organising, classifying and preparing collections, together with his researches in archaeology and palaeontology, resulted in him being appointed the Museum's first curator, where he established the journal *Revue d'Ethnographie*.

The American collections at the museum opened to the public in 1882 : almost 10.000 objects from French scientific missions and from private collections, including those of Eugene Boban, Abel Drouillon and Guillemin Tarayre.¹⁵⁶ The American collections from the Louvre were transferred there in 1887, as were the old collections preserved in the *Cabinet du Roi*, and the *Bibliothèque Nationale*.

From the beginning, the American collection of the museum was displayed in a gallery where the objects were laid out in cases alongside models which faithfully reproduced the human types and reconstructed scenes of their lives. Objects were displayed in geographical order, subdivided into ethnological series :

La première salle, en entrant dans le Musée américain, est occupée par le Brésil d'une part, les Guyanes de l'autre; la seconde, la troisième et la quatrième sont remplies d'objets péruviens; la cinquième loge l'Equateur, la Nouvelle Grenade, l'Amérique Centrale, les Antilles, le Yucatan, et une petite partie de Mexique; la huitième contient les collections du Nouveau Monde d'une part, la Californie de l'autre; la

¹⁵⁶ N. Dias, *Le Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadero, 1878 - 1908*, p. 175.

nuevième, en fin, est destinée aux Peaux-Rouges du Canada et des Etats Unis, aux indigènes de la Colombie Britannique et aux populations de la cote Nord-Ouest, Eskimo exceptées.¹⁵⁷

The museum had a further two rooms not mentioned in the above description, which were set aside for “Mexican divinities and antiquities.”¹⁵⁸

Although some of the Colombian archaeological items that reached the Trocadero Museum, were bought, the majority were the result of donations. According to the intake records that are still preserved in the museum’s successor, the *Musée de l’Homme*, the first Colombian accessions were recorded in 1878. The first two collections included Muisca objects from Tunja, donated by Alphonse Pinart and Lucien de Césac.¹⁵⁹ Pinart and Césac had explored the north-western part of South America for the French government. They started in Peru in 1875 and finished their journey five years later in California, and everything they collected went to French museums.¹⁶⁰ Two gold objects from Bogotá, donated by a M. Dehoux, were registered in 1884.¹⁶¹

Three Colombian collections were recorded in 1887, transferred from the Louvre. The first of these had been acquired in 1853 by the curator Adrien de Longperier from the diplomat Auguste le Moyne, and included two pottery

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Collections DT. 78.1 and 78.54, Département d’Amérique, AMHP.

¹⁶⁰ P. Riviale, *Un Siècle d’Archéologie Française au Pérou, 1821-1914*, (Paris, 1996), pp. 369 - 370, 399.

¹⁶¹ Dehoux Collection, D.T. 84.4, Département d’Amérique, AMHP.

vessels and five gold Muisca votive offerings.¹⁶² The second collection had been acquired from a naturalist called Schlimm, who collected the objects he sold himself in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta: a pottery vessel, eight cylindrical jasper and serpentine beads.¹⁶³ The other collection transferred from the Louvre consisted of two figurines, 37 pottery vessels, and a Quimbaya gold figure, all from Antioquia, donated by a M. Colville, resident in Medellín since 1853, who had come across countless native graves on his frequent travels in Antioquia. The objects he sent to the Louvre had been removed from “graves dug by experts”; he had written that it would be easy to obtain more pottery objects, since grave plunderers “are looking for gold and throw away pottery objects.”¹⁶⁴

A collection given by a priest, Père Termes, was recorded in 1888 : ten objects from the Caldas region. That same year a pottery object was also donated by the French archaeologist and antiquarian Louis Capitan, who built up a large collection of 1.230 Peruvian and Mexican archaeological objects, which he finally donated to the Museum in 1930.¹⁶⁵

Before the end of the century, three other French explorers who visited Colombia contributed collections. Jean Chaffanjon travelled through Colombia and the Orinoco region in 1888 and 1889. He made a large collection, 346

¹⁶² Le Moyne Collection, D.T. 87.114 to 87.118, Département d'Amérique, AMHP. Le Moyne, 1800 - 1891, had been French Vice-Consul in Bogotá from 1828 to 1840. See A. Le Moyne, *Voyages et Séjours dans l'Amérique du Sud, La Nouvelle Grenade, Santiago de Cuba, La Jamaïque et L'Isthme de Panamá.*

¹⁶³ Schlimm collection, D.T. 87.118, Département d'Amérique, AMHP. The collection had been sold to the Louvre Museum in March 1858.

¹⁶⁴ A de Colville to Nieuwerke, Louvre Museum, Medellín, 9 November 1858, AMHP.

¹⁶⁵ P. Riviale, *Un Siècle d'Archéologie Française au Pérou, 1821-1914*, p. 368.

pottery and gold objects, the most important of which were two gold breastplates.¹⁶⁶ Also worthy of note was a rotating gold disc.¹⁶⁷ According to a note in the *Musée de l'Homme* archives, this collection included “ 31 objects found on the trip, 11 ‘jewels’, 238 objects acquired from a Sr. Jiménez, and 66 from a Sr. Koppel.”¹⁶⁸ Henri Candelier, who had lived in the Guajira and in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, and had published *Riohacha et les Indiens Goajiros* in Paris in 1893, donated a collection of 51 ethnographic objects from the Guajira 1889.¹⁶⁹

Finally, after spending six years exploring the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the Guajira and the Tamalameque and Ocaña regions between 1890 and 1896, Count Joseph de Brettes donated 13 Arhuaco ethnographic objects, “wooden tiaras which recall Assyrian head-dresses, bone trumpets and carved beads which have been used for worship”, and an archaeological pottery roller.¹⁷⁰ The last Colombian collection to be recorded before the end of the century were twelve objects, donated by a M. Penon.¹⁷¹

From this description of Colombian collections based on the records in the *Musée de l'Homme* archives, eight of the collections were sent in by French travellers or French men who lived in Colombia. The role of the scientific explorers who contributed six of the twelve collections should be stressed.

¹⁶⁶ Registers 91.57.172 and 91.57.282, MHP.

¹⁶⁷ Register 91.57.281, MHP.

¹⁶⁸ Chaffanjon Collection, DT 90.20 to 93.38, Département d'Amérique AMHP.

¹⁶⁹ Collection D.T.92.16, Département d'Amérique AMHP.

¹⁷⁰ Joseph de Brettes to Ernest Théodore Hamy, Riohacha, 31 May 1892, in D.T. 94.1 to 97.46, Département d'Amérique AMHP.

¹⁷¹ Collection no. 98.7, Département d'Amérique AMHP.

Unlike the acquisition procedures that were employed by both the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin and the British Museum in London, which purchased collections and single items, the Museum in Paris only spent money between 1880 and 1900 on the collection of the traveller Chaffanjon. The Louvre Museum had in 1853 bought the objects offered by the diplomat Le Moyne.

How effective were these European museum collections in spreading and deepening knowledge about pre-Hispanic Colombian societies? How important to Colombian archaeology was the work of Bastian at the Berlin museum and Hamy at the Trocadero Museum in building up series of objects so that comparative research could be undertaken?

As we will see in Chapter 6, it was not until the first decade of the twentieth century, when French Americanism and its German equivalent, *Altamerikanistik*, became specialised sciences, that a group of professional archaeologists and ethnologists emerged and produced archaeological and ethnological knowledge about the cultures they studied that was based on field work.

The truth is perhaps that these collections in European museums at first played more of a symbolic than a scientific role. As the technological, formal and iconographic skills involved in pre-Hispanic Colombian metallurgy and pottery became part of the “libraries of the past” of Adolf Bastian or the “representation of mankind” of Henri Balfour, they became universally recognised. This proved

in the early years of the twentieth century to be a spur to action in Colombia to preserve the remains of the ancient past.

CHAPTER 5

THE PROTECTION OF ANTIQUITIES, MUSEUMS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

5.1. The Awareness of the Importance of Preserving the Colombian Heritage

During the War of the Thousand Days, 1899 - 1902, all scientific work in Colombia came to a halt and educational establishments were closed. The premises of scientific societies and universities were converted into barracks. Yet even before the end of the war, historical studies enjoyed a revival. The pre-Hispanic era shared in this revival along with the heroes of Independence. The original native inhabitants became a subject of interest as part of this *historia patria*, and preserving and caring for American antiquities was preached as a duty. A group of historians, Pedro María Ibañez, Carlos Cuervo Márquez, Miguel Triana, Ernesto Restrepo Tirado, Eduardo Posada, Luis Cuervo Márquez, Jesús María Henao and Gerardo Arrubla persuaded the Ministry of Public Instruction to name a commission to organize a National Academy of History and Antiquities:

CONSIDERANDO :

Que por incuria y por la triste situación del país día por día se van perdiendo irreparablemente multitud de documentos preciosos, de monumentos y datos de todo género, que constituyen material histórico de grande importancia para Colombia.

RESUELVE :

El ministerio procederá a organizar como núcleo y principio de la "Academia de Historia y Antigüedades Colombianas ", una Comisión de hombres doctos y diligentes a cuya solicitud confiará el estudio de las antigüedades americanas y de la Historia Patria en todas sus épocas, el allegamiento y análisis de los materiales propios de tales estudios; la fundación de museos y el aumento del que existe en Bogotá, el arreglo, conservación y formación de índices de los archivos públicos y los de propiedad particular cuyos dueños quieran generosamente ponerlos a disposición del Gobierno para los estudios antes dichos, la dirección de la Biblioteca de Historia de Colombia cuyo primer volumen está ya en prensa y que ha sido fundada para sacar a la luz los manuscritos valiosos, el cuidado y conservación de monumentos históricos y artísticos; en cuanto ello corresponda al ramo de Instrucción Pública; y el estudio de los idiomas, tradiciones, usos y costumbres de las tribus indígenas del territorio colombiano.¹

The commission contained various sections, including archaeology, which took on responsibility for museums and ancient objects, and Ethnology, which would consider the study of native languages and traditions. On 12 December 1902 the commission was transformed into the *Academia de Historia y Antigüedades*, an official academy and consultative body for the Government. From then until 1941, when the National Ethnological Institute was created, the Academy was the official body that had the responsibility for investigating, preserving and protecting the country's archaeological heritage, and undertaking the study of native groups.

The *Academia de Historia de Antioquia* was set up in 1904. It acknowledged that "due to ignorance and negligence" ancient objects of historical and archaeological importance had all too often disappeared; many were still in

danger of being lost objects which “would be invaluable and of inestimable use for studying the customs, habits and industry of the aborigines of Antioquia.”² In his inaugural at the opening of this Academy, its President Tulio Ospina justified the need for a regional Academy of History; the idea of *lo Antioqueño* could be consolidated through historical research :

A primera vista parecerá que la historia de una provincia pequeña, que apenas cuenta cuatro siglos y medio de vida civilizada (.....) no ha de dar pábulo suficiente a las investigaciones de una Academia de Historia, pero ningún pueblo es demasiado insignificante para que sea digno de estudio su desenvolvimiento, si desde el principio exhibe la energía, la elevación de carácter y el vigor físico e intelectual que algún día pueden conquistar un puesto distinguido entre las naciones civilizadas.³

Both academies began to publish bulletins. The national *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* appeared for the first time in 1902, and from the start was an important outlet for articles and reports on pre-Hispanic objects and monuments and on archaeology. The regional Academy of History of Antioquia began to publish the *Repertorio Histórico, Organo de la Academia Antioqueña de Historia* in 1905.

A greater awareness began to develop at this time of the need for pre-Hispanic objects and monuments to be actively preserved, and this spread to non-academic circles. Individuals whose work made them aware of archaeological

¹ Resolution no. 115 dated 9 May 1902, in *BHA*, Año 1, no. 1, Bogotá, (September, 1902), pp. 1 - 2.

² Decree 360 dated 2 January 1904, in *Repertorio Histórico, Organo de la Academia Antioqueña de Historia*, no. 145, Medellín, (January, 1940), p. 285.

³ T. Ospina, “Discurso pronunciado en la Inauguración de la Academia Antioqueña de Historia el 7 de Agosto de 1904”, in *BHA*, Año 2, no. 24, Bogotá, (August, 1904), p. 705.

remains or objects informed the Academy of History in the hope of getting them preserved. In 1908, Carlos Cuervo Márquez submitted a report to the Academy from Carlos Borda, who while working in the Magdalena region had found a group of gold objects which he had acquired to present to the Academy of History and Antiquities, together with a detailed report.⁴ In this report, Borda told of his visit to Gaira, where he had found the remains of a “place of worship” and had picked up a collection of zoomorphic figures, gold nose and ear ornaments and various types of bead in the surrounding area. Borda had also acquired a large cylindrical stone one metre twenty centimetres long, which he had brought up to Bogotá, and which was according to his speculations part of a temple and “must have been used for offerings or sacrifices”. The archaeologist and academic Carlos Cuervo Márquez, at the time Minister of Public Instruction, recommended that this object be acquired for the National Museum’s collection.⁵

One of the original priorities for the Academy of History was to promote and improve existing museums. It sent Ernesto Restrepo Tirado and Manuel Antonio de Pombo to inspect the National Museum in 1902. They reported that “objects of great value were kept there, without any classification or order”, and that both a “scientific putting-things-in-order” and the drawing up of a complete catalogue were urgent and essential.⁶ The Ministry of Public Instruction

⁴ C. Cuervo Márquez, “Informes sobre Objetos Indígenas” in *BHA*, Año VI, no. 61, Bogotá, (July, 1909), p. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶ History and Antiquities Commission Minute, 15 June 1902, *BHA*, Año 1, no. 1, (September, 1902), Bogotá, p. 1-2.

consequently issued Law 39 of 1903, which obliged all museums in the country to organise and improve their collections, and to ensure that descriptive catalogues of their collections were published.⁷ The *Antioqueño* antiquarian Leocadio María Arango published the catalogue of his private museum in 1905. The Director of the National Museum, Rafael Espinosa Escallón, published an *Apéndice a la Guía del Museo* in 1907. Much more than the usual catalogue, this Appendix was a full inventory of objects which recorded large numbers of banknotes, coins, medals, books and items of furniture which had not appeared in the earlier guides published by Fidel Pombo in the nineteenth century.⁸

To enrich the Museum's collections, Cuervo Márquez as Minister of Public Instruction issued a circular along the lines of those sent out by Francisco de Paula Santander in 1824, Gonzalo A. Tavera in 1879 and Ricardo Becerra in 1881. He asked for donations of "objects which because of their value and their historical or scientific merit" ought to be preserved in the National Museum. Various points in this circular are worthy of mention. The notion of rescuing and preserving the country's heritage that Cuervo promoted could only be achieved if Colombians showed their "patriotism" and "enlightenment" by donating "objects which would be exposed to certain destruction in the none too distant future". The circular explicitly requests "objects relating to Colombian pre-history" and "photographs of prehistoric monuments" to be donated, so that a

⁷ Law 39 of 1903, in *Leyes Colombianas Expedidas por el Congreso de Estado en sus Sesiones Ordinarias de 1903*, (Bogotá, 1903), p. 64.

⁸ *Apéndice a la Guía del Museo Nacional*, (Bogotá, 1907), pp. 72 - 74, 89.

start could be made on drawing up an inventory of pre-Hispanic remains which could be then published.⁹

The Centenary of Independence celebrations of 1910 aimed to show the progress the country had made and at the same time to review the historical past. The ideals of progress was represented by a National Exposition, with various pavilions set up in the Parque de la Independencia in Bogotá. President Ramón González Valencia in his inaugural speech called the display a “tangible and practical demonstration of the benefits the country had reaped”; it was also time for a “grandiose hymn to work.”¹⁰ Monuments, busts and tablets were set up in honour of the “founders of the independence movement”, Antonio Nariño, Antonio Ricaurte and Simón Bolívar, and in honour of the conquistadors and “illustrious men” from the colonial era, Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, Sebastián de Belalcázar, Rodrigo de Bastidas, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa and José Celestino Mutis.¹¹

The celebrations made a clear and important reference to the pre-Hispanic era when two statues from San Agustín, transported to Bogotá on the orders of President Rafael Reyes in 1906, were erected in the park, the heart of the centenary celebrations, amidst the novel electric illuminations there and the

⁹ C. Cuervo Márquez, “Circular no. 638 del Ministerio de Instrucción Pública”, in *Revista de la Instrucción Pública de Colombia*, vol. XVIII, no. 3, Bogotá, (March,1906), pp. 317 - 318.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

¹¹ *Primer Centenario de la Independencia de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1911), pp. 38. 69.

pavilions displaying the artistic and industrial exhibits that were the symbols of the country's progress.¹²

The positioning of these representations of the pre-Hispanic past alongside the busts and statues of leading figures from the colonial and independence eras was well received and marked a change in the way *historia patria* was viewed. It was no longer solely conceived around illustrious figures from the time of the Spanish Conquest onwards. The presence and the monumental nature of the San Agustín statues at these centenary celebrations was the first occasion on which the ancient societies which had inhabited Colombian territory during the pre-Hispanic era were allowed to occupy a prominent position on the public stage. The San Agustín statues were evidence of an ancient world, one largely unknown to the majority of the visitors to the exhibition.

5.2. The “Nation’s Sanctuary”: The Rebirth of the National Museum and its Archaeological Collections

Colombia's National Museum enjoyed a marked revival in the second decade of the twentieth century after the historian, archaeologist and academic Ernesto Restrepo Tirado took over as Museum Director in 1910. With support from Minister of Public Instruction Carlos Cuervo Márquez, Restrepo Tirado managed to get the museum a worthy location and a budget for acquiring and organising the archaeological collections and for publishing catalogues.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 215.

Restrepo Tirado managed to get both the government and private individuals interested in the National Museum, reversing a decade of abandonment and neglect that had followed the death of Fidel Pombo in 1900. Restrepo Tirado had found two recurring themes in the museum's correspondence during that first decade of the century : notes from the Ministry of Public Instruction in response to requests from the director of the day, saying simply "no funds available", and requests from private individuals for objects from the museum to be loaned for parties. Some of the museum's collections had been sent elsewhere during this period: the mineral collections were transferred to the School of Engineering, the works of art were sent off to form the nucleus of a *Museo de Bellas Artes* and the herbariums were despatched to the School of Medicine.¹³ Donations by private individuals were few and far between, despite the circular that Cuervo Márquez had sent out in 1906. Between 1900 and 1912 only fifteen objects had been received.¹⁴

Restrepo Tirado saw the need for major transformations. Three months after he took up office, in February 1911 he asked the Ministry of Public Works for the Industry and Trade Pavilion that had been built for the Centenary Exposition as a location for the museum. The government answered that the best thing to do would be to move the museum to another of the pavilions that had been built for the centenary celebrations, the Egyptian one, since this was a masonry structure, whereas the Industry and Trade Pavilion was made of wood, and

¹³ E. Restrepo Tirado, "Reseña Histórica sobre el Museo Nacional", in *BHA*, Año VI, no. 71, Bogotá, (April, 1911), pp. 669 - 670.

¹⁴ E. Restrepo Tirado, "Discurso en la inauguración del Museo Nacional", in *BHA*, Año IX, no. 98 Bogotá, (July, 1913), p. 85.

therefore “did not offer the necessary security.”¹⁵ The National Museum was however not given either of these pavilions.

Restrepo Tirado had a clear perception of what the museum should be like : he believed that one of the primary functions of a museum was to act as a centre where collections could be studied, rather than just somewhere where “curiosities of varying degrees of rarity were put before the eyes of visitors.”¹⁶ He was nevertheless faced with a problem that his predecessors had also come up against on repeated occasions, budget difficulties, which made it impossible for the collections to be built up. While collections of pre-Hispanic objects could now be studied and analysed in European and North American museums, the same was not true of the National Museum :

Un museo no puede progresar mucho con sólo limosnas, y la partida existente es irrisoria. Diariamente vienen a ofrecer, en buenas condiciones, artefactos indígenas, recuerdos de nuestros próceres, curiosos productos del país, etc., y como no hay fondos, van a dar a manos de extranjeros y a aumentar los museos del exterior. Hoy día se pueden estudiar mejor nuestras antigüedades indígenas en los museos de Berlín, Madrid, Estados Unidos, etc. que en el Museo Nacional.¹⁷

He nevertheless achieved his two major aims, of ensuring that permanent funds were available so that collections could be acquired and organised, and finding a worthy location. Carlos Cuervo Márquez managed to get Congress to agree that the National Museum should receive a fixed annual sum of \$1,000

¹⁵ C. Rodríguez O., Minister of Public Works, to Pedro María Carreño, Minister of Public Instruction, Bogotá, 14 February 1911, vol. 3, AMNC.

¹⁶ E. Restrepo Tirado, “Reseña Histórica sobre el Museo Nacional”, p. 663.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

for the preservation and acquisition of collections.¹⁸ During 1913, the museum and its collections were transferred from the “dark basements of the San Carlos Palace” to “cheerful rooms” in the Pasaje Rufino Cuervo which, “if not exactly appropriate for the purpose, were at least more comfortable, and offered the light and ventilation that were so essential.”¹⁹

In Medellín, Leocadio María Arango was aware that Restrepo Tirado was interested in acquiring archaeological objects, and he offered his own collection to the National Museum. Restrepo Tirado felt however that Arango’s offer was “quite expensive”. Restrepo was most interested in the pottery collection of 2,219 objects, which Arango offered to sell for \$10 pesos per object, a price which he pointed out was a great deal less than what he had paid for them; he was offering them at this price because he was in poor health, and “so he could have the satisfaction of knowing that they would be in the National Museum.”²⁰

The Museum opened in its new location on 20 July 1913. For Cuervo Márquez, the occasion was “a festival of civilisation and culture: the rebirth of the National Museum.”²¹ The Museum was to be a “sanctuary” where “objects belonging to the primitive inhabitants of our land” would be preserved, objects which could be used “partly to reconstruct the pre-history of those peoples.”²² Restrepo repeated Cuervo Márquez’s arguments; he proudly trusted that the museum

¹⁸ E. Restrepo Tirado, “Discurso en la Inauguración del Museo Nacional”, p. 86.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Leocadio María Arango to Ernesto Restrepo Tirado, Medellín, 19 November 1913, vol.3, AMNC.

²¹ C. Cuervo Márquez, “Discurso en la Inauguración del Museo Nacional”, *BHA*, Año IX, no. 98, Bogotá, (July, 1913), p. 88.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

would be a place where the public could “make comparisons between what we once were and what we are today”.²³

The goal of showing the public “what we once were” was achieved. By 1915 the National Museum had built up a Muisca, Quimbaya and Chiriquí archaeological collection consisting of 500 gold, pottery and stone objects. Prominent in the Muisca collection were the following :

Un cacique en sus andas, toscamente fundido; una diadema de oro de diez y seis quilates de una maleabilidad asombrosa, fundida con esmero, trabajada con arte y en la que no se sabe qué admirar más, si los conocimientos del orfebre en materia de fundición, o la paciencia para sacar con tanta armonía los calados que la adornan; siete objetos pequeños de oro y tumbaga, que como ofrendas depositaban los indios en sus adoratorios, y en que se pueden estudiar sus creencias, sus costumbres y diversos procedimientos de laborar el oro; siete piezas de barro cocido ponen de manifiesto la habilidad de los alfareros de esta nación en dar forma y pulimento a las vasijas, que no sólo les servían para sus usos domésticos sino como adorno de los bohíos.²⁴

The Director mentioned that among the 105 items in the Quimbaya collection there were 18 vessels showing human figures, the bodies covered with geometric drawings in which red and black predominated, and also 24 vessels, 4 pitchers, one of them 50 centimeters tall, of a solid, fine texture and decorated with white and black drawings, all covered with a varnish.²⁵

In 1915, recalling his youthful experiences, Restrepo Tirado said that more

²³ E. Restrepo Tirado, “Discurso”, p. 86.

²⁴ E. Restrepo Tirado, “Informe del Director del Museo Nacional al Señor Ministro de Instrucción Pública en el Año 1915”, *BHA*, Año X, no. III, Bogotá, (October, 1915), p. 160.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

than thirty years earlier, when his enthusiasm for archaeological studies had first begun, native graves had revealed much more to him than he could ever have learned from all the books of the historians and chroniclers. Now, as Director of the National Museum, he deeply regretted the fact that the collections he had built up with his father, Vicente Restrepo, had been lost to the country and that they had not had the foresight to make collections for the National Museum :

Varios aficionados hicimos colecciones de lo que alcanzábamos a llegar de esos tesoros, que en su mayor parte, iban a enriquecer los museos del exterior. A nuestro museo alcanzaron a llegar unos pocos objetos, a manera de muestra, y de ellos cuán poco quedó. Entonces hubiera sido fácil recoger una colección de que hoy hubiera podido enorgullecerse el Museo, y que hubiera servido de base a los estudios arqueológicos, pues que de los terrenos del Quindío, de Anserma y de Antioquia, se sacaban en grandes cantidades.²⁶

Restrepo went on acquiring archaeological objects and collections for the museum, and in 1917 he published the *Catálogo General del Museo de Bogotá, Arqueología*.²⁷ This catalogue, an important moment in the history of the museum, is the only one to have been printed in its entire history which deals exclusively with the archaeology collections. The catalogue is arranged not by local origin or by regional groups, but rather on the basis of where the different objects were located in the museum's store cupboards. Four groups

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

²⁷ In addition to the catalogue devoted to the archaeological collections, between 1912 and 1918 Restrepo published three volumes on other parts of the museum's collections: *Catálogo General del Museo de Bogotá*, (Bogotá, 1912), *Catálogo General del Museo de Bogotá, Objetos Históricos, Retratos de Próceres y Gobernantes, Pinturas, etcetera*", (Bogotá, 1917), and *Catálogo General del Museo de Bogotá, Mineralogía y Paleontología*, (Bogotá, 1918).

are stressed: “Chibcha Objects”, “Quimbaya, Catio Objects”, “Chiriquí Objects” from Panama, and “Pottery of the Pacific Coast.”²⁸

The goldwork collection the museum housed in 1917 was certainly substantial.

The description of some items is transcribed here :

Un cacique macizo, toscamente fundido, en cuclillas, con los brazos cruzados sobre las rodillas. Lleva en cada mano una insignia, y como casco una cabeza de águila con su penacho de plumas en señal de mando. (...) Representación en oro de un mohán o jeque chibcha, hallado en Ramiriquí, lleva en la cara una máscara aterradora, como de felino y por único adorno, un collar. Está en cuclillas y tiene en la mano derecha los tubos para absorber el yopo.²⁹

Thus, these period was a definite one for the National Museum who began to house and to exhibit important archaeological collections.

5.3. Americanist Studies and German Collecting in Colombia during the Early Years of the Twentieth Century

The interest among European academics in Americanist research in archaeology, ethnology, ethnic history and linguistics became stronger in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when a new generation of professional archaeologists and ethnologists came to the fore. Some specialized in specific regions, and had worked in the field, sponsored by museums. In Germany the leading archaeologist of this generation was Max Uhle, 1856 – 1944; Adolf

²⁸ E. Restrepo Tirado, *Catálogo General del Museo de Bogotá, Arqueología*, (Bogotá, 1917), (Edition without page numbers).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Bastian had sent him to Peru in 1892. He spent the next forty years there, systematically digging, especially at Tiahuanaco and Pachamac, following the stratigraphic method.³⁰ He published his most important work, *Die alten Kulturen Perus im Hinblick auf die Archäologie und Geschichte des amerikanischen Kontinents*, *The Ancient Cultures of Peru in Relation to the Archaeology and History of the Continent of America*, in 1935.³¹ Mexican studies developed in Germany through the work done by Eduard Seler, 1849 - 1922, who had started his professional career as research assistant to Bastian at the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in 1884; he became director of the museum's American section in 1903. He had a keen interest in Quimbaya objects and published the article *Die Quimbaya und ihre Nachbarn*, *The Quimbaya and their Neighbours*, in 1893.³² Seler went on six expeditions to Mexico with his wife, the archaeologist Cécile Sachs, and built up valuable Mexican collections for the museum. He also undertook linguistic research and research into ancient Mexican manuscripts.

In France, the Society of Americanists in Paris, which had been founded in 1896 with Ernest Theodore Hamy as its director, was one of the leading forces behind Americanist studies in the early years of the century. In 1919, its President, M. de Vignaud, was at the helm of a Society which boasted 144 active members. He believed that scientific Americanism should focus on

³⁰ G. Kutscher, "Berlin as a Centre for Americanist Studies", in *Indiana*, Berlin, vol. 7, (1976), p. 14. Uhle, as already mentioned, had published the two-volume work *Kultur und Industrie Südamerikanischer Völker* in 1889 with Alphons Stübel, Wilhem Reiss and Bendix Koppel.

³¹ M. Uhle, *Die alten Kulturen Perus im Hinblick auf die Archäologie und Geschichte des amerikanischen Kontinents*, (Berlin, 1935).

³² E. Seler, "Die Quimbaya und ihre Nachbarn" in *Globus*, vol. LXIV, Berlin, (1893), pp. 242 - 248.

archaeological, ethnographic, linguistic and anthropological studies which would have a bearing on research into one of the main subjects of enquiry at the time, the origins of American man :

L'Américanisme scientifique qui est la notre ouvre à nos investigations un vaste champ où prennent place l'archéologie, qui fait voir l'état ancien de civilisation d'un peuple, l'ethnographie qui permet de retracer ses moeurs, ses usages, ses croyances, la linguistique, qui au moyen du vocabulaire révèle l'étendue de ses idées morales et matérielles ainsi que les associations qu'il a pu former avec d'autres peuples, et l'anthropologie en fin, qui détermine son rang parmi les autres groupes humaines et qui réunit les éléments nécessaires à la solution du grand problème de l'unité ou de la pluralité des races américaines.³³

Research into the origin of American man held this priority among Americanists partly because that generation of researchers had access to native groups "which were at various stages of social evolution."³⁴ Paul Rivet, a leading figure in the *Société des Americanistes*, stated that the priorities of Americanist scientific work, were above all to establish the lines of ancient migrations and to establish relative chronologies for ancient societies. Rivet, 1876 - 1958, was an Army doctor and naturalist. In 1901 he was sent as a member of a French geodesic mission to Ecuador, where he remained until 1906. He gathered anthropological, archaeological, linguistic and ethnographic information in Ecuador which formed the basis of his work *L'Ethnographie Ancienne de l'Equateur*, which he published with René Verneau.³⁵ Rivet continued his Americanist research, particularly in the field of pre-Hispanic metallurgy, the

³³ M. Vignaud, "L'Américanisme et la Société des Américanistes", in *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, vol. XI, Paris, (1919), p. 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁵ P. Rivet and R. Verneau, *L'Ethnographie Ancienne de l'Equateur*, (Paris, 1912).

native languages of Ecuador, and the early settlement of America.³⁶ In the *Société des Américanistes*, he emphasized the need for caution and prudence in research work, and recommended that the work to be done should be undertaken above all from a comparative viewpoint, and based on linguistic, ethnographic, archaeological and anthropological evidence.³⁷

Studies undertaken by members of the Society of Americanists had not only to be comparative but also holistic in nature; each member should take results obtained by other specialists in the different areas of knowledge into consideration:

Chaque fait nouveau qu'il découvre, de chaque hypothèse qu'il émet, il peut et il doit rechercher la corrélation qui existe entre ce fait ou cette hypothèse et les données acquises en dehors de lui, dans un ordre de recherches différentes des siennes.³⁸

Based on an analysis of private goldwork collections belonging to Colombians who lived in France, a collection belonging to Count de Brettes and the one that Jean Chaffanjon had taken to the Trocadero Museum, Rivet published several articles about pre-Hispanic goldwork, together with his colleagues.³⁹ With Henri Arsandaux, he undertook comparative studies of the metallurgical techniques

³⁶ J. Jamin, "Le Savant et le Politique: Paul Rivet, (1876 - 1958)", in *Bulletin et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, vol. 1, nos. 3 - 4, Paris, (1989), pp. 287 - 288.

³⁷ M. Vignaud, "L'Américanisme et la Société des Américanistes", p. 20.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁹ The articles that were published are: G. de Créqui-Montfort, P. Rivet, and H. Arsandaux, "Contribution à l'étude de l'archéologie et de la métallurgie colombiennes", *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris, Nouvelle Série*, vol. XI, Paris, (1914 - 1919), pp. 525 - 591; P. Rivet, "Note complémentaire sur la métallurgie sud-américaine", in *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris, Nouvelle Série*, vol. XIII, Paris, (1921), pp. 233 - 238; H. Arsandaux, and P. Rivet, "L'Orfèvrerie du Chiriquí et de Colombie", in *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris, Nouvelle Série*, vol. XV, Paris, (1923), pp. 169 - 182; and P. Rivet, "L'Orfèvrerie Colombienne, Technique, Aire de Dispersion, Origine", in *Proceedings of the XXI International Congress of Americanists*, 2 vols., (The Hague, 1924), pp. 15 - 28, and two plates.

that had been used in Muisca, Quimbaya and Chiriqui in an attempt to try and establish an unity of origins in metallurgical industries.⁴⁰ With this in mind, he carried out metallurgical analyses of the alloys that had been used to make Muisca and Quimbaya objects and published details of these analyses. He also put forward the idea that there were no major metallurgical differences between the two industries, as both used alloys of gold, silver and copper, even if in differing proportions. After stressing the metallurgical techniques which had been used in the past, such as casting using the lost wax method and the laminating and embossing methods, Rivet went on to argue that this technical knowledge had originally developed in Colombia, after which it had spread to other regions:

L'industrie colombienne d'or a débordé largement au-delà des frontières de l'actuelle République de Colombie, elle a été transportée dans les régions méridionales par les invasions de tribus appartenant à la famille linguistique Chibcha, et même s'est répandue, par la voie de l'emprunt, au-delà des limites que la linguistique permet de fixer actuellement à ses migrations. (.....) La vaste contrée comprenant la République de l'Equateur et de la cote péruvienne avait subi, soit directement, soit indirectement, l'influence de la technique métallurgique colombienne.⁴¹

The central focus of Rivet's research was not only metallurgy but also the relationships which developed during the pre-Hispanic era between American societies. Metallurgy was an indicator for Rivet, just as linguistic studies were, for formulating hypotheses about migrations in ancient America. He stated that the groups which spoke Chibcha might not have been the inventors of

⁴⁰ H. Arsandaux and P. Rivet, "L'Orfèvrerie du Chiriquí et de Colombie", p. 176.

⁴¹ P. Rivet, "L'Orfèvrerie Colombienne, Technique, Aire de Dispersion, Origine", p. 22.

metallurgical techniques. For Rivet, the role they played had been to perfect and divulge techniques whose essential elements had come from elsewhere. Rivet's hypothesis supposed a migration of Karib groups who in very ancient times could have invaded the Colombian highlands, and who introduced the Chibcha-speaking groups to gold-working techniques. Rivet based his views on linguistic evidence and on the common use of gold and copper alloys in Muisca and Quimbaya objects and in objects found by the Spaniards known as *karakoli*. These objects made from a gold and copper alloy were used by natives in the West Indies and also by those who inhabited the vast region north of the Amazon which included the Guayanas and Venezuela. Groups who spoke the Arawak language called them *guanin*, while the Karibs called them *karakoli*. Rivet thought that as there was no evidence of any Chibcha migrations to the Orinoco region or to the Guayanas, it had been Karib groups that had invaded the Colombian highlands. He backed his statement up by the use of the word *karakoli* in its form *karikuri*, which according to the Spanish chronicles was the term used by Colombian natives for gold objects.⁴² The great value of Rivet's studies was not so much his hypothesis of possible Karib migrations to the Colombian highlands as the fact that he opened up lines of research for later work on pre-Hispanic Colombian societies based on studies of metallurgical composition, and of the inter-relationships that metallurgy showed.

Some field work and research was made in Colombia by specialists from European and American museums in the first decades of the twentieth century.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 22 - 23.

Back in 1892, Colombia's delegate to the Americanists' Congress in Huelva, Spain, Ernesto Restrepo Tirado, had invited the Americanists assembled there to undertake archaeological research in Colombia where, according to Restrepo, "we are governed by the most protective laws imaginable for the foreigner."⁴³

This invitation was taken up by the ethnologist Theodore Koch-Grünberg, the archaeologist and ethnologist Konrad Theodor Preuss, who had links with the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin, the Swedish ethnologist Gustave Bolinder from the University of Upsala and the American archaeologist John Alden Mason from the Field Museum of Chicago. They all collected for the museums with which they had professional links. Koch-Grünberg was in Vaupés from 1903 to 1905, studying the ethnography, linguistics and art of native groups in the region. He explored the banks of the Orinoco from the Guayanas to Manaus between 1911 and 1913, and took large and valuable ethnographic collections back to the Berlin museum. He took many photographs, and included these in the works he published, which provide important information about the native groups he encountered.⁴⁴

Preuss, who was in Colombia from 1913 to 1919, researched in San Agustín and in the region inhabited by the Uitotos on the Orteguasa River. He later

⁴³ *Actas de la Novena Reunión Congreso Internacional de Americanistas*, 2 vols., (Madrid, 1894), vol. 1, p. 136.

⁴⁴ Koch-Grünberg published *Anfänge der Kunst im Urwald*, (The Beginnings of Jungle Art), (Berlin, 1905), *Südamerikanische Felszeichnungen* (South American Petroglyphs), (Berlin, 1907), and the story of his trip, *Zwei Jahre unter den Indianern Nordwest-Brasiliens*, 2 vols., (Two Años amongst the Indians of

visited the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, where he studied the Koguis, who Preuss called the “Kaggaba”. Gustave Bolinder undertook ethnographic work in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in 1914.⁴⁵ John Alden Mason sponsored by the Field Museum of Chicago, investigated Tairona remains in 1923 in the coastal region and on the spurs of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

5.3.1. The Colombian Collections at the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin

The *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin continued to acquire Colombian archaeological collections during the early years of the twentieth century. Apart from objects it was offered either as donations or for sale, the travels through Colombia and the field work done there by the ethnologist and archaeologist Konrad Theodor Preuss proved to be a fine source of objects for the Berlin museum, quite apart from the fact that they resulted in valuable scientific knowledge in the fields of archaeology and ethnology.

In 1903, the collector and museum patron Arthur Baessler donated two Quimbaya helmets which had come from a grave and had been found buried at a depth of five metres on Moravo farm near the town of Chinchiná, in what is today the Department of Caldas. One of them has repoussé of a female representation.(Figure 16).⁴⁶ The grave was discovered on a dig and in it was a

North West Brazil), (Berlin, 1909 - 1910), published in Colombia under the title *Dos Años entre los Indios*, 2 vols., (Bogotá, 1997).

⁴⁵ C. Uribe, “Un Antropólogo Sueco por Colombia: Gustave Bolinder”, in *Boletín Museo del Oro*, no. 18, Bogotá, (1987), pp. 3 - 8.

⁴⁶ Reg. VA 14617, MVB.

container holding emerald earrings, gold nuggets, rings, shells, various different stones, pieces of agate, spools and carnelian.⁴⁷

Baessler believed that the helmets were one of the most valuable and interesting finds from the pre-Hispanic era; for him, no more than five other similar ones existed, which were in the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid as part of the “Quimbaya Treasure.” He gave a meticulous description of the helmets made from “a sheet of 18 to 19 carat gold, between 1 and 2 millimetres thick”, he supposed that to make them, a central core in the shape of a ‘calotte’ had been cast, and that then they had been gradually hammered into the shape of a half sphere.⁴⁸ Baessler was surprised at the artistic skill of the creators, who had portrayed on one of the helmets a standing female human figure, “whose bust, navel and sexual organs are well defined”. However, what most caught Baessler’s attention was the dual nature of the representations, and the fact that feathers had been used which were similar to those found in ancient Peru.⁴⁹

In addition to giving this detailed description of the helmets, Baessler discussed the similarities and differences between the funeral attire of Quimbaya men and that of Roman emperors in the German region :

La tumba colombiana fue descubierta prácticamente al mismo tiempo que las tumbas imperiales en la catedral de Seller, posiblemente las

⁴⁷ A. Baessler, “Goldene Helme aus Kolumbien” in *Ethnologisches Notizblatt* Band II, Heft III, Berlin, (1901), p. 30.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

épocas de los dos entierros no estén tan lejos una de la otra; a los indios los enterraron con cascos de oro y muchos de los objetos más valiosos en las tumbas sencillas. Al poderoso emperador romano de la nación germana le colocaron en su sarcófago de piedra con una corona muy primitiva elaborada en cobre.⁵⁰

From 1903 onwards, when Eduard Seler set up the American section in the Berlin museum, it became more ambitious and selective about the American objects it acquired and those it received as donations.⁵¹ Thus it was that two collections of immense archaeological and aesthetic importance were acquired in 1903. The first of these consisted of Quimbaya objects that were purchased from the British firm Schloss Brothers, which regularly sold outstanding Quimbaya objects to both the Berlin museum and to the British Museum. This group of Quimbaya gold objects included the lid of a lime-flask or *poporo*, pins, necklace beads, nose ornaments and two *poporos*. The second, which came from the Muisca region and was offered by Ernest Pelke, included 34 Muisca gold objects, the most outstanding of which were anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations, and 18 pottery objects, the most notable of which were several anthropomorphic figures, offerings, and other vessels. One of the anthropomorphic objects is remarkable for its size of 25.4 cms.⁵²

A further two Muisca gold objects, a breastplate and a spear thrower, were acquired in 1904 from a Herr Luhrsen, and one year after that, the museum received two Quimbaya collections: Charles Blin sold a collection from Manizales consisting of a further 10 items of Quimbaya goldwork, including

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33. Translation by Dr. Manuela Fischer, MVB.

⁵¹ S. Westphal-Hellbusch, "Zur Geschichte des Museums", p. 176.

⁵² Reg. VA 14645, MVB.

nose ornaments, pendants, a breastplate and a necklace, while the firm Schloss Brothers sold an earring, a pendant, a breastplate and another Quimbaya *poporo* which is remarkable for the extraordinary beauty of its shape and the fineness of its finish.⁵³

In 1906, museum director Max Schmidt asked Herr Ernst Thalmann, founder of the *Amerikabank* in New York, for financial help so that new Muisca gold objects “of incalculable ethnological value” and of a type not represented in the museum could be acquired, which were offered by the commercial company Hesse, Newmann & Co. of Hamburg.⁵⁴ This firm had received the objects from “friends of theirs who had found them in graves near Bogotá.”⁵⁵ The offer was accompanied by photographs, measurements and weights of the objects, and this confirms that pre-Hispanic Colombian gold objects were circulating amongst international commercial companies as high value objects in the early years of the twentieth century. It was not just the firm Schloss Brothers from London or the Colombian firm of Enrique Cortés that sold to the British Museum at that time. Import companies in Hamburg were also trading in pre-Hispanic objects. Thalmann supported the museum’s request, but only six of the nine objects initially offered could be purchased, since “the other three had already been sold”. Worthy of note amongst the objects which the Berlin museum did

⁵³ Reg. VA 16997, MVB.

⁵⁴ Max Schmidt to Ernst Thalmann, Berlin, 12 October 1906, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 29, September, 1906 - May 1907, no. 1757/06, AMVB.

⁵⁵ Ernst Thalmann to Max Schmidt, Paris, 2 October 1906, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 29, no. 1757/06, AMVB.

acquire are Muisca breastplates of exquisite beauty.⁵⁶ A Dr. J. Magin donated six highly-decorated pottery vessels and three stone axes, for which Max Schmidt was extremely grateful for, it was one of the only Colombian archaeological collections donated to the Berlin museum during the first decades of the twentieth century.⁵⁷

The collection was boosted in 1908 by a further Quimbaya gold helmet, which was offered by a Mr. Rogers of Liverpool.⁵⁸ From what the Berlin museum was told by the seller, it had been found in “the native grave of a chieftain, a five-day horseback ride from the Marmato mines, in the Caldas region”, he had confessed that he was not a connoisseur, he was unable to put a price on the object.⁵⁹ Seler identified it as a “Quimbaya helmet”, referring to similar examples in the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid, and others which had been acquired thanks to a donation by Baessler.⁶⁰

In 1910, Oscar von Elsner, acting as a middleman, offered a large collection consisting of 46 gold objects. Seler asked him for information about the owner of the collection, advising that the Berlin museum would be interested in a small part of the offer, and suggesting to him that he show the rest to the British

⁵⁶ Max Schmidt to Ernst Thalmann, Berlin, 26 December 1906, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 29, no. 1757/06, AMVB.

⁵⁷ Dr. J. Magin to Max Schmidt, Berlin, 12 September 1906, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 29, no. 1605/06, AMVB.

⁵⁸ Reg. Va 29664, MVB.

⁵⁹ Rogers to the Director of the Museum für Völkerkunde, 9 May 1908, in *Acta Amerika* vol. 31, no. 931/08.

⁶⁰ The museum purchased the helmet for £ 80, in Eduard Seler to Rogers, 31 May, 1908, in *Ibid.*

Museum in London.⁶¹ Five Quimbaya goldwork objects eventually entered the German collection.

The cartographer Karl Theodor Stoepel travelled through Latin America in 1911, collecting geographical information for a map of South America. The Director of the *Museum für Völkerkunde* asked Stoepel to visit the San Agustín archaeological site and make an inventory and photographic record of it.⁶² Stoepel spent a month in the San Agustín Valley, taking photographs, making digs to expose statues so that paper moulds could be made of eighteen of them, which he took back to Germany. Stoepel found that the symbolic world represented by the statues and shrines lent itself to speculation :

The gigantic figures of mythical and other persons tell us something of the religious, public and domestic life of the people and of their artistic skill. The costume, the geometrical figures, the ornamental robes worn by the priests and the symbolical groups of snakes, monkeys, pumas, frogs and birds afford scope for a variety of speculations.⁶³

As we will see later, Konrad Theodor Preuss would later criticise Stoepel's unscientific approach after his own research work and digs at San Agustín in 1913, even though it had been Stoepel himself who had paved the way for Preuss' visit : Preuss had access before he left to the valuable photographic material which was the result of Stoepel's visit, and also to the moulds of the statues, which gave him his first impression of the magnitude and importance of

⁶¹ Oscar von Elsner to Eduard Seler, Berlin, 26 February 1910, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 33, no. 51/10.

⁶² K. T. Stoepel, "Archaeological Discoveries in Ecuador and Southern Colombia during 1911 and the Ancient Stone Monuments of San Agustín", in *International Congress of Americanists, Proceedings of the XVIII Session*, (London, 1913), p. 251.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

the site he was going to investigate. That same year, a Dr. H. Dolem offered the museum a “magnificent collection of Muisca gold, pottery and stone objects”, according to Preuss. The collection had been acquired by Ernest Pelke in Colombia. In an internal report to the museum director, Preuss said that the collection, which he recommended buying, included three absolutely outstanding goldwork objects, a blowgun, a stylised human figure with a head-dress in the form of a bird, and an exceptional zoomorphic figure. Preuss added that the collection included pottery vessels with anthropomorphic representations and a whole host of small vessels, cups and spindle whorls.⁶⁴ In 1912, Frau Elise Fromme offered a small collection of objects described as “ancient amulets” and “funeral decorations”, some gold frogs which her brother, who had lived in Colombia, had found in graves near the city of Palmira.⁶⁵

5.3.2. Konrad Theodor Preuss’ Research Journey throughout Colombia

Konrad Theodor Preuss, 1869 - 1931, had studied for his doctorate at Königsberg University, and was a teacher from 1895 to 1905. His interest in anthropology and archaeology first showed itself when he joined a German expedition to Nayarit, Mexico, from 1905 to 1907, where he did field work amongst the Coras and the Huicholes.⁶⁶ Preuss’s association with the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin began in 1900, when he worked there as a volunteer and scientific assistant, and in 1909 he was appointed curator of the American

⁶⁴ K. T. Preuss to the Director of the Museum für Völkerkunde, 6 November 1910, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 33, January 1910 – October 1910, no. 1880/10, AMVB.

⁶⁵ Elise Fromme, n.d. in *Acta Amerika*, no. 567/12, AMVB.

⁶⁶ K. T. Preuss, *Die Nayarit-Expedition*, (Leipzig, 1912).

section.⁶⁷ He travelled to Colombia as a museum officer in 1913, on a research trip with a scholarship for teachers.⁶⁸ Preuss was in Colombia from 1913 to 1919. What interested him most was San Agustín:

Mi primer objetivo lo constituían las gigantescas estatuas de piedra en las cercanías de San Agustín en el Alto Magdalena, los únicos testigos misteriosos de una cultura bárbara que están tan aislados en el continente como las gigantescas estatuas de la Isla de Pascua en el Océano Pacífico.⁶⁹

With his previous knowledge being confined to the map showing the location of the statues and shrines described by Agustín Codazzi in 1857 the work done by Carlos Cuervo Márquez in 1893 and the brief description given by Konrad Theodor Stoepel in 1911, Preuss's first reaction when he reached San Agustín was one of astonishment, not only at the size of the statues and shrines but also at the incomprehensible enigma that these archaeological remains represented :

Aquí donde los vestigios hablan por sí mismos, nos sentimos tocados por algo secreto, inaprensible, como si la humanidad quisiera mostrarnos un lado nuevo, hasta ahora desconocido.⁷⁰

The results of his work were published in Germany in 1929 and in Colombia in 1931.⁷¹ For Preuss, the essential basis of archaeological work was the

⁶⁷ S. Westphal-Hellbusch, "Zur Geschichte des Museums", p. 176.

⁶⁸ K. T. Preuss, "Bericht über meine archäologischen und ethnologischen Forschungreisen in Kolumbien", in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Berlin, nos. 52, 53, (1920 - 1921). K. T. Preuss, "Informe sobre mis viajes de Investigación Arqueológica y Etnológica en Colombia", manuscript.

⁶⁹ K. T. Preuss, "Informe sobre mis viajes de Investigación Arqueológica y Etnológica en Colombia", p. 5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

meticulous and detailed describing of all objects found, with accuracy and precision being the essential condition for scientific activities. He believed that scientific knowledge was something which was built up as the result of a process whereby information was gradually accumulated in a systematic manner.⁷² The cornerstone of his archaeological work would therefore be a meticulous description of the statues, shrines and monuments. However, the purpose of his work at San Agustín, was not restricted solely and exclusively to archaeological research and the detailed describing and cataloguing of the ancient remains, as it also included an ethnological study of the religious symbolism that was implicit in the monuments.⁷³

In this work, Preuss recalls all those people who visited and described San Agustín from a scientific viewpoint. He particularly praises Codazzi, and says that although he “made a few incorrect interpretations, he comes across as a conscientious and serious explorer.”⁷⁴ He also acknowledges the work done by Cuervo Márquez, and says that the great value of his descriptions lay in the fact that he located the places where Codazzi had made his findings, since between 1893 and 1913, when Preuss arrived at San Agustín, a large number of statues had been taken to the village square.

⁷¹ K. T. Preuss, *Monumentale vorgeschicht-liche Kunst. Ausgrabungen im Quellgebiet des Magdalena in Kolumbien und ihre Ausstrahlungen in Amerika* (Göttingen, 1929); *Arte Monumental Prehistórico. Excavaciones hechas en el Alto Magdalena y San Agustín, Colombia* (Bogotá, 1931).

⁷² K.T. Preuss, *Arte Monumental Prehistórico*, p. 1.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

After giving a detailed description of archaeological digs and describing what he found, statues, temples, shrines, and graves with monolithic sarcophagi, he devotes one chapter to what he calls “Ethnographic Considerations of the Finds”, in which he attempts to make inferences from the remains found about the society which produced them:

Un pueblo que creó tantas estatuas, en su gran mayoría labradas con esmero, un pueblo que trabajó tan intensamente en la construcción de templos y santuarios, transportando para tal fin inmensas piedras de lugares muy distantes, un pueblo que supo vaciar y pulimentar ingentes bloques de piedra para formar sarcófagos (.....) debió tener una población ser bastante densa.⁷⁵

He also put forward the idea that the religion of the society which produced the statues would have been closely linked to natural phenomena, and on the basis of this, he started to outline the search for elements that are common to figurative representations in other societies. He therefore suggested the need for further comparative studies, of artistic representations at San Agustín and those found in Peru and Ecuador :

La cultura de San Agustín se encuentra en el centro de un complejo extraño de representaciones del “segundo yo” que llega desde México, o mejor desde el Lago de Nicaragua en el Norte hasta Nazca y Cajamarca en el Sur, y hasta el río Trombetas en el Este.⁷⁶

He also stressed the aesthetic nature of the figures represented, and described with particular interest the ways that features such as mouths, teeth, eyes and limbs were portrayed, pointing to the association between abstraction and

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 140 - 141.

⁷⁶ K. T. Preuss, *Arte Monumental Prehistórico*, p. 215.

stylisation in the human form and the long processes of experimenting and trial and error in producing these artistic creations.⁷⁷

He noted that archaeological research at San Agustín presented a problem for the researcher, in that apart from the monumental nature of the statues and shrines and their deep mythological and religious meaning, virtually no everyday objects had been found, such as stone axes, mortars and cooking vessels, or remains of bones in graves and in the large, monolithic sarcophagi.⁷⁸

After his work at San Agustín between December 1913 and April 1914, and as a result of the questions that had arisen about the ritual and religious nature of the statues, Preuss was interested in investigating further the religion of a living native group, not so much because he wanted to get information about that society but rather so that he could “analyse religion and through this find out something of the religious ideas in the San Agustín monuments.”⁷⁹ This interest, together with the arrival of the rainy season at San Agustín which hindered archaeological digging, led him to head off towards the River Orteguzza and Upper River Cauca regions, where groups of Coreguaje, Tama and Uitoto Indians were to be found, and there he gathered myths and other religious material which might help him interpret the religious symbolism of San Agustín:

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁷⁸ K. T. Preuss, “La Importancia de Colombia para la Arqueología y Prehistoria de América”, in *Revista del Colegio del Rosario*, vol. XVI, Bogotá, (1930), p. 557.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Ahora se trataba de ahondar lo más pronto posible esta misteriosa región, única en Sudamérica, para ponerse oportunamente al amparo de una maloca indígena y allí en la religión de los que aún viven, encontrar quizá los puntos de referencia que ayudarán a la comprensión de las figuras y sarcófagos de piedra descubiertos aquí recientemente.⁸⁰

After his spell of work amongst the Uitotos, though he had planned to go on digs in Ecuador, Preuss went to research among the Kaggaba at the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, because this involved less expense and also because he preferred the scientific challenge of getting a better knowledge of a living society:

Los trabajos arqueológicos exigen mucho más dinero que los etnológicos y aunque se compre y se excave todo lo que sea necesario y se envíen pesadas colecciones a grandes distancias, no se reconoce tanto la actividad individual del investigador, como en la investigación entre los vivos, menos visible, pero más penetrante.⁸¹

Preuss set off for the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in September 1914, to research the language and religion of the Kaggaba.⁸² A few months before Preuss reached the Sierra, the Swedish ethnologist Gustaf Bolinder from the University of Upsala had offered the Berlin museum collections from the native groups there:

I have heard from a Spanish monk that one of the scientists of your museum is here in Colombia and that you are wanting collections from the Arhuaco Indians of the Sierra. Perhaps it would be possible for me to

⁸⁰ K. T. Preuss, *Religion und Mythologie der Uitoto*, 2 vols., (Gottingen, 1921 - 1923); K. T. Preuss, *Religión y Mitología de los Uitotos*, 2 vols., (Bogotá, 1994), vol, 1, p. 13.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

bring entire collections of the Arhuaco areas, Guajira, Chimilas and Motilones. (.....) I would like that this letter to be treated as confidential.⁸³

Eduard Seler confirmed to him from Berlin that Preuss was on his way to the Sierra, but added that the object of Preuss's work there was not to collect archaeological or ethnographic objects, but rather material about religion, mythology and folklore, and also to carry out linguistic studies. He added that it was difficult at the time to get funds for acquiring collections, because of the war.⁸⁴

Preuss stayed with the Kaggaba from December 1914 to April 1915, and the results of his research was published in 1926.⁸⁵ His work on the Kaggaba is important in Colombian ethnology, as the anthropologist Carlos Uribe states in the introduction to the first edition in Spanish :

Tenemos ante nosotros unos materiales de excelente calidad sobre los Kággaba, tanto desde el punto de vista etnográfico como desde el lingüístico, aún si los miramos con los patrones de valuación contemporáneos. (.....) Su oficio de etnógrafo (el de Preuss) se convertía, por tanto, en algo similar al oficio de un "explorador de almas". Y tal oficio lo obligaba de manera inexorable a tratar de cruzar los abismos que lo separaban de los Kággaba, unos "pequeños gigantes" del espíritu humano. Por ello, Preuss escogió el camino que más le acercaba al alma de estos Kággaba: el estudio de la lengua y religión de estos señoriales indígenas, que vivían en la Nevada como "monumentos naturales de otros tiempos."⁸⁶

⁸³ Gustaf Bolinder to Director of the Museum für Völkerkunde, Santa Marta, 1 June 1914, in *Acta Amerika*, vol. 38, February 1914 - December 1917, no. 930/14. AMVB.

⁸⁴ Eduard Seler to Gustaf Bolinder, Berlin, 25 August 1914, in *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ K. T. Preuss, *Forschungreise zu den Kággaba. Beobachtungen, Textaufnahmen und Sprachliche Studien bei einem Indianerstamme in Kolumbien, Südamerika*, (Wein, 1926).

⁸⁶ C. Uribe, "Konrad Theodor Preuss y la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta", Introduction to K. T. Preuss, *Visita a los Indígenas Kággaba de la Sierra Nevada*, (Bogotá, 1992), p. 11.

At the end of his seven-year visit to Colombia, he took archaeological and ethnographic collections back to Berlin with him, including fourteen original statues from San Agustín and moulds of the larger statues. The process of making the moulds, which Preuss looked on as a means of recording the site he had researched and making it known in Germany, was complex. The work involved in taking this evidence back to the Berlin museum 'library' was extremely hard, as he himself was to say :

Se requirió excavar estatuas enterradas y ponerlas de pie y a veces costaba trabajo de días el mover una sola de estas planchas, quitarles toda la tierra o enderezar alguna figura. Las lluvias frecuentes impedían secar al sol los moldes tomados en papel.⁸⁷

The translators of his book *Arte Monumental Prehistórico* say in a footnote that it was inexplicable that the government should have allowed these objects to be taken out of the country, and that “anywhere else in the world, not only would the exporting of the originals have been banned, something would also have been demanded in exchange for copying the moulds.”⁸⁸

Both the *corregidor* of San Agustín and the Academy of History protested at the original statues being allowed to leave the country. In a note that the former sent to National Museum Director and Academy member Ernesto Restrepo Tirado, he referred to Preuss's activities and asked the government to declare the San Agustín statues as property of the nation :

⁸⁷ K. T. Preuss, “Las Estatuas de Piedra de San Agustín” in *BHA*, no. 137, Bogotá, (January, 1919), p. 276.

De febrero a mayo del año pasado, estuvo en este corregimiento el profesor Dr. Teodoro Preuss fotografiando y sacando moldes en papel de todas las estatuas que encontró, haciendo excavaciones para sacar las que estaban enterradas. Las figuras pequeñas que encontró se las llevó con licencia del Administrador de la Hacienda de Laboyos. Otras las sacó de la Hacienda del Usno, dos de unas ocho arrobas cada uno y otras figuras pequeñas. No tengo conocimiento con permiso de quien sacaría estas estatuas. Aquí en este corregimiento los dueños del terreno dicen ser dueños de las estatuas que se encuentran en sus predios y convendría que el gobierno declarara ser dueño de ellas y ordenar recogerlas en la cabecera del corregimiento haciendo un edificio para guardarlas.⁸⁹

Archaeological heritage legislation in Colombia until 1918 did not place any restriction whatever on private individuals appropriating archaeological objects or monuments. Under Law 48 of that year, pre-Hispanic monuments were declared to “belong to the material of the history of the *patria*”, and the destruction, repairing, decorating or setting aside of these monuments was not allowed.⁹⁰ But in practice, everything went on exactly as it had before this law was issued, and when Preuss left Colombia in 1919 and despite the reports to the Academy of History, nobody hindered him leaving or prevented the original statues from being sent to Germany.

It was not until 1920 that it was forbidden by law to take archaeological objects out of Colombia, including precious metals, without authorisation from the government. The law entrusted the Colombian Academy of History with the task of safeguarding public buildings and monuments, fortresses, paintings, sculptures and ornaments from the colonial era, pre-Columbian monuments and

⁸⁸ K. T. Preuss, *Arte Monumental Prehistórico*, p. 23.

⁸⁹ José María Burbano to Ernesto Restrepo Tirado, *Corregiduría* de San Agustín, Pitalito, 1 September 1915, vol.3, AMNC.

any objects and documents which might be of interest to history, ethnography, folklore and the fine arts :

Se prohíbe sacar del país objetos de arte o cualesquiera otros que a juicio de las expresadas academias o Cuerpos Consultivos sean de importancia tradicional o histórica, ya sean dichos objetos de propiedad pública o privada.⁹¹

When he returned to Germany, Preuss organised an exhibition in 1923 with the original statues and the plaster casts of the large ones, in a courtyard of the old Berlin Museum of Arts. This exhibition was a great success, which surprised even Preuss :

Un éxito inesperado me sorprendió. Más allá de las fronteras aparecieron en distintos periódicos y revistas reproducciones de objetos artísticos que traje de tierra desconocida. Da la impresión que mis modestos yesos y originales no pueden darse mejor idea que por el hecho de que hubo quien los pusiera al mismo nivel de los tesoros de Tut-Anch-Amon, entonces en boca de todo el mundo.⁹²

In 1930, one year before his book about San Agustín was published in Colombia, an article that had been written by Preuss appeared in the Rosario College journal in Bogotá, underlining how important Colombia was in the archaeology and prehistory of America because of its geographical position, and pointing to the importance of San Agustín :

⁹⁰ Law 48 of 1918, in *Acto Legislativo y Leyes Expedidas por el Congreso Nacional en su legislatura del año 1918*, (Bogotá, 1919), p. 98.

⁹¹ Law 47 of 1920, in *Leyes Expedidas por el Congreso Nacional en su legislatura de 1920*, (Bogotá, 1940), p. 55.

⁹² K. T. Preuss, *Arte Monumental Prehistórico*, p. 23.

San Agustín constituye el punto central de una capa cultural profunda que en tiempo antiguo se extendió sobre vastas regiones. (.....) Colombia, de este modo, ha sido un centro, tanto por lo que toca a las técnicas del trabajo del oro, como por lo que se refiere a las ideas religiosas que se reflejan en las obras plásticas.⁹³

He found Colombian archaeology in a really deplorable state at the time, since “in both the Cauca Valley and in the Muisca region, it is entirely in the hands of gold seekers, or *guaqueros*.”⁹⁴

Two years after Preuss left Colombia in 1919, the historian Eduardo Posada, a prominent member of the Academy of History who had also been a member of the *Société des Americanistes*, explained the state of Colombian archaeology in a lecture in Paris :

En nuestro país, hay un campo inmenso para el estudio de cuestiones americanistas, y en Europa es generalmente desconocido. Fuera de un grupo de sabios que han penetrado en él y que ha sabido cultivarlo, se ignora nuestra historia. (.....) No se tienen sino escasas ideas de lo que son nuestros tesoros arqueológicos. (.....) Las razas aborígenes dejaron bastantes rastros de su vida pero en la lucha de la conquista se perdieron muchos de ellos. (.....) Quedaron, sin embargo, como testimonio de nuestra prehistoria magníficos objetos.⁹⁵

He stressed three types of expression: native inscriptions on petroglyphs, the statues of San Agustín, and the pottery and goldwork objects that were to be found both abroad and in the National Museum in Bogotá and in the collection of Leocadio María Arango in Medellín :

⁹³ K. T. Preuss, “ La importancia de Colombia para la Arqueología y la Prehistoria de América“, p. 563.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 555.

⁹⁵ E. Posada, “Arqueología Colombiana”, *BHA*, Año XIV no. 162, Bogotá, (April,1923), pp. 365 - 366.

Los museos europeos guardan muchos de ellos, traídos de Colombia, y en el de Bogotá existe una profusa e interesante colección. (.....) Posee Medellín el del señor Leocadio María Arango, una de las mejores colecciones privadas que se han hecho en Sur América de utensilios de los aborígenes y hay allí fecundo campo para las gentes exhumadoras del pasado.⁹⁶

He repeated previous invitations to members of the Society of Americanists to research in Colombia :

Nuestras bibliotecas, nuestros archivos, nuestros museos, nuestras academias, nuestros liceos están abiertos para toda noble aspiración. Allí se os prestará benévola colaboración para vuestras tareas y a todo sabio que tocara a sus puertas se le ayudará a sus obras y respetados serán sus trabajos.⁹⁷

5.4. The British Museum Collections during the Twentieth Century

Back in 1896, when Augustus Wollaston Franks retired from the British Museum, Charles Hercules Read became Keeper of the Department of British Antiquities, a post that he held until 1921. In 1880 Read had begun to work with Franks as an assistant in charge of the classification of the Christy collection, of which he was also a trustee.⁹⁸ In 1897 he had published a note about the technique of series used in Muisca goldwork :

The methods in use by primitive peoples in working metals are always of interest.(...) I call attention on an illustration of the way in which the repoussé gold figures are made so common in the Republic of Colombia. (...) They are found in rows upon the larger gold ornaments. (...) The

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ O. M. Dalton, "Sir Hercules Read, (1857 - 1929)" in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. XV, London, (1930), p. xv.

Christy collection in the British Museum possesses several that might almost have been made from this very model.⁹⁹

Read was a scholar, an archaeologist and an antiquarian; he continued Franks's tradition of keeping a close relationship between the Museum and other scientific organizations. He was a member of the Anthropological Institute from 1873, and in 1899 was elected President of the Section H, Anthropology of the British Association.¹⁰⁰ Of the Society of Antiquaries which undertook many important excavations in Great Britain during the period, he was Secretary from 1899 to 1901, and President from 1908 to 1914.

Read gave wide diffusion to the idea that archaeology should be no diversion for the leisured, but a study using the methods of science. His influence was important in British archaeology during the first two decades of the twentieth century.¹⁰¹ In 1917 he was elected President of the Royal Anthropological Institute; he remained President until 1919.¹⁰²

In 1902, Thomas Athol Joyce was appointed as Assistant in charge of the ethnographical collections.¹⁰³ During his early years at the Museum, he reorganized the American collections and prepared valuable publications to

⁹⁹ C. H. Read, "Aboriginal Goldsmith's work in Colombia" in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. XXVI, London, (1897) p. 294.

¹⁰⁰ British Museum, *Sir Charles Hercules Read, A tribute on his retirement from the British Museum 1896 - 1921*, (London, 1922), p. ii.

¹⁰¹ O. M. Dalton, "Sir Hercules Read (1857 - 1929)", p. 11.

¹⁰² British Museum, *Sir Charles Hercules Read, A tribute on his retirement from the British Museum, 1896 - 1921*, p. ii.

¹⁰³ British Museum Standing Committee, 12 July 1902, p. 1708.

make the collections known to a wider public.¹⁰⁴ In 1921, Joyce was appointed as Deputy Keeper of the Department where he remained until his retirement in 1938.¹⁰⁵

During the twentieth century, the British Museum continued to acquire Colombian objects by purchases from firms with business with Colombia, and also from private individuals as in the nineteenth century.

In 1900, a Calima gold breast plate with an anthropomorphic representation, still one of the finest object in the collection, was purchased from the firm Rollin and Feuarent (Figure 17).¹⁰⁶ In the same year, Sr. Guillermo Calderón donated a zoomorphic representation made of gold.¹⁰⁷ Two years later, a gold human figure was bought from a Mrs. Sawyer.¹⁰⁸ In 1902, the first Tairona goldwork collection was acquired by the British Museum, one item of which is described as “small figure of copper, cast on a core plated with gold, wearing a flat cap with a drooping plume, on either side it has a snout as face and two small arms embossed on each side.”¹⁰⁹ Three zoomorphic figures representing frogs and three hollow objects of varied shape from “tombs of the Sierra

¹⁰⁴ Joyce published in 1912 the first guides to the Precolumbian collections of the British Museum; *A Short guide to the American Antiquities*, (Oxford, 1912), and *South American Archaeology*, (London, 1912). Joyce also contributed to the preparation of the *Handbook to the Ethnographical Collections*, (Oxford, 1910), (Oxford, 1925).

¹⁰⁵ British Museum Standing Committee, 8 October, 1921, p. 3856.

¹⁰⁶ Reg. Ethno. 1900 5-17. 1, British Museum. The price of acquisition was £115, British Museum Standing Committee, 12 May 1900, p. 1174.

¹⁰⁷ Reg. Am 1900.913.1. - British Museum.

¹⁰⁸ The British Museum paid £ 4 for a “base gold figure from a grave in Colombia”. British Museum Standing Committee, 14 June 1902, p. 1693.

¹⁰⁹ Reg. Am 1902.0904.2. - British Museum.

Nevada de Santa Marta” were donated by the Friends of the British Museum.¹¹⁰ The Friends of the British Museum were at that time a group of anonymous donors who had placed in Read’s hands a sum of money to be used in acquiring desirable objects for the collections.¹¹¹ In 1904, a group of 35 gold pins and ornaments with representations of human figures, were purchased from Enrique Cortés and Company.¹¹² Three years later, a gold ornament with “flute players, cast and bells” was bought from the antiquities dealers Spink and Sons.¹¹³ In 1909, a mask, a vase, a bowl, a vessel with a masculine representation and an urn from Tolima, four gold nose rings and three bracelets, were acquired as part of the Greenwell collection.¹¹⁴ Among the most important collections acquired during this period was a lot bought by the museum in 1910 of 17 Quimbaya objects. It included an embossed gold helmet raised from sheet tumbaga with enriched surfaces. The lot, purchased from Johnson Matthey and Company, included also a mask with nose and ear ornaments, vases, whistles, pendants and chisels. These came from the Quindio region. As Warwick Bray states, this is close to Filandia where the Treasure of the Quimbayas was found in 1890; as he notes, “the helmet represents the Quimbaya style in its most classical form.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Reg. Am 1902.0904.1-9 - British Museum.

¹¹¹ Standing Committee of the British Museum, 8 June 1901, p. 1448. In 1904, the Friends of the British Museum merged in the “National Art Collections Fund” and continued to make donations to the museum through that body. Standing Committee of the British Museum, 9 January 1904, p. 1897.

¹¹² The British Museum paid £47 to Messrs E. Cortés & Co. for “Ancient gold ornaments from Colombia”. British Museum Standing Committee, 9 July 1904, p. 1973. This was a prominent Colombian commercial house in London. Among other things, it was the agent for Colombian government purchases for the Casa de la Moneda.

¹¹³ Reg. Am 1907.0618.1 - British Museum.

¹¹⁴ J. Pieport Morgan had acquired the Greenwell Collection of Prehistoric implements and weapons from different parts of the world. Morgan sold it for £10.000 to the Museum in 1908. British Museum Standing Committee, 10 October 1908, p. 2513.

¹¹⁵ W. Bray, *The Gold of El Dorado*, (London, 1978), p. 189.

In 1897, a small company was formed in Bogotá to try once again to drain Lake Guatavita, but after vain attempts it had to desist. A British company, “Contractors Limited” was formed in 1900 to take over the rights of the Colombian company, and the lake was successfully drained dry in 1904.¹¹⁶

The results were described as follows:

Great difficulties have been encountered in dealing with the mud and sand at the bottom (...) Work, although slowly, has been going steadily all the time. A depth of 30 feet has been obtained in the centre and along the ditch to the tunnel, through which all the mud is being washed. (...) The bottom, perfectly flat when first drained, is now cup shaped. Many beautiful gold ornaments have been found, particularly during the last two months, together with quite a collection of emeralds, strings and strings of beads, and a lot of quaint old pottery.¹¹⁷

In 1911, Louis C. G. Clarke donated to the Museum Muisca pottery figurines, head figurines, vases, tripod vessels, a zoomorphic shaped vessel, tetrapod vessels, all obtained from Lake Guatavita and in 1918 a gold pendant. Perhaps these were recovered by Contractors Ltd.¹¹⁸

During the period between 1914 and 1940, the Museum continued its acquisition of Colombian archaeological collections as can be seen in Table 1.

Among these collections, one was the result of fieldwork by James Hornell and the Scientific Expeditionary Research Association, on Gorgona Island during

¹¹⁶ *Description and details of articles recovered from the Sacred Lake of Guatavita, Republic of Colombia, South America, through the operations of Contractors, Ltd.*, (London, 1912), p. 5.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

two visits in 1924. Hornell described a site of prehistoric settlement with a culture which belonged “to the Neolithic stage” and whose “material culture appears to be considerable and certainly markedly greater than that of the mainland natives of Colombia and Panama of the present day”. He described with admiration “their stone axes and chisels beautifully shaped and ground, the presence of stone spindle–whorls “ and pottery “ which exhibits unmistakable skill” and “the use of decorated pottery show a growing artistic sense.”¹¹⁹

TABLE 1
COLOMBIAN GOLDWORK AND POTTERY COLLECTIONS 1914–1940¹²⁰

Acq. Year	Description	Collection	Material
1914	VESSEL	ERNEST DUTCHMAN	POTTERY
1915	VESSELS, STAMPS	A. W. F. FULLER	POTTERY
1916	ZOOMORPHIC AND ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGURINES	DR. SPURRELL	POTTERY
1918	QUIMBAYA PENDANT	LOUIS CLARKE	GOLDWORK
1921	QUIMBAYA ANTHROPOMORPHIC SHAPED VASE	G. F. ENGLAND	POTTERY
1922	QUIMBAYA ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGURES, VASES AND VESSELS	M. N. ARCE	POTTERY
1922	MUISCA OBJECTS	SINCLAIR	GOLDWORK
1923	VASE	W. C. COPPERTHWAITTE	POTTERY
1925	26 POT-SHERDS AND SPINDLE WHORL FROM GORGONA ISLAND	JAMES HORNELL, SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITIONARY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION	POTTERY
1926	MASK	G. BATESON	POTTERY
1926	FISHING HOOK FROM TUMACO	JAMES BEST	GOLDWORK

¹¹⁸ Clarke was a member of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland since 1913, and during the first decades of the century made various donations of Colombian pieces to the Museum.

¹¹⁹ J. Hornell, “The Archaeology of Gorgona Island, South America, St. George Expedition to the South Seas, 1924” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, London, vol. LVI, (1926), p. 427.

¹²⁰ Source : British Museum American Accession Books

1928	QUIMBAYA MALE FIGURINE AND BELL	A. NAYLOR	GOLDWORK
1928	ANTHROPOMOPHIC FIGURE	H. G. BEASLEY	GOLDWORK
1928	DISCS, ORNAMENTS AND FIGURINE	T. B. CLARKE THORNHILL	GOLDWORK
1929	VESSEL AND SHERDS	A. E. WADE	POTTERY
1931	ANTHROPOMOPHIC AND ZOOMORPHIC FIGURINES	BLACKMORE MUSEUM	GOLDWORK
1931	DISCS, ZOOMORPHIC AND SPIRAL ORNAMENTS	A. C. MADAN	GOLDWORK
1931	QUIMBAYA BOWL	HENRY S. WELLCOME	POTTERY
1932	VASES, ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGURES, CYLINDERS	STUART SANKEY	POTTERY
1936	VESSELS, BOWLS, JARS, CYLINDER STAMPS	G. P .L. MILES	POTTERY
1936	QUIMBAYA VASES, URNS, BOWLS, CYLINDER STAMPS	SALVADOR SAPAG	POTTERY
1937	MUISCA PENDANTS	WALLIS BARNES	GOLDWORK
1938	QUIMBAYA BOWL	S. R. K. GLANVILLE	POTTERY
1938	CAUCA CAST GOLD PECTORAL	NATIONAL ART COLLECTIONS FUND	GOLDWORK
1940	RING	FREDERIC BERNAL	GOLDWORK
1940	QUIMBAYA PEDESTAL WITH 6 FACES AND LIME- FLASK OF SEATED FEMALE	LADY DAVIES	GOLDWORK

Among the most outstanding objects acquired during the period were a cast gold Cauca pectoral donated in 1938 by the National Art Collections Fund. (Figure 18).¹²¹ Also, a Quimbaya gold pedestal with six faces around the top, and a cast gold lime-flask of a seated Quimbaya female was purchased in 1940 through the National Art Collection Fund, from Lady Davies.(Figure 19).¹²²

During the first four decades of the twentieth century, there were certain shifts in the acquisition of Colombian collections in comparison to the previous century. First, collections of Tairona objects arrived in the Museum for the first time; second, even though during the period. British archaeology developed

¹²¹ Reg. Am1938.0706.1 - British Museum.

¹²² Reg. Am1940.09.1. Figure 19 is Reg. Ethno 1940. Am 11-2, British Museum.

rapidly as an academic discipline, there was not British archaeological fieldwork in Colombia, a contrast with European and North American archaeological missions of exploration.

In 1920, the first exhibit of ancient American objects to have a predominantly aesthetic tenor was organized in London by a Committee formed by Joyce and Read of the British Museum, Henry Balfour, Keeper of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Louis C.G. Clarke, Alfred P. Maudslay and O. C. Raphael. It was held at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in London. The catalogue insisted on "autochthonous art viewed as art", and also maintained that art was not subject to evolution :

Art is universally one only in intention; its methods, its canons, and its means of expression (...) are entirely governed by local conditions and are the outcome of the inherent genius of the country.¹²³

Colombia was represented by Quimbaya and Muisca objects. Joyce who wrote in the introduction to the catalogue :

In Colombia, (...) the only manifestations of art which call for notice occurred on the high plateau land around Bogotá. Here, certain tribes, notably the Quimbaya and Chibcha, manufactured pottery of some merit, but the most outstanding feature of the art of this district is the goldwork of the former.¹²⁴

Of the six Colombian objects which were displayed, four were from the "Quimbaya people" : the representation of an eagle with elaborated crest lent by Mr. H. G. Beasley; a pin, with the head formed by a hawk-bell and a gold ornament in the form of a human figure with two heads, both lent by the Liverpool Public

¹²³ Burlington Fine Arts Club, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Objects of Indigenous American Art*, (London, 1920), p. vii.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xx.

Museums; a nose ornament lent by C. L. Fenton.¹²⁵ The other two objects were Muisca : a gold pin surmounted by the figure of a bird lent by Mrs. Murray Guthrie and a gold pin with spatulate head surmounted by the figures of two birds, lent by Lord Murray of Elibank.¹²⁶

Perhaps the recognition of the Chibcha was related to three 1912 publications. The first was Sir Clements Markham's *Conquest of New Granada* written with the clear purpose of "giving some knowledge about the civilization of the Chibchas", as William Prescott had done in the 1840's with the Aztecs of Mexico and Incas of Peru :

Some knowledge of the civilisation of the Aztecs and Incas as of the Conquests of Mexico and Peru as told by Prescott with the stories of Cortés and Pizarro is part of a liberal education. But the civilisation of the Chibchas and the story of the Conquest of New Granada by Quesada has found no Prescott and is unknown to our English literature.¹²⁷

The Chibchas were described by Markham as "a rising civilization which has received less notice than it deserved", and whose "religion and traditions and civil government are worthy of record and of study because they reflect the genius of a nation on its own way to achievement."¹²⁸

Secondly, Joyce, assistant in the Department of British Antiquities and Ethnography since 1902, wrote for the British Museum *A Short Guide to American Antiquities*. On Colombia he concluded that "the most interesting section of the

¹²⁵ In 1928, Beasley donated a cast gold Quimbaya figurine to the British Museum, British Museum Standing Committee, 8 December 1928.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 46, 49. Lord Murray had led a trade mission to Colombia after the First World War.

¹²⁷ C. Markham, *The Conquest of New Granada*, (London, 1912), p. vii.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 20.

population is the small group of tribes collectively known as Chibcha."¹²⁹ He considered that the Quimbaya "were less advanced politically than the Chibcha, but better craftsmen."¹³⁰ Joyce's approach to Colombian objects was predominantly descriptive:

Fine specimens of the hammered work of the Quimbaya in the shape of head-pieces and breast plates. The characteristic gold work of the Chibcha consists of small flat figures with details apparently in soldered wire; their appearance, however, is deceptive, since in many, if not all cases they were cast solid.¹³¹

In relation to Colombian pre-Hispanic objects, it is evident that the Muisca and the Quimbaya societies were for British archaeologists, connoisseurs and aesthetes the near total representation of the ancient Colombian cultures. Even though the British Museum had possessed a San Agustin statue since 1899, and a group of Tairona gold objects, they were not mentioned in any of Joyce's publications, nor were they included in any of the British Museum's guides.

5.5. John Alden Mason and the Tairona Culture

American archaeologist John Alden Mason had the following to say at a lecture to the 21st Americanists' Conference in 1924:

Scientific knowledge of Colombian archaeology to date is practically restricted to the region of the Chibchas, who occupied the high plateau in the region of Bogotá in southern Colombia, and it has generally been

¹²⁹ British Museum, *A Short Guide to the American Antiquities in the British Museum*, (Oxford, 1912), p. 33.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

assumed that this Chibcha culture represented the culmination of native civilization of Colombia.¹³²

The Field Museum of Natural History of Chicago had sent him in 1922 to Santa Marta and the foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta to undertake archaeological research into the Taironas.¹³³ Mason's interest had been aroused when he saw Tairona artefacts that had been acquired by museums in North America, notably small collections which were preserved at the American Museum of Natural History in New York and the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburg.¹³⁴ These objects clearly showed Mason that the society which had produced them was comparable with Muisca society. The large numbers of carnelian and agate bead of various colours and the stone axes held a particular fascination for him. The other feature that attracted him was the geographical location and the biological and cultural diversity of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, where the Taironas lived :

The Tairona indians occupied the lower sections of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, in the state of Magdalena in northern Colombia. This is a high and rugged mountain mass, absolutely isolated from the adjacent Andes, and rises from the shores of the Caribbean Sea abruptly to heights of eternal snow. It is a region, therefore, of great environmental diversity, ranging within a space of some 40 kilometres, from arid, torrid, cactus-covered sea-coast, through humid, temperate, dense forests to chill, grassy "páramos" and rocky, snow-clad peaks, thus presenting the diversified elements necessary for the development of high culture.¹³⁵

¹³² J. A. Mason, "Archaeological Researches in the Region of Santa Marta" in *Compte-Rendu de la XXI Session, Congrès International des Américanistes tenue à Goteborg en 1924*, (Goteborg, 1925), p. 159.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ J. A. Mason, *Archaeology of Santa Marta, Colombia, The Tairona Culture, Part I, Report on Fieldwork*, (Chicago, 1931), p. 11.

¹³⁵ J. A. Mason, "Archaeological Researches in the Region of Santa Marta", p. 160.

From May to December 1922, Mason carried out exploration work and digs in the coastal bays, on foothill sites, on high mountain sites, and in the Dibulla and Riohacha areas in Guajira. He found ruins of ancient settlements, defined their characteristic features, and did some digging at several of them. He stressed the archaeological importance of Gairaca, Nahuange, Guachaquita and Palmarito bays, where he found signs of habitation and the remains of wells, canals and irrigation ditches. He considered that these had been seasonal sites, used as bases for fishing, and privileged places for cemeteries because of their dry climate and the extreme aridity of the soil.¹³⁶

Mason was surprised at the existence of many villages of different sizes in the foothills, which were connected by excellently-built roads, frequently made by cutting and filling through the steep hill slopes and terraces, with retaining walls. The types of structure on the terraces were decisive factors in the dividing of Tairona sites into three categories that was proposed by Mason:

In one, the flat terrace with retaining walls alone indicated the site. In the second type, the actual size was marked by a circle of admirable stone work, consisting generally of large, flat, thin stone slabs, carefully and perfectly cut into a perfect circular ring. (.....). The third type of site was surrounded by a circle of upright, rude, natural stone slabs.¹³⁷

It was the remains of the Tairona city of Pueblito that most caught Mason's attention, because it had been the biggest city, one where he found "paved roads, bridges, walls, covered drains, staircases, circular sites and stone-lined

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ J. A. Mason, "Archaeological Researches in the Region of Santa Marta", p. 162.

graves.”¹³⁸ Mason excavated some of the central graves at Pueblito, and he described these meticulously and drew a detailed plan of the remains of canals and circular housing platforms.¹³⁹

A methodological precision can be seen in the way Mason presented data giving the results of his work, which was the first systematic research to be done into the remains of the ancient Taironas. Nevertheless, as he himself was to state in 1936, the digging work focussed on what he called “rich sites”, graves, ceremonial sites and homes which were not at a great depth.¹⁴⁰ Mason added that because it had been impossible to undertake stratigraphic digs, this had prevented him from presenting time sequences for the Tairona culture. After giving a traveller’s account of the background to his stay and telling a few anecdotes about it, he devotes the first volume of his work, which was published in 1931, to a detailed description, with photographs, of the “localities investigated”, which he divides into four groups, namely coast sites, foothill sites, high mountain sites and distant coast sites.¹⁴¹ He later published separate reports on Objects of Stone, Shell, Bone and Metal in 1936 and three years later of pottery objects in which he gave a detailed description, together with

¹³⁸ J. A. Mason, *Archaeology of Santa Marta, Colombia, The Tairona Culture*, p. 18.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61 - 113.

¹⁴⁰ J. A. Mason, *Archaeology of Santa Marta, Colombia, The Tairona Culture, Part II, Section II Objects of Pottery*, (Chicago, 1939), p. 285.

¹⁴¹ The sites explored by Mason which he called “Coast Sites” were Ciénaga, Gaira, Durcino, Santa Marta, San Pedro Alejandrino, Taganga, Concha, Chenque, Gairaca, Nahuange, Cinto, Guacaquita, Palmarito, Cabo, Arrecife and Cañaveral. The “Foothill Sites” he described were Bonda, Mandigua, Sabana de Limón, Terán, Curinquita, Matagiro, Los Cóngolos, Donama, Nahuange Ariba, Pueblito and Pueblo Bernardo, while the “High Mountain Sites” were Vista Nieve, Rio Frio Arriba, Sierra Nevada, San Miguel, Pueblo Viejo and Bongá. Finally, what he called “Distant Coast Sites” were Dibulla and Riohacha, in Guajira. J. A. Mason, *Archaeology of Santa Marta, Colombia, The Tairona Culture*, p. 18.

drawings and photographs.¹⁴² This volume was prepared on the basis of the material taken to the Field Museum of Chicago and a study of Tairona pottery objects that were to be found in 1936 in various American museums, the Museum of the American Indian in New York, the American Museum of Natural History, the University Museum in Philadelphia, and the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh.¹⁴³

Most of the material that Mason excavated and which was destined for the Field Museum of Chicago came from Pueblito, Gairaca and Nahuange. However, in November 1922, the Ministry of Public Works told the Academy of History that reviews of the archaeological remains discovered by the expedition led by Mason had appeared in several American newspapers.¹⁴⁴ A few months later, the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the Academy its opinion about this archaeological collection leaving Colombia.¹⁴⁵ At the request of the Academy, Mason sent a letter about the archaeological objects he had collected and which he was intending to take to the Chicago Museum, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the Academy for a further opinion as to whether the government should authorise the objects to leave the country.¹⁴⁶ The Academy of History's view was that the government should enforce Law 47 of 1920,

¹⁴² J. A. Mason, *Archaeology of Santa Marta, Colombia, The Tairona Culture, Part II, Section I, Objects of Stone, Shell, Bone and Metal*, (Chicago, 1936), and J. A. Mason, *Archaeology of Santa Marta, Colombia, The Tairona Culture, Part II, Section II, Objects of Pottery*, (Chicago, 1939).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

¹⁴⁴ Minutes of the Academy of History, 15 November 1922, in *BHA*, Año XIV, no. 160, Bogotá, (December, 1922), p. 227.

¹⁴⁵ Minutes of the Academy of History, 1 February 1923, in *BHA*, Año XIV no. 161, Bogotá, (February, 1923), p. 268.

¹⁴⁶ Minutes of the Academy of History, 15 June 1923, in *BHA*, Año XIV no. 161, Bogotá, (February, 1923),

which banned the exporting of archaeological objects and monuments from Colombia.¹⁴⁷ As a result, the Academy of History, as consultative body for the government, gave the Ministry of Foreign Affairs its verdict on 1 March 1923 :

Los objetos arqueológicos hallados cerca de Santa Marta no deben salir del país por ser utilizables para el estudio de nuestra historia.¹⁴⁸

However, and as Mason himself noted, the collections duly left for Chicago on the basis of a decision made by the Ministry of Public Instruction :

I waited in Santa Marta (...) endeavouring to obtain some official action as to the disposition of the interdicted collection and then returned to Chicago, leaving the collection in storage in Santa Marta. However, shortly after my return, the Colombian Minister of Public Instruction, overruling the decision of the National Academy of History, decreed that the collection might be exported.¹⁴⁹

This episode shows that despite the fact that legislation existed, and despite the recommendation by the Academy of History that archaeological objects should not be allowed to leave the country only certain intellectual groups and a few members of the government were aware that the country's archaeological heritage should be preserved.

After the lack of coordination between Ministers about letting the Tairona archaeological objects leave the country for the Field Museum of Chicago under the 1920 law, another proposal in 1926 regarding a request by a foreign

p. 388.

¹⁴⁷ Minutes of the Academy of History, 6 July 1923, in *BHA*, Año XIV no. 161, Bogotá, (February, 1923), p. 389.

¹⁴⁸ Minute dated 1 March 1923, in *BHA*, Año XIV no. 162, Bogotá, (April, 1923), p. 362.

museum led to ambiguity among government officials. The Director of the National Museum, the historian and archaeologist Gerardo Arrubla received a letter from José Medina, Director of the Colombian Government Bureau of Information and Trade Development in London saying that Thomas Athol Joyce from the British Museum was interested in undertaking archaeological digs in Colombia. It can be seen from this letter that for Medina it was important that the government should back and promote archaeological research, as a mechanism for creating a positive impression of Colombia abroad :

Hace unos días tuve ocasión de relacionarme con el Capitán T. A. Joyce, O.B.E., arqueólogo del Museo Británico (.....). El Capitán Joyce como arqueólogo y estudioso muy notable, se halla interesado naturalmente en hacer algunos estudios sobre la materia en Colombia. El Capitán Joyce iría por cuenta del Museo Británico (.....). Más para que el Museo Británico se decida a dar tal paso, será necesario que el Gobierno de Colombia haga una invitación formal dirigida al Director del Museo, solicitando el envío de un experto y mencionando para el caso el nombre del Capitán Joyce, a quien el Gobierno costeará sus gastos de transporte y le proveerá con los peones necesarios para los trabajos de exploración y excavaciones, así como la colaboración de entendidos en la materia (.....). el Gobierno, a efecto de halagar y estimular al Museo Británico ofrecerá darle participación de los objetos que hallen en las excavaciones (.....). No está por demás llamar la atención de ese despacho hacia los resultados que desde el punto de vista de la propaganda tendría para Colombia la visita de una comisión del Museo Británico, como que la prensa británica y el mundo entero se ocuparía constantemente de los trabajos que fuera adelantando la Comisión.¹⁵⁰

However, even if this visit by Joyce to Colombia never took place, Medina felt that exceptions could be made to current legislation governing the country's

¹⁴⁹ J. A. Mason, *Archaeology of Santa Marta, Colombia, The Tairona Culture*, p. 22.

¹⁵⁰ José Medina to the Minister of Industries, London, 9 December 1926, vol. 5, AMNC.

archaeological heritage, such as dividing up objects discovered by researchers between the Colombian government and the British Museum.

5.6. *Los Bachués, Piedras Pintadas and the Templo del Sol*

During the 1920s, a renewed interest in the ancient remains of the Muisca arose in Colombia. Miguel Triana in his work *La Civilización Chibcha* presented his particular view of the Muisca society and gave some interpretations on *piedras pintadas* or petroglyphs of the region inhabited by the Muisca. Secondly, a group of artists who led a break away from European rules and influenced by Mexican mural painting made representations of Muisca mythology in their works. They were called *Los Bachués*. During the same period, the discovery of the remains of one of the Muisca's sacred sites, the *Templo del Sol* in Sogamoso led to curiosity in the remains of a temple constructed by a society which could be considered as a basis of the Colombian nation.

5.6.1. Miguel Triana's *Civilización Chibcha* and the *Piedras Pintadas*

Miguel Triana, 1859 - 1931, studied engineering at the Faculty of Mathematics and Engineering in Bogotá, where he taught optics, topography and industrial physics; he also worked as a railroad engineer. He was elected to Congress and a member of the Academy of History. He became interested in Muisca society after analysing petroglyphs, or *piedras pintadas*, as he called them. In

his work *La Civilización Chibcha*, he attempted to present an overall view of Muisca society.¹⁵¹ He devoted the first part to what he called “Prehistoric Sociology”, and in this, he put forward arguments about the origin of the Muisca and attempted to describe human types, the prehistoric landscape, and the myths about the origin of the society. In the second part, which was entitled “Industrial Skills”, he analysed material culture in the form of textiles, goldwork and stone works. He devoted the third part of the work, “Signs of Mental Culture”, to putting forward two hypotheses, or rather, speculations, about the *pedras pintadas*. According to Triana, these had been placed at points which marked the boundaries of Muisca territory, and their function was to mark strategic defensive points.¹⁵²

The second speculation argued that Triana relates to the fact that the Muisca had a hieroglyphic form of writing, which they had left behind on *pedras pintadas* and pottery objects.¹⁵³ Triana compared the signs on various *pedras pintadas* with ancient writing systems: he tried to identify Greek letters on a stone with inscriptions near the town of Pandi, and on an inscription he had found in Duitama. He considered that an inscription found in Boyacá was a cuneiform inscription produced by the Muisca.¹⁵⁴ These speculations aroused the curiosity of Bogotá amateurs and encouraged them to visit places where there were *pedras pintadas* and Indian inscriptions on rocks.

¹⁵¹ M. Triana, *La Civilización Chibcha*, (Bogotá, 1921).

¹⁵² M. Triana, *La Civilización Chibcha*, 2nd edition, (Bogotá, 1984), p. 212.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 257 - 258.

5.6.2 The “Bachués”

During the 1920's, a group of artists led by Luis Alberto Acuña, and sculptor Rómulo Rozo made an exaltation of Muisca myths in their artistic works.¹⁵⁵

Acuña and Rozo met Picasso in Paris, at an exhibition where Rozo had his sculptures on display, and according to Acuña, the two Colombians asked Picasso for his opinion of Rozo's academic works, to which Picasso gave the following reply :

Ustedes que vienen de Colombia deben saber que Colombia es un país del que nosotros tenemos una imagen algo exótica, algo fantástica. Nosotros aceptamos esa realidad como algo remoto, como la realidad de una cultura nacida antes de nuestra cultura. (.....) Así que ustedes deben expresarse de otra forma.¹⁵⁶

From that moment, according to Acuña, the two of them left the Academy and spent their time visiting the Trocadero Museum, and “there we began to draw, so we could become impregnated with America, with all its enormous culture.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ E. Serrano, “Cien Años de Arte en Colombia” , in *Nueva Historia de Colombia*, vol. VI, (Bogotá, 1989), pp. 154 - 159.

¹⁵⁶ A. Medina, “Entrevista a Luis Alberto Acuña, el Movimiento Bachué”, in *El Espectador*, Bogotá, Sunday Magazine, (21 August 1977), p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Acuña mentioned that the break with the Academy was particularly hard, as at first it involved a very great effort to break away from the aesthetic rules in which he had been trained :

Para nosotros, los educados en el gusto por una cultura occidental, acostumbrados a las exquisiteces del clasicismo, a las formalidades y lugares comunes del academicismo y a las representaciones realistas y exaltadas de los barrocos, con todos los prejuicios que de tales escuelas se derivan, la comprensión integral del arte precolombino, esencialmente estático y cuajado de exotismos, arcanos y rarezas, es cosa harto difícil.¹⁵⁸

Rozo produced sculptures that were inspired by Muisca myths, while Acuña concentrated on painting. Rozo was born in Chiquinquirá, Boyacá, a region which had been inhabited by the Muisca in pre-Hispanic times, and he began his sculpture work without any visual background of the mythical figures relating to the origin of the Muisca. His first works, *Bachué*, *Tequendama* and *Bochica*, were based, above all, on literary references to these myths, as described by the chroniclers.¹⁵⁹

Bachué, the mythical woman who was believed to be the mother of the human race in Muisca myths, had risen from the waters with a baby in her arms, and when this baby grew up, he became Bachué's wife. Some versions of the myth said that each time she gave birth, Bachué brought five or six children into the world, and that was how the earth had become inhabited. The husbands returned to the waters of the lake, and many years later, their descendants saw

¹⁵⁸ L. A. Acuña, *El Arte de los Indios Colombianos*, (Bogotá, 1935), p. 22.

them leave the lake in the form of snakes. Rozo recreated *Bachué* with these elements, and produced two versions, one in black granite 170cm. tall, which was displayed in the central courtyard of Colombia's Pavilion at the 1929 International Exhibition in Seville, and the other in bronze, measuring 32cm., which was cast using the lost wax method.¹⁶⁰ *Tequendama* and *Bochica*, two sculptures which were produced in 1927, referred to the myth which said that a man with a long white beard down to his waist, who the natives called Bochica, had come from afar and broken the mountain with a rod in order to drain off water from the Bogotá grasslands, resulting in the Tequendama Falls, where the water cascades in an enormous drop.

Acuña's admiration for pre-Hispanic art forms comes across clearly in his plastic works, where he mainly represented Muisca myths, and his critical and historical essay on native art in Colombia, which he published in 1935.¹⁶¹ Acuña based this essay on a selection of the most important works about evidence of ancient societies, including those published by Liborio Zerda, Vicente and Ernesto Restrepo Tirado, Konrad Theodor Preuss, and Miguel Triana. Acuña stressed the close links that existed between the religious and the aesthetic in ancient Colombian societies :

El precolombino, en alas del innato sentido religioso, admirando lo bello y adorando lo extraordinario, fue adentrándose en el mundo del arte poblado para él de mil revelaciones y maravillas.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ A. Medina, "Rómulo Rozo, el Arte de su Tiempo en América Latina", in Museo de Arte Moderno, *Rómulo Rozo, Sincretismo*, (Bogotá, 1999) p. 29.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

For Acuña, pre-Hispanic art was not limited just to architecture, sculpture, goldwork, pottery and textiles. He pointed out that one of the biggest gaps in people's knowledge of the past was in the field of music, despite the large number of musical instruments that were known at the time, and he attributed this ignorance to the fact that it was impossible to record musical creations and preserve them for posterity.¹⁶³

5.6.3. The Discovery of the *Templo del Sol*

In 1924, the priest Cayo Leonidas Peñuela, who was president of the *Sociedad Histórica de Tunja*, provided the National Academy of History with information about exploration work he had undertaken to find the *Templo del Sol*, according to chroniclers, one of the sacred Muisca sites. Peñuela had received information from a peasant who lived near the town of Sogamoso and who had found fragments of *lignum vitae* timber which still showed signs of having been burned and formed a circle, around which various graves had appeared.¹⁶⁴ When the Academy of History received this information, it arranged for the then Director of the National Museum, the historian Gerardo Arrubla, to make a visit, together with Carlos Cuervo Márquez, in order to check whether the discoveries were indeed the remains of the *Templo del Sol*. The rumour of this discovery caused great excitement amongst the people of Sogamoso, so much so that the first visit to the site was made in the company of the mayor and “an enormous

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

crowd of local people.”¹⁶⁵ The two academics confirmed the find in their report on the visit :

Por las exploraciones y observaciones que practicamos sobre el terreno y por los informes que obtuvimos de personas veraces y respetables, adquirimos la convicción de que efectivamente era en ese sitio donde estuvo construido el llamado Templo del Sol.¹⁶⁶

They based this statement on descriptions by the chroniclers, who said that the temple had been built with stout columns of wood that had been brought from the *Llanos Orientales*, while the walls had been made of interwoven reeds. The materials found by Arrubla and Cuervo Márquez coincided with these descriptions, and also with the fire which destroyed the famous temple, as described by Friar Pedro Aguado :

Entre los templos, había uno de extraña grandeza y ornato que decían los indios ser dedicado al dios Remichinchagagua, a quien veneraban mucho en sus ciegas supersticiones e idolatrías. Este santuario, andando ciertos soldados con lumbre encendida a buscar oro porque era muy lúgubre y oscuro (...) y por ser la puerta tan pequeña y baja que estaban abajados o como suelen decir, a gatas, por descuido de los que con la lumbre andaban dentro, vino a encenderse el fuego de suerte que no se pudo atajar ni remediar porque como todo la cubierta era muy seca, de paja, hizóse más irremediable el daño y así fue consumido del fuego.¹⁶⁷

Arrubla and Cuervo Márquez had found fragments of wood of a species that came from the *Llanos*, arranged in a circle at great depth. This indicated that it was an exceptional construction, for which materials had been used that came

¹⁶⁴ Cayo Leonidas Peñuela to the President of the National Academy of History, Tunja, March 1924, in “Templo del Sol, Informes”, in *BHA*, Año XIV no. 165, Bogotá, (June, 1924), p. 538.

¹⁶⁵ Report by Gerardo Arrubla and Carlos Cuervo Márquez, in *Ibid.*, p. 539.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 540.

from a long way away. The fragments they found were also all of the same height, which showed that the only part which had been preserved was that which had remained buried. The other fact which confirmed the discovery was the finding of a large quantity of “gold, stone and pottery objects, snails, and strings of beads”, which had most probably been votive offerings. The recommendation they made was that the land should be acquired and declared an ancient monument :

Adquiérase para la República el terreno donde los Chibchas, pueblo prehispánico el más importante de los que ocuparon el territorio colombiano, levantaron el Templo del Sol, erijase allí un monumento conmemorativo que perpetue la nación aborígen y sea símbolo de sus tradiciones, de su civilización y de sus infortunios.¹⁶⁸

As a result of this find, Gerardo Arrubla became more concerned that the government should reinforce the legislation governing the country's archaeological heritage:

La investigación arqueológica que he hecho ha venido a demostrar elocuentemente la necesidad de una ley que ampare las preciosas antigüedades indígenas que hay en el territorio nacional.(...) He solicitado la expedición de un acto legislativo que venga a salvar tales reliquias de la prehistoria de una destrucción injustificable.¹⁶⁹

His plea fell on deaf ears at the time. It was not until 1931 that new legislation was issued, which declared archaeological monuments and objects from the Upper Magdalena regions to be national property.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ P. Aguado, *Recopilación Historial*, (1582) (Bogotá, 1956), vol. 1, pp. 294 - 295.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Report by Gerardo Arrubla, Director of the National Museum to the Minister of Public Instruction, Bogotá, 15 May 1924, Vol. 4, AMNC.

¹⁷⁰ Law 103 of 1931, in *República de Colombia, Leyes Expedidas por el Congreso Nacional en su Legislatura de 1931*, (Bogotá, 1945), p. 15.

CHAPTER 6

THE CREATION OF A SCIENTIFIC TRADITION IN ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE FOUNDATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUMS

A political change occurred in Colombia in 1930, which brought to an end 45 years of conservative governments. The Liberal Era, between 1930 and 1946, was a period of major changes, which aimed to convert Colombia into a modern nation. Enrique Olaya Herrera, who was President from 1930 to 1934, set educational reforms in motion which sought to increase school coverage and reduce illiteracy levels, which were as high as 63% in 1930. These reforms were to be promoted even more strongly by Alfonso López Pumarejo, in his first period as President between 1934 and 1938. For López, education was the way to “comprehend the national reality” and achieve regional and social integration. Within the context of this economic, political and social modernisation, education was looked on by López as the cornerstone of the *Revolución en Marcha*, as he declared at his inauguration in 1934 :

Cuando decimos que el pueblo colombiano carece de preparación, estamos seguros de no equivocarnos. (.....) No tenemos maestros de primera y segunda enseñanza, como no sean los que se forman por su propio esfuerzo, casos aislados, y no el producto de un esfuerzo estatal sostenido para difundir, por toda la República, un grupo de institutores que sepan lo que enseñan y sepan enseñar. (.....) el estado desarrolla su

actividad sobre un país desconocido cuyas posibilidades ignoran generalmente los gobernantes y sobre el cual se han tejido todo tipo de leyendas. (.....) Y en esa general incertidumbre sobre nuestra propia vida perdemos el tiempo entregados a divagaciones, a conjeturas, a las teorías más empíricas sin que la estadística o las ciencias naturales y sociales nos abrevien y faciliten el trabajo.¹

López Pumarejo promoted a reorganisation of the education system to train the workers and technicians that the country needed to provide men and women with secondary and university studies so they could be the founders of a dynamic society that was committed to the future.² The Constitutional Reform of 1936 established, in the field of education, that freedom of teaching and government involvement in both public and private education should go hand in hand, so as to “guarantee that the social goals of culture are achieved and that students receive a better intellectual, moral and physical preparation.”³

New pedagogical guidelines were set, and the overall education system for males and females from urban and rural elementary school right up to professional level was given a new content. Female education was a particular concern of President López Pumarejo, who said that “due to a lack of education, and against her will in most cases, Colombian woman has seen her social activity reduced to being no more than an indifferent expectation in a man’s Republic. (.....) An extremely important part of our population, more than half of it, is thus denied cultural, social and national activity.”⁴

¹ A López Pumarejo, *Obras Completas* vol. I, (Bogotá, 1979), p. 114.

² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

³ Article 14, “Acto Legislativo no. 1 de 1936” in *Constitución Política de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1936), p. 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*

The National University was one of the focal points of this education project. Law 68 of 1935 decreed that it should be reorganised, with the research faculties and institutes, which had hitherto been widely scattered, being brought together in one single centre.⁵ Work started in 1936 on building a large university campus in Bogotá, based on a project drawn up by the German pedagogue Fritz Karsten and the architects Eric Lange and Leopoldo Rother. This major project, which was completed in 1940, represented a coming together of political ideology on social renovation in Colombia, and European and American currents in modern architecture, which put forward progressive aesthetic, formal and technical approaches.⁶ At the Ministry of Education, President López Pumarejo was able to rely on a brilliant group of intellectuals, which included Dario Echandia, Luis López de Mesa, Agustín Nieto Caballero, Jorge Zalamea, Daniel Samper Ortega, Tomás Rueda Vargas and Dario Achury Valenzuela who, as ministers, ministry officials and officers in the different cultural institutions, projected the changes in the education system and devised new cultural promotion strategies. The National Library was considered as a centre for the education and cultural renovation currents. From the moment he took over management of the Library in 1931, the writer Daniel Samper Ortega pursued the idea of putting up a new building, which was designed by the architect Alberto Willis Ferro with the sobriety that was such a feature of modern architecture, and had the necessary functional nature which enabled it

⁵ Law 68 of 1935 in *Leyes Expedidas por el Congreso Nacional*, (Bogotá, 1935), p. 150.

⁶ A. Saldarriaga and L. Fonseca, "Un Siglo de Arquitectura Colombiana", in *Nueva Historia de Colombia*, vol. VI, (Bogotá, 1989), p. 194.

to house the valuable documentary and bibliographic collections and also make these available to users.⁷

Samper Ortega and his team of assistants introduced new cataloguing systems for the bibliographical collections, increased the number of exchanges with other countries, incorporated the National Archives into the National Library, and published indexes of the collections. In the Library Statute of 11 September 1934, Samper Ortega revealed his plans for covering the whole country with mobile libraries, thereby achieving the goals set by López Pumarejo that all Colombians should have access to knowledge :

La Biblioteca Nacional deberá servir de sistema circulatorio al libro dentro del país y al pensamiento colombiano al exterior, suplir las deficiencias de la escuela ante aquellos que no pueden recurrir a ella, (.....) ayudando a los colombianos a orientarse en el estudio como medio para perfeccionar la personalidad y, en consecuencia, a capacitarse mejor para la acción creadora de la riqueza pública y de la nacionalidad.⁸

The new building was opened on 20 July 1938, as part of the celebrations commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the foundation of Bogotá. Samper Ortega did not stop there: he gave the Library a social role, one where culture would be spread democratically through radio broadcasts and educational cinema. He created the journal *Senderos*, which was to be an instrument for publishing articles about rare and curious manuscripts and books, one that could be exchanged for other publications, and a collection of a

⁷ G. Hernández de Alba, *Historia de la Biblioteca Nacional*, pp. 249 - 253.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 257 - 258.

hundred titles from Colombian literature, the *Colección Samper Ortega de Literatura Colombiana*.⁹

This atmosphere of renovation and change brought with it a number of initiatives in the field of museums and the archaeological heritage. In February 1931, on the initiative of César Uribe Piedrahita, the Ministry of National Education decreed that a *Museo Nacional de Etnología y Arqueología* should be set up, to “use all means possible for encouraging and promoting a knowledge of prehistory and the history of the *patria* and to prevent objects of great value leaving the country”.¹⁰ This museum, was a reality years later under the direction of Gregorio Hernández de Alba. In 1931, the San Agustín archaeological site was declared by law a national monument, the sale and exporting of objects, statues and shrines from there was prohibited, fines would be imposed on anybody who destroyed them, and an archaeologist was to be appointed to undertake excavation; the government took powers to acquire the land to create a National Archaeological Park.¹¹

The work that had begun in the nineteenth century and had been continued in the early years of the twentieth century by scientists and enthusiasts like Liborio Zerda, Ezequiel Uricoechea, Carlos Cuervo Márquez, Vicente Restrepo, Ernesto Restrepo Tirado and many other pioneers of archaeological and

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 259 - 261.

¹⁰ Segura, M., *Itinerario del Museo Nacional de Colombia 1823-1994*, 2 vols.(Bogotá, 1995) Vol. 1, p. 285.

¹¹ Law 103 of 1931 in República de Colombia, *Leyes Expedidas por el Congreso Nacional en su Legislatura de 1931*, (Bogotá, 1945), pp. 15 - 16.

ethnological research in Colombia, was consolidated during the 1930-1941 period by several simultaneous events : the *Escuela Normal Superior* was established as a professional training institute which prepared future researchers; the *Servicio Arqueológico Nacional* and the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional* were founded. All this fitted in well with the liberal atmosphere. In this context two museums were developed, the *Museo Arqueológico y Etnográfico* linked to the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional*, and the republic's central bank, the *Banco de la República* started a collection intended initially to prevent Pre-Hispanic gold objects leaving the country, which was later to become the *Museo del Oro*.

6.1. The Training of *Maestros de los Maestros*: The *Escuela Normal Superior*

The training of secondary school teachers, which had been set in motion by President Enrique Olaya Herrera under Decree 1353 of 1931, passed to the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the National University. This faculty, which had the task of training teaching and managerial staff for secondary and teacher-training establishments throughout the country, changed its name under Law 39 of 1936 to the *Escuela Normal Superior*.¹² This academic centre became the birthplace of modern social sciences in Colombia, and was the training centre which allowed archaeology and ethnology in the country to gain

¹² Law 39 of 1936, in *Leyes de 1936 expedidas por el Congreso Nacional*, (Bogotá, 1950), p. 103.

strength, since a group of its graduates were to become the pioneer professionals at the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional* which was formed in 1941.¹³

Its founder and first director, the psychiatrist José Francisco Socarrás, who pioneered psychoanalytic studies in Colombia, stated that the aim was to set up a national centre to train the “teachers of teachers”, not in the traditional manner of inductive, scholastic memory training, but rather on the basis of an overall training which would take the situation of the country into account.¹⁴ Students at the *Escuela* could specialise in social sciences, philology and languages, biological sciences, chemistry, physics and mathematics.¹⁵ Socarrás stressed the need for students of the exact sciences and mathematics to study philosophy, history, literature and the arts :

Si las ciencias nos forman en el sentimiento de poder sobre cuanto nos rodea, las segundas, las humanidades, nos imponen el deber ser respecto al entorno y, especialmente con relación a la comunidad.¹⁶

The *Escuela Normal Superior* took two European centres as its points of reference, the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* in France, from which it got its humanistic guidance, and the Berlin Faculty of Sciences, which influenced the scientific direction it took.¹⁷ In the words of Socarrás, the *Escuela* was “a workshop for knowledge” which brought together theoretical knowledge and an

¹³ The first ethnologists and archaeologists obtained their degree issued by the *Escuela Normal Superior* and the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional* in 1942 and 1943. M. Chávez, *Trayectoria de la Antropología Colombiana, de la Revolución en Marcha al Frente Nacional*, p. 99.

¹⁴ J.M. Ospina, “La Escuela Normal Superior, un Circulo que se Cierra”, in *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico*, vol. XXI, no. 2, Bogotá, (1984), p. 3.

¹⁵ J. Morales Gómez, “Entrevista con el Dr. José Francisco Socarrás, Primer Director de la Escuela Normal Superior”, in *Revista de Antropología y Arqueología*, vol. VI, no. 2, Bogotá, (1990), p. 125.

¹⁶ J. M. Ospina, “La Escuela Normal Superior, un Circulo que se Cierra”, p. 6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

in-depth knowledge of the country, something which was achieved through three fundamental elements: the library, the laboratories, and excursions to various places so that exploration and practical work could be done in the field.¹⁸ One of the obsessions of the Director was the Library, as anthropologist Milciades Chávez, who spent long hours in it recalls :

Ejemplares agotados llegan a los anaqueles de la biblioteca, porque él (Socarrás) personalmente los fines de semana visita a las librerías de viejo situadas en las carreras séptima y sexta y los libreros de libros raros llegan a la Normal Superior seguros que cuando Socarrás husmee su importancia los adquiere para la biblioteca.¹⁹

Socarrás said that his extensive knowledge of the country, which he had begun to gain back in his youth when the journey from his native city of Valledupar to Barranquilla, where he went to secondary school, was a ten-day horse ride, and which he subsequently extended through his trips to Bogotá, which took one month, had aroused a profound curiosity in him, and an interest in getting to know yet more of the country. This became a fundamental policy when selecting and training students at the *Escuela* :

Estos viajes me trajeron un interés por el país, por conocerlo. Me recorrí íntegra a Colombia, la conocí en su totalidad. (.....) Eso repercutió en que fuera a buscar estudiantes para la Escuela en todo el país. Logré que los estudiantes formados en geografía, historia, etnología, economía colombiana, botánica y zoología nacionales adquieran el interés por conocer el país. La base fundamental de la formación era Colombia, antes que todo, se necesitaba inculcar una gran dosis de patriotismo, de amor por Colombia.²⁰

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ M. Chávez, *Trayectoria de la Antropología Colombiana, de la Revolución en Marcha al Frente Nacional*, p. 49.

²⁰ José Francisco Socarrás, Interview, Bogotá, 2 March 1994.

This training model, which favoured a commitment to and practical knowledge of the country and left aside memory and encyclopaedic training, presented a challenge for Socarrás : how to select the best teachers. The anthropologist Roberto Pineda Giraldo, who studied social sciences and subsequently ethnology at the *Escuela*, says that events in Europe gave this educational centre the opportunity to gather together a group of scientists and intellectuals who had emigrated to Colombia because of the Spanish Civil War, the advance of Nazism, and the Second World War.²¹ Outstanding members of this group of teachers were the Spaniards José Prat, an essayist and theatre critic; Urbano Gonzalez de la Calle, a specialist in Sanskrit and Indo-European languages; Pablo Vila, a geographer; Francisco Cirre, an ethnohistorian, and José de Recasens, an anthropologist. A group of academics and intellectuals from the Karl Marx Institute in Berlin also arrived having fled Germany as a result of the rise of Nazism : Kurt Freudenthal, a mathematician, Justus Wolfram Schottelius, who was to be one of the founders of modern archaeology in Colombia, and Rudolf Hommes, an economist. Finally, from France came the ethnologist, linguist and founder of the *Musée de L' Homme* in Paris, Professor Paul Rivet.²² These European academics, together with brilliant young Colombians like the sociologist Antonio García, the historian Gabriel Giraldo Jaramillo, and archaeologist and ethnologist Gregorio Hernández de Alba, encouraged an atmosphere where “ideas were debated, ideas of academic betterment, of

²¹ R. Pineda Giraldo, “Inicios de la Antropología en Colombia”, in *Revista de Estudios Sociales* no. 3, Bogotá, (June, 1999), p. 30.

²² Luis Duque Gómez, Interview, Bogotá, 20 April 1998; Ospina, J. M., “La Escuela Normal Superior, un Circulo que se Cierra”, p. 10.

pedagogical experimentation, and of rediscovering a country which was only just starting to enter the twentieth century.”²³

6.2. Gregorio Hernandez de Alba and the National Archaeological Service

One of the Colombian teachers at the *Escuela Normal Superior* was Gregorio Hernández de Alba, 1904 - 1970, a self-taught *Bogotano* who devoted his whole life to archaeological and ethnological research and promoting indigenous studies. From his days as a student at the Bogotá School of Commerce, Hernández de Alba showed a pronounced leaning towards literature and the indigenous world. He was a close friend of the members of the Bachué artists group. He joined this movement from literature, while preparing his book *Cuentos de la Conquista*, in which the main characters were not spaniards but natives.²⁴ The sculptor Rómulo Rozo encouraged him from Mexico to continue his work of exalting the native world :

Leí con el placer más grande sus dos cuentos de su libro en preparación, “Cuentos de la Conquista”. Adelante, amigo mio, a resucitar esa defunta tradición que todos los colombianos tengan ideas felices semejantes a la suya. Así se realizará la redención de la patria colombiana.²⁵

²³ R. Pineda Giraldo, “Inicios de la Antropología en Colombia”, p. 30.

²⁴ G. Hernández de Alba, *Cuentos de la Conquista*, (Bogotá, 1937).

²⁵ Rómulo Rozo to Gregorio Hernández de Alba, Mexico, 5 December 1933, AGHA, BLAA.

A nationalist and indigenous sentiment comes across clearly in the article that Hernández de Alba published in 1934, *Huansaúa y Tisquesusa*, dedicated to the ancient chieftains of Tunja and Bogotá:

Hijos de España? Sí, pero también hijos de América, con sangre de una raza calumniada. (.....) No es justo, pues, que al lado de la estatua en bronce de del heroico Jiménez de Quesada se alce en piedra el homenaje a Tisquesusa.²⁶

At the same time, Hernández de Alba developed an interest in archaeology. Urged on by Gustavo Santos, National Fine Arts Director and the brother of Eduardo Santos, who was to be President from 1938 to 1942, he proposed that an Archaeology and Ethnology Section be set up under the Ministry of Education's National Fine Arts Division :

Pocas cosas de tanto gusto para mí como esta de cumplir su encargo esbozando el plan que desarrolle su excelente idea de prestar atención a los estudios etnológicos y a las investigaciones de arqueología, disciplinas que fueron tan descuidadas entre nosotros hasta el momento en que el actual Ministro comenzó a hacer pensar en colombiano y en progresista a los guiones de la educación nacional.²⁷

In this program, Hernández de Alba proposed to set up a museum devoted solely to archaeology, with a library where people could consult works on archaeology and ethnology and which would carry out exchanges with foreign museums and societies. He also draw up an archaeological inventory on the basis of information supplied by teachers around the country who would report

²⁶ G. Hernández de Alba, "Huansaúa y Tisquesusa", in *El Tiempo*, 19 August 1934.

²⁷ Gregorio Hernández de Alba a Gustavo Santos, Director de Bellas Artes, *El Ocaso*, 8 Abril 1935, AGHA, BLAA.

monuments, painted stones and burial grounds.²⁸ To encourage the rise of a generation of archaeological and ethnological scientists, he proposed to begin a special ethnology and prehistory training course in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, which would train students in human anatomy, anthropology, the morphological classification of races, general prehistory, ancient civilisations, general geology, general and American archaeology, and American prehistory.²⁹

On the question of setting up an archaeological museum, Hernández suggested that students from the *Escuela* should assist, in any premises which the Ministry of Education might deem convenient, either in the new National Library building or in the School of Fine Arts. The collections which would form the nucleus of the new establishment would be the archaeological collections currently held by the National Museum.³⁰ These visionary proposals put forward by Hernández in 1935 were to form the basis for future developments in archaeological and ethnological studies, and for the setting up of the National Archaeological Museum.

Although he had the support of the government and the Section on Archaeology and Ethnology was created, Hernández de Alba also founded a Society for Archaeological and Ethnographic Studies, with support from Guillermo Fischer. This was a private association, the goals of which included publishing

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

archaeological and ethnographic studies, and analysing the collections in the National Museum.³¹ The founding partners were Dario Echandía, Gustavo Santos, Director of Fine Arts; Gerardo Arrubla, Director of the National Museum, Emilio Robledo, Belisario Matos Hurtado, and José Miguel Rosales, who was appointed director.

As head of the recently-created Archaeology and Ethnology Section of the Fine Arts Division, Hernández de Alba was named as Ministry of Education representative on an ethnological expedition to the Guajira, together with other foreign researchers : the anthropologist Vincenzo Petrucco from the University of Pennsylvania, Lewis Korn, an archaeologist from the University of Columbia, Paul Kirchoff, a German ethnologist from the University of Columbia, and the photographer Lidia du Pont.³²

For Hernández, this mission was his first experience of field work, and the first time he had been given responsibility, as director of the Archaeology and Ethnology Section. He sent the following report to the Minister of Education, from the Venezuelan part of the Guajira :

Me es grato enviar desde esta Guajira mi especial saludo a S.S., agradeciéndole una vez más la oportunidad que me ha brindado para vivir, conocer este pueblo. (.....) Quiero ante todo, captar de la manera más completa posible los diferentes puntos de interés que presenta esta península, pues la oportunidad de un viaje detenido, hecho de rancho en rancho, raras veces se presenta.³³

³¹ Guillermo Fischer, President of the Colombian Society of Archaeological and Ethnographic Studies, to the National Fine Arts Director, Bogotá, 9 June 1936, AGHA, BLAA.

³² J. Perry, 'Biografía Intelectual de Gregorio Hernández de Alba', (Thesis, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, 1994), p. 17.

³³ Gregorio Hernández de Alba to the Minister of National Education, Cussi, Camp in the Venezuelan part of Guajira, 3 August 1935, in AGHA, BLAA.

After four months of field work, Hernández published his first ethnological work, "*Etnografía Guajira*", and also a number of articles in newspapers.³⁴ One year after this scientific mission to Guajira the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, seeking to make things easier for foreign expeditions in Colombia while exercising some control over the photographic and film material and publications resulting from the different scientific commissions, drew up regulations which stipulated that all foreign scientific expeditions or missions should apply to the Ministry of National Education for a licence to carry out their research work, for which they should first submit a work plan.³⁵ On the question of archaeological materials and the materials resulting from archaeological work, Articles 7 and 8 in this decree had the following to say :

Art. 7 No archaeological, artistic, natural or historical specimen whatever may be taken out of the country unless a licence has been granted for such purpose by the government beforehand.

Art. 8 All scientific and photographic material, studies and texts which might be produced and obtained by scientific expeditions shall be subject to government censorship before it or they leaves or leave the country, and a duplicate of the same shall be supplied to the government, which shall guarantee the copyright of interested parties with respect to such copies.³⁶

Hernandez de Alba began archaeological research work in 1937. These activities, which were the first systematic explorations and digs by a Colombian,

³⁴ Hernández de Alba, G., *Etnografía Guajira*, (Bogotá, 1936). The articles that were published in the press of the day were: "Colombianicemos al Guajiro", *La Prensa*, Barranquilla, (2 September 1935); "El Extraño Paisaje de la Guajira", *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (16 September 1935); "La Organización Familiar de los Guajiros", *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (6 October 1935); "De la Economía Guajira", *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (20 October 1935); "La Religión Guajira, Parte I", *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (8 December 1935); and "La Religión Guajira, Parte II", *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (5 January 1936).

³⁵ Decree 1,060 dated 12 May 1936, in *Diario Oficial*, Bogotá, (27 June 1939).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

were undertaken on two sites which would subsequently become National Archaeological Parks, and in 1994 would be declared part of the Heritage of Mankind by UNESCO: Tierradentro, and San Agustín.

The first mission was to Tierradentro, which he visited at the request of the Ministry of National Education to inspect the digging done in graves by the German geologist George Burg in the area around Inzá, Cauca.³⁷ However, Hernández did not restrict himself to checking work that he had been entrusted with. He travelled around, explored, and described the Inzá region, and also the Belalcázar region and the Paez district. In the *Hacienda Segovia* area, on the El Tablón plateau and on the El Aguacate and Loma Alta hills, he explored and described 68 hypogeums, deep graves which are typical of this region :

Sepulturas admirablemente construidas por excavación de la roca (.....) en forma de salones de planta casi circular, techo abovedado o de cortes en descenso, nichos abiertos a los lados, pilastres, columnas centrales y escalas de descenso, todo ello pintado con decoraciones geométricas y en veces adornado también con relieves de caras o cuerpos humanos.³⁸

This work by Hernández de Alba is particularly important : his is the first description of the graves, and he produced magnificent drawings, both ground plans and vertical sections, and recording of the exceptional geometric designs which are so typical of the Tierradentro hypogeums. He greatly admired the perfection of the designs and the perfectly preserved colours :

³⁷ G. Hernández de Alba, "Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Tierradentro", in *Revista de las Indias*, vol. II, no. 9, Bogotá, (April, 1938), p. 29.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Muy bien empleados ví mis esfuerzos cuando entré en la excavación y pude observar que estaba en presencia de una de las mas hermosas sepulturas del gran yacimiento de Inzá, por su trabajo de cortes y por su decoración de grandes mascarones relievados, que coronan solemnemente las columnas y de la conocida gama de cuadros, ángulos y rombos en rojo y negro de tonos frescos, vivos, cual si hubieran sido pintados ayer.³⁹

As he did after his trip to Guajira, Hernández de Alba wrote various newspaper articles for the general public.⁴⁰

While he was at Tierradentro, Ministry of Education secretary Jorge Zalamea told him that the Spanish professor José Pérez de Barradas, who had been hired by the Ministry of Education to give courses at the National University in Bogotá, would accompany him during the final part of his work at Tierradentro and afterwards at San Agustín.⁴¹ They would begin exploration and digging work together.⁴² A short while after work began at San Agustín, problems arose between the two researchers. Although Hernández de Alba had been in charge of the expedition, the government decided that because Pérez de Barradas was

³⁹ G. Hernández de Alba, "Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Tierradentro", in *Revista de las Indias*, vol. II, no. 10, Bogotá, (August, 1938), p. 100.

⁴⁰ On his work at Tierradentro, Hernández de Alba published "Los Hallazgos Arqueológicos de la Región de Tierradentro", *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (30 August 1936); "Esquema Arqueológico de Tierradentro", *Occidente Colombiano*, Popayán, (1 October 1936); "La Cerámica de Inzá", *El Tiempo*, (4 October 1936); "Costumbres del Indio de Tierradentro", *El Tiempo*, (18 October 1936); and "Una Antigua Tumba de Tierradentro", *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (1 November 1936).

⁴¹ José Pérez de Barradas, 1897 - 1981, a doctor in natural sciences from the University of Madrid, started his archaeological exploration and digging work in 1918 in Manzanares, under the supervision of his mentor Paul Wernert. In 1920, he was appointed director of digging and deposits for the province of Madrid and the Manzanares valley, and in 1929 he began digs at Roman ruins near Malaga. He also studied ethnology, and was a member of the Spanish Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory Society. He travelled to Colombia in 1936 on a contract from the Ministry of Education, and undertook research work at Tierradentro and San Agustín. While he was in Colombia, he published "Máscara de Oro de Inzá" in the *Revista de las Indias*, vol. 1, no. 5, Bogotá, (1937), pp. 3 - 7; "Problemas actuales de la Antropología" in the *Boletín de la Sociedad Geográfica de Colombia*, vol. IV, Bogotá, (1937), pp. 128 - 144; "Arqueología de San Agustín, las Culturas de San Agustín, Huila y sus relaciones con las culturas prehistóricas suramericanas" in *Revista de las Indias*, Bogotá, vol. II, no. 8, (1938), pp. 35 - 50. As a result of his work at San Agustín, he published *Arqueología Agustiana: Excavaciones Realizadas de Marzo a Diciembre de 1937*, (Bogotá), 1943.

such a well-known archaeologist, he should take over. Hernández de Alba sent him a lengthy report from San Agustín on the archaeological activities that had been undertaken, based on Preuss's work, and awaited comments from Pérez de Barradas, who was still in Bogotá :

Habiendo llegado a esta durante su ausencia de varios días en Bogotá, me abstuve de iniciar excavaciones hasta no recibir sus ideas al respecto y me dediqué, en cambio, a efectuar el necesario reconocimiento de los alrededores, necesario para comprender un tanto la índole de las huellas culturales a estudiar y formar, a continuación, el método de trabajo.⁴³

Pérez de Barradas arrived in San Agustín, problems arose with a film maker, who was going to make a film about San Agustín and who did not allow Hernández de Alba to take part in the project.⁴⁴ However, Hernández de Alba said in 1938 in an article in *El Tiempo* that the film, "which had been very well made" would reveal to the general public the sculptures, statues and graves of San Agustín, and that it "showed just what can be done with good and dedicated archaeologists."⁴⁵

For Gregorio Hernández de Alba, 1938 was to be an important year in his professional achievements. Firstly, the government formed the National Archaeological Service and he was appointed its first director. This was a major step forward in getting past the amateurs or "enthusiast" stage which historian Eduardo Posada had talked of to the Society of Americanists in Paris in 1921.

⁴² Jorge Zalamea to Gregorio Hernández de Alba, Bogotá, 19 August 1936, in AGHA, BLAA.

⁴³ Gregorio Hernández de Alba to José Pérez de Barradas, 7 August 1937, in AGHA, BLAA.

⁴⁴ J. Perry, *Biografía Intelectual de Gregorio Hernández de Alba*, p. 31.

⁴⁵ G. Hernández de Alba, "San Agustín, la Mejor Fuente de Historia", in *El Tiempo*, Bogotá. (2 January 1938).

The background to the Archaeological Service was the work that the Ministry of Education's Cultural Extension Section had done, and one its first actions was to set up a system of record books for the archaeological and ethnographic collections held by the National Museum, using the numbering and cataloguing system recommended by the Paris Institute of Ethnology, whereby each item is recorded in the following manner: Year - Collection Number - Consecutive Registration Number.⁴⁶ Secondly, Paul Rivet, the founder of the *Musée de L' Homme* and General Secretary of the *Institut d' Ethnologie* of Paris, came to Colombia. He had got to know Eduardo Santos in Paris at the Latin American gatherings at the *Musée de L' Homme*. Santos invited him to visit Colombia when he became President in August 1938 and give a number of lectures as part of the programme organised by Daniel Samper Ortega at the National Library, commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the founding of Bogotá.⁴⁷ One of Rivet's future disciples, Alicia Dussán de Reichel, recalls her first impressions of him :

En 1938, recuerdo el salón de nuestra Biblioteca Nacional de Bogotá donde ví por primera vez a Rivet quien daba una conferencia magistral sobre un tema entonces muy novedoso: "Los Orígenes del Hombre Americano". El conferencista era un personaje de pequeña estatura, calvo y de ojos centellantes bajo los gruesos lentes. Hablaba un español magnífico y exponía sus argumentos no sólo con convicción sino con vehemencia. Su poder de comunicación impresionó al público, logrando un ambiente de expectativa ante cada nueva teoría.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Record Books, Archaeological and Ethnographic Collections, Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, Bogotá.

⁴⁷ Luis Duque Gómez, Interview, Bogotá, 28 July 1998. "Está en Bogotá el Profesor Paul Rivet, Notable Sabio Francés", in *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (8 August 1938).

⁴⁸ A. Dussán de Reichel, "Paul Rivet y su Epoca" en *Correo de los Andes*, no. 26, Bogotá, (May - June, 1984), p. 73.

Another of those present, Luis Duque Gómez, who was a student at the *Escuela Normal Superior* at the time, remembers that the room was full, because the subject was such a novel one. Intellectuals, journalists, university students and their counterparts from the *Escuela Normal Superior* had all flocked there, interested in hearing Rivet's theories about the first inhabitants of America. Loudspeakers had to be put up by the entrance to the Library, and people crowded around in the street outside to listen.⁴⁹ Rivet put forward the argument that not all inhabitants of America had arrived from Asia across the Bering Strait. Other, non-Asian, ethnic groups had arrived and settled, and the great diversity in American languages and civilisations was the result of this mixing of races. He was also of the opinion that sailors from Melanesia could have reached America's Pacific Coast and the coasts of California. According to Duque Gómez, these theories of Rivet led to many arguments between students at the *Escuela Normal Superior*.⁵⁰ Rivet was in Colombia throughout August 1938, to make "a close study of the country and of various archaeological matters."⁵¹ He visited San Agustín with the Belgian Ambassador and Hernández de Alba. It was on this trip that the idea arose of the Colombian researcher making a study visit to France, and Rivet offered Hernández de Alba a scholarship so that he could study ethnology and archaeology at the *Musée de L' Homme* and the Ethnology Institute of the University of Paris. Before leaving Colombia, Rivet sent the following letter to Hernández de Alba and his wife Helena :

⁴⁹ Luis Duque Gómez, Interview, Bogotá, 28 July 1998.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

A usted, a su señora, quiero decir todo mi cariño y todo mi reconocimiento. No hay duda que fue merced a usted que mi viaje a Colombia fue tan lleno de enseñanzas, especialmente esa excursión a San Agustín que quedará como el mejor de los recuerdos colombianos: Deseo verlos pronto en Paris para poder trabajar juntos y contribuir al desarrollo científico de su querida Patria.⁵²

Hernández de Alba answered that he was making preparations for travelling to France in December 1938 with his wife and children, “to receive your teaching and to try and serve science and our beloved *patria*.”⁵³

Apart from the admiration and fascination that visiting San Agustín had aroused in Rivet, he was also surprised at the skill, foresight and tenacity of Hernández de Alba in organising the first archaeological and ethnographic exhibition to be held in Colombia.

6.3. The 1938 Archaeological Exhibition: *Algo para Todos*

In February 1938, the Society for Archaeological and Ethnographic Studies, which had been founded in 1935 by Hernández de Alba and Guillermo Fischer, suggested that an archaeological and ethnographic exhibition should be put on as part of the 1938 celebrations commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the founding of Bogotá :

Organícese una exposición de objetos indígenas de Colombia, consiguiendo para ella apoyo del Museo Nacional, los coleccionistas

⁵¹ “Está en Bogotá el Profesor Paul Rivet, Notable Sabio Francés”, *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (8 August 1938).

⁵² Paul Rivet to Gregorio Hernández de Alba, Barranquilla, 2 September 1938, in AGHA, BLAA.

⁵³ Gregorio Hernández de Alba to Paul Rivet, Bogotá, 30 October 1938, in ‘Archive Paul Rivet’, MS 1/3486 bis, BMHP.

particulares y los vendedores de antigüedades del país para la mayor recolección de piezas. (.....) Esta exposición deberá ser arreglada de manera de presentar las piezas clasificadas por culturas indígenas, con sus correspondientes tarjetas de detalle de origen. (.....) Se complementará con conferencias científicas que los socios inscriban en el ramo de su especialidad y por los hombres de ciencia del país cuya colaboración se solicitará.⁵⁴

Preparations were made for setting up the first exhibition to be put on in Colombia with the specific aim of making the general public aware of evidence of the ancient societies known at that time to have inhabited the country.

La exposición arqueológica es algo para todos y para los ojos. (.....) Se gozará de la contemplación de ciento y más productos de la industria indígena.⁵⁵

The old National Library rooms in the *Las Aulas* building, which until a short time previously had housed incunabula and ancient manuscripts, were done up for the occasion. With the help of ten workmen, Hernández de Alba transformed the whole area, fitted lighting systems and obtained showcases for displaying the collections.

The first challenge facing Hernández de Alba was to get exhibits. The archaeological objects of the National Museum and those he had dug up at Tierradentro and San Agustín were not enough. The Ministry of National Education put out a call to collectors and dealers to register their objects, offered prizes for the best collections displayed, and guaranteed owners that their collections would be duly cared for and returned when the exhibition

⁵⁴ “La Exposición de Objetos Indígenas será en Bogotá”, in *El Espectador*, Bogotá, (17 February 1938).

⁵⁵ “Exposición Arqueológica” in *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (11 February 1938).

ended.⁵⁶ The newspaper *El Tiempo* encouraged collectors to lend their objects and assured them that the Ministry of Education would guarantee that they would not be in any danger :

Los propietarios de tunjos, pectorales, cerámicas que las exhiban con este motivo no correrán el peligro más remoto de perderlas. Al matricularlas deberán hacerlo por escrito y enviar al Ministerio de Educación, Sección de Bellas Artes, una lista completa de los objetos que desean exhibir. Contribuirán con ello al realce de uno de los más atrayentes espectáculos que ofrecerá el gobierno a los visitantes de la capital para el Cuarto Centenario: La Exposición Arqueológica.⁵⁷

This initiative bore fruit. Collectors from various regions of the country lent objects and the Ministry of Education published the book *Colombia, Compendio Arqueológico*, written by Hernández de Alba, which can be looked on as an exhibition catalogue because it describes and illustrates with photographs a selection of the objects that were displayed.⁵⁸ Part of the magnificent Quimbaya collection of gold and pottery objects that had belonged to Leocadio María Arango was shown in Bogotá for the first time. His heirs, in a gesture of 'patriotism', lent the most outstanding objects they had inherited from their father. Dionisio Jaramillo, from Armenia, sent a selection of 250 pottery objects. From Nariño Alejandro Moncayo lent some pottery objects with multicoloured geometric decorations of outstanding beauty. In Bogotá, Alfredo Vergara, José Antonio Concha and Luis Alberto Acuña sent a variety of pottery objects, and

⁵⁶ "Interesante Espectáculo será la Exposición de Arqueología", in *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (7 July 1938).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ G. Hernández de Alba, *Colombia, Compendio Arqueológico*, (Bogotá, 1938).

the 'El Mensajero' book shop sent its Muisca goldwork collection. The National Museum sent its entire archaeological collections.⁵⁹

The exhibition was opened on 3 August 1938, in the presence of the Minister of Education, José Joaquín Castro Martínez, the National Director of Fine Arts, and Bogotá mayor Gustavo Santos. On entering the exhibition, visitors saw a large map showing the position of the different Colombian archaeological sites, illustrated with the most typical types of object.⁶⁰ (Map 2). A selection of Muisca goldwork objects was displayed there, to which Hernández de Alba gave particular prominence because of the archaeological and artistic praise they had received and because they have given Colombia the name of "el país del oro".⁶¹ Nearby were the magnificent Quimbaya gold lime containers and flasks, nose and ear ornaments, breastplates and pendants belonging to the Arango collection.⁶² From Tierradentro, pottery statues, mortars and vessels that had been excavated by Hernández de Alba were exhibited, and from San Agustín, axes, chisels and small statues were shown. As Preuss had done at the Museum of Arts in Berlin in 1923, Hernández de Alba had ordered a series of eight large plaster reproductions to be made of San Agustín statues, which showed the simple embossed engraving and the perfection of line and the stylisation of the figures.⁶³

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 7 - 8.

⁶⁰ "Solemnemente Inaugurada la Exposición Arqueológica", *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (4 August 1938).

⁶¹ G. Hernández de Alba, "Los Chibchas en la Exposición Arqueológica", *Cromos*, no. 1.138, Bogotá, (17 September 1938).

⁶² G. Hernández de Alba, "De la Exposición Arqueológica, Arte Quimbaya", *Cromos*, no. 1.139, Bogotá, (24 September 1938).

⁶³ G. Hernández de Alba, "De la Exposición Arqueológica, San Agustín y Tierradentro", *Cromos*, no. 1.140, Bogotá, (1 October 1938).

The second room was devoted basically to pottery objects, which were displayed in ten showcases containing objects from the Arango, Dionisio Jaramillo and Luis Alberto Acuña collections.

A few vessels from the Calima region, some funeral urns from the Mid-Magdalena valley, and a number of objects from the Chiriquí region in Panama were displayed alongside two Muisca mummies belonging to the National Museum and a series of shrunken Jívaro skulls from Ecuador. These latter, according to the press, caused a degree of terror amongst visitors.⁶⁴

The aim of Hernández de Alba was not just to show pre-Hispanic objects, but also the native indigenous present. With this in mind, he brought fifty indigenous natives belonging to different ethnic groups, from various parts of the country: Guajiros, Paeces, Guambianos, Tunebos and Sibundoyes, and he referred to these in the following terms :

A los cuatrocientos años de extinguido por una cruel conquista, está el indio y lo indio bien presente en materna ciudad. Representalo además de las obras que ha esbozado esa familia también de la Guajira, que sin hablar el castellano nos mira bien curiosa, más no atemorizada; que en ese fuerte raza se halla un orgullo noble. El hermoso grupo de Sibundoyes que lucen sus vestidos de tradición. Las familias guambianas que a través de los años conservan sus sombreros de asiática tradición y los Paeces de Calderas, esos indios parientes de los Chibchas cuya suave chirimía vas a oír y a gozar. Los indios vivos y los indios antiguos por los que pido el favor oficial.⁶⁵

The people of Bogotá met the invited native groups, saw them, and heard them play their musical instruments in the Independence Park and in the Colón

⁶⁴ “Exhibiciones de Grupos Indígenas Comienzan Mañana”, *El Tiempo*, (12 August 1938), Bogotá.

⁶⁵ G. Hernández de Alba, *Colombia, Compendio Arqueológico*, pp. 8 - 9.

Theatre.⁶⁶ It is highly symbolic that Hernández de Alba should have brought native groups to the four hundredth anniversary celebrations, to show the native diversity of the country. The effect, nevertheless, was to some extent ambiguous. Although he wanted to show them off as being societies that were capable of producing artistic manifestations in dance and music, a photo appeared in the press at the time of a native Guajira family accompanied by a missionary, which rather than a family portrait, looked more like a setting for the Virgin Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus and the Three Kings in view of the posed positions and the costumes and objects used, which were a mixture of Guajira ritual objects and Christ figures.⁶⁷

Gustavo Santos awarded Hernández de Alba the Centenary Medal in recognition for his work in organising the archaeology exhibition, and as the “upholder of the sacred fire of our archaeological concerns.”⁶⁸

It is clearly significant that it was a commemorative event which set this initiative in motion, which enabled the native world of the past and the present to be shown in Bogotá. As far as the archaeological collections were concerned, the mere fact that they were brought together and displayed meant that an overall view could be gained of material evidence of those ancient societies which were known at the time. It was also an occasion for Hernández de Alba to argue in public the need for an archaeological museum to be set up, “where the

⁶⁶ “50 Indígenas de Varias Tribus se Presentarán en el IV Centenario”, *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (12 April 1938); “La Fiesta Indígena en el Teatro Colón”, *El Espectador*, Bogotá, (19 August 1938).

⁶⁷ “Hoy Llegó a la Ciudad la Banda de Indios Guajiros”, *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (27 July 1938).

⁶⁸ Gustavo Santos to Gregorio Hernández de Alba, Bogotá, 15 September 1938, in AGHA, BLAA.

few archaeological objects which have been saved in Colombia, firstly from the voracious grasp of the conquistadors and afterwards from the grave plunderers, simply because they are still locked up in graves, can be kept and preserved for posterity.”⁶⁹

6.4. The Colombian Reference to the *Musée de L’Homme* and the Background for the *Museo Arqueológico Nacional*

Gregorio Hernández de Alba arrived at the *Musée de l’Homme* in Paris in 1939. From the experience he had gained in organising and setting up the archaeological exhibition, he was convinced that archaeology and ethnography museums should be places where knowledge was divulged. He saw the permanent displays in the *Musée de L’ Homme*, the totem pole from Canada and the enormous globe with photos of different societies in the world which welcomed visitors to the museum, the physical anthropology and prehistory galleries and those where the cultures of various ethnic groups were displayed.⁷⁰ Here, as he was to say in June 1939, the theoretical currents in the ethnology of the day were shown :

Migraciones, influencias, orígenes de grupos se pueden constatar con la presencia de tantas cosas y tantas técnicas iguales en civilizaciones que hoy vemos diferentes, más que en un tiempo y en un sitio tuvieron su contacto.⁷¹

⁶⁹ G. Hernández de Alba, “De la Exposición Arqueológica, Arte Quimbaya”.

⁷⁰ G. Hernández de Alba, “El Museo del Hombre”, Paris, June 1939, AGHA, BLAA.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

He took courses in anthropology, physiology of races, general ethnography, museology, linguistics, prehistory, and human geography. To make it possible for him to study in France, the Colombian government had appointed him vice-consul. It was the first time Hernández de Alba had been able to study in an establishment where ethnological and archaeological research was mixed with making this knowledge known to the general public. Hernández de Alba was fascinated by the scientific work based around special subjects that was done at the museum :

Cada especialidad bien dirigida brinda sus grandes y tranquilas salas de estudio, plenas de colecciones donde el aprendizaje y las comparaciones de unas con otras etapas de civilización o de varias culturas entre sí se lleva a cabo de una manera casi exhaustiva por todos los que ocupa y acoge éste laboratorio donde a la vez se prepara un personal de donde saldrán los investigadores del futuro en Antropología, Ethnología, Lingüística y Prehistoria o Arqueología, los alumnos del Instituto de Etnología de la Universidad de Paris, grupo juvenil donde todas las nacionalidades y las diferencias fisiológicas se encuentran representadas; que es interés actual de todo pueblo conocerse, estudiarse a sí mismo, desde el incierto origen hasta su vida actual.⁷²

Hernández de Alba became a disciple of Paul Rivet's theoretical and political approaches to ethnology. Rivet looked on ethnology as "the science of man", and also as "a discipline of urgency", one which would allow the strategic ways in which human beings from all civilisations have represented their relationship with the world to be recorded, preserved, researched and made known.⁷³ Rivet considered that ethnology should use museums as a tool for making the results of research known, because of the visible location of museums in cities. Rivet

⁷² Gregorio Hernández de Alba, "El Museo del Hombre", Paris, June 1939, AGHA, BLAA.

⁷³ P. Rivet, "La Etnología, Ciencia del Hombre", in *RIEN*, vol. 1 no. 1, Bogotá, (1943), p. 1.

had enthusiastically reorganised the *Musée du Trocadero* and in 1937 he transformed it into the *Musée de l'Homme* with a clear justification: to provide a record of the objects, costumes and tools of human societies, especially those which were on the way to becoming extinct through the effects of human settlement and modernisation.⁷⁴ In the words of Alicia Dussán de Reichel, “he attempted in the museum to give an overall scientific view of the human being. Rivet put forward new guidelines for grouping mankind together, while stressing at the same time the right to a wide range of cultural forms and expressions.”⁷⁵

Rivet centralised all the material and intellectual means necessary for developing ethnology in the museum, grouped together the main French ethnology and archaeology collections, set up a specialised library, put on temporary exhibitions, and arranged lectures which were not only given in the museum but also broadcast by radio.⁷⁶ His ambition was to create a centre where archaeologists, ethnologists, linguists and historians could work together, studying the origin and development of human civilisations.⁷⁷ Rivet thus looked on the *Musée de l'Homme* not as a store, as a ‘library’ in the manner that European museums had done earlier, but as a “laboratory of ideas and representations”, as a museum for man, a viewpoint that he was to introduce to his disciple Gregorio Hernández de Alba in Paris and then later in Bogotá to his disciples at the *Escuela Normal Superior*. Looked at this way, each object that was collected, classified and displayed in the museum would have a value not

⁷⁴ J. Jamin, “Paul Rivet, le Savant et le Politique”, p. 281.

⁷⁵ A. Dussán de Reichel, “Paul Rivet y su Epoca”, p. 72.

⁷⁶ J. Jamin, “Paul Rivet, le Savant et le Politique”, p. 286.

⁷⁷ Luis Duque Gómez, Interview, Bogotá, 28 July 1998.

only as “evidence” but also as an “object of conviction”, in other words, one that had a political content. Ethnology would thus be defined as an enterprise consisting of restoring and appraising the marginal or oppressed cultures of the world.⁷⁸

Clearly referring to his experience at the *Musée de l'Homme*, the 1938 archaeological exhibition, Gregorio Hernández de Alba persisted in urging on President Santos the idea he shared with Rivet, that a Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology should be set up in Bogotá, in a specially designed museum that could be built on a plot of land near the recently completed National Library building. Based on the *Musée de L' Homme*, Hernández proposed that this museum should provide photography, drawing, object disinfection, restoration, moulding and packing services. In a letter to Santos from Paris, he wrote that Rivet had offered the help of the *Musée de L' Homme* architect for drawing up the plans for the future building :

Siguiendo la idea expresada por S.E. al Profesor Rivet y al suscrito de dotar a Colombia de un museo de Antropología, Arqueología, Etnografía y Folklore que debe quedar emplazado cerca de la Biblioteca Nacional, y debiendo contar dicho museo con todos los servicios indispensables a la exposición, conservación y estudio de las piezas, he obtenido del Sr. Prof. Rivet el ofrecimiento de los planos necesarios gratuitamente, para lo cual me deben ser enviadas los datos de extensión del terreno disponible con un croquis a escala del mismo, su topografía y emplazamiento.⁷⁹

He also told Minister López de Mesa that when he returned to Colombia, apart from making the final arrangements for a “laboratory museum”, he hoped to

⁷⁸ J. Jamin, “Paul Rivet, le Savant et le Politique”, p. 285.

⁷⁹ Gregorio Hernández de Alba to President Eduardo Santos, Paris, 18 June 1939, AGHA, BLAA.

train future ethnologists by setting up an Ethnology and Archaeology specialisation for social sciences students at the *Escuela Normal Superior*. Rivet had offered to “release two of my distinguished colleagues at the Museum for two or three years, to help you train this ideal group which will provide the country and ethnological sciences in general with valuable results.”⁸⁰ Hernández not only drew up plans for creating a new generation of ethnologists and establishing a museum in Bogotá, he also sent López de Mesa reports about the progress he was making with his studies in Paris and on preparing his thesis, the initial title of which was to be *Las Civilizaciones de San Agustín y Tierradentro y sus relaciones con otras civilizaciones megalíticas precolombinas de América*.⁸¹ The influence that his studies at the French Americanism centre had on him can be clearly seen in his new comparative research approach. He noted that “it is impossible to go on considering the megalithic San Agustín and Tierradentro civilisation as an isolated fact amidst the ancient cultures of America.”⁸² He raised a number of new research questions about the origin of the San Agustín civilisation, and he developed these in his thesis though he never published in its lifetime. His son, Gonzalo Hernández de Alba, found the French manuscript after his father’s death in 1970, and published it under the title *La Cultura Arqueológica de San Agustín*.⁸³

Hernández de Alba’s dream of putting up a special building for the Museum never came to fruition. However, his project of establishing a museum devoted

⁸⁰ Gregorio Hernández de Alba to Luis López Mesa, Paris, 3 June 1939, AGHA, BLAA.

⁸¹ Gregorio Hernández de Alba to Luis López Mesa, Paris, 10 May 1940, AGHA, BLAA.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ G. Hernández de Alba, *La Cultura Arqueológica de San Agustín*, (Bogotá, 1978).

solely to archaeology and ethnology became a reality that was no more than modest in view of his ideals of giving Colombia a great archaeology and ethnography museum. The *Museo Arqueológico Nacional* opened in 1940 in two small rooms in the north wing of the National Library. The collection that was housed in this fledgling museum consisted of the archaeology and ethnography collections from the National Museum and the objects from his excavations in San Agustín and Tierradentro.

Back in 1938, Hernández de Alba, as Director of the Archaeology Service and then of the archaeological exhibition in the *La Aulas* building, recorded three great collections in the Archaeology Museum, the first of these consisting of 1,854 objects from the National Museum's archaeological collections. These objects included pottery vessels, jars, pots and anthropomorphic figures and a collection of Muisca goldwork.⁸⁴ A group of six mummies from the National Museum, various statues from San Agustín and pots and vessels from Tierradentro that Gregorio Hernández de Alba had acquired on his study trip in 1936 also entered the collection.

After the 1938 exhibition, the Nariño collector Alejandro Moncayo donated 261 pottery objects from the River Juananbú area at San Lorenzo, Nariño.⁸⁵ Four collections were recorded in 1939. First, anthropomorphic representations and Quimbaya pottery vessels, urns, plates and jars from the Quindío region, which were donated by Dionisio Jaramillo after he had displayed them at the 1938

⁸⁴ Regs. 38-I-1 to 38-I-1854, Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, Bogotá.

⁸⁵ Regs. 38-II-1854 to 38-II-2125, Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, Bogotá.

exhibition.⁸⁶ These were followed some months later by a further group of Quimbaya pottery objects, which were donated by a Sr. Ramírez. In 1940, while Hernández de Alba was in Paris, only three minor pottery objects were recorded. But after 1941, and parallel with the opening of the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional*, the interest shown by both Hernández de Alba and Rivet in consolidating the museum's position led to it receiving valuable collections donated by private individuals and others which were the result of studies undertaken by researchers from the Institute. The first group included a Muisca pottery collection of pottery vessels and jars, donated by a Sr. Borda, and a donation by a Sr. Wills of vessels, pots and bones from Mosquera, Cundinamarca.⁸⁷ Hernández de Alba, who was still in Paris at the time, recommended that the government acquire the Leocadio María Arango goldwork collection for this new museum.⁸⁸

6.5. Paul Rivet in Colombia and the Creation of the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional*

When France was invaded by German troops in 1940, the *Musée de L' Homme* was still continuing with its scientific and information-providing activities, as Rivet noted :

Aquí no hay novedad. El Museo no cerró sus puertas ni un solo minuto. Mis colaboradores se quedaron a mi lado. La vida científica ha seguido

⁸⁶ Regs. 39-I-2150 to 39-I-2323, Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, Bogotá.

⁸⁷ Reg. 41-III-2409 to 41-III-2625, Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, Bogotá.

⁸⁸ Luis Duque Gómez, Interview, Bogotá, 28 July 1998.

su marcha. (.....) Vivimos aquí separados del mundo y aún de la Francia no ocupada. Este es el verdadero sufrimiento que padecemos.⁸⁹

Not closing down was a great challenge, as the Museum defended a respect for a diversity of expression by ethnic groups around the world, and a respect for all races, without any differentiation whatever. Rivet, who had been one of the founders in 1934 of the Anti-Fascist Intellectual Vigilance Committee, organised a French Resistance group with his assistants at the Museum.⁹⁰ Although he said in communications and letters to his friends that everything was going on as normal, he was facing high risks. Hernández de Alba wrote to the Colombian President about Rivet's difficult situation.⁹¹ President Eduardo Santos offered him work as a researcher in Colombia, and he made his exit from France with Hernández de Alba, his wife Helena and their two children. According to various people who knew Rivet and Hernández de Alba, the train they were travelling in to Spain was stopped, and when soldiers asked passengers for their identification documents, the Colombian showed his passport and told the soldiers that the old man who seemed to be asleep, Rivet, was his grandfather."⁹² After a long trip from Spain to Havana, Cuba, and from there to New York, they finally set sail from New York for Barranquilla.

Shortly after arriving in Bogotá, and thanks to support from President Santos, Rivet and Hernández de Alba founded the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional*, with Rivet as director, which was attached to the *Escuela Normal Superior*. The

⁸⁹ Paul Rivet to Gregorio Hernández de Alba, Paris, 22 July 1940, AGHA, BLAA.

⁹⁰ A. Dussán de Reichel, "Paul Rivet y su Epoca", p. 73.

⁹¹ Luis Duque Gómez, Interview, Bogotá, 28 July 1998.

⁹² *Ibid.*

newspaper *El Tiempo* recorded the founding of the National Ethnological Institute in the following words on 21 June 1941:

El Presidente de la República firmó ayer un decreto procedente del Ministerio de Educación Nacional por medio del cual se crea el Instituto Etnológico Nacional anexo a la Escuela Normal Superior. El establecimiento de esta nueva dependencia de enseñanza persigue la educación en la ciencia etnológica en general y de la americana y colombiana en particular, la investigación etnológica sistemática del territorio nacional y la publicación de los trabajos que resulten de dicha investigación. Conforme al proyecto, la enseñanza en el Instituto se impartirá en dos ciclos de manera que el primero suministre a los alumnos la cultura etnológica general y el segundo sirva para su especialización en lo relativo a América y Colombia. (.....) El Ministerio de Educación Nacional tomará las medidas del caso a fin de que el Museo Arqueológico Nacional preste al Instituto la colaboración que necesite. Igualmente dictará normas especiales para que el Instituto colabore con las misiones científicas extranjeras que emprendan exploraciones etnológicas en el territorio nacional y para que tome parte en la campaña tendiente a evitar que la riqueza arqueológica siga siendo construida por los buscadores de tesoros.⁹³

While the National Ethnological Institute was being set up, attached to the *Escuela Normal Superior*, Hernández de Alba was fighting to have his old post as Head of the National Archaeological Service revived, as this had been done away with during his absence, and also to revive the idea of the construction of a special building for an archaeological museum :

El museo que fundara en 1938 resultó pequeño, con escaso personal, mal arreglado por ende y carente de un presupuesto que nos permita realizar, siquiera en parte, el deseo de su excelencia de dejarle al país el centro de cultura que debe ser. Una entidad que tenga no sólo nombre sino acción.⁹⁴

⁹³ *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, (22 June 1941).

⁹⁴ Gregorio Hernández de Alba to President Eduardo Santos, Bogotá, 11 August 1941, AGHA, BLAA.

6.5.1. Ethnological and Archaeological Training at the *Escuela Normal Superior*

Rivet considered the *Escuela Normal Superior* to be “a refuge of European, Colombian and American intelligence, somewhere which opened up new channels for experimentation, the propounding of new theories and techniques, for debate and intellectual confrontation.”⁹⁵ Apart from finding an exceptional group of students who were interested in archaeology and ethnology, he found that the school boasted a number of eminent European and Colombian intellectuals as teachers. A resolution signed by Minister of Education Guillermo Nannetti on 26 June 1941 appointed Rivet director of the National Ethnological Institute and also the different teachers for the ethnology and prehistory specialisation. Rivet was in charge of the general anthropology, American anthropology and American linguistics courses, and a course was also opened in one of the subjects which most interested him, the Origins of American Man.⁹⁶ José Francisco Socarrás was in charge of the general and American bio-anthropology courses, while Gregorio Hernández de Alba, who had just returned from his studies at the *Musée de L’ Homme*, taught American ethnography and general and American sociology. Geology was taught by José de Recasens, the philologist Manuel José Casas was in charge of the general

⁹⁵ M. Chávez, *Trayectoria de la Antropología Colombiana*, p. 51

⁹⁶ According to various reports, while he was in Bogotá, Rivet worked on the manuscript of the book which many people believe is his most important work, P. Rivet, *Les Origines de l’Homme Americain*, (Paris, 1957).

linguistics and phonetics courses, and Luis Alberto Sánchez, who had worked with Hernández de Alba since 1936 at San Agustín and subsequently at the 1938 archaeological exhibition, taught a museology and technology course.⁹⁷

The teacher in Archaeology was the German Justus Wolfram Schottelius, 1892 – 1941, who had arrived in Colombia as an exile in 1939 and had been taken on as a teacher by the *Escuela Normal Superior*.⁹⁸ Schottelius had studied law and philosophy in Berlin, where he had been a student of Eduard Seler, head of the American Section at the Berlin Museum of Ethnography. He showed a great interest from an early age in studying ancient America, and from 1924 he worked in the *Museum für Völkerkunde* with Preuss. He went on to work at the Iberoamerican Institute in Berlin, one of the most important Americanist centres in Europe. He left Germany for Colombia in 1938, and on arrival he was taken on by José Francisco Socarrás as a teacher at the *Escuela Normal Superior*.⁹⁹ Schottelius went on study trips to San Agustín and Tierradentro with his students, “where he stressed intelligent observation and crystal-clear objectivity as the basis for a first approach to study.”¹⁰⁰ To review archaeological studies that had been undertaken to date and establish a number of priorities and guidelines for archaeological research, he wrote a document about the state of Colombian archaeology in 1940. After stressing the importance of Colombia for archaeological studies into the cultural interdependence of the northern and

⁹⁷ Resolution no. 686 dated 26 June 1941, AGHA, BLAA.

⁹⁸ A. Dussán de Reichel, “Paul Rivet y su Epoca”, p. 74.

⁹⁹ P. Rivet, “Justus Wolfram Schottelius”, in *BA*, vol. 11 no. 3, Bogotá, (July - September, 1946), pp. 195 - 196.

¹⁰⁰ M. Chávez, *Trayectoria de la Antropología Colombiana*, p. 45.

southern parts of the continent, he referred to the archaeological map which had been produced by Hernández de Alba in 1938.¹⁰¹ Schottelius noted that the distribution by archaeological regions shown on the map had been done on the basis of objects, “the protohistoric and prehistoric relics found in each one”, without taking mutual relationships and the respective chronology into account in this scheme of things. Another gap that Schottelius pointed to was the need to research whether the cultural manifestations in each of the areas marked represented ethnic units :

Así, los Quimbayas, por ejemplo, no fueron seguramente los creadores de todos los objetos que hoy se denominan “Quimbayas”. (.....) Demasiado conocido es también el caso de la cultura de San Agustín, que es mucho más antigua que la de otras regiones.¹⁰²

With this, he opened up new lines of research into ancient Colombia, the need to relate objects to the societies which produced them on the basis of archaeological inferences and not just, as had been the case until that time, on the basis of a description of the social, political and religious organisation of a particular group in sixteenth century chronicles.

The other important contribution Schottelius made was to give the society which had inhabited the high plains of Cundinamarca and Boyacá in pre-Hispanic times, the Muisca, its correct name :

¹⁰¹ J. W. Schottelius, “Estado Actual de la Arqueología Colombiana” in *BA*, vol. 11 no. 3, Bogotá, (July – September, 1946), p. 201.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 203.

Quiero proponer en este trabajo la denominación “Muysca” para designar el núcleo Chibcha de Cundinamarca y Boyacá, con el fin de distinguirlo de otros pueblos pertenecientes a la familia lingüística Chibcha.¹⁰³

In this document Schottelius also stated that studies into the two best known societies in Colombia and abroad, the Muisca and the Quimbayas, were not based on exploration and digging work but rather on museum studies. As a result, the central focus of archaeological research that was proposed by this German researcher for future studies was that these should be set within the context of an analysis of mutual relations between different local cultures and their relationship with other parts of America, and establishing a reliable chronology. To achieve the first of these aims, he proposed that comparative studies be introduced, applying historical and cultural method criteria. And for the second, research work in the field should be encouraged, using reliable stratigraphic methods.¹⁰⁴

Schottelius stated clearly and precisely what work needed to be done to promote Colombian archaeology: gathering data, studying and classifying museum and private collections, analytic research of ethnographic news in the chronicles, and “most important of all, research in the field, as without systematic digging, no true archaeology can be undertaken.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 206 - 207.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

6.5.2. Rivet's students at the *Escuela Normal Superior*

According to his students, Rivet's classes were held early in the morning; he was a teacher whose enormous enthusiasm for the subjects he taught was contagious, as he walked backwards and forwards from one side of the classroom to the other. What his students most remember were his analyses of blood groups and anthropometric measurements, and linguistics, an area where he trained them first and foremost in phonetic writing. But what they recall most of all about this teacher was that he instilled in them the need to be strict and accurate when gathering and analysing scientific data.¹⁰⁶ Training focussed on them going out into the field, on excursions organised by the *Escuela Normal Superior*, which were called expeditions by the ethnologists and archaeologists.

The first students to specialise in ethnology were a group from the *Escuela Normal Superior* : Luis Duque Gómez, Blanca Ochoa Sierra, Edith Jiménez Arbelaez, Alicia Dussán, Graciliano Arcila Vélez, Eliécer Silva Celis, Gabriel Giraldo Jaramillo and Alberto Ceballos Araujo.¹⁰⁷

The first three had been selected personally by Socarrás on a trip to Medellín :

El Doctor Socarrás fue a Medellín a buscar alumnos para la Escuela y nos ofreció grandes posibilidades y becas de estudio aquí en Bogotá; de Medellín nos vinimos Edith Jiménez, Blanca Ochoa y yo. Vinieron mujeres en un momento en que la coeducación estaba en tela de juicio en Colombia, nosotros llegamos a estrenar casi

¹⁰⁶ A. Dussán de Reichel, "Paul Rivet y su Epoca", p. 74; Luis Duque Gómez, Interview, Bogotá, 28 July 1998.

¹⁰⁷ Luis Duque Gómez, Interview, Bogotá, 28 July 1998.

coeducación a nivel superior porque la Normal Superior era un modelo académico en el que se promovió la participación de las mujeres.¹⁰⁸

The first three women to specialise in ethnology had something in common, as they were the best secondary school students at the establishments where they studied, and they had the necessary tenacity and courage to begin university studies at a time when very few women did so. In 1937 the University of Antioquia graduated the first professional woman in Colombia, the dentist Mariana Arango Trujillo.¹⁰⁹ That same year, a number of developments occurred in the incipient process of bringing women into the field of further education. The first group of secondary school students left the *Gimnasio Femenino* in Bogotá, and amongst these was the future ethnologist and archaeologist Alicia Dussán. In Antioquia, the *Instituto Central Femenino* was opened, from which Blanca Ochoa Sierra and Edith Jiménez Arbelaez were to graduate.

The interest and determination that these women showed in forging a professional career for themselves in new sciences, ethnology and archaeology, at a time when a woman's central role was still that of wife and mother, and devoting her time exclusively to the home, paved the way for many Colombian women to become professionals.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ A. Helg, *La Educación en Colombia, 1918 - 1957*, (Bogotá, 1988), p. 178.

¹¹⁰ The problems they had to overcome to get further education is clearly illustrated by the academic lives of Blanca Ochoa and Edith Jiménez in Medellín. They entered the *Escuela Normal de Antioquia* in 1932 to complete their middle-school education cycle and the recently appointed director of the Normal, a Catalan made the necessary arrangements so they could take classes at the Liceo Antioqueño only for boys. These measures, which were avant-garde for their day, caused a great scandal in Medellín, and the Antioquia Director of Education sacked the progressive Catalan. When this happened, the two future

When José Francisco Socarrás went to Medellín to look for candidates for the *Escuela Normal Superior*, the Antioquia Director of Education, Joaquín Vallejo, who knew that these two brilliant students would have problems entering the University of Antioquia because of the strike they had led a few years earlier, recommended that they go to Bogotá and take up the offer of a scholarship that Socarrás had made. Breaking many taboos of the day, the two young girls from Antioquia set out for Bogotá to study. As Blanca recalls, “another scandal at the time was that two young girls should come to Bogotá on their own to study.”¹¹¹

Six months after the first group of students had started ethnology classes, they were joined by a number of other students from different regions of Colombia who were to make their career in archaeology and anthropology : Virginia Gutierrez Cancino from Socorro, Santander, Inés Solano from Rosas, Cauca, Milciades Chávez from Gualmatán, Nariño, Roberto Pineda Giraldo from Abejorral, Antioquia, and the Spaniards Francisco de Abrisqueta and María Rosa de Recasens.¹¹² This first, pioneer generation of archaeology and ethnology students in Colombia, trained by Rivet, established close contact with the French professor, outside classes at the *Normal*. Rivet invited his students

anthropologists led a strike which lasted 42 days and was supported by all pupils and some teachers. They did not go to any classes, and led marches through the streets of Medellín with the Colombian flag held aloft, calling for the Catalan headmistress to be reinstated. As the Antioquia education authorities did not solve the problem, the two student leaders went to Bogotá, to speak to President López Pumarejo. This was in 1936. López Pumarejo was impressed when he saw 17-year-old girls clamouring for the reforms which he himself had promoted. Although in the end it was not possible for the former headmistress to be reinstated, Blanca Ochoa and Edith Jiménez finished their secondary school studies with the two highest grades at the Liceo, Blanca Ochoa de Molina, Interview, 8 December, 1998.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² M. Chávez, *Trayectoria de la Antropología Colombiana, de la Revolución en Marcha al Frente Nacional*, p. 76.

to his home and loaned them the few books he had been able to take out of France. His students thus read the works of Marcel Boule, Henri Vallois, Erland Nordenskiöld and Marcel Mauss in French. Alicia Dussán, recalls that this group had to overcome many problems in their training process based on the French model :

Esta escuela que Rivet quería introducir en Colombia era un intento de transplante de experiencias del Viejo Mundo y puesto que en nuestro país no existía un verdadero museo, ni colecciones que completaran las cátedras, esto planteó dificultades pedagógicas; para muchos no era fácil visualizar objetos exóticos o conceptualizar diferentes expresiones culturales, fuera de la órbita hispano-americana.¹¹³

However, these problems were overcome when research work in the field began. Socarrás, as Director of the *Normal Superior*, and Rivet, at the head of the *Instituto Etnológico*, were convinced of the need for knowledge acquired in the classroom to be put into practice. Apart from the central goal of the *Escuela*, which was to get to know the country, these “expeditions” or fieldwork had two objectives in terms of ethnology and archaeology: to gather as much information as possible about traditions and material culture so that an archaeological and ethnological inventory could be drawn up, and to collect archaeological and ethnological objects for the Museum of Archaeology, where they could be studied, classified and made known to the public through exhibitions.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ A. Dussán de Reichel, “Paul Rivet y su Epoca”, p. 74.

¹¹⁴ Luis Duque Gómez, Roberto Pineda Giraldo, Blanca Ochoa de Molina.

Rivet's Americanist conception combined ethnological theory focussed on native societies with collecting of material objects so that a knowledge of and respect for the native societies of both the past and the present would be attained and transmitted to the general public through museums.¹¹⁵

The first field trip was led by Schottelius and his colleague the Spanish geographer Pablo Vila, to the Mesa de los Santos region in Santander. Schottelius had earlier undertaken digs and surveys in a cave which the local people called the *Cueva de los Indios*. Access was difficult due to the rugged and rocky nature of the terrain, with narrow passes overlooking enormous precipices. The cave consisted of a system of fissures, passages and galleries in which the expedition found graves where the surface had been disturbed.¹¹⁶

The person who had first made mention of the cave, the local inhabitant José Antonio Barcenas, said that many mummies had been found there, wrapped in blankets tied to the head with knots, and also many pottery objects, weapons, a loom, and countless spindles. On this expedition, apart from visiting the *Cueva de los Indios*, Schottelius and his students located a number of mummies in the possession of private individuals in neighbouring towns, and they collected these for the National Archaeological Museum together with textiles, mummies, skulls and bones.¹¹⁷ According to Rivet, Schottelius's health suffered from the hardships and overwork; he paid no heed to the pleas of his wife and his

¹¹⁵ Roberto Pineda Giraldo, Interview, Bogotá, 30 September 1998.

¹¹⁶ J. W. Schottelius, "Arqueología de la Mesa de los Santos", in *BA*, vol. III, no. 3, Bogotá, (July – September, 1946), p. 214.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 217. Reg. 41-III-2409 to 41-III-2625, Register Book of the Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, Bogotá.

colleagues that he should rest, saying “I’ll rest when it’s holiday time, but my students need me now.”¹¹⁸ Shortly after returning to Bogotá, he died of a lung infection. On his deathbed, he left his scientific will to Socarrás :

No temo que se pierdan los muchos trabajos empezados por mí. Mis discípulos lo terminarán bajo la dirección de Rivet y usted. Decido que mi biblioteca americanista y mis apuntes personales muy escasos aquí se regalen al alumno que al fin del año presente mejor trabajo, hecho ya sin mi ayuda.¹¹⁹

That student was Luis Duque Gómez, who showed great interest in archaeology. Impressed by his academic performance, Rivet sent him to the Caldas and Quindío regions “to search for the Quimbayas.”¹²⁰ Duque carried out archaeological research and studied some of the private collections in this region, a traditional area for grave plundering. The first digs on the La Lorena estate revealed graves with two vertical shafts between five and ten metres deep, linked by a transverse tunnel in which two equal-sized vaults were found. The entrances to these vaults were blocked by stones, but inside he found pottery urns which were taken to the Archaeological Museum in Bogotá.¹²¹

His most interesting work, however, was on a dwelling site in the town of Supia, Caldas. He dug on an archaeological rubbish dump and accurately described the cuts made and the pottery fragments he discovered. In addition to the description and drawings of the different types of pottery found, a

¹¹⁸ P. Rivet, “Justus Wolfram Schottelius”, p. 197.

¹¹⁹ Justus Wolfram Schottelius to José Francisco Socarrás, Bogotá, 10 August 1941, in *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Luis Duque Gómez, Interview, Bogotá, 28 July 1998.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

methodological bent can be appreciated in his classification of the material and in the statistical percentages he noted of each pottery type found.¹²² A clear and consistent methodology can be seen in the way the data is presented, result of his archaeological training at the *Escuela Normal Superior*.

Before he returned to Bogotá, Duque undertook surveys of a large number of large and small farms, “very fine archaeological fields which are still being actively cultivated by their private owners, and where the regional authorities have not been able to gain any control to ensure that they can be protected and preserved.”¹²³ In addition to his surveys and digging work, he made a comparative study of the private goldwork and pottery collections of Roberto Quintero Garrido in Anserma, Roberto Quintero in Montenegro and Bernardo Marulanda in Pereira.¹²⁴

The third expedition set off for Tierradentro, under Gregorio Hernández de Alba. Blanca Ochoa, Edith Jiménez, Graciliano Arcila Vélez and Eliécer Silva Celis spent three months carrying out archaeological surveys and making ethnographic, linguistic and anthropological observations.¹²⁵ These early experiences of field work were to shape the directions that each of Rivet’s disciples would take in the future. Some were more interested in archaeology, others in ethnological studies. From the Tierradentro group, Eliécer Silva Celis

¹²² L. Duque Gómez, “Excavación de un sitio de habitación en Supia”, in *RIEN*, vol. 1, no. 1, Bogotá, (1943), pp. 97 - 112.

¹²³ L. Duque, *Colombia, Monumentos Históricos y Arqueológicos*, vol. 1, p. 40.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

published the results of the archaeological surveys, in two articles which appeared as *La Arqueología de Tierradentro*.¹²⁶ After giving a general description of the sites where the observations were made, Silva Celis sets about describing the statues and a number of pottery objects that were found.

The descriptions of the statues are still those of a student :

Los caracteres y detalles generales de ésta (estatua) siguen siendo los dominantes en la estatuaria de Tierradentro: menton saliente, boca incisa sin colmillos salientes, brazos en angulo, gran desproporción entre el busto, cabeza y miembros inferiores, detalles predominantes en la confección de la cara y del pecho.¹²⁷

The members of the expedition returned to Bogotá with four statues, six boxes of pottery and fifty discs with recordings of native languages and music for the museum.¹²⁸

Rivet followed the results of the research work done by the first group of his students with interest from Bogotá. The results of the field work would be published in the Institute's own publication, the *Revista del Instituto Etnológico Nacional*. In the first issue of this journal, which was dedicated to President Eduardo Santos as the *Fundador del Instituto Etnológico Nacional*, the leading article was *Etnología, Ciencia del Hombre*, written by Rivet.¹²⁹ In this, he outlined the course of the training that his Colombian disciples should follow.

¹²⁶ E. Silva Celis, "La Arqueología de Tierradentro", *RIEN*, vol. 1, no. 1, Bogotá, (1943), pp. 117 - 130, and E. Silva Celis, "La Arqueología de Tierradentro", *RIEN*, vol. 1, no. 2, Bogotá, (1943 - 1944), pp. 521 - 589.

¹²⁷ E. Silva Celis, "La Arqueología de Tierradentro", *RIEN*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 121.

¹²⁸ Blanca Ochoa de Molina, Interview, Bogotá, 8 December 1998.

¹²⁹ P. Rivet, "La Etnología, Ciencia del Hombre", in *RIEN*, vol. 1, no. 1, Bogotá, (1943) pp. 1 - 6.

As he viewed ethnology as “science *par excellence*”, he noted that those engaged in it required a universal knowledge: “ethnologists have to be up-to-date on all discoveries that are made and all developments which take place in every branch of human knowledge.”¹³⁰ He refers to the American ethnic diversity and the need for surveys to be undertaken of American native groups:

Si los etnólogos hacen a veces sonreír al manifestar su pesar por la quiebra y paralización de la evolución de las civilizaciones americanas a consecuencia del descubrimiento, tienen sin embargo el derecho y el deber de hacer recordar a todos los que han aprovechado tanto de los productos de estas civilizaciones la parte que corresponde al indio en la economía moderna de los pueblos civilizados.¹³¹

Rivet developed a close friendship with an Austrian who had arrived in Colombia in 1939, also at the invitation of President Eduardo Santos, Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff. After graduating from the *Akademie der Bildende Künste* in Munich, he had taken courses in the Arts faculty at the Sorbonne in Paris. In Colombia, he began work as a researcher in 1941 at the Instituto Etnológico Nacional. Later on, in 1943, when Reichel-Dolmatoff and his fiancée, Rivet’s disciple Alicia Dussán, decided to get married, Rivet and his wife, Mercedes Andrade Chiriboga acted as best man and bridesmaid at the wedding.¹³²

The first two generations of ethnologists and archaeologists graduated in 1942 and 1943 respectively, and entered the National Ethnological Institute as

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹³² Museo del Oro, *Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, Antropólogo de Colombia, 1912 - 1994*, (Bogotá, 1998), p. 10.

researchers, where they continued with their commitment to “focus their studies on the country’s past and present native societies.”¹³³ The “trips to search for native Colombians” were still pioneering. The map of Colombia showed a number of areas where native groups lived, but where there were no roads and no detailed maps. They had to rely on information from missionaries or oil workers, hack their way through jungle with *machetes* and take bearers with them. Each expedition had a small budget, for buying from the native groups or bartering with them, and luggage included knives, fabrics, salt, goods that could be traded. Recalling this period, the ethnologist Roberto Pineda Giraldo has the following to say :

Fue muy importante haber trabajado muy duro en las expediciones para recuperar lo que hubiera de las comunidades indígenas que se sabía que iban declinando. Era recopilar material en grandes cantidades para que ese material no se perdiera. (.....) La idea era recoger aquello a lo que le otorgaba mucha importancia en esa época, la cultura material. La tecnología, el instrumental de las comunidades que representa una parte muy valiosa. También se compraba mucho material que estaba por ahí disperso, no costaba mucho en esa época. La idea era defender ese patrimonio del abuso de la gente.¹³⁴

The objects that were gathered on the expeditions were looked on by these pioneer archaeological and ethnographic students as “documents” that should be recorded, classified and researched as a way of increasing knowledge about the groups studied.¹³⁵

¹³³ Virginia Gutierrez de Pineda, Interview, Bogotá, 7 September 1998.

¹³⁴ Roberto Pineda Giraldo, Interview, Bogotá, 30 September 1998.

¹³⁵ Blanca Ochoa de Molina, Interview, Bogotá, 8 December, 1998.

6.6. The *Museo del Oro*

The Banco de la República, Colombia's Central Bank, which was founded in 1923, had the right and obligation to purchase mined and alluvial gold in the country. In 1936, the gold purchasing agency in Honda acquired a pre-Hispanic gold object and instead of sending it away to be melted down, sent it to the Bank's central office in Bogotá. The following year, thirteen new objects were acquired from this same agency in Honda, three of which had been offered by Sr. Abraham Gonzalez.

Minister of Education Alfonso Araujo sent a letter in March 1939 to the Bank's Executive Committee, requesting that pre-Hispanic gold objects be acquired :

Se encarece al Banco que trate de comprar, para conservarlos, los objetos de oro o plata de fabricación indígena y de época precolombina los que el Ministerio compraría por su valor material.¹³⁶

The Ministry said in its letter that the aim of this initiative by the government was to try and prevent pre-Hispanic goldwork leaving the country, and it asked the Bank to acquire a "gold vase, very perfectly made" which was being offered for sale by Sra. Magdalena Amador de Maldonado.¹³⁷ This perfectly-made Quimbaya lime-flask of harmonious proportions was duly acquired (Figure 20).¹³⁸ Some witnesses say Rivet advised President Santos that the Bank

¹³⁶ Executive Committee Minutes of the Banco de la República, no. 505, 30 March 1939, in Banco de la República, *Museo del Oro, 50 Años*, p. 61.

¹³⁷ Banco de la República Board of Directors' Minutes, no. 1174, 17 May 1939, in *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Reg. MO 015, Museo del Oro, Bogotá.

should acquire the major goldwork collections that existed in the country. The Central Bank promptly took on the preservation duty that the government was requesting and it also took up the suggestion from the ethnologist that considered that Colombian metallurgy was a fundamental source of knowledge about the societies that had produced it. During this period when a start was being made on professionally training archaeologists and ethnologists at the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional* and the first expeditions with government support were visiting archaeological sites, the Banco de la República began to acquire important private goldwork collections. To the three artefacts which were acquired in 1940 were added in November 1941 the first major acquisition, the 154 Muisca objects making up the collection of the Bogotá bookshop "El Mensajero." 2,003 objects arrived the following month, bought from Fernando Restrepo Vélez. 1942 marked a turning point in the building up of the Bank's fledgling collection, for in January that year the most important acquisition was made since the Quimbaya *poporo* was bought: the collection of 225 items of Quimbaya goldwork which had belonged to Leocadio María Arango.

Two further large collections were added during the following months, and by the end of the year, the Banco de la República boasted no fewer than 1,010 goldwork objects. That same year, the collection was first put on permanent display in the Bank's Board Room. The collection grew relatively quickly, and by the end of 1944 it had 3,489 items, including 864 which had been sold by the Manizales collector Santiago Vélez. The museum moved in 1944 to a large room in the Bank, which at that time occupied the Pedro A. López building in

the centre of Bogotá. The museum was open only to special visitors during this period, heads of state and visiting foreign dignitaries, members of trade, military and diplomatic missions, and privileged Colombians. In the first catalogue of the museum published in 1944, Gregorio Hernández de Alba hoped that this collection, the largest and most important of pre-Hispanic goldwork in the country at the time could become the basis of one of the most important Colombian museums because of Colombian pre-Hispanic goldwork :

El profesor Rivet y notables etnólogos han reconocido a Colombia como el lugar donde el trabajo del oro alcanzó la mayor perfección en la época precolombina.¹³⁹

Hernández de Alba's wishes became a reality. The *Museo del Oro* has formed the largest Pre-Hispanic goldwork collection and today the over fifty thousand items in the museum collection include 33.800 objects in gold and 13.500 in pottery, shell, bone and wood, stone and textiles. The collection comprises archaeological material from the ancient Colombian cultures referred to by archaeologists as Nariño, Tumaco, Calima, San Agustín, Tierradentro, Quimbaya, Tolima, Muisca, Zenú, Urabá and Tairona. Since 1980, the Museo del Oro has opened nine regional museums each of them specializing in its own archaeological region, and since 1954 has organized 170 exhibitions in 48 different countries.

¹³⁹ G. Hernández de Alba. " El Museo del Oro" in Banco de la República, *El Museo del Oro* (Bogotá, 1944). (Edition without page numbers).

6.7. The Legacy of *Américanisme*

For the group of archaeologists and ethnologists from the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional* the vastness of the virgin territory that was Colombia, as far as archaeological and ethnographic studies were concerned, was the starting point in a life devoted to scientific research. From the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta to the jungles of the Amazon and Vaupés, and from San Agustín to Santander, this group of dedicated researchers travelled throughout Colombia, overcoming all kinds of difficulties in their quest to record, analyse and publish the results of their work on living native societies and the historical reconstruction of ancient pre-Hispanic ones. Paul Rivet moved to Mexico in 1943 as Latin American Adviser to Free France. When he gave up his post of Director of the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional*, he proposed that Luis Duque Gómez should be the new Director of this pioneer centre, which opened during the 1940's branches for regional research and museums in Santa Marta, Popayán, Medellín and Tunja. Luis Duque Gómez undertook research work at San Agustín and into the Quimbayas.¹⁴⁰ From the Magdalena Ethnological Institute in Santa Marta,

¹⁴⁰ See L. Duque Gómez, "Los últimos hallazgos arqueológicos en San Agustín" in *Revista de las Indias*, vol. 30 no. 96, Bogotá (Mayo 1947) pp. 387-418; *Reseña Arqueológica de San Agustín* (Bogotá, 1963) *Exploraciones Arqueológicas en San Agustín*, (Bogotá, 1964); *Arqueología de San Agustín: Alto de los Idolos, montículos y tumbas*, (Bogotá, 1979); "Los últimos hallazgos arqueológicos en San Agustín", *RIEN* vol. II, no. 2 Bogotá (1946). "San Agustín, un mundo artístico inmerso en la naturaleza" in *Historia General del Huila* vol. I Bogotá, (1995), pp.125-150; *San Agustín* (Bogotá, 1980); *San Agustín, Colombia* (Paris, 1982); With Julio César Cubillos he published *Arqueología de San Agustín, La Estación*, (Bogotá, 1981), *Arqueología de San Agustín: exploraciones y trabajos de reconstrucción en las Mesitas A y B* (Bogotá, 1983) *Arqueología de San Agustín, Alto de Lavapatas* (Bogotá, 1988). *Arqueología de San Agustín, Exploraciones Arqueológicas realizadas en el Alto de las Piedras, 1975-1976*, (Bogotá, 1993). On the Quimbayas, he published *Los Quimbayas: Reseña Etnohistórica y Arqueológica* (Bogotá, 1963).

Gerardo Reichel Dolmatoff and Alicia Dussán de Reichel began a systematic survey of Colombia's Atlantic coast, covering an extensive area from the lower Magdalena valley to Gulf of Urabá. The results of this work changed the archaeological panorama in the country and its meaning in the American context. Through their work at Momil, Barlovento and elsewhere, they showed the importance of the Caribbean coast in the processes involved in developing a sedentary lifestyle, the rise of agriculture, and pottery not only in Colombia but at South American level.¹⁴¹ The Instituto became in 1953 the *Instituto Colombiano de Antropología*. Research in archaeology continued and Rivet's students were for a generation the archaeologists who proposed a new view of Colombians past. Rivet maintained a permanent correspondence with his students and kept in constant touch with developments in Colombian archaeology and ethnology. He paved the way for his disciples to establish a scientific tradition in Colombian archaeology and ethnology, with passion, discipline and precision.

¹⁴¹ See G. Reichel Dolmatoff "Perspectivas de la arqueología en el Norte de Colombia" in *Boletín del Instituto de Antropología* vol. 1 no. 1, Medellín (1953), pp. 80 – 88; "Excavaciones de conchales en la Costa de Barlovento" in *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* no. 4, Bogotá (1955) pp. 247-272; "Momil : A Formative Sequence from the Sinú Valley, Colombia" in *American Antiquity* no. 22 (1957) pp. 226 – 234; "Puerto Hormiga : Un complejo prehistórico marginal de Colombia, Nota Preliminar" in *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, no. 10 Bogotá (1961) pp. 347 – 354. Also with Alicia Dussán, they published "Las urnas funerarias en la cuenca del río Magdalena" in *RIEN* vol. 1, no. 1 ((1943) pp. 209-281; "Investigaciones Arqueológicas en el Departamento del Magdalena, 1946– 1950; Parte I, Arqueología del Río Ranchería; Parte II: Arqueología del río César" in *BA* vol. 3 no. 1-6, Bogotá (1951) pp. 1-334; "Investigaciones arqueológicas en el Departamento del Magdalena: 1946-1950; Parte III : Arqueología del Bajo Magdalena" in *Divulgaciones Etnológicas* vol. 3 no. 4, Barranquilla (1953) pp. 1-96; "Investigaciones arqueológicas en la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta" in *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* no. 4, Bogotá (1955) pp. 191-245; "Momil. Excavaciones en el río Sinú" in *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* no. 5, Bogotá (1956) pp. 109 –333; "Reconocimiento Arqueológico de la hoyá del río Sinú" in *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* no. 6, Bogotá (1957) pp. 29-157.

CONCLUSION

The slow process involved in the emergence of a consciousness about Colombia's pre-Hispanic past between the 1820's and the 1940's involved three central elements: collecting, scientific activity, and the search by Colombian scientists, intellectuals and politicians for ways of showing the world that Colombia was a "civilised" nation. An important rationale was to show that the societies which had inhabited the territory we now know as Colombia in pre-Hispanic times had been "civilisations."

These three elements became intertwined during this long period which witnessed the transition from antiquarianism to the rise of prehistory and academic archaeology, and the process of defining cultural areas from a historical and cultural standpoint.

Why did objects which had been looked upon merely as "relics" or "curiosities" take on a documentary value and become sources of knowledge? How did the changes in the way the past was looked at and the changes of attitude towards the past come about, in the space of this century and a half?

We have examined the changes in how objects were regarded, the interests of collectors, of museums in Colombia and in Europe and of their curators in ancient Colombian objects. We have also analysed studies about Colombia

undertaken by antiquarians, archaeology enthusiasts and scientific Colombian and foreign archaeologists.

Collecting was a fundamental part of this process, since objects as “documents” of the past were the basis for the defining the societies that had produced them. During the nineteenth century, archaeological collecting in Colombia was a private and individual activity, centred on the cities of Bogotá and Medellín. For people like Leocadio María Arango in Medellín, collecting was a hobby that he enjoyed in his spare time. The same could be said of Vicente Restrepo, through whose hands had “passed all the gold of Antioquia”, and Gonzalo Ramos Ruiz in Bogotá. Through his ownership of these objects and exhibiting them in his private museum, Arango also attained honour and reputation.

One recurring theme in this period is the gap that existed between the private interests of collectors and the efforts of a public and state institution, the National Museum, to preserve the archaeological heritage for study and exhibition. While collectors built up important collections, subsequently sold in most cases to foreign museums, successive directors of the National Museum called for objects to be donated, yet most of their pleas fell on deaf ears as far as private collectors were concerned. The collections which Colombian antiquarians had built up had more than just a symbolic value for them. They had an important commercial value, too. In Colombia, no archaeological collections were donated during the period we have looked at to the museum which represented the nation: the National Museum.

The gradual rise in Europe of prehistory, the opening of museums specialising in archaeology and ethnography, led to an interest developing in Europe in having evidence of ancient Colombian societies in their “libraries of the world”. Despite some valient attempts by nineteenth century Colombian scientists to establish reciprocal relations with their counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic, the truth of the matter is that in the world of antiquarianism and incipient archaeology, Colombia was looked upon as being nothing more than a supplier of pre-Hispanic objects. It was no mere chance that the British Museum in London built up a collection of more than 300 first class Colombian objects during this period, or that the Berlin museum not only fought for six years to acquire the biggest private Colombian collection of the nineteenth century - the Ramos Ruiz collection - and in the twentieth century received original statues from San Agustín, or that the Trocadero Museum was able to exhibit good examples of Colombian pottery and goldwork. It was not until the 1930s, when the *Escuela Normal Superior* began to train future archaeologists and a number of European intellectuals were in Colombia, including Paul Rivet, that the necessary conditions were established in the country for developing a Colombian scientific tradition. European scientists played a predominant role in training the first generation of professional archaeologists and ethnologists.

Just as collecting archaeological objects in Colombia was an essentially private activity during the period we have been looking at, so studies of the remains of the past were undertaken by scientists, researchers and antiquarians very much

on their own. Scientific activity in Colombia met with social approval during the period studied, but there was little or no support from the state. This was mainly due to political instability, but also to the fact that the sciences were considered only marginally useful. There were for a long time no societies or professional associations. Naturalists, doctors or metallurgists combined archaeological enthusiasm with political, diplomatic or military activities, something we see in all these authors who wrote on pre-Hispanic remains: Joaquín Acosta, Liborio Zerda, Carlos Cuervo Márquez, Vicente Restrepo, Manuel Uribe Angel, Andrés Posada Arango and Ernesto Restrepo Tirado.

The setting up of the Academy of History in 1902 allowed these enthusiasts, as Eduardo Posada announced to the Society of Americanists in Paris in 1923, to have somewhere where they could discuss matters of interest and gave them the means of publishing works in the field of archaeology. Only when Ernesto Restrepo Tirado became director of the National Museum in the early years of the century were major archaeological collections acquired by an official body with institutional permanence. The later establishment of the *Servicio Arqueológico Nacional*, the *Instituto Etnológico Nacional* and the two archaeology museums, the *Museo del Oro* and the *Museo Arqueológico Nacional*, made possible serious research in Colombia on ancient societies. This ancient heritage then became part of the symbolic capital of the nation.

Proof of the existence of “civilised” pre-Hispanic societies was sought by Colombian politicians, scientists and thinkers to emphasize to the world

Colombia's claims as a "civilised" nation. A national museum was envisaged as one of the symbols *par excellence* of a civilised nation, as a repository for the sacred objects of the Republic, as a sanctuary or temple of the nation. This can be appreciated in the speeches and writings of Francisco de Paula Santander in 1823, Rafael Eliseo Santander in 1868, and Carlos Cuervo Márquez in 1913. There was nevertheless a long distance between the wish to have a splendid museum and the problems involved in making it a reality.

How did studies of ancient Colombia contribute to the idea that the Colombian nation had its roots in "civilised" societies?

The idea of Muisca civilisation throughout the nineteenth century owed much to the supposed existence of the lunar calendar, which had been mentioned by Father Duquesne and then subsequently confirmed and made internationally known by Humboldt. This was evidence for the notion that the ancient inhabitants of Cundinamarca and Boyacá should be considered to have been on the same level as the Aztecs and Incas. This claim was reinforced when a Muisca monument, the *Infiernito* temple, was discovered and details of it were made known in France by the antiquarian Jomard. It would seem that for Colombian scientists and intellectuals, the notion of civilisation needed international endorsement. That led Joaquín Acosta in a gesture of generosity to offer William Prescott his notes and details of his research into the conquest of New Granada, so that Prescott could add his work on the conquest of Mexico and Peru something similar on New Granada.

When foreign travellers and scientists began to show their appreciation of pre-Hispanic gold and pottery objects and the San Agustín monuments, Colombians started to realise their importance. When European museums made contacts through diplomats, mining engineers and other European citizens living in Colombia to obtain collections, Colombian antiquarians responded so that objects from ancient Colombia could be represented in European museums.

From the mid-nineteenth century until the 1940's, two features dominate both archaeological studies about the notion of civilisation of pre-Hispanic Colombian societies: goldwork and monumentality.

Until well into the twentieth century, Muisca and Quimbaya gold objects were the best known, the most studied and the most sought-after both by Colombian antiquarians and by European museums. They virtually represented the pre-Hispanic societies of Colombia. Apart from the material remains being available to collectors and to museums, these societies, according to reinterpretations of the chroniclers by nineteenth century Colombian scholars, had shown a number of features of what were then considered "higher" cultures. The Muisca and Quimbaya societies were sedentary; they had lived in the highlands of Colombia, and had engaged in agriculture. In other words, they followed patterns that were similar to those followed by Europeans, unlike the "wandering hordes of savages" who lived in the lowlands. It was the most important Quimbaya collection known to date which the Colombian government

chose as a gift to Spain in 1892. This clearly shows that in those days, Quimbaya goldwork was looked upon in Colombian intellectual and political circles as an unrivalled example of pre-Conquest civilisation.

Monumentality was represented by San Agustín, which had been described by Codazzi and the artists of the Chorographic Commission and whose uniqueness and importance had subsequently been ratified and popularised in international academic circles by Konrad Theodor Preuss. He transferred this notion of monumentality to Germany with the original statues that he took back with him, and with the enormous moulds that he displayed in the Berlin Art Museum in 1923. Later, the first scientific excavation work done by Hernández de Alba was at San Agustín, and subsequently, the most prestigious Colombian archaeologists, Luis Duque Gómez and Gerardo Reichel Dolmatoff, researched this monumental Colombian site in minute detail.

The “idols of the devil” of the colonial era became “relics”, “antiquities”, “curiosities” and “works of art” in the nineteenth century. “Relics” were considered in the National Museum in Bogotá to be a category of objects from the past which included “antiquities”, or archaeological objects and also historical objects. “Curiosities” was the term that was used in Colombia to refer to items which did not come into the category of objects that had a high symbolic value, such as a gold or pottery object; it embraced specimens like mummies and human remains. The relic, antiquity, curiosity and work of art of the past became a meaningful artefact as a result of the scientific discourse of

the thirties, evidence of the material culture of an ethnic group or society that is to be found and studied in a museum.

This thesis ends with the creation of the National Ethnological Institute and the *Museo del Oro*. From the 1940's onwards, both institutions have been the leading forces in Colombia towards the dissemination and appropriation of knowledge about ancient Colombian societies.

The revaluation of pre-Hispanic material culture has been of the greatest importance for Colombia in the last decades. First, attitudes of Colombians towards pre-Hispanic societies has changed republican national identity and the way Colombians view their own society. Though the country has not generated an *indigenismo* comparable, say, to post-revolutionary Mexico, Colombia as a *república mestiza* has come to recognize and value its roots in the ancient pre-Conquest societies. Secondly, the fame of Colombian gold has spread world-wide and it is now recognized as one of the most marvellous achievements of ancient America. Neither of these two developments could have come about without the pioneering efforts of Colombian and foreign scientists, collectors and antiquarians that is the subject of this thesis.

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