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Museo de Oro (Gold Museum), Bogota, Colombia

SLIDE-SHOW OF GOLDEN MASTERPIECES:

[Gold Museum, Banco de la Republica](#)

A unique collection of golden masterpieces!

The Banco de la República Gold Museum, in Bogota, Colombia, displays an extraordinary selection of its pre-Hispanic goldwork collection - the biggest in the world. Together with other pottery, stone, shell, wood and textile archaeological objects, these items testify to the life and thought of different societies which inhabited what is now known as Colombia before contact was made with Europe.



The museum has a collection of 50,000 pieces.

The Main Room is called People and Gold in prehispanic Colombia. Through its glass cases it displays the goldsmith work of the different cultures which habited Colombia before the Spanish people arrived; the room is divided into different halls for every culture; Calima, Quimbaya, Muisca, Zenu, Tierradentro, San Agustín, Tolima, Tayrona and Uraba, and a special room called After Columbus (Despues de Colón).





Lime container from middle Cauca Valley.



Anthropomorphos container from Calima region.



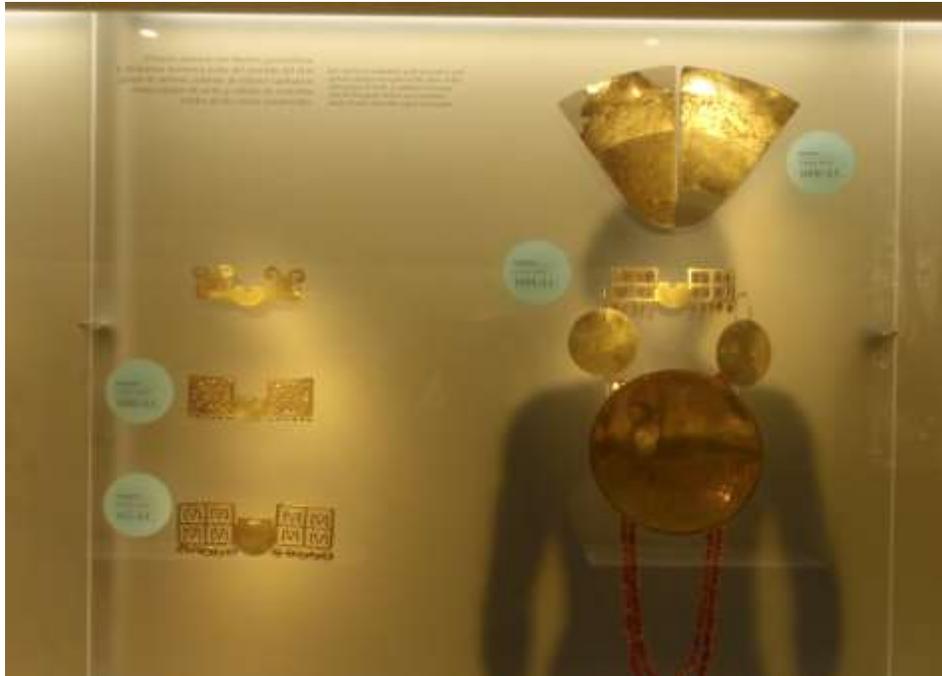
Tumbaga inside gilded object.

Tumbaga was the name given by Spaniards to a non-specific alloy of gold and copper which they found in widespread use in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica and South America.

Tumbaga was widely used by the pre-Columbian cultures of central America to make religious objects. Like most gold alloys, tumbaga was versatile and could be cast, drawn, hammered, gilded, soldered, welded, plated, hardened, annealed, polished, engraved, embossed, and inlaid.

[Wikipedia article on Tumbaga](#)





Ornaments with geometric and abstract designs.



The jaguar and puma symbolize male power and strength in Amerindian thought, also the skill and wisdom of the hunter and the warrior.



The chieftains controlled economic and ceremonial life. At death they were buried under mounds ("tolas").



Masks in the form of skulls or lifeless faces were placed on the dead person.



Yotoco-period tomb. Regalia related its owner to feline figures and powers.



Luxury objects of leaders, worn as symbols of their political, economic, and ritual dominance over their community.



The same, gilded face (ideal of beauty), uniform and enigmatic, is repeated on diadems, breastplates, and pendants.





The Yotoco icon symbolized ideas of cosmology, and it lent support to the power of whoever exhibited it.





When he is transformed into a bat and jaguar, man evokes and merges the powers, knowledge, and habits of these two animals, and reveals the secrets of life and death.



Shamans heal the sick by rhythmically stirring palm leaves.



In indigenous thought, containers are like women: they hold substances which get transformed and give rise to life.



Coca was used by chieftains and shamans to help them to think and to renew and transmit sacred knowledge, because of the effect it had in activating the powers of concentration, memory and speech.



The ashes of the dead were kept in urns inside single-chambered tombs. These urns were shaped like gourds or pregnant women, as if they were wombs where life was reborn.



Hammered gold or tumbaga helmets or crowns were the leaders' largest and most visible emblems.



The bird-men in these ornaments have twisted nose rings with circular tips instead of a beak; they are elements in the transformation into a bird which allude to the ecstatic flight of the shaman.



The roundness of the breastplates, that were worn by important women and chieftains, alluded, as did the burial mounds, to the place where fertilization, gestation, and rebirth took place.



The religious leader, a man transformed into a bat, was depicted on metal breastplates, pendants and bells, on stick heads carved out of bone, and on pottery objects.



Political and religious leaders on the high plains wore ornaments with openwork decoration and hanging plates. Farmers, artisans, traders and ordinary people wore small simple ornaments.



Ancestral mummy.



This group was part of the exquisite funerary attire of a leading person who was buried in Sogamoso, a Muisca pilgrimage site that was famous for its Temple of the Sun.



During ceremonies, the hanging plates on ornaments twinkled in the light and gave off metallic sounds which helped transform those present and enabled them to communicate more easily with the gods.



The snake with a head at each end appears associated with the sun, as a symbol of its eternal movement to and fro between two opposite points on the horizon. It was from this movement that life originated.



Priests and shamans, some of them regarded as being genuine bird-men, made a magical flight through the universe. Their paraphernalia, with figures of birds, gave them powers to undertake long journeys.





A leading figure with a fan headdress, the Sun, on a bar carried by figures makes the journey between the solstices. Bats from the underworld can be seen underneath or at his sides.



This sumptuously attired female chieftain has adopted a solemn, engrossed attitude. Shaman, chieftains, potters and goldsmiths performed rituals to ensure that the cyclical processes of nature would continue.



Because of its golden, shiny skin and its aggressiveness, astuteness and vitality, the jaguar was associated with the regenerating powers of gold and the sun.



It was with this lime container, which was found in Antioquia in the 19th century, that Banco de la Republica started its Gold Museum in 1939. It is an imitation of a gourd, the rounded features of which were associated with the female body.





Golden Boat of Lake Guatavita (the legendary place of El Dorado)



Lake Guatavita (the place of the legendary El Dorado)