The Rise of Religious Routinization
The Study of Changes from Shaman to Priestly Elite

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It is argued that the changes from shamanism to priesthood or institutionalized religion can be traced through the identification of processes of religious routinization that are absent in the shaman’s world. This routinization is expressed in the material culture, especially in the iconography or art styles and architecture. These expressions are typically a byproduct of the religious routinization generated by successful prophetic movements. The perspective and concepts offered in this paper allow us to rethink the impact of ideology. The routinization of religion as a process can account for most of the shared material culture in space (horizons and cultural areas) as religious complexes. Temporal changes in the routinization are radical and can be perceived in the archaeological record as distinctive phases. It is proposed that these processes are common in the Andes and Mesoamerica and explain why these locations are different from areas where shamanism is the dominant ideology. This conceptual approach allows us a better understanding of the nature of the religious sphere and its relationship to the material cultural world. As a case study, the archaeological evidence of the Tairona in northern Andes is presented.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ROUTINIZATION AND THE RISE OF PRIESTHOOD

The recognition of shamans in the archaeological record has been difficult. However, the real problem is to identify the changes from shaman to the rise of a priestly elite. This task falls to the archaeology of identifying prophets, and more importantly, it is not really the archaeology of finding a prophet himself, but is the archaeology of routinization. I argue that the prophet is the source of institutionalized religions and canons. He is the transformer from the numinous to the holy (see Otto 1958:110). This conclusion is not new. Several authors have made similar arguments (for example see Wallace 1956; La Barre 1972:265; Weber 1993:28; Hugh-Jones 1996:71-73). Max Weber (1993:46) refined the definition of the prophet by adding the important notion of charisma. For Weber the prophet is:

"a purely individual bearer of charisma, who by virtue of his mission proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment."

He adds:

"...the personal call is the decisive element distinguishing the prophet from the priest. The latter lays claim to authority by virtue of his service in a sacred tradition, while the prophet’s claim is based on personal revelation and charisma. It is no accident that almost no prophets have emerged from the priestly class" (Weber 1993:46).

He goes on to characterize the properties of the prophet as being able to practice divination, magical healing, and counseling. In other words the prophet is a shaman. For Sullivan (1988:387) the bases of religious authority are basically: possession, canon, and ecstasy. Of these it is ecstasy which accounts for most religious authority in South America under the specialist: the Shaman. I share the view of Weston La Barre in that:

"The secular fact remains that all religions begin with either a paranoid shamanistic self-impresario or shaman-priest impresario of his supernatural Spirit-Helper or animal familiar. All gods are at least as real as shamans’ visions, although perhaps not any more so" (La Barre 1972:269-270).

It is in periods of crisis of a political, economic, social or even environmental nature or of ‘values’ in relation to the ‘other’ (the ‘other’ being a different house, clan, moiety, or people) that the shaman can rise as a prophet. These periods of crisis have been traditionally interpreted as generating what has been called resistance religious movements, messianic or revitalization movements, and eschatological movements (see Wallace 1956; Sullivan 1988:551-614; Schaden 1989:39-60; Brown 1994; Clastres 1995; Hugh-Jones 1996; Wright 1998).

The rise of a prophet can occur only in a very particular condition; this is that the religious system that he/she promotes encompasses a new set of principles that must be embedded in the idea of salvation. This discourse of salvation can take different forms, but all of them are considered under the term of eschatology (defined as a doctrine of last things, the end, a conception of the beyond that expresses the destiny of the individual after his death). His eschatological views, a product of revelations, and his/her personal ecstasies become important alternatives to the crisis. When the prophet confronts the crisis with revelations, he/she can succeed in winning permanent helpers; these may be disciples or followers. The followers form congregations for particular activities making communities of people who share the same eschatological view. In all cases they are personal devotes. The maintenance of these congregations has to be sustained by sacrificial offerings and gifts provided by the followers (Sullivan 1988:672-681; Weber 1993:60-79; Hugh-Jones 1996:51). The expansion in space of the movement is influenced by multiple factors, and depends heavily on the success of the discourse presented by the prophet and the form that it takes in relation to preexisting political
structures. The structure of that relationship can be very
diverse and complex (in terms of alliances and political
support).

Due to the limited temporal control that archaeology has
where identified periods encompass events of several
generations (with the exception of the Maya), we are not
going to be able to recognize all the prophetic movements
in the archaeological record. The record will be biased
only toward illustrating the successful prophetic movements
that generated religious routinization. In this
sense we have to be satisfied with recognizing the patterns
in the archaeological record that are generated by the
successful religious paradigms of prophets. We can do this
by looking for the repetitive iconography, artifact remains
and changes in the settlement pattern that can be attributed
to such movements in time and space.

I define routinization as the critical threshold practice of
the change from shamanism to priesthood. Weber termed
the process of routinization (Veralltäglichung) as:

“where the prophet himself or his disciples secure the
permanence of his preaching and the congregation’s
distribution of grace, hence insuring the economic
existence of the enterprise and those who man it, and
thereby monopolizing as well the privileges deserved for
those charged with religious functions” (Weber 1993:60).

Giddens (1986:216) reformulated the routinization concept
in terms of reproduction of practices:

“Routine action is action which is strongly saturated by
the ‘taken for granted’... however much they involve a
labour of reflexive attention, used to generate interaction
over time, are latently accepted by the parties to that
interaction” (Giddens 1986: 218).

This transition toward routinization, that can be very
gradual, is characterized by one key attribute. This
attribute is the creation of fixed cultic centers that are
The rise of temples and shrines reinforces the message of
the prophetic ecstatic experience. In archaeology this
routinization is known as the Priest-Temple complex. It
has to be clarified that the success of a priesthood elite
does not mean the disappearance of shamanistic practice.
Shamanism will always be present as an alternative form to
the establishment and may even coexist in the religious
sphere, as multiple ethnographic cases demonstrate (Lowie

The religious routinization generated by a priestly elite is
expected to take advantage of the material culture to
reproduce and maintain the new religious paradigm. The
best way to do this is by transforming or changing the
iconography and artifacts to reflect the new belief system.
The illustration of events and new cultic artifacts become
ideologically important in the routinization of the prophet’s
life by means of depicting his revelations and by showing
his transformations into other beings such as jaguars,
serpents, birds, or other animals (see Hugh-Jones 1996:70-
71). These representations, that are usually interpreted by
archaeologists as being of shamans, are actually
illustrations of the events that occurred in the past before
the routinization took place. Temples and shrines are not
places of shamanistic cults. These are places where the
priest is in charge of the routinization and the maintenance
of the holy. It is obvious that the representation of dances
and other numinous experiences are very important to the
reproduction of the religion of the shaman who becomes a
prophet, and the transition of his eschatological beliefs
(See Sullivan 1988:564, 591-597,579; Hugh-Jones

By examining how the new religious system is tied to
the political organization, we can also begin to recognize how
the process of routinization is achieved (see Brown 1994;
Wright 1998). Furthermore, by looking at the iconography
and the symbolic context of the new cult, we will be able
to recognize the crisis that generated the rise of priestly
‘horizons’. With this I make explicit reference to the
development of horizons such as the one identified for
Chavin, as an example, and early Moche in the Andes.

I also argue that we have already identified those
distributions of religious motifs dispersed in time and
space in the iconography, the cultic artifacts, the temples
and shrines, but we have erroneously called them ‘cultural
areas’, or ‘cultural periods’. The explicit distribution of
iconographic motifs of a human transforming into an
animal, humans with masks or masked dancers, or
representations of gods are no more than the illustrations of
such prophets and prophetic events of the numinous
experience. These cultural areas and periods represent the
distribution of a cult managed by a priestly elite. They are
not the result of the routinization process and this is what is
occurring when the iconography in gold and ceramics is of
‘shamans’. This iconography was previously used to
define ‘cultures’, for example the Tayrona culture, the
Muisca culture, La Tolita culture, Valdivia, San Agustin,
Chavin, the Nazca, and many others. As the many years of
chiefdom studies have shown us, the distribution of the
gold artifacts, in what we defined as cultural areas, are not
in political units or economic units or ethnic groups. I
repeat myself that such spatial distributions illustrate the
temporal and spatial reach of religious cults of shamanistic
origin, developed by a prophet of prophets and reproduced
in a routinization of the sacred and the holy by a priestly
elite.

The concept of religious complex must now be defined. I
use the concept as the system of shared cosmological
views that are expressed in low statistical variation in the
religious material artifacts and religious architecture. This
religious complex usually operates above the level of
political units, languages and economic units. The
foundation of the religious complex is shamanistic in
origin and is proposed as an alternative to a crisis by a
prophet. This prophet creates the agenda around eschatological views. During the development of the complex and expansion in time and space, the routinization of the rituals takes place in temples and shrines, as well as in the artifacts associated to these activities. The complex can expand and contract in space, depending on the rise of new crises and the success of the process of routinization in the landscape. This complex can be identified archaeologically and may demonstrate dynamic movement in space and time that can be independent from local variations of political and economic processes of complexity. Let me now go to a case study.

THE CASE STUDY OF THE SIERRA NEVADA DE SANTA MARTA AND THE TAIRONA RELIGIOUS COMPLEX

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is one of the most complex ecosystems of the world due to its northern location in South America. It is a massive mountain with a pyramidal shape in front of the sea. It rises to a height of 5775 meters above sea level in just 48 kilometers from the sea. It is the highest mountain in Colombia and of the permanent glaciers of the Andes, as well as being the highest mountain in the world beside the sea. Two

Map 1. Northern Colombia with area of study marked: Northwest Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.
religious complexes have developed there, that of the Tairona Religious Complex (AD 600 - 1600) and the Kaggaba Religious Complex (1600 - Present). The last one has its origins rooted in the first. It is expressed in a different form but has elements from the previous complex.

Our knowledge of the archaeology of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is limited to three regions. These are characterized by being very different ecologically. The Parque Tairona is located at the coastal northern face of the Sierra. The Gaira region is located in the coastal northwestern side, and the last region is the Upper Buritaca on the northern side of the headwaters of the Buritaca River. The best chronological sequence of archaeological artifacts and settlement pattern is available for the region of Lower Gaira (Oyuela 1987b, 1989, 1995). The sequence of occupation of the area goes from at least 500 BC up to the present, with continual evidence of occupation. In the case of the region of the Parque Tairona, the available evidence supports a record from around AD 500 to the present (see Bischof 1969; Oyuela 1985, 1986b). In the case of the Upper Buritaca, the evidence of occupation begins in the tenth century AD up to the seventeenth century AD (Cadavid and Herrera 1985; Herrera 1985; Oyuela 1983, 1986c, 1987a, 1995). The variation of the three sequences helps us understand the variation of the expansion of the Tairona Religious Complex.

THE TAIRONA RELIGIOUS COMPLEX: ORIGINS, CRISIS, DEVELOPMENT AND ROUTINIZATION

Origins from ca. 500 BC to AD 600

The only evidence that we have for the origins of the religious Tairona Religious Complex is found at two type sites. These are Puerto Gaira in the Lower Gaira (Oyuela 1987b, 1989), and Cinto in the Parque Tairona (Oyuela 1984, 1985, 1986b). The interpretation and data presented are based mainly on two reports for both areas produced by the author. The longest sequence is from Puerto Gaira, a site that reaches an area of 1.5 to 2 hectares at the end of its occupation around AD 600. This area can be interpreted as the location of a small village of a few dwellings of fishermen.

Map 2. Location of the three areas of study: lower Gaira river drainage, the National Park Tairona and the Upper Buritaca river drainage.
The associated artifacts change in time, and for this reason the chronology is separated into two phases. The first one (AD 500BC? - 200) is characterized by very elaborate ceramic vessels that have large pedestal bases with bulbous forms.

During the second phase (AD 200 - 600), a clear pattern of association of these fisherman-agriculture populations to the lower Magdalena River and Cienaga Grande complex are observable, as well as an association with ceramics from the Rancheria River in the Guajira (La Loma and Horno phases). The burial practices consist of the deposition of the body in a cooking vessel used as an urn with a different painted vessel used as a lid. Other small vessels were deposited as offerings (two burials like this were excavated). The ceramics that can be considered to have a ritual purpose are decorated with red or purple color over black, as well as of red over cream. All of these vessels usually have high bases or evidence of having been used under heating conditions to toast leaves in low quantities. The vessels seem to have been used in the toasting possibly of coca leaves. These very elaborate vessels and two gigantic rollers used for body or cloth painting with sigmoide and circular motifs are the only materials that suggest a worship of some kind, or ritual activities that are outside of fishing and food production. Evidence of offering jars with painted red over cream was also found. These are fine ceramic containers with lids that seal the container. They usually have been found to contain hundreds of volcanic crystal stone beads, which are sometimes perforated. These were buried as offerings, a practice which continued during the whole sequence. Through time the vessels changed, not in form, but in quality. The well manufactured bichrome vessels changed to crude and low quality painted black vessels in the later periods. All this material seems to be peripheral to a religious complex developed somewhere else in the interior of northwest Colombia or the Guajira Peninsula.

What kinds of crises can be identified to have caused a shift to local ceremonial centers and the development of a local new religious complex? Let us explore this aspect. Although the data are still very sketchy, it is too much of a coincidence that different authors have noted an environmental change in the area that might have triggered the rise of a prophet and the cult of the 'Father Sun' and the 'Great Mother', figures that are even today maintained as key components in the religious belief system of the Kogi.

The Crisis: An Environmental Change

I propose that a catastrophic environmental crisis took place ca. AD 500-550, just before the occupation of Manoron in the Gaira valley, between AD 550-800. This time period also seems to be related to a dry period that coincides with the desertification of the Guajira at the end of the El Horno complex (see Reichel-Dolmatoff and Dussan 1951, Bray 1995, Oyuela 1996). There are also data to support a massive uplift of the Sierra Nevada de

Map 3. Location of settlements during the Gaira phase of the lower Gaira region.
Map 4. Location of settlements during the Mamorón phase of the lower Gaína region.

Map 5. Location of settlements during the Pozos Colorados phase of the lower Gaína region.
Santa Marta around this time, related to the disappearance of an estuary located in the lower Gaíra area. We know that the seashore line became more or less stable as indicated by the history of the estuarine environment at the beginning of the Christian era (see Oyuela 1996).

The dry period that has been proposed in other areas of northern Colombia for between AD 450 - 600 may indicate small regressions in the sea level, with marked consequences for the estuarine environments and fishing production. This would have slowed the population growth of shellfish to a point where their exploitation by human populations reached a low level of productivity. This would explain the existence of natural shell middens and marine terraces in the area of Rodadero, dated to 1430 ± 40 BP, with oyster beds 1.25 meters above the present sea level (Van der Hammen and Noldus 1986:587).

What happened after the crisis? One of the fastest processes of population growth and colonization of the northern and western drainage of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta began. This growth was accompanied by the building of small towns and a terrace system that permitted the occupation of the steep mountain and the creation of a vertical road network. This period was also when the standardization process of the material culture appeared to occur and coincided with the rise of specialist centers of pottery production, salt production and lithic ceremonial artifacts, as well as metallurgy centers. These centers could supply the settlements of this colonization initiated on the coast of the Sierra and between the lowland of the Cieraga Grande de Santa Marta and the west of the Sierra Nevada.

**The Beginning of Cult Centers, ca. AD 600 - 900**

The following phase is Mamoron (AD 600 - 900), characterized by a major change in the archaeological landscape of the lower Gaíra. The settlement pattern moves to the agricultural plain and does not demonstrate a focus on fishing. For the first time evidence of a site that differs from the small village appears; this is the site of Mamoron with an area of close to 4 hectares. It is located on a hillside, having evidence of a small road system connected to the floodplain, terraces, and a small paved 'plaza' in front of a large base of dwellings, or possible temples. The burials associated with it are of chambers cut into the metamorphic rock sealed by elaborate stone doors. Some of these burials that were looted seem to be as deep as eight meters. The burials were rich, and commonly contained gold laminated artifacts with illustration of the solstice icon.

Mamoron seems to represent a transition to what has become best known as the 'Tairona culture', with its attributes rooted in the Puerto Gaíra and later phases. It is my interpretation that Mamoron is the first clear evidence of the rise of settlements that are not linked to food production in a direct way. Furthermore, the architectural evidence and brief occupation (at most two or three centuries) indicates a shift in the area. I consider this site to be a ceremonial settlement or a place specializing in cultic activities. The sites oriented to fishing production disappear.

The Parque Tairona is the other region where we have evidence of the rise of cultic places and material that can be considered to be relevant toward understanding the process of the development of religious complexes. The main excavated sites that illustrate the events that are related to the process described for the lower Gaíra region are the Bay of Cinto and a large stone grave excavated at Nahunge by J. Alden Mason (1931, 1936, 1939). This grave was found inside a circular mound measuring 14 meters by 15 in diameter. The rich grave corresponds to
the end of early Cinto Phase II (AD 400 - 600). In the grave thousands of perforated and unperforated beads were deposited in vessels as offerings. Some of the vessels were bichrome vessels (that I relate to the toasting of coca leaves). Also, a large number of broad-winged, bat-like pendants were found, thirty specimens of which were recovered. These pendants are used in pairs on the upper part of the arm during dances even today by the Kogi. One half of these were made from green volcanic glass rocks easily confused with jade, the others were made of green metamorphic rock (Mason 1936:180). These so-called nephrite jade artifacts are diagnostic of this period. Beside the bat-like pendants, seven human figurines were found, six made of green volcanic glass and one of slate, all of them with representations of a human female. In all of these the umbilicus is a constant feature, as a large circle with a central dot (Mason 1936:189). Plaques of thin gold were also excavated at Nahuanga in the same temporal context. These artifacts are the same as those which Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff (1988. 149-158) interpreted in his study of goldsmith and shamanism as representations of a Solstice icon. In the argument that I accept here, he stated that the human figure is a representation of the ‘Father Sun’. We do not have clear evidence if the burial was of one person or if other individuals were in the chamber. The large size of the mound and ceremonial artifacts associated to dances suggest a possible temple. The mound’s use was more or less contemporaneous with the end of the Phase II of Puerto Gaiana and end of Phase 1 of Cinto. It is this material and location of the site that indicate the existence of a clear cultic center. What is interesting is the repetition of the female in the green stone artifacts in contrast to the ‘Father Sun’ image in gold.

To summarize, the antecedents of the ‘Tairona culture’ first make their appearance with ‘imported’ artifacts, such as the fine wares with bicolor painting and the ceremonial stone artifacts and two dimensional gold pendants. The formation of cultic places (the Munoror site and the Nahuanga mound) confirm the beginning of a routinization process. This process starts to occur around the sixth to seventh century AD.

Figure 1. Gold plaques with representation of the “father sun” or Solar Icon. The Ijka identified the figure as Zerankua; the Kogi called it Seyankua, and it is the son of the father sun. Most likely, it is a cultural hero according to the interpretation presented here. It is of the prophet who started the religion that is of common origin for the Ijka, Sanak and Kogi Indians today. 1.1. Museo del Oro, Bogotá. Height: 13.5 cm. (MO 12.562). 1.2. Museo del Oro, Santa Marta. 1.3. Museo del Oro, Bogotá. Height: 14 cm. (MO 14.451). (photos 1.1 and 1.3, courtesy of the Museo del Oro; photo 1.2, A. Oyuela-Caycedo).

Figure 2. Plaques similar to the solar icon have been used for cult purposes widely around the world. Near the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, there is a town where a few silver plaques are used that represent the Virgin Mary caring for her son Jesus Christ. Very likely the plaques illustrated in figure 1 were carried on clothes and were used in the routinization process of the cult of Seyankua, a tradition that seems to be very ancient occurring at least since 600 AC. At Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta 1.1. Use of plaques today in the town of Mompox, for the ceremony of ‘viernes santo’. 2.2. Detail of the silver plaque, probably manufactured in the XVIII century or earlier.
The Triumph of the Routinization, AD 900-1500

After AD 900, the settlement patterns of the lower Gaira, the Parque Tairona and the Upper Buritaca are similar in content and in the use of strategies of concentration into nucleated settlements. Hundreds of nucleated settlements have been discovered that date after the ninth century; all of them share the same religious icons in metallurgy, lithic and ceramic work. Two of the largest sites found have urban characteristics (water canalization, roads, terraces, clear urban planning). The first one is Pueblo located in the Parque Tairona. The other is Ciudad Perdida located in the Upper Buritaca. Both sites are monumental stone-built settlements located in the humid tropical forest. The sequence of occupation in both are similar. However, the archaeological assemblage is different in terms of the everyday life activities. Pueblo was a very unusual settlement. Its central part is characterized by several gigantic rings on which dwellings stood, and which also may have been used for public gatherings. What is more revealing is the large amount of ritual artifacts that were excavated by J. Allen Mason (1936, 1939) and G. Reichel-Dolmatoff and Alicia Duussen (1951, 1953, 1955) and Reichel-Dolmatoff (1954ab). This material led to the definition of the Tairona Culture.

Thanks to the excavations done on the ring structures, we have a good idea of the ceremonial context that is typically associated with the temples. This is the case of caches found at site 1, 31 and 32. Twenty-nine batons were found that come from the three structures that Mason recognizes as ceremonial (Mason 1931:87, 98, 1936:170-172). Thirty monolithic axes were also recovered (Mason 1936:176) and most of the broad-wing pendants were found in caches and burials in these same structures (one hundred and fifty were recovered in total). These ceremonial structures or cultic places have diameters between 15 to 24 meters, whereas the usual diameter of a ring structure used for dwellings is 3.5 to less than 6 meters.

Due to the excavation of Ciudad Perdida or Buritaca 200 we have a more refined chronology of the Upper Buritaca (Cadavid and Herrera 1985; Herrera 1985; Oyuela 1986bc). Palynological evidence as well as the settlement pattern and ceramic sequence clearly indicate that the area was colonized after AD 900. Of the several studies conducted the site of Frontera is most noteworthy, with evidence of an early occupation and possible destruction by a landslide and subsequent rebuilding. An early C-14 date places the first occupation as early as AD 660. This is the lowest site of the Upper Buritaca located 500 meters

Map 7. Settlements and road system of the Upper Buritaca Drainage system.
above sea level, with Ciudad Perdida at 1100 meters above sea level (Oyuela 1983; Cardoso 1986). All of these sites found in the upper Buritaca have clear areas that can be designated as ceremonial or used for performing rituals. However, the knowledge that we have of the artifacts associated with such areas is minimal due to the intensive looting of those areas. The reports that led to the discovery of sites such as Ciudad Perdida were due to the abundant gold artifacts that showed up in the illegal market in Santa Marta in 1975-1976.

The evidence from the Sierra Nevada reveals a pattern of continual colonization after the sixth century that seems to indicate an intensification of agricultural production and exploitation of new territories by means of terraces and road networks. Fissioning and segmentation were the likely form of colonization. The existence of multiple higher order central places in small regions separated by physiographic barriers seems to be the norm in the littoral as in the case of the Upper Buritaca. The only evidence of some higher sphere of integration above the political units seems to be expressed in the iconography of artifacts such as gold and stone offerings, as well as the architecture of cultic places that clearly indicate that a common religious cult was the only integrative factor above the political factional units of town-chiefdoms that operated in the Sierra Nevada.

**CONCLUSION**

The rise of the Tairona Religious Complex seems to be related to an environmental crisis, caused by dry climate, desertification, change of sea level and changes in estuarine production. It is clear that the settlement pattern of Gaia changed after this time. There is a growth in the number of sites located on the floodplain. For the first time, occupation of the hillsides occurs, as well as the development of the technology of terracing and road system building. The rise of cultic centers appears very clearly in the cases of Mamaron and the mound from Nahuanga. We start to see, beside the strong variation of styles of ceramics that characterize places like Cinto and Gaia before AD 600, there are the common 'imported' vessels for ritual purpose and 'imported' artifacts of greenish volcanic glass used as plaques or female figures (the Mother Goddess). Metallurgy for the first time begins to appear as sheets of gold, all with a similar pattern of a 'Father Sun'. It is my opinion that these artifacts were used in a worship that demanded offerings of exotic materials such as beads, bichrome vessels and 'jade' pendants, as well as scarce artifacts of laminated gold. These are the elements of a cult and the first evidence of worship in a broad area where the autonomy of the village continues be the norm, but religious beliefs unite farther and farther reaching areas. The only common attributes between the regions are the ceremonial artifacts such as the vessels for toasting (imported), the gold (imported), and the plaques (imported) and the existence of cultic places that are related to the worship that a priestly elite demands.

The mass production of icons, such as the 'Father Sun' in tambaga artifacts, indicates a process of routinization. However, this figure in gold or tambaga became three dimensional probably between the seventh and ninth centuries, and was saturated with symbols associated with it such as bats, birds, snakes, caimans. Sometimes the figure wears a mask. In the case of the representation of females, this continues in the ceramics (for example the urns from Gaia), but is not as far-spread as the 'male' ceremonial paraphernalia. To this ceremonial assemblage of the priestly elite is added sophisticated batons of rock, and plaques and wing pendants. Places that function as shrines are recognized for the first time in caves around the archaeological site of Pueblo, after the tenth century. Sculptures of snakes are manufactured, associated with temples.

It is very clear that the Conquest disrupted the whole pre-Hispanic system of chiefdoms. The demographic dissemination and the destruction of the whole economic system destroyed the Tairona Religious Complex'. However, most likely some remote temples survived and new crises generated from the new religious proposals that resulted in the fundamentalist theocratic chiefdom of the Kogi or Kagabu that we see today (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1950, 1951; Oyuela 1986a, 1991, 1998).

I have to stress the importance of understanding that the cosmological world is an integral part of the belief system of the everyday life of the indigenous people where the shamans’ domains are characterized by constant fear, terror or horror of a spirit world of masters and owners from which the shaman has to protect the individual. In contrast, the world of priesthood is characterized by the existence of clearly defined sacred places and times in the form of temples and shrines, where the individuals can engage in prayers and offerings to the masters and gods that control the universe. The individual cannot communicate directly with these supernatural beings. The priest manages a defined canon of offerings and prayers to help the individual pass his message to the supreme beings. But the priest cannot engage in direct communication with the supernatural world as happens with the shaman in his ecstatic journey.

The potential of the shaman as a prophet who can re-establish temporal and spatial order in response to a crisis of any origin has been argued. This is done through presenting an alternative explanation or revelation that can generate a shift in the religious system, a migration, or even conflicts with the pre-established religious system. If the messenger (the shaman) is successful, these actions can generate a routinization of the new religious system through the use of iconography, shrines, temples or what has been usually referred to as cultic places. It is at this point that the institutionalization of religion can occur and the consolidation in space and time of a religious cultural complex occurs.
To have a priestly elite does not necessarily mean to have a politically unified power. As I stated, the autonomy of chiefdoms can be maintained and is independent at times of the sharing of religious systems (Oyuela 1998). These cults or horizons of religious belief can overcome the barriers of conflictive politics and even linguistic differences, as for example the Yuruparí rituals that spread in Northwest Amazon over languages so different as Arawak (for example Yukonas) and Tucanoans (for example Desanas). There are many cases that illustrate the scale and level where the religious routinization in space over conflictive chiefdoms and other political units can be recognized. For example Helene Clastres (1995:30-37) shows that in the supra-spatial distribution of the Tupi and Guaraní eschatology, the fragmented political units were independent from the religious system of priest and prophets. The Karai (the prophets) were able to visit all the villages and even go into enemy villages due to the supra-belief of the eschatology and the need to migrate in pursuit of the 'land without evil'. In a few cases the Karai was also the chief of a province. Another aspect to take into account is that these movements sometimes recycle a previous prophetic name, as was the case of the figure of Súme, a prophet or cultural hero whose name was used by another prophet (Clastres 1995:13). This utopian renewal occurs in historical cases that help us understand the effects on the archaeological record (see Brown 1994 and Hugh-Jones 1996). We have to remember that the prophet can reappear when a shaman takes over the figure of a previous cultural hero or prophet to build a new cult or renew a previous one.

### TABLE 1

**Phases of the Lower Gaira Region and Settlement Pattern Based on Stratigraphic Context of Ceramic and Calibrated Radiocarbon Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chronology AD</th>
<th>Local Phase Variation</th>
<th>Settlement Pattern and Food Production</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500-200</td>
<td>Early Puerto Gaira</td>
<td>Small concentration of fishermen and agricultural dwellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-600</td>
<td>Late Puerto Gaira</td>
<td>First nucleated small villages oriented toward fishering and agricultural production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600-900</td>
<td>Mamoron</td>
<td>Small villages and ceremonial centers with emphasis in agriculture production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900-1500</td>
<td>Pozos Colorados</td>
<td>Hierarchy of settlements, ceremonial centers, emphasis in agriculture and salt production.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 2

**Phases of the Parque Tairona and Settlement Pattern Based on Stratigraphic Context of Ceramics and Calibrated Radiocarbon Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chronology AD</th>
<th>Local Variation</th>
<th>Settlement Pattern and Food Production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>400-600</td>
<td>Early Cinto Temprano I</td>
<td>Small village of fishermen and agriculture production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600-800</td>
<td>Early Cinto and Nahuangue I</td>
<td>Mounds and internal hierarchy of settlements. Salt production and intensive agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900-1500</td>
<td>Pueblito</td>
<td>Hierarchy of settlements and areas of cult, specialization in food production by settlements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IN MEMORY

In memory of Hernan Henao Delgado. Assassinated May 4th of 1999 at the Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín (Colombia). Another unsolved crime against the pacifists of my country.

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