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PRESS RELEASE

SPK cooperates with Colombia

The Ethnological Museum of the Berlin State Museums holds two masks from the indigenous Kogi community from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia. These objects have a ritual background and still have sacred significance for the Kogi, whose self-designation is "Kágaba". Because of this special significance, the SPK and the Embassy of Colombia in Germany have initiated conversations.

Hermann Parzinger, President of the SPK: "Having been in contact with representatives of the indigenous organization *Gonavindúa Tayrona* and the ICANH (Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History) for several years, Colombia has now asked for the return of the two masks. I hope that we will soon have clarified the remaining issues to find a solution that is appropriate for Colombia and the Kogi, with which I will then address the bodies of the Foundation as soon as possible, because the final decision on this matter must be made by the Foundation Council of the SPK. I look forward to a more intensive cooperation in other areas in the near future."

Ambassador Salazar-Mejía: "The return of the masks to Colombia is a matter of the greatest importance to us. I thank Professor Parzinger and Professor Koch for their openness and constructive discussions, which have made me very confident that the masks will soon be back in Colombia at their place of origin with the Kogi."

In addition to the masks, the joint talks also focused on a Memorandum of Understanding on the preservation of archaeological holdings and the scientific study of Colombian collections in Germany, as well as on joint research on pre-Columbian goldsmithing techniques. The Berlin State Museums will also establish a collaboration with Colombia in 2023 as part of their 2023 Residency Program, which will focus on the collection of objects in Berlin from the San Agustín culture and related objects, as well as on the archaeological and historical study of pre-Columbian gold objects at the Ethnological Museum.

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**EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA
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Ethnographic and Pre-Columbian Objects in the Collections of the Ethnological Museum.

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The two Kogi masks were acquired in 1915 by Konrad Theodor Preuss, ethnologist and curator of the Royal Museum of Ethnology, the predecessor institution of the Ethnological Museum. Preuss collected more than 700 objects on a research trip to Colombia between 1913 and 1919, of which around 440 are still conserved in the Ethnological Museum. The objects from the "Preuss Collection" were shown for a long time in the permanent exhibition of today's Ethnological Museum and occasionally in special exhibitions. In the Humboldt Forum, gold objects from this collection from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the Muisca area are shown in the module "The Value of Gold" on the second floor.

During his research stay with the Kágaba, Preuss started a small collection. In cooperation with several *mamas* (priests of the Kágaba) he also recorded myths and songs in the Kágaba language (kougian) and published them with a translation in 1926. Preuss acquired the two masks from the heir of a deceased *mama*, "thanks to a favorable opportunity," as he writes in his book "*Forschungsreise zu den Kágaba*" (1926, "Research trip to the Kágaba"). He was neither aware of the age nor the special significance of the masks. According to the tradition of the Kágaba/Kogi, the masks are inalienable objects that have been transmitted from generation to generation of *mamas*. They still have sacred significance today and are understood, among other things, as guarantors for the continuity of the reclaimed territories.

One of Preuss' central concerns was the study of the prehistoric "monolith culture" of San Agustín in southern Colombia. He published a two-volume catalog of the sculptures preserved there, some of which he excavated or just located. He made numerous casts, which were later poured in the Berlin plaster molding house (*Berliner Gipsformerei*). Preuss also brought some of the original stone sculptures from San Agustín and Briceño to Berlin, 23 of which are still preserved in the Ethnological Museum, as well as six heads of such stone sculptures.