

STYLISTIC AFFINITIES BETWEEN THE QUIMBAYA GOLD STYLE
AND A LITTLE-KNOWN CERAMIC STYLE OF THE MIDDLE
CAUCA VALLEY, COLOMBIA

Karen Olsen Bruhns

The middle reaches of the Cauca Valley of Colombia, stretching from the area around the city of Antioquia in the north to near Buga in the south, have long been famous as the homeland of a number of impressive artifacts that have, for lack of a better name, been called Quimbaya. This name comes from that of a small tribe that inhabited a rather restricted area around the modern city of Manizales at the time of the Spanish Conquest. Whether any of the artifacts called Quimbaya were actually made by the Quimbayas themselves is a moot point. The Quimbayas were a rather small group, unrelated linguistically and somewhat different culturally, from the tribes around them.¹ The Quimbayas themselves said that they had migrated from the north, perhaps from the area around the Río Sinú, and had settled in the area in which the Spanish found them.² By Pedro de Cieza de León's calculations, the migration took place a very long time before the Conquest, although this point is open to question.³ Because very little scientific excavation has been undertaken in the middle Cauca area, it is not known which of the many types of artifacts found in the region actually pertain to the historic Quimbaya. During museum research in Colombia in 1966 a series of separate ceramic styles was identified by the author.⁴ Although the analysis of the ceramics was done on purely stylistic grounds, it was possible to check the analysis with the small amount of verifiable archaeological information available and to associate some other data, such as tomb type and non-ceramic artifacts, with the various groupings. In addition, there was some added corroboration of the ceramic groups from excavations in the closely related Calima culture area directly to the south. It is not known in what temporal relationship the various groups of pottery stand. However, since all of the remains overlap in geographic distribution, it is assumed that time differences must exist. One of the groups of ceramics so isolated corresponds to the style that Wendell Bennett called Brownware Incised.⁵ This is a ware which he recognized as a distinct substyle, entirely different from the more common resist painted and appliqué and incision decorated vessels of the area. He noted that this style consists mainly of urn-like vessels, dark in color and with incised decoration. He further notes, "...One has a relief human figure on the side with modeling quite superior to the general Quimbaya." On this point further research has borne Bennett out; the relief modeled decoration found on Brownware Incised vessels does not resemble that of the other ceramic styles of the middle Cauca at all. It does, however, show startling affinities with the style of metalwork, also featuring relief human figures (as well as figures in the full round), which is likewise called Quimbaya.

Bennett in 1942 had a total sample of the Brownware Incised style of only eighteen vessels.⁶ In 1966 I managed to locate a sample roughly four times that size of urns alone, plus several related pieces

of different shapes and an entire grave group from a tomb which had been recently found in an outlying barrio of Manizales. Although this tomb had been opened by workmen looking for treasure, they had brought at least part of its contents, including an urn and four large jars with their original contents, to the Museo Antropológico de Caldas, also in Manizales. In addition, they had given the secretary there some information about the type of tomb and its layout which she very kindly passed on to me. This sample was further extended by referring to published sources, although these were of secondary value, most of the published vessels having no provenience. The expanded sample, coupled with information from the Manizales grave group and bits of information from other sources, enabled me to make a fairly detailed analysis of the ceramic type, and also made it possible to associate one of the many tomb and burial types of the Cauca Valley with this style of objects. In addition, it has been possible to outline a general range of provenience for this style. None of the pieces with sure provenience comes from outside a rather restricted area in the departments of Caldas and El Quindío (fig. 1).

The Brownware Incised style as represented in this extended sample is mainly a style of funerary urns; most of the vessels assignable to this style on stylistic grounds belong to this group.⁷ The Manizales grave group, in addition to a funerary urn with cover, contains four large jars, also used as ash containers, a small bowl, and an olla of plain, undecorated ware. A number of other jars were observed in the Museo Antropológico de Caldas, the only collection studied containing a large number of vessels of apparent domestic use. These jars could belong to this group. The lack of elaborate decoration or fine finish on vessels which were not primarily of funerary use seems to explain why mostly urns are represented in museums and private collections. Guaqueros, who have done most of the burial excavations in the area, do not bother to collect vessels which are not handsomely decorated, for these do not have a ready market. Consequently, the sample represents only the (probably) relatively small percentage of pieces made expressly for funerary purposes.

As noted, the commonest shape represented in the Brownware Incised group is an urn. It is a semicylindrical vessel whose neck opening is of approximately the same diameter as its body. Most of these urns exhibit a slight bulbousness towards the bottom, giving a flowing line most pleasing to western eyes (fig. 2). A few of the urns have pushed out protruberances on the lower quarter of the body instead of the bulbous swelling. The bottom is flattened, although not always precisely flat. The rim is always flat and ledge-like, thickened with a vertical edge (fig. 3). A decorative molding encircles the body slightly below the rim of the vessel. This molding serves a functional as well as a decorative purpose, for the lids with which these urns were originally furnished often rested upon the molding, completely covering the decorated rim. The urns vary widely in size. The largest one reported was over a meter and a half in height; the smallest are some 10 to 12 cm. tall, with an apparent average size of roughly 15 to 20 cm. All of the urns appear to have originally had lids, although often these

have been mislaid in the process of moving the urns about or are catalogued separately as "bowls" or "basins." A number of urns with their original lids and a number of isolated lids were recorded. The lid usually has a rounded top, straight sides, and a thickened and flattened rim, much like that of the urn itself (fig. 4).

A related shape, both in apparent function and in decoration, is an anthropomorphic urn (fig. 5). All specimens examined represented females. In many cases the anthropomorphic decoration was more or less simply applied to the basic urn shape, although a number of pieces exhibit true modeling of the vessel. These vessels also have the flat, ledge-like rim, but lack the decorative molding. As none was seen which retained the lid, it is not known how the lid fitted on or if, indeed, it was of the same form as the lids of the other urns. The modeling and appliqué and incised decoration which these anthropomorphic urns bear is identical to that on the other urns, as is their color and finish, so there seems to be no doubt of their association with Brownware Incised pottery. The average height of the anthropomorphic urns appears to be about 20 cm.

The other vessels which can be attached to the Brownware Incised group are not numerous. The jars of the Manizales grave group are large (ca. 60 cm.), with a globular body and a tall, narrow neck, often with modeled decoration on the neck or at its base. The jars are not particularly well finished (at least in comparison to the urns) or elaborately decorated. A fair number of similar jars was seen, and it is likely that they also should be associated with the Brownware Incised group. Several small bowls and ollas were tentatively identified as also being Brownware Incised. With the exception of the examples from the Manizales grave group, these vessels can all only be provisionally associated with the more elaborate Brownware Incised ceramics. They are rather crudely made, and many show signs of use in the fire. These dishes were very likely the domestic ware of the people who made the urns. In addition, there are a few anthropomorphic or zoomorphic dishes which seem, on stylistic grounds, to belong to this group. No figurines in this style were identified.

All of the vessels seem to have been constructed by coiling, as is typical of the prehistoric ceramics of the middle Cauca Valley whatever their stylistic affiliation. The coils seem to have been built up from a flat pancake of clay which formed the bottom of the urn or jar. The coils were carefully smoothed on both the inside and outside of the vessel, although faint traces of them can be seen by holding the vessels against a strong light or felt by running the fingers lightly down the vessel, particularly on the interior. The moldings were evidently made of coils which were applied to the vessel and then cut and shaped. Relief decoration was likewise formed of coils or flat cut outs of clay applied and smoothed onto the vessel wall. The anthropomorphic urns and other vessels exhibit the same kind of construction.

Most of these vessels are more or less reduced in firing. Unlike other ceramic groups of the middle Cauca, this reduction seems to

have been intentional, for practically all of the vessels exhibit an even, dark tone. A substantial number of vessels was lightly smoked, producing a black surface. The normal color is, however, a drak red brown, sometimes tending towards a chocolate brown. The paste is tannish to greyish, with the smoked vessels having a dark gray paste. A few pieces, mainly jars and small utilitarian pieces, are oxidized. All pieces have a sand temper. A significant number has a micaceous sand temper; that of the other vessels is fairly evenly divided between quartz sand and a quartz sand mixed with black obsidian particles.⁸ The temper is moderate; perhaps 10 to 15% of the clay body.

All of the urns, both plain and anthropomorphic, the dishes, and some of the jars were slipped and polished. More of the jars were merely smoothed and given a very low burnish, while other small vessels are only slightly smoothed. It appears that vessels made for funerary or ceremonial use were much better finished and elaborately decorated than those intended for domestic purposes.

The decoration of the urns follows certain very specific canons. The rim is always flat, projecting slightly beyond the vessel wall. The outer edge of the rim is almost invariably flat too, although the inner edge may slope imperceptibly into the interior wall (fig. 3). The outer edge is often decorated with little incised ticks, punched circles, or excised triangular depressions, also small in size. Below the rim on the upper quarter of the body is a projecting molding upon which the lid usually rests. This molding was formed by pushing the vessel wall outwards while the clay was still damp and thickening the resulting bulge with an applied coil of clay, smoothed carefully so that the join is invisible. This molding may form a flattish shelf ticked to match the rim, or it may be cut and pulled to form vertical scallops or points (fig. 2). On some vessels double rows of projecting scallops or flutes may be used as decoration. On a few of the plainer urns the molding is not decoratively shaped but is merely smoothed off to make a plain, projecting ridge. The body of the urn below the molding is then usually covered with vertical bands of incised decoration. At times a white paste was rubbed into the incisions, although this practice does not seem to have been general. The incision is very shallow and appears to have been scratched in when the vessel was quite dry. The vertical bands are most commonly filled with carelessly scratched V's and X's, sometimes forming a herringbone pattern. Filled bands usually alternated with empty ones. If the molding is scalloped or notched the vertical stripes are usually matched up with these projections, the incised line forming the boundary of the decoration starting between the scallops or points. The regular placement of the stripes of ornament and the very scratchy, careless quality of the filler designs are typical of this ware. A few pieces are more elaborately decorated with modeling. On some pieces this modeling takes the form of modeled fluting on the body, the flatter areas between the flutes being filled with the usual scratchy designs. Other vessels have a second molding on the lower part of the body where the walls were pushed outwards to give the vessel its slightly bulbous shape. This second molding does not seem to have fulfilled any functional purpose. Other pieces decorated with modeling usually have applied heads

located at regular intervals around the top molding. These faces are often flanked by slightly modeled upraised arms with incised hands, as if they were holding the lid which fitted onto the molding. A very few vessels have full figures placed around the vessels in low relief (fig. 6). Both the full figures and the faces are in the same style. The faces are more or less triangular, with slanted slit eyes and a slit mouth incised in the clay. Both eyes and mouth have a raised edge; the eyes are often of the "coffee-bean" type. The nose is generally large and naturalistically formed. It seldom has an ornament, although some noses are pierced, and the former existence of a metal ornament is not impossible.⁹ An appliqué headband with incised detail, apparently representing some sort of plaiting or braiding, is placed across the forehead or at the top of the face. The arms, or in the case of whole figures, the entire body, are modeled in low relief, apparently by applying bits of clay of appropriate shapes to the vessel wall and smoothing and modeling them while in place. The body is usually in somewhat higher relief and shows more attention to detail than the limbs. Details are indicated by modeling, incision, and some punching. All figures seen were female, naked, but with arm and leg bands and ligatures. Individual pieces vary greatly in the quality of the modeling. Some are very schematic and stylized, while others are carefully modeled, especially on the face. The full-figure decorated urns generally display more care in modeling than the ones with only faces.

The urn lids are decorated in a similar manner. The vertical sides usually have simple scratched vertical lines or herringbones (fig. 4). A few have fluted sides. One example had a modeled and scalloped rim like the scalloped molding seen on some urns. Similar scalloping or notching is seen on the band commonly applied as decoration around the necks of jars associated with Brownware Incised pottery. The jars may also have a little fluting or incised decoration on the neck in the style of the urns, although this practice seems uncommon. One jar from Manizales had the remains of dark red paint on the upper part of the neck. This was the only piece of Brownware Incised pottery observed which had any painted decoration.

The effigy urns seem to have been formed by coiling a vessel of the same shape as the non-anthropomorphic urns, modifying it slightly, and applying the effigy features to this modified shape. All the anthropomorphic urns seen represented females, apparently squatting or seated on a bench with the legs dangling.¹⁰ The urn opening has the same rim shape and decoration as the non-anthropomorphic vessels. Usually the appliqué face is placed just below the rim. This face has the same shape and features as the faces on the non-effigy urns. It is cut out of a piece of thickish clay and stuck on with slip. The shoulders and thighs were formed by pushing the damp vessel wall outwards and are rather bulbous in appearance. The solid arms and lower legs were made of an applied roll of clay smoothed onto the vessel wall. The arms are shown bent at the elbows and with the forearms usually flanking the face. On one example the shoulder and thigh were decorated with incised cross-hatching.¹¹ The breasts are indicated by applied pellets, and the navel is shown by a round, shallow indentation in the middle of the body,

probably made with the end of a stick. Digits, bracelets, anklets, ligatures on the arms and legs, the crease at the bottom of the stomach, and the vulva are all represented by incised lines.

Two effigy dishes of the same style as the anthropomorphic urns were seen. One represents a female lying on her back with the dish opening in the center of her body. The thighs and shoulders are very bulbous, but the representation of the lower limbs is almost rudimentary. The bent arms of the female hold the dish opening. The other dish stands on a high annular base, a feature not observed on other Brownware Incised vessels. An applied triangular head, almost identical to that of the first dish and of the same style as the heads of the urns, is placed on one end of the vessel; at the other end a fish-like tail replaces the stylized limbs and incised genitals of the other dish. Two fins are modeled on either side of the vessel.¹²

Double vessels do not seem to be at all common in Brownware Incised pottery. Only one example was observed in the entire sample. This vessel consists of two very small urns joined by a short piece of clay and standing on small tetrapod feet pushed out from the interior of the vessel.¹³ The tetrapod feet are unusual too, although polypod and double vessels are known from other ceramic groups of the middle Cauca, as well as from many of the other ancient cultures of Colombia. This double urn is so small that, if it was a chinerary urn, it must have been intended for the remains of an infant or infants or, perhaps, for part of a body. Given the range of funerary practices in prehistoric times in the Cauca Valley, as well as the emphasis on cannibalism and trophy taking, either is a distinct possibility.

Archaeological information concerning the people who made the Brownware Incised pottery is almost entirely lacking. There are no occupation sites or non-ceramic artifacts that can be archaeologically associated with them. In at least one instance, in Manizales, they buried their cremated dead in a rectangular tomb of several chambers. The four jars and the one lidded urn from this tomb were all full of ashes and bits of charred bone. Lack of time and facilities made it impossible to have tests made to see if all this ash and bone was human. A rudimentary comparison with cremated remains from other ancient burials in Manizales demonstrates that, if these ashes were all human remains, each of the jars must contain the remains of more than one individual. Arango C. mentions many times that multiple burial was extremely common in the tombs he looted, so it is quite possible that the Brownware Incised people also practiced multiple or retainer burial, cremating the bodies rather than interring them.¹⁴ As has been mentioned, many of the urns are large enough to have contained multiple cremations or even secondary or primary burials.

Dating this pottery is difficult. It is not known how the Quimbaya themselves disposed of their dead, although there is some suggestion that it was by burial.¹⁵ If this was so, then the Brownware Incised pottery cannot belong to the historic Quimbaya. Because the places where these urns have been found often fall well within the known

Quimbaya territory, it seems likely, then, that they predate the Quimbaya (fig. 7). On the basis of current evidence, admittedly incomplete, this ceramic assemblage may date somewhat before 500 A.D. The resist painted pottery of the Quimbaya regions has much the same distribution as Brownware. This pottery is related, at least in its earlier phases, to that of the Calima culture directly to the south. There are, in fact, many Calima trade pieces found with the ones of "Quimbaya" manufacture. The Calima resist pottery is radiocarbon dated to somewhere between 800 and 1000 A.D.; later dates on the same style carry it through to at least 1300 A.D. and perhaps later.¹⁶ If these dates are applicable also to the Quimbaya resist painted wares, this dating then leaves practically no time for the Brownware Incised style to have flourished and disappeared before the historic Quimbaya, with an unidentified style of ceramics and a different mode of disposal of the dead, came down from the north and occupied the same territory. Since there was another style of pottery in the "Quimbaya" area which is probably ancestral to the resist wares, the Brownware Incised style ought to date before 800 A.D. How much before this date is anybody's guess. Some time before 500 A.D. but perhaps after the turn of the millenium would be reasonable. This date corresponds to Root's guess dates of 400 to 700 A.D. for what he calls "Classic Quimbaya" in metal.¹⁷ Any more secure dating will have to await scientific excavations in the middle Cauca Valley.

In addition to the several ceramic styles found in the middle Cauca Valley, there are a number of styles of metal artifacts. Because many of these objects are of gold or gold alloys such as tumbaga, treasure hunting has been widespread in the Cauca Valley. It is to the treasure hunters that we owe the vast majority of collections of both ceramic and other artifacts as well as the almost total lack of any sort of provenience or other information about the cultures that produced these artifacts. Metal work, although better publicized in art books, is as little known as the pottery in many ways. Several descriptive works, mainly illustrated catalogues of collections, have been published on the goldwork of the Cauca Valley.¹⁸ In addition there are illustrations and descriptions available for single pieces or for small groups of pieces in museum and private collections. However, no detailed analysis of Quimbaya goldwork considering stylistic features and archaeological matters which attempts a rigorous definition of the style has appeared. Pérez de Barradas in his monumental Orfebrería prehispánica de Colombia has done some work in this direction, but to date there has been no intensive analysis of the goldwork nor any attempt to set up stylistic or cultural groupings except on the most superficial grounds of resemblance.¹⁹ The problem is complicated by the fact that the major goldwork styles of Colombia all have much the same distribution. Thus goldwork called Tolima, Calima, Quimbaya, and Darien are actually found in most of the same areas. Because all the collections are derived from the work of professional or amateur treasure hunters, there are almost no archaeological data accompanying any of the metal work. The Quimbaya style is no exception. It is rather loosely recognized as being that style of goldwork which is found mainly in the Cauca Valley with the majority of the sites known being in the

departments of Caldas, Risaralda, El Quindío, Valle, Tolima, and Antioquia (fig. 7). It consists mainly of cast pieces of gold or tumbaga in contrast to, for example, the Calima style which is mainly sheet metal work. Most of the pieces called Quimbaya are flasks, anthropomorphic flasks or bottles, helmets, or small heads which apparently once formed parts of necklaces or clothing decoration. There are also a few unusual pieces such as spear throwers and trumpets. Although there is an abundance of smaller objects from the same area, these are not usually included in the Quimbaya style because of the difficulty of associating them stylistically with the other, more elaborate pieces. Ear and nose rings, nose pendants, metal plaques, and arm and leg bands are all very common finds in this geographic area. These ornaments are often of baser metal, but many examples of gold and silver are known. It is obvious, if only from anthropomorphic representations, that these pieces must correspond in some way to the culture which produced the Quimbaya pieces, but without archaeological associations it is impossible to say where and with what other materials they belong. There are also a number of pieces which are stylistically intermediate between some of the art styles; the Quimbaya style fades into both the Calima and Darien styles, with pieces showing features of both being fairly common. Whether the relationship is a regional or a temporal one is not known. For the purposes of stylistic comparison it has proved necessary to use just those pieces which most people familiar with Colombian antiquity would call Quimbaya; those which exhibit such congruity of peculiar traits that there is little doubt that they were all made by the same people within a fairly short period of time. No attempt has been made to utilize or analyze pieces which are closely related to the Quimbaya ones but seem to exhibit features belonging to other styles as well.

The two main collections used in this study were the collection of the Museo del Oro of the Banco de la República in Bogotá, as published by Pérez de Barradas, Carli, and others, and the so-called "Tesoro de los Quimbayas," a single grave lot from a tomb in the municipio of Finlandia and now in the Museo de América in Madrid.²⁰ In addition many single pieces in North American and European collections that exhibit the distinctive set of traits that label them Quimbaya were used.

The technology of ancient Colombian metallurgy has been well studied; much better studied, in fact, than the objects as representatives of separate styles or the cultures to which they pertain.²¹ Consequently there is no need to describe the processes of manufacture in any detail. Most of the Quimbaya objects are cast, although hammering and repoussé work are known. Many objects are of pure gold, and many, perhaps more, are of tumbaga, a gold-copper alloy. Mise en couleur gilding was practiced, although seemingly to a lesser extent than in other Colombian metallurgical traditions. Most of the objects exhibit a high degree of finish. They have been smoothed and polished after casting, and any imperfections have been carefully repaired. This is in direct contrast to some other traditions, such as that of the Chibchas, whose metal pieces were left as rough as they came out of the mold.

Diagnostic of the Quimbaya style is the representation of serenely smiling human beings in a variety of quiescent poses. Most of these are figures in the round; usually the figures form a flask with a small neck in the top of the head.²² Some figures are in relief, either on flasks of cast metal (fig. 8) or on helmets or crowns of sheet gold in repoussé work. There are a number of pieces which represent the face only (fig. 9); these may be small, as if they were intended to be strung as a necklace or sewn onto cloth, or they may be large enough to be separate ornaments. Both male and female figures are known, although there seems to be a slight preponderance of females. This preponderance, however, may simply be a function of the small sample. Both male and female representations have plump, softly rounded bodies with small hands and feet. Sexual differentiation is so slight in most figures that the only difference is in the genitals. Both sexes carry the same sorts of objects and wear much the same jewelry. The shoulders are commonly quite broad and square. An undeformed head has a broad, triangular face. Facial planes may be carefully modeled or quite stylized. There is a tendency towards more stylization or simplification in the small faces and on the repoussé figures. All figures have a simple headdress, usually a headband or some sort of plaiting that is tied around the forehead. It may occasionally be placed a little higher as if it were tied on like a hair ribbon. No hair is represented. Facial features are regular, although definitely stylized. A fairly long, narrow nose is common, usually with a nose ornament. These ornaments may be pendants of various shapes, or studs in the nostrils, or many small rings through the septum. The eyes are always shown closed or semi-closed. They are shown as ling slits, either horizontal or slanting, with modeled edges giving an appearance of puffiness in some examples. The mouth is loosely closed, with slightly modeled lips; most of the figures seem to be smiling in a very restrained way. The total resemblance of the facial expression to certain East Indian depictions of the Buddha has often been remarked. One specimen, the so-called death mask in the British Museum, has an open mouth with filed teeth showing between the parted, smiling lips.²³ Sometimes there is a little incised or raised decoration on the face, perhaps depicting tatooes. Most of the figures have large, simply modeled ears with multiple earrings through the lobe and cartilage. Body details are very simple. All of the figures are naked except for their jewelry. Body and limb modeling is stylized and simplified, although remaining well within the realm of "naturalism." All of the figures are plump. One example of a pregnant or obese female is known; there are no diseased or deformed individuals represented.²⁴ Jewelry usually consists of, in addition to the ear and nose rings, bracelets, anklets, and calf and sometimes upper arm ligatures. The ligatures and other limb ornaments are usually shown as made of some kind of braided or twined material similar to that of the headband. The necklaces or collars are rather stylized but seem to represent strings of beads of various shapes.²⁵ Some figures have small flasks hung about their necks on one of the strands of the necklace. These flasks are identical in shape to non-anthropomorphic metal flasks of the Quimbaya style. The scale is that of a real flask to a real human being. Some figures hold palm (?) branches or other small devices in one or both hands. Others hold small

flasks or a flask and a spatula in their hands. This fact suggests some connection of the flasks with coca chewing.²⁶ That the makers of these little anthropoid containers intended some degree of realism in their representation is evident in the jewelry they wear, which is identical to real jewelry found in tombs of the middle Cauca Valley, and in the often very careful delineation of the plaiting or braiding of the headbands and body ornaments of the figures. It has not yet proved possible to identify the spiral ornaments held in the hands with any known artifacts from the area. This fact is not surprising, since the artifact inventory from the area is limited to what the treasure hunters think they can sell and to non-perishable items in general.

In addition to the various anthropomorphic representations, there are a number of nonrepresentational artifacts in this style. Their association with the Quimbaya style is certain, both on grounds of their representation on some of the little figures and because there is at least one instance of primary association with the figures (the Tesoro de los Quimbayas). Commonest among these artifacts are little flasks with narrow necks and lobed bodies. Some of these are identical in shape to flasks with relief figures on them. There are also little flasks similar to those held by the figures and objects of unknown use usually called lids or jar stands.²⁷ Some of the flasks have rings attached to them, presumably so they could be worn suspended around the neck as is seen on some of the figures. A few examples of "trumpets" and spear throwers are known. These objects often have anthropomorphic relief decoration in the same style as the flasks. This very limited set of artifacts completes the known inventory of Quimbaya metal objects. As has been mentioned, there are many small objects, such as bells and simple jewelry, both in precious metals and copper, that were found in the middle Cauca and probably pertain at least partly to the Quimbaya. To date, though, there are no reliable data to associate any of these unquestionably with the more elaborate metal work. What is even more unfortunate is that there is no archaeological information on any of the Quimbaya metal pieces except for an occasional vague provenience. The only grave group is the Tesoro de los Quimbayas, and even for this we have no reliable information on any of the other grave goods that may have been found with the gold. According to Arango, the major source for archaeological information for this area, most tombs contained, besides their gold and the bodies of the dead, many other artifacts.²⁸ There were usually ceramic pieces, weapons, and occasionally large items like canoes or furniture. Arango also mentions that textiles occasionally survived. Although Arango's descriptions of the artifacts are too vague to identify most of the ceramic or gold styles he found, he does give enough information to suggest that the position of the artifacts in the tomb was important in terms of identifying principal personages buried and in terms of other practices. From Arango it becomes evident that multiple burial, retainer burial, and ossuaries were all common among the several aboriginal cultures of this area. Unfortunately, we have none of this sort of information for the Tesoro de los Quimbayas or for any of the other Quimbaya gold pieces.

The lack of archaeological information for this important

style of metal objects means that the only way to arrive at any sort of information about other aspects of the culture of the people who made the metal work is to compare the metal objects stylistically with other artifacts having the same distribution in space. This approach was more or less impossible for a long time, because studies of other aspects of the ancient cultures of the middle Cauca Valley were even scarcer than studies of the metal working. My analysis of the ancient pottery of the middle Cauca Valley, while admittedly incomplete, indicated several things. The first was that the gold style called Quimbaya bore little resemblance to the more common ceramics also called Quimbaya, that is, the relatively abundant resist painted wares. Anthropomorphic representation is well developed in these ceramic traditions and is of a totally different style from that of the metal pieces. While it is not unknown for a people to have very different modes of representation in different media, it is uncommon for there to be no stylistic points of contact. Therefore, it seemed that, pending major evidence to the contrary, the Quimbaya gold style probably was not directly connected with the resist painted ware. Much the same situation pertained for the other major group of ceramics isolated. When comparing the gold style to the group of ceramics which, following Bennett, I have called Brownware Incised, however, the situation was very different. Allowing for the different properties of gold (or gold alloy) and clay, the similarities between the anthropomorphic decoration on the two classes of artifacts are too close to be accidental.

In comparing the gold with the ceramic artifacts the first thing one notices is that the shape categories appear to be mutually exclusive. This fact is not surprising, considering the different media and, apparently, the different functions of the artifacts. Some of the anthropomorphic gold and tumbaga flasks are occasionally, however, referred to in the literature as being cinerary vessels. Lacking references to the circumstances in which these articles were found, it is hard to say whether they were actually used as cinerary vessels or whether we are simply dealing with another terminological convention. Most of the Brownware Incised vessels appear to have functioned as cinerary or funerary urns. There are some correspondences, albeit very vague ones, in a tendency towards lobed decoration in both ceramic and metal vessels, but the main correspondences are, as I have said, in the anthropomorphic decoration, both in its style and in its placement on the vessels. When either the metal flasks or the clay urns are decorated with relief figures, these are placed in fairly low relief against the sides of the vessel. Usually the figures are placed singly between the projecting lobes (fig. 6, 8). The flasks, being smaller, tend to have only two figures, while the larger and rounder urns may have four. The poses of these figures are the same: standing with the legs somewhat apart and the arms at the sides or bent at the elbow and held across the body. Some of the figures on the urns seem to be shown as if they were seated on a bench or stool with the legs hanging down, a common pose of the metal figures. In most cases the figures are naked females. Resemblances are somewhat less between the metal figures and the anthropomorphic urns, perhaps because of the subordination of the body shape to function in the case of the urns. In the more stylized manifestations

of the style the resemblances are more striking. There is an almost exact identity between the small detached heads of metal and the appliqué heads of clay that decorate some of the urns and form the heads of the anthropomorphic urns.

Comparisons in matters of detail are more effective than overall appearance. The shape of the head, particularly that of the detached or appliqué examples, is the same: more or less triangular, with rather little modeling of the facial planes except for the high cheek bones, which are often accentuated. The shape of the face is much the same on the relief figures as well. As there have been no figurines identified for the Brownware Incised style, it is impossible to compare the heads of figures in the round in clay and metal. However, the general shape of the face is the same in both. In all cases the eyes are closed or only slightly open and are represented by a slit with raised edges. On the better modeled clay and metal examples, the eye treatment is modified a bit to show a rather swollen upper eyelid, as is found in some American and Mongolian groups today. The eyes are relatively long and may be slanted at an exaggerated angle, again particularly in the detached heads and appliqué faces. What seem to be representations of facial tattooing are found both in clay and in metal, though more elaborately executed in the latter medium. Although the clay and metal figures wear identical headdresses and limb ligatures, jewelry as such is found only on metal examples. This may be due to the difficulty of executing very fine details such as the jewelry in clay and to their fragility when fired. Elaborate ornaments in cast metal would be easier to form and less likely to break off. On the other hand, it is not impossible to do very fine work in clay nor is there any technological reason why the artist could not have rendered the simple, low relief necklace in clay. In any case, clay figures are somewhat simpler in execution than the metal ones, and this simplification is reflected in the amount of jewelry on the figures.

On all anthropomorphic representations the hands and feet are shown as being unnaturally small, and the individual fingers and toes are shown by an incised or indented line. The extremities of the clay figures were usually formed by smoothing off the end of the applied clay roll of the leg and incising the digits, but sometimes small feet were formed of separate pieces of clay and applied to the appropriate place. The hands and feet of the metal figures were cast separately and soldered on.

Body proportions in all the full figure representations are much the same. As has just been mentioned, the hands and feet are very small, perhaps corresponding to some local ideal of beauty. Limbs are of the "normal" length; the common New World convention of a relatively large head, thickset body, and short limbs is not very common in Quimbaya art. The shoulders of all figures are very broad and square; this, in fact, along with the tiny hands and feet, seems to be the most common and pronounced stylization of the style. Both limbs and body are plump with smooth, flowing surfaces. There is little or no difference in the representation of the breasts between male and female figures. However, on all figures, whether metal or clay (and including the anthropomorphic

urns), the nipples are shown by a small pellet. This pellet was applied on the clay vessels, cast in one piece with the metal ones.

The same set of stylizations pertain for the lower body in both clay and metal. The navel is shown by a rather large, shallow, circular indentation. The line at the bottom of the abdomen is shown by an impressed or incised line. In the case of female figures (there are no male figures in clay) the vulva is a broad, flat, triangular or trapezoidal area bisected by an incised vertical line.

It is particularly interesting that there should be so many correspondences of detail between the metal and clay representations. In most comparisons of one ancient art style with another (particularly if the cultures are widely separated in space) the comparison is done on the basis of overall resemblance or, at most, on the correspondence of one or two details. It seems, however, that the minor details of an art style often show the greatest conservatism and the greatest carry-over between the different media. The Quimbaya gold style and the Brownware Incised pottery do not strike one immediately as being greatly similar, particularly because there is so much difference in color, texture, and size. In details of anthropomorphic decoration they are extremely similar, notwithstanding the differences of overall impression. The greater range of subject and the elaboration of representations in the metal work can, I believe, be laid to differences both in basic material and in function. If one compares the function of the metal figures with the supposed function of anthropomorphic pieces from other cultures of the middle Cauca Valley, the elaboration of the metal figures is not surprising. In these other ceramic styles the anthropomorphic figures (often flasks or jars) often have much more elaboration of detail than the anthropomorphic decoration on other pieces in the same ware. It is significant that there seem to be no figurines or figurine/flasks in the Brownware Incised style though these are prominent in most of the other ceramic styles of the area. If one assumes that the metal figures of the Quimbaya style take the place of the ceramic figures of other cultures, one perhaps can see some cultural reason for the greater elaboration of the metal figures as compared to the purely decorative anthropomorphic decoration in clay. It may also be pertinent that male figures are relatively common in other middle Cauca cultures in clay, while in the Quimbaya/Brownware Incised group they are found only in metal. In any case, the similarities between the style of human representation in the Brownware Incised ceramics and the Quimbaya gold style seem too numerous and pronounced to be due only to chance. Moreover, these similarities are much greater than those existing between either the metalwork or the ceramics and any now known art style of the middle Cauca Valley. There is the possibility that the similarities may be due to some temporal or trade connection and do not reflect different aspects of the culture of the same people. This is an objection which cannot be answered in the light of present information, and the possibility should be kept in mind. The much greater geographic range of the gold pieces can, I believe, be explained by the portability of the metal objects and their apparent wide appeal to foreign peoples. Finds of various styles of Colombian goldwork have been claimed for as far north

as Honduras and Yucatan. Some of these finds may be Quimbaya or at least from the middle Cauca Valley.²⁹ Ceramics are not as portable and, in this case, where they seem to have been made for a specific, funerary purpose, there was probably little incentive to try to export them, since, considering the range of funeral customs at any one time in Colombia, the likelihood would be that most of the prospective customers would dispose of their dead in a different manner.

The problem of exact associations between the Quimbaya gold style and other cultural traits remains, however. Stylistic comparison, while valuable when there is no other evidence or for reasons of internal differentiation of process, can never give as convincing groupings as associations in the ground. What is really needed to clear up the problems of the Quimbaya and their neighbors is for someone to start excavating in the area, to find living sites and, hopefully, some tombs missed by the guaqueros. It is only in this way that the questions of the associations of the various artifacts from the middle Cauca Valley will finally be answered for certain.

NOTES

¹Cieza de León, 1849, p. 375; Friede, 1963, ch. 1.

²Henao and Vélez, 1913.

³Cieza de León, 1945, p. 376

⁴Bruhns, ms.

⁵Bennett, 1944, p. 76.

⁶Bennett, 1944, p. 77.

⁷The urns may have had other, non-funerary purposes. A large lidded urn, now in the museum of the Banco de la República in Manizales (collection of the heirs of Santiago Vélez Arango) was reportedly found filled with beans. Although this piece too was found in a tomb, it is quite possible that the urns were used for storage.

⁸Attempts to infer the provenience of vessels from their temper proved only partly successful. Almost all pieces with a temper of white quartz and black obsidian sand come from Manizales; other types of sand temper could not be so localized. However, no rigorous analysis of the tempering material was carried out, nor was any attempt made to locate ancient sources of sand or clay.

⁹Clay figures from other middle Cauca archaeological cultures occasionally have metal nose rings and other ornaments.

¹⁰A kneeling female is represented on one of the urns in the collection of the Museo Nacional in Bogotá. In this example, the legs are modeled separately and are hollow. However, the entire lower half of the vessel is reconstructed in plaster, and there is no way of telling if the reconstructed part shows the original form or represents modern artistic license.

¹¹Museo Nacional catalogue no. 38-I-1088.

¹²The zoomorphic dish is illustrated in Nachtigall, 1961, p. 320.

¹³Nachtigall, 1961, p. 320.

¹⁴Arango C., 1924.

¹⁵Cieza de León, 1849, ch. XII.

¹⁶Bray, 1966 and personal communication.

¹⁷Root, 1961, pp. 254-255; cf. also Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1965, p. 45.

¹⁸e.g. Carli, 1957; Lavachéry, 1929, etc.

¹⁹Pérez de Barradas, 1954, 1958, 1966.

²⁰This grave was opened in 1891. Its contents, or part of them, were given to the Queen of Spain in 1892. This collection has never been completely published. It is said to contain over 130 gold pieces including five gold figures, a helmet, and an incense burner.

²¹Bergsøe, 1937, 1938; Pérez de Barradas, 1954, 1958, 1966; Root, 1961.

²²Anthropomorphic vessels of unknown use with an opening in the top of the head are characteristic of a number of middle Cauca cultures.

²³This piece is illustrated in Pérez de Barradas, 1966, fig. 11.

²⁴Illustrated in Jouffroy, 1958, p. 91.

²⁵Small stone and shell beads of various shapes, along with metal ones, are among the commonest archaeological finds from this area. Presumably some of them were originally strung into necklaces similar to those shown on the gold figures.

²⁶Coca cultivation was widespread in Colombia at the time of the Spanish Conquest. Preservation of organic remains is very poor in Colombia in general and in the Cauca Valley in particular due to the humid climate. This fact, coupled with the lack of scientific excavation, has resulted in there being no actual remains of coca itself from this area. However, the paraphernalia used for coca chewing are very similar all over South America, and include besides something to hold the coca leaves, a small flask (of gourd or some other material) to hold the lime chewed with the coca and a spatula to remove the lime from the container. There seems to be no other use for this particular group of artifacts. Since the Spanish reported that the rich men or chiefs of the Cauca Valley used gold vessels to drink out of, there seems to be no reason to assume that they might not have used gold vessels to keep their lime in too, if they were rich enough. For coca use in Colombia cf. Uscátegui Mendoza, 1954.

²⁷One figure, illustrated in Nachtigall, 1961, p. 541, has a lid on its head, the whole figure forming a lid. Also some gold figures hold flasks topped with stoppers very like these lids. It is not inconceivable that they actually were stoppers, either for some of the gold flasks or for flasks of perishable material.

²⁸Arango C., 1924.

²⁹Stone and Balser, 1965; Lothrop, 1952.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arango C., Luis
 1924 Recuerdos de la guaquería en el Quindío. Editorial de Cromos, Luis Tamayo y Cía., Bogotá. (cover dated 1929)
- Bennett, Wendell Clark
 1944 Archeological regions of Colombia: a ceramic survey. Yale University Publications in Anthropology, no. 30. New Haven.
- Bergsøe, Paul
 1937 The metallurgy and technology of gold and platinum among the pre-columbian Indians. Ingeniorvidenskabelige Skrifter, Nr. A 44, Copenhagen.
- 1938 The gilding process and the metallurgy of copper and lead among the pre-columbian Indians. Ingeniorvidenskabelige Skrifter, Nr. A 46. Copenhagen.
- Bray, Warwick Michael
 1966 Archaeology of the middle Cauca Valley, Central Andes, Colombia. American Philosophical Society, Yearbook 1965, pp. 485-487. Philadelphia.
- Bruhns, Karen Olsen
 ms. Ancient pottery of the middle Cauca Valley, Colombia. Ph.D. dissertation in Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, 1967.
- Carli, Enzo
 1957 Pre-conquest goldsmiths' work of Colombia in the Museo del Oro, Bogotá [sic]. William Heinemann Ltd., London.
- Friede, Juan
 1963 Los Quimbayas bajo la dominación española; estudio documental (1539-1810). Banco de la República, Bogotá.
- Henao, José Tomás, and others
 1913 Quimbayas y Pijaos. José Tomás Henao and Santiago Vélez; Ramón Correa and Emilio Robledo. Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades, año VIII, núm. 94, marzo, pp. 613-618. Bogotá.
- Jouffroy, Alain
 1958 Le trésor des Quimbayas. Connaissance des Arts, no. 76, juin, pp. 88-93 and cover. Paris.
- Lavachery, Henri Alfred
 1929 Les arts anciens d'Amérique au Musée Archéologique de Madrid. Editions "De Sikkell," Anvers.

Lothrop, Samuel Kirkland

- 1952 Metals from the cenote of sacrifice, Chichen Itza, Yucatan. With sections by W. C. Root and Tatiana Proskouriakoff and an appendix by William Harvey. *Memoirs of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University*, vol. X, no. 2. Cambridge.

Nachtigall, Horst

- 1961 *Indianerkunst der Nord-Anden; Beiträge zur ihrer Typologie.* Dietrich Reimer Verlag, Berlin.

Pérez de Barradas, José

- 1954 *Orfebrería prehispánica de Colombia; estilo Calima.* Obra basada en el estudio de las colecciones del Museo del Oro del Banco de la República, Bogotá. Madrid. 2 vols.
- 1958 *Orfebrería prehispánica de Colombia; estilos Tolima y Muisca.* Obra basada en el estudio de las colecciones del Museo del Oro del Banco de la República, Bogotá. Madrid. 2 vols.
- 1966 *Orfebrería prehispánica de Colombia; estilos Quimbaya y otros.* Obra basada en el estudio de las colecciones del Museo del Oro del Banco de la República, Bogotá. Madrid. 2 vols.

Reichel-Dolmatoff, Gerardo

- 1965 *Colombia. Ancient People and Places*, 44. Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, New York.

Root, William Campbell

- 1961 *Pre-Columbian metalwork of Colombia and its neighbors. Essays in pre-Columbian art and archaeology*, by Samuel K. Lothrop and others, pp. 242-257. Harvard University Press. Cambridge.

Stone, Doris, and Balser, Carlos

- 1965 *Incised slate disks from the Atlantic watershed of Costa Rica.* *American Antiquity*, vol. 30, no. 3, January, pp. 310-329. Salt Lake City.

Uscátegui Mendoza, Néstor

- 1954 *Contribución al estudio de la masticación de las hojas de coca.* *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, vol. III, pp. 208-289. Bogotá.

KEY TO ILLUSTRATIONS

Plate XXXII

Fig. 1. Map of western Colombia showing the municipios where Brownware Incised vessels have been found.

Plate XXXIII

Fig. 2. Group of Brownware Incised urns in the collection of the heirs of Santiago Vélez Arango, Banco de la República, Manizales.

Plate XXXIV

Fig. 3. Silhouette of a Brownware Incised urn. Height 26.6 cm.

Fig. 4. Lid from Brownware Incised urn. Height 12 cm., diameter 34 cm. Museo Antropológico de Caldas, Manizales.

Fig. 5. Anthropomorphic Brownware Incised urn. Collection of Dr. Feliz Henao Toro, Manizales.

Plate XXXV

Fig. 6. Brownware Incised urn with relief figures. Museo Nacional, Bogotá. Photograph courtesy of the Museum.

Plate XXXVI

Fig. 7. Table of areas in which Quimbaya style gold ornaments have been found.

Plate XXXVII

Fig. 8. Tumbaga anthropomorphic phial. Photograph courtesy of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania.

Fig. 9. Yellow tumbaga mask in the Museo del Oro, Banco de la República, Bogotá. Photograph reproduced by permission of the Museum.

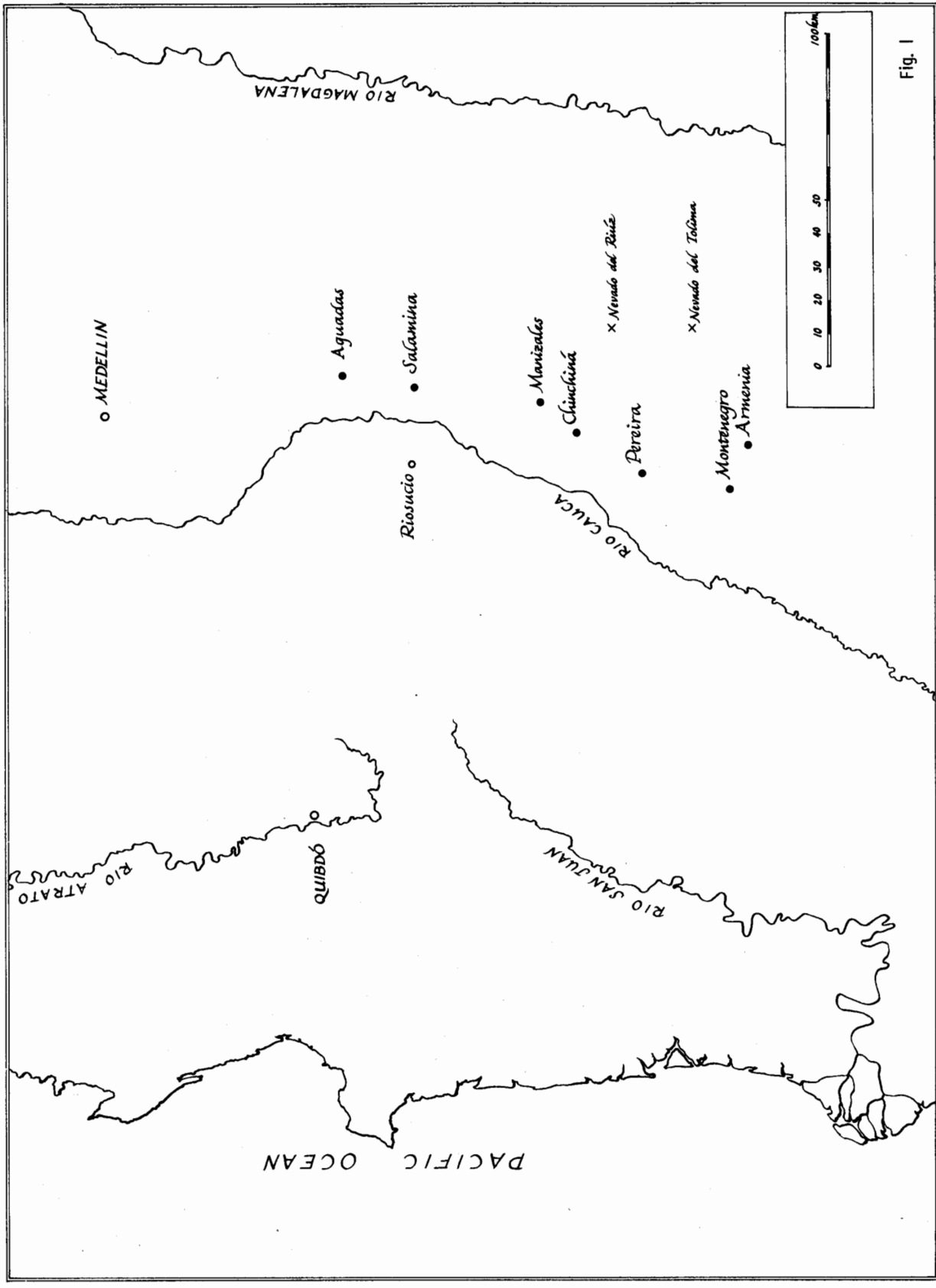


Fig. 1

Plate XXXII. Municipios in western Colombia where Brownware Incised vessels have been found.



Plate XXXIII. Brownware Incised urns in the collection of the heirs of Santiago Vélez Arango, Banco de la República, Manizales.

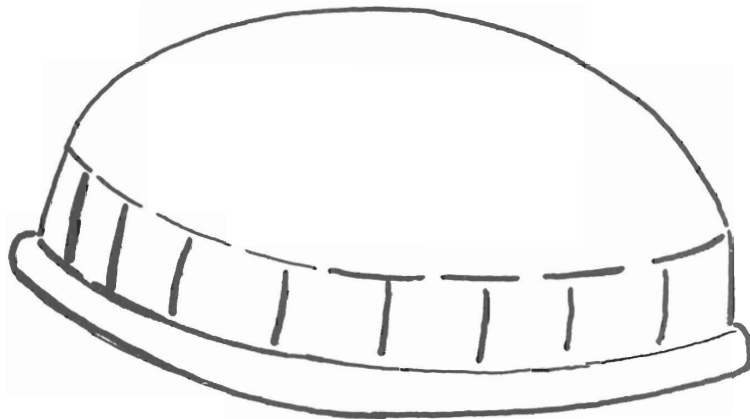
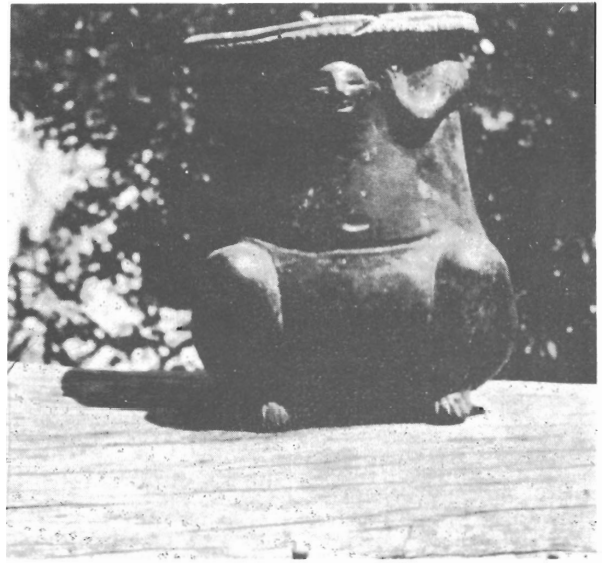


Plate XXXIV. Brownware Incised specimens. See Key to Illustrations.



Plate XXXV. Brownware Incised urn with relief figures. Museo Nacional, Bogotá. Photograph courtesy of the Museum.

AREAS IN WHICH QUIMBAYA STYLE GOLD ORNAMENTS HAVE BEEN FOUND

Costa Rica

Western Costa Rica (Stone and Balsler, 1965)

Panama

Coclé

Colombia

Department of Antioquia

Caucasia

Antioquia

Yarumal

Pajarito (located on the border of the municipios of
Yarumal, Angostura and Campamento)

Valdivia

Medellín

Jericó

Caramanta

Department of Caldas

Manizales

Samarraya

Department of Riseralda

Pereira

Department of Quindío

Filandia

Quimbaya

Montenegro

Armenia

Department of Valle

Caicedonia

Roldanillo

Guásana

Corinto



8



9

Plate XXXVII. Two examples of the Quimbaya gold style. See Key to Illustrations. Fig. 9 is a miniature.