

The British  
Museum

# Spiritual Journey

15th August 2019

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Poporo 2013,2014.1a-b  
Colombia. Kogi people.  
Ceremonial container

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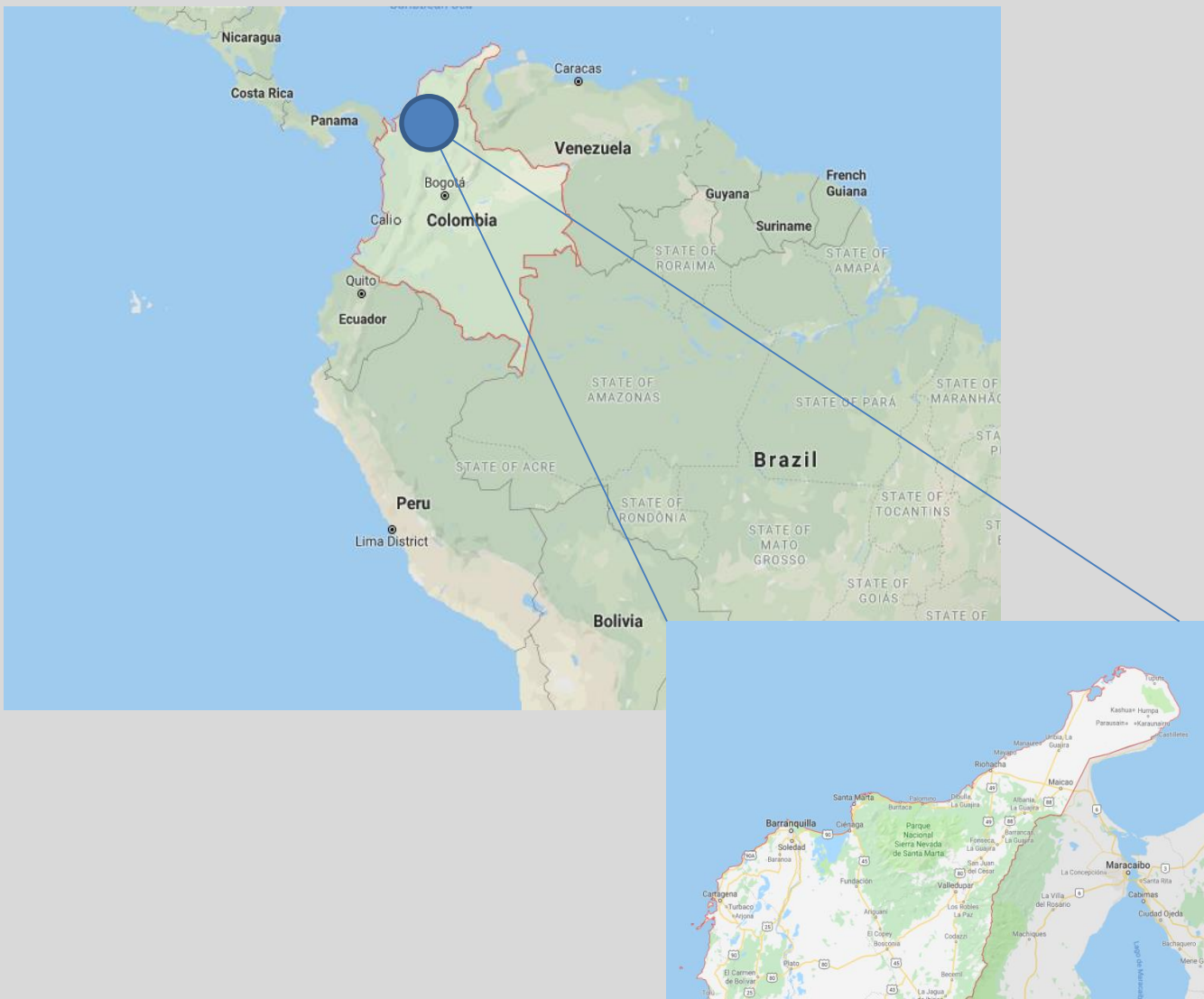
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# Poporo

## The Kogi's spiritual journey

A journey is not only the movement of people through space; it can also be linked to the spiritual world. By travelling to the ancestral realm, indigenous people from many groups in South America can gain wisdom, balance and illumination.



**The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta** is a unique pyramid shaped mountain hidden from the modern world in northern Colombia. Deep in the Sierra live some partially isolated tribes, including the Arhuaco, the Wiwa, the Kankuamo and the Kogi. They are descendants from an ancient civilisation known as the Tayrona, and still keep their distinct languages, preserve their cultural heritage and maintain their traditional kinship system.

Songs and meditation are at the core of these groups' spiritual and cosmological journey. During meditation, they connect with the mountain and, through the mountain, with the structure of the universe; becoming one with mother earth, called "Aluna".

Part of this journey involves the continuous use of the poporo, a sacred container. Men carry their poporos wherever they go, as it represents their ancestors, the cosmic womb, and life itself.



A Kogi man with his poporo

***"I shall weave the Fabric of my Life  
I shall weave it white as a cloud."***

***Kogi folk song***

**Poporo 2013,2014.1a-b**  
**Colombia. Kogi people.**  
**Ceremonial container.**

The poporo is a rounded bottle made of gourd and accompanied by a wooden stick. The container is filled up with powdered lime from crushed sea shells. The stick is used to extract the powder and mix it with dried coca leaves in the mouth.

Then, the stick is rubbed against the neck of the container, building up thin layers of lime.

This poporo shows thick layering, indicating that the user invested years in meditation. By these means, he could communicate with his ancestors and help keep the harmony between people and the Earth.



**Poporo**

**British Museum Collection Online:**

[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/E\\_2013-2014-1-a-b](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/E_2013-2014-1-a-b)