



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MUISCA ROCK ART AND THE LEXICON

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Abstract - Relationship between Muisca rock art and lexicon

Pre-Columbian Muisca culture was localized on the central Colombian plateau, in the mountainous departments of Cundinamarca and Boyacá. Muisca culture was one of the most developed in the American continent, with multiple means of communication and forms of expressions such as rock art, basketwork, and goldsmithing. In pre-Columbian times, fine gold work made in the same territory has been dated up to fifteen centuries before Central and North American cultures started equivalent works. This research on Muisca rock art gives more importance to the image itself, than to the fact of it being art on a rock surface or board. The images are related to its meaning in Muisca language, in the intent of finding a clear and logical relationship between the native spoken words and artistic forms as a written language. Artistic forms and spoken words in Muisca are related to topographical and spatial references, being toponymical references some of the most found in the Muisca lexicon.

Riassunto - La relazione fra lessico e arte rupestre presso i Muisca

La cultura pre-colombiana dei Muisca si sviluppò sugli altipiani centrali della Colombia, nelle regioni montana di Cundinamarca e Boyacá. La cultura Muisca, una fra le più sviluppate del continente americano, ha sviluppato numerose forme di arte ed espressione: l'arte rupestre, l'oreficeria, gli intrecci di vimini. I lavori di oreficeria Muisca stupisco per la loro realizzazione antecedente di 15 secoli le produzioni nord e centro americane. Questa ricerca privilegia l'analisi delle immagini su superficie rocciosa o su tavola che vengono correlate con il loro significato nel linguaggio dei Muisca, al fine di trovare un legame chiaro e logico tra le parole della madrelingua e forme d'arte come lingua scritta. Fra i Muisca, le espressioni artistiche e la lingua parlata sono legate a riferimenti topografici e spaziali.

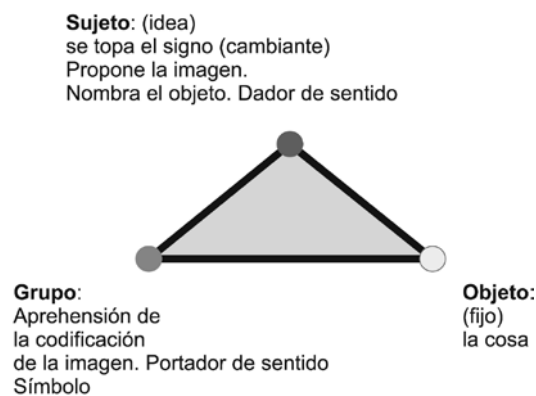
Résumé - La culture précolombienne des Muisca était localisée sur le plateau central colombien, dans les départements montagneux de Cundinamarca et de Boyacá. La culture muisca était l'une des plus développées du continent américain : elle avait de multiples moyens de communication et formes d'expression, tels que l'art rupestre, la vannerie et l'orfèvrerie. Des objets en or fin auraient été réalisés à l'époque précolombienne dans ce territoire 15 siècles avant que les cultures du Nord et du centre de l'Amérique ne commencent à faire un travail équivalent. Cette recherche sur l'art rupestre des Muisca accorde plus d'importance à l'image en elle-même qu'au fait qu'elle soit de l'art sur une surface rocheuse ou sur une planche. Les images sont mises en relation avec leur signification dans la langue des Muisca dans le but de trouver un lien clair et logique entre les mots du locuteur natif et les formes artistiques en tant que langage écrit. Chez les Muisca, les formes artistiques et les mots parlés sont liés à des références topographiques et spatiales. D'ailleurs, les références toponymiques abondent dans le lexique des Muisca.

To imagine how the first writing action of the first men was suggests that these primates unconsciously made use of an immanence: the mimetic function, which initiates imitation. Imitation is possible because it is an inherent dimension of desire, the desire to represent the object as a known fact, how it appears as a sign¹ and how it is upgraded to the category of a signal or a symbol. In these early groups there were people who took the lead in the effort to contemplate and to think, to produce results of knowledge. These aborigines made and then taught solutions achieved for the benefit of the clan. Put in another way, the subject who takes the initiative of the collective desire, which in

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1 The sign appears when the subject is aware (has conscience) of the object, at that very moment when the correlate (correlation) or funcive appears; it happens when you light up the bulb of imagination. Signs are latent, they remain in the air.

turn, is imitated by the group, with whom they identify is for this reason defined by western culture as the witch or shaman. Indeed, there is a communication phenomenon between subject, object and the collective. Therefore, correlated to the subject is the idea, for the object; the sign made; and for the group the environmental information through the annotations and incised glyphic on the rocks.



Undoubtedly, in those days, pressed by hunger, sleep and mobility, these primates solved the basic problems of the group by intuition and initiative, through the diligent observation of plants and animals in their surroundings.

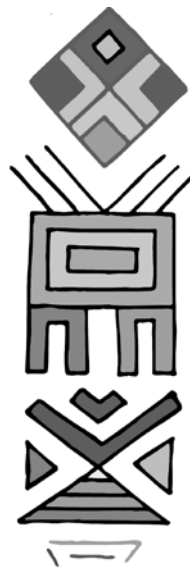
The basic fact is that abstract shapes are represented by the set of Muisca objects. The reported figures represented the state of affairs of the living space. Hence, the images painted by the Tibacui become models themselves and for me the reality.² Muisca, giving rise to the sign, which provided the graphic writing boards rock, was then applied to different crafts. It was the beginning of a second more elaborate writing

on loque.³ The writing is based on the language-speech of this community.

The moment of primates' encountering the scriptural gesture of mimesis was one of the most important of all moments. The 27 letters, consonants and vowels, are actually 27 artificial signs created from natural signs that reflected the beginnings of man's necessities.

Proxemic studies on interpersonal space and distance in communicative function: this is a semi-otic discipline that analyses the disposal of the subjects and objects in space, and more precisely, the use of space-made subjects for purposes of significance, that is, a semiotics of space. The spatial relations (of closeness and of distance) given and depending on the interests that are being established in the social groups' priorities can be set and will be subject to discontinuities.

According to this, research results will be presented in the following proposals for analysis.



Supcua: bat, crab, spear; *Who*: person; body height; animal: *Supcua-indent*: bat person; crac person.

TIVA OR SHAMAN

The word *quin* used as a suffix represents the speaker, who has the knowledge to embody the action or fact. The Muisca embodied knowledge through the representation of animals. Animals had experiential parts in dramatised games. The Spanish called these people with knowledge warlocks, today called shamans.

Eurocentric ideas thought that the wise men or Tivacui⁴ were witches or sorcerers of each community in America. The shaman, in a close contemporary conceptualisation, could appoint the native knower of the environment, referring to the creator of images with which he named or encoded things, ceramic utensils, useful gold objects. It can be said of these men, natives of the savannah, that they conducted, organised,

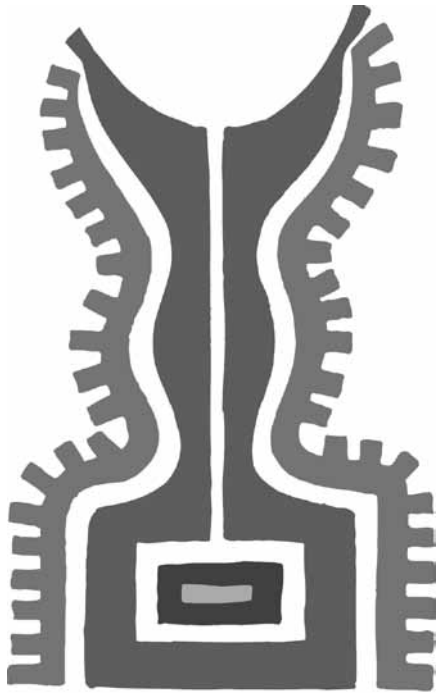
² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Alianza, Madrid, 1989.

³ The definition of loque is found in the Dictionary of Joaquín Acosta Ortegón: paper, letter (paper had not been invented. People used the skins of animals they hunted to write hieroglyphics on; coat, whip (using the same leather whips were prepared for torture).

⁴ Tiva, civil chief, sir, captain, comrade, master; serious person of respect; purple, yellow; goldsmith, silversmith. Hi, mate! Outside pleasures and joys. *Cui* or *Chisacui* where the verb *zecuigosqua* (in neutral) appears, meaning 'to draw', more accurately 'draw with art'; (in active), *bcuisuca* 'stroke' or 'I'm drawing.' Let us try to relate the root *Ze*, which is the possessive pronoun I; mine, belonging to me; I is the personal pronoun, with *Cui* who is the creator, then *zecu* refers to a merely human action, 'my line', 'I draw', it refers to the ability to sense the representation of 'the thing itself' and 'the thing for me', the capacity for synthesis or abstraction of objects at the moment of drawing.



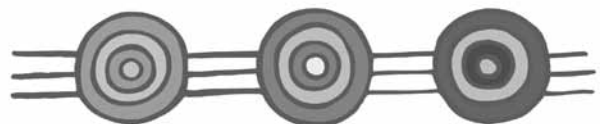
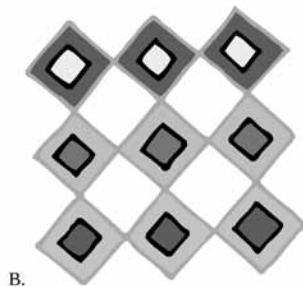
planned, thought, worked and built a just society. These shamans or experts in the specific activities of yesteryear are the forebears of science today. The image above shows a composition of several elements arranged vertically, the concepts assemble and build, linking to the inherent axiality of the *homo quaerens*.⁵ This image is made from the bottom up: the land, the butterfly, the chair or seat, the symbol of water, the 'sunas' and canals, and finally the cultivated rhomb; the composition may be the totemic representation of the Tivata, the head or chief of crops. *Ta* means having domain or knowledge of the farm land and tilling, sowing, harvesting, including seasons and properties. *Ta* is the name of the number six.



La Leona stone, Tequendama región is an image made with intent to recognise, identify, relate, to honour the space, events or people, represented with lines in the rock panels. Following on therefore, through this study, the most important manner of recognition, to honour or give thanks to nature, was made by drawing, exposed in places of stone, where celebrations were made, where people ate, danced and the new (the drawing on the rock) media was socialised. Let us look at the elements in the composition of this picture. The zip lines represent the river, the sunas and canals symbolise crops (food); the bottle or jar in a sinuous female form with open arms in waiting turns out to be the container of a rectangle symbolising water. This blue-red image could be the representation of Bachué, the goddess born of water, the woman who gave birth to the cultures gathered on the central Colombian plateau, that historiography has named Muisca.

The savannah of Bogotá was covered with lakes, which then were converted into wetlands, until its total disappearance because of the enormous growth of urban civilisation. The great lakes of the central plateau to date have been reduced in size, like Tota, Fuquene, Guatavita Sibaté, Siecha.

ANAPHORA



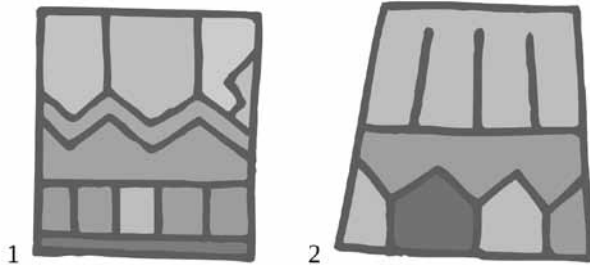
A. Built rocky crest in the Vanegas hacienda, Firavitoba. 41. B. The organic layout of the modules dynamically move up or down. After three similar modules are repeated, anaphora is possible, or repetition (*Wiederaufnahme*). Lexical repetition (word or denotant). Identical repetition, replacement of identity, each new repetition is linked to a new moment, for example, men, many men, these men.

5 *Homo quaerens*, an animal that does not get tired of investigating and questioning, an animal that reaches the limits of language and image: George Steiner, *Grammars of creation*, Siruela, 2001.

The written or spoken word is a tool used to persuade the other. It does the same with the image and potentialises the penetration factor in the collective memory.

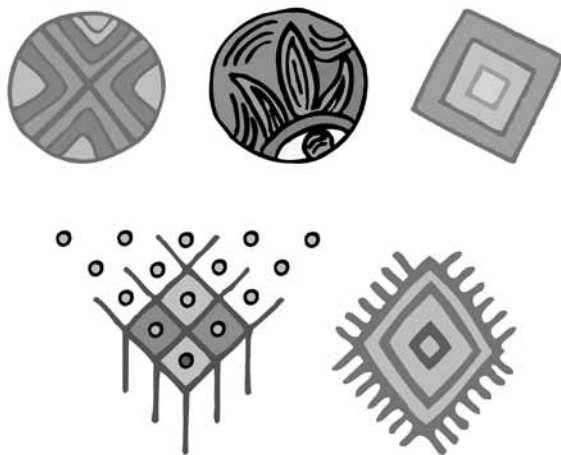
The same happens with the image, since the beginning of man, when he discovered the possibility of using images to represent spatial objects, he also found that he could repeat the same image at will. In such a way he built a variety of concepts, as we see in the photo by Dolmatoff.⁶

CLOSED CONTAINERS OR BOXES. OPEN CONCEPTS



Drawings within a rectangle, square, rhomb and other geometric elements. The composition is more complex than it seems. The framework given to a graphic idea does not imply limitation, on the contrary, it becomes the container of ideas grouped to form more complex concepts. To the extent we acquire cognitive awareness of a thing,⁷ we have a knowledge of something said at that time. Put in another way, a Tibacui⁸ draws or writes relational concepts between

function and society. We have the closest examples in these graphs: The graph not only acts on the pre-image we have of the image, but affects the psyche. The mental laboratory opens the range to other similarities⁹ and reveals how the demiurge is able to gather, categorise and semanticise.



The first image allows us to view the importance of the river represented by a zigzag pattern (replaces the movement of the river meandering), bordered by the suna cropping system. Similarly, the second represents a macro-perspective with respect to the first.

- To introduce (or put into), to tie up, to mix, to hold responsible.

- To include, to contain, to understand, to mean, to express, to symbolize.

In this drawing a close story is told, the points or dots inside and the ones outside, generating a cluster concept. Abstract elements represented are: people with open arms, ready to receive others under the same group commitment, which means that there are ideological criteria.

This representation is plotted using a rhomb network, at the same time building a triangular network not visible at first sight.

The circles are clustered in both systems and represent the ability to associate a group of individuals, prepared for the organisation, who will put their expertise available to the welfare and growth of the community. The Muisca organisation was made through individual skills, clustered around an expert chief knower, the Tiva, the wise man or one who knew a craft, of the various types practised by the aborigines of the Cundiboyacense savannah.

THE ROUND (CIRCLE) (MODEL TAKEN FROM SUA AND CHIA)

The round thing that gives daylight or the moon that reflects it: source of inspiration for the Cui men,¹⁰ who made mimesis of the two images appearing in the sky.

The sketch drawn on the ground and finally written or painted on rock parietals in different places of the Cundiboyacense savannah.

6 Photograph by Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, taken from *The Shaman and the Jaguar*, Siglo XXI, 1978, A Tukano Indian after a dream.

7 Thing: 'Every science would be unnecessary, if the form things manifest and their essence would coincide directly.' Marx, *Das Kapital* Volume 3. Appearance is the first thing that occurs to man, then it is a powerful weapon for ingenuity and speculation about absolute truths. If man could be born with the essence of things inquiry would not be needed, it would be very dull being alive, but as this is not the situation we need to know the essence of things. In fact, every thing presents itself in appearance, hence, the concern for inquiry is born.

8 Chief tracer of images. He is the modern equivalent of a graphic designer, but one who draws or traces.

9 It relates the similarities: the convenience, emulation, analogy and sympathy.

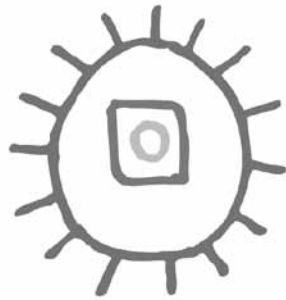
10 In Muisca the root *Cui*, *Chisacui*: the verb *zecuigosqua* appears, meaning to draw or to make with art; demiurges who traced, drew and wrote about rock panels located in the central high plateau of Colombia.



Moon



Sun



The first model of the round was taken from the two natural elements that still shine in the day and at night. This form was done by people who lived in the savannah of Bogotá, representations initially related to surrounding nature.

Representation of undulating movement at the time of throwing a stone into water. Normal action of people who come to a lake to enjoy, relax and meditate.

Undulations: water sunas (water), seed, mother-earth and sun

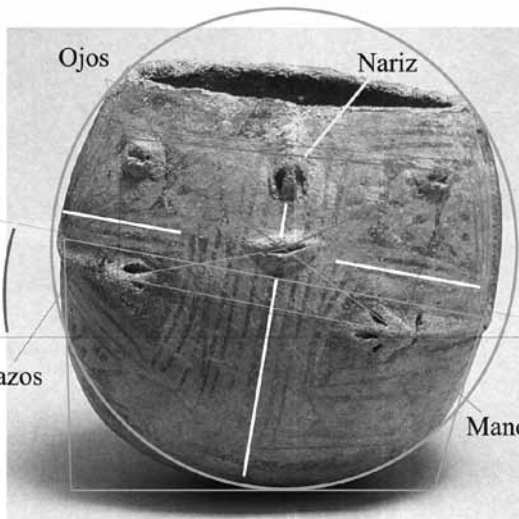
The primate of the savannah realised that he could build other images according to the relations with the surrounding environment. He rationalised creating other combinations with the round shape. He used the form by way of repetition and invented a first rhetorical element (anaphora), as shown in the following photography¹¹ of a Barasana after ingesting the infusion of *Banisteriopsis* (*yajé*) overnight, attaining a phase of geometrical dreams; then, in the morning, he shaped the marks on the land.

The above relationship shows that there are relationships between human activities, past and present, that above all, writing painted by the men of the central Colombian plateau brought the management of space and the scene of relational knowledge at the discretion of the craftsmen called Tibacui, connoisseurs, those who draw pictures on the land or on the rock surfaces. Today we call these such people graphic designers or visual artists.

PORTRAIT

A) Portrait with paint-writing pasted over the face

The two eyes and the mouth form a triangle, which makes up the face; hands and arms make an illusion of the whole body. Under a masterful composition, the sphere-shaped vessel offers a complete aesthetic experience of the body, reduced to a head (the unit value according to Greco-Roman canons). The visual experience given by the simple expression in the utensil is a real abstraction of the body. You can interpret skill in the process of conceptual abstraction made by the Tibacui or graphic artist. The attaching or pasting technique gives it a more attractive nature, which incidentally makes it a sculpture, revealing the taste, the senses and an aesthetics. This vessel reveals that Guanes and Muisca used facial paint. Facial paint is not decoration,



A Labios y boca

it is writing, as the Embera do today with Kipará (drawing or painting from the group of Embera; a way of representing the world through a graphic language). The pasting and the paint jobs on the vessel designate the specific function of the vase or represents the taste or intention of the owner.

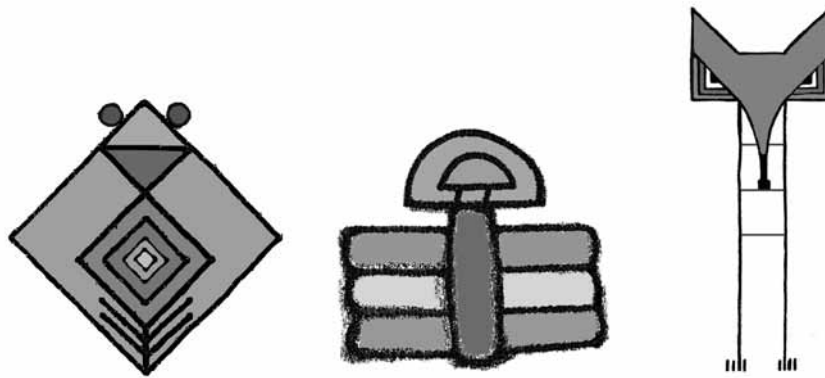


B) Portrait of single young Embera woman

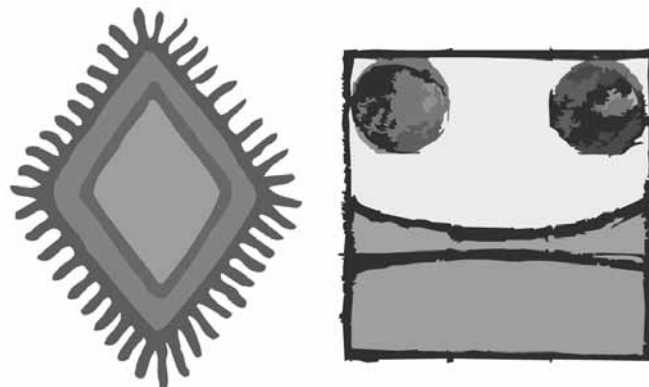
According to Astrid Ulloa, they use facial paint (writing) designs that refer to the eggs of the snake. Even lines and points are scriptural elements with proper semantics of their own, characterising a desire, a husband. It symbolises, 'I'm young and I'm single'. The scriptural action of this woman is the *intentio auctoris vs intentio lectoris*. The points act as the determinative factor.

ANIMALS

Representations of animals on rock panels in the Cundiboyacense territory were expressed using geometric shapes based on the mimesis of the sun. The moon, the horizon and certainly the animals that caused curiosity and admiration are different representations from the deposits in Valcamonica, Altamira and Pech-Merle. Animals are rethought through an abstract geometric purism different from these European sites. From 13,000 years BC, according to data obtained by Gonzalo Correal,¹² ancient dwellers began their own basic geometry by means of painting abstract drawings taken from the same Muisca landscape.



Graphic representations of the first inhabitants of the Cundiboyacense high plateau denote conceptual contents through graphic signs. Not only do present cultures designate a value to a signifier form, the old ones used to as well. With this premise we can begin to recognise the images painted on the rocks, and to look at their contextualisation and implementation on other traditional techniques, such as goldsmithing, ceramics, lithics and weaving. These are used today to feature in museums veiled under the cloak of Western culture, but without the autonomous deployment denoted by its constructed signs. West calls these cultures unwritten.



Reading from outside in, we find the following symbolised elements: 1. Water in the sunas. 2. Land husbandry. 3. Frog, humidity. 4. Female Eros. 5. Seed, fertility.

¹² Maguaré 5, 'In search of the first farmers in the Cundiboyacense highlands', by Marianne Cardale Schimpff.



Referring to what Román Piña Chan says about the Olmecs, the first Mesoamerican civilisation, 'But the land being rich and fertile, like women, it needs to be penetrated by water, semen or precious fertilising liquid'.

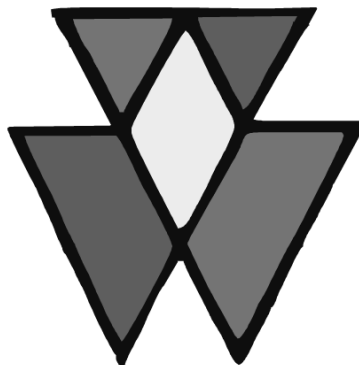
The graphic resources of duality, resemblance, shade, analogy, anaphora, hyperbole, are reflected in material Muisca culture.

The paintings made by the Muisca had a purpose: to disclose experiences of the Tivas in the different crafts. A picture painted on a rock surface became an indicator of actions to perform. The explanation of a Tibacui through the painted picture served to explain certain things.

Reading comprehension of any such object as, for example *-car-*, depends on the vocabulary skills you have. In the Western world today, people only know how to say, speak or pronounce, because reforms have been developed to lower the university and school academic standards. It includes the full privatisation of media, especially television, where all the broadcasted programmes have a low-profile content, and are banal, trivial, vulgar and unsubstantiated, futilities issued to direct ways of being and ways of life, which ultimately are reflected in the social behaviour of the family. This conduct is opposed to the actions of good study, of seeing, and of reading the objective world. It is known that reading teaches one to reflect on and understand more deeply the objective world and its social relations. Therefore, it is not within the purposes of the global market or globalisation policies to allow proper education and information in categories.

The great danger that we run with the commodification and manipulation of myths¹³ is a true alienation and, of course, a false conscience¹⁴ schematisation in individuals and in the everyday life of the people. Both city dwellers and farmers are alienated by the religious myths and the industrialised production of banal objects. Referring to this danger, the world's industries produce increasingly meaningless objects, a vacuous multiplication of unnecessary objects, distributed to the peoples of the world in order to exploit trade through purchase, a phenomenon is called reification.

The thing is covered with layers of obviousness and simplicity. In this way, the individual does not create awareness of the value of the thing for itself, because he does not get to know the essence of the thing but only its appearance.¹⁵



Bird with two heads. Tiva imitating the bird's flight

13 With the production and reproduction of objects made by Western man.

14 Karel Kosik, *The Dialectics of the Concrete*, Grijalbo, 1976. 'Human consciousness is 'reflection', and at the same time, 'projection', records and builds, takes notes and plans, reflects and anticipates, is both receptive and active at the same time,' p. 45.

15 Ibid. Only when you do the job of finding what is essential in the philosophical field, and the linguistic, semiotic or the approaches of science (*Phenomenology: science that deals with appearances*, 1976).