

Basic Detail Report



Ornament

Date

ca. 700-1550

Primary Maker

Diquis

Medium

gold

Description

Around the beginning of the Common Era, Costa Rica adopted gold and copper metallurgy from the northern highlands of modern Colombia. Metals eventually replaced jade in importance as the medium for ritual and status-marking art. Traded among ruling chiefs and other political or religious leaders, gold ornaments such as this one were symbols of prestige and rank. Twin jaguars with long curling tails and snarling teeth are mounted on two parallel bars. Additional small gold ornaments dangle from suspension holes and jingle against the jaguar figures, further accentuating the power of the ornament by bringing it to life. This ornament was likely worn by a high ranking chief and it is one of a very limited number of gold pieces still intact outside of Costa Rica itself. Because Europeans cherished it so highly, much of the pre-Columbian gold art they encountered was melted down and sent to Spain.

Dimensions

Overall: 7/8 x 2 x 1 3/4 in. (2.2 x 5.1 x 4.4 cm)