The first description of this large center of pre-Hispanic culture located on the headwaters of the Magdalena River in the vicinity of the present-day village of San Agustín, from which its name was taken, is found in a book by the Spanish friar Juan de Santa Gertrudis who visited the region in 1757.

Subsequently visited and described by travelers of various nationalities, the region was first seriously studied by the German archeologist, Konrad Theodor Preuss, who worked there from 1913 to 1914. In 1935, the Colombian Ministry of Education purchased a large tract of land in order to put the principal ruins under government protection, thus establishing an Archeological Park.

In spite of the great amount of attention it has received, the San Agustín culture is still little understood. Its beginnings go back to the 6th century B.C. and the area covers several hundred square kilometers.

The main archeological features found at these sites are earthen mounds, megalithic temples and shrines, tombs and sepulchral chambers and large monolithic statues, some of which are shown in these slides.

The statues are distinguished by their fierce and menacing mien and monumental size and by the variety of ways in which the human eye is represented. Several statues have a so-called alter ego representation, a second figure crouching on top of the head, or shown as if climbing over the back and shoulders of the statue. While most of the figures are of humans with disproportionately large heads, a variety of animals is also represented.
53A  Figure with snake in its hands
53B  Figure with round eyes with protruding pupils and fangs
53C  Figure with weapons in both hands
53D  Figure with square eyes and rectangular mouth
53E  Figure with square eyes and rectangular mouth
53F  Figure with round eyes, protruding pupils
53G  Figure with oval eyes, holding another small figure in both hands
53H  The Archeological Park
53I  Another view of figure 53D and 53E
53J  Figure with semi-circular eyes in the foreground and alter ego representation in the background

Bibliography:

COLOMBIA  a) San Agustin, pre-Hispanic stone sculpture

The first description of this large center of pre-Hispanic culture located on the headwaters of the Magdalena River in the vicinity of the present-day village of San Agustin, from which its name was taken, is found in a book by the Spanish friar Juan de Santa Gertrudis who visited the region in 1757.

Subsequently visited and described by travelers of various nationalities, the region was first seriously studied by the German archeologist, Konrad Theodor Preuss, who worked there from 1913 to 1914. In 1935, the Colombian Ministry of Education purchased a large tract of land in order to put the principal ruins under government protection, thus establishing an Archeological Park.

In spite of the great amount of attention it has received, the San Agustin culture is still little understood. Its beginnings go back to the 6th century B.C. and the area covers several hundred square kilometers.

The main archeological features found at these sites are earthen mounds, megalithic temples and shrines, tombs and sepulchral chambers and large monolithic statues, some of which are shown in these slides.

The statues are distinguished by their fierce and menacing mien and monumental size and by the variety of ways in which the human eye is represented. Several statues have a so-called alter ego representation, a second figure crouching on top of the head, or shown as if climbing over the back and shoulders of the statue. While most of the figures are of humans with disproportionately large heads, a variety of animals is also represented.
51A  Alter ego representation
51B  Alter ego representation
51C  Predatory bird in the foreground, another view of figure no. 1.
51D  Figure with semi-circular eyes
51E  Monolithic figure holding a baby by the legs with its head hanging down
51F  Figure with round eyes as in slides Nos. 6, 14, and 16.
51G  Figure with oval eyes, also shown in no. 29
51H  View of the Archeological Park
51I  Predatory bird with snake in its mouth, also shown in no. 3
51J  Figure with alter ego representation

Bibliography:

The first description of this large center of pre-Hispanic culture located on the headwaters of the Magdalena River in the vicinity of the present-day village of San Agustín, from which its name was taken, is found in a book by the Spanish friar Juan de Santa Gertrudis who visited the region in 1757.

Subsequently visited and described by travelers of various nationalities, the region was first seriously studied by the German archeologist, Konrad Theodor Preuss, who worked there from 1913 to 1914. In 1935, the Colombian Ministry of Education purchased a large tract of land in order to put the principal ruins under government protection, thus establishing an Archeological Park.

In spite of the great amount of attention it has received, the San Agustín culture is still little understood. Its beginnings go back to the 6th century B.C. and the area covers several hundred square kilometers.

The main archeological features found at these sites are earthen mounds, megalithic temples and shrines, tombs and sepulchral chambers and large monolithic statues, some of which are shown in these slides.

The statues are distinguished by their fierce and menacing mien and monumental size and by the variety of ways in which the human eye is represented. Several statues have a so-called alter ego representation, a second figure crouching on top of the head, or shown as if climbing over the back and shoulders of the statue. While most of the figures are of humans with disproportionately large heads, a variety of animals is also represented.
52A  Figure with weapon in each hand

52B  Pull figure with feet, "toeing in", grasping staff in each hand

52C  Warrior with protruding round eyes and weapons in each hand

52D  Round-eyed figure with hands clasped over waist

52E  Predatory bird with snake in its mouth

52F  Figure with square eyes and rectangular mouth

52G  Figure with elongated eyes

52H  Monolithic figure

52I  Figure with eyes formed by a half-circle

52J  Crescent shaped eyes and eyebrow, square mouth and with both hands clasping a weapon

Bibliography: