# Ticuna Fibres of Resistance

## From the Spirits of the Amazon to the Museum

#### The Project

A cross-disciplinary participatory study focused on material culture & practices associated with the 'Young Woman's Festival', a Ticuna rite of passage aimed at protecting young women during puberty.

In collaboration with the Ticuna, the largest indigenous nation of the Brazilian Amazon, we will study a historic collection of tururi (Ficus radula and Poulsenia armata) bark artefacts housed at Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia, Universidade of Sao Paulo (MAE-USP), Brazil, and compare them to contemporary examples in the Amazon.

Different groups of stakeholders will work together to explore aspects of continuity and change in manufacturing technologies, socio-cultural articulations, current use and significance, deterioration mechanisms and preservation of tururi bark.

Methods include archival research, qualitative data collected during fieldwork in Benjamin Constant and Sao Paulo of Olivença (both located in the state of Amazonas, Brazil), visual examinations and instrumental analysis of samples from the MAE-USP's collection, as well as contemporary material accessed during fieldwork.

Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia, Universidade de Sao Paulo (MAE-USP) houses around 600 Ticuna items, many related to The Young Woman's Festival. The collection was assembled & documented by ethnographer & photographer Harald Schultz between 1950-1960. It presents examples of the three colours of tururi bark (white, brown and red) and is accompanied by Schultz' photos & videos. Images (1): Ader Gotardo (2015).











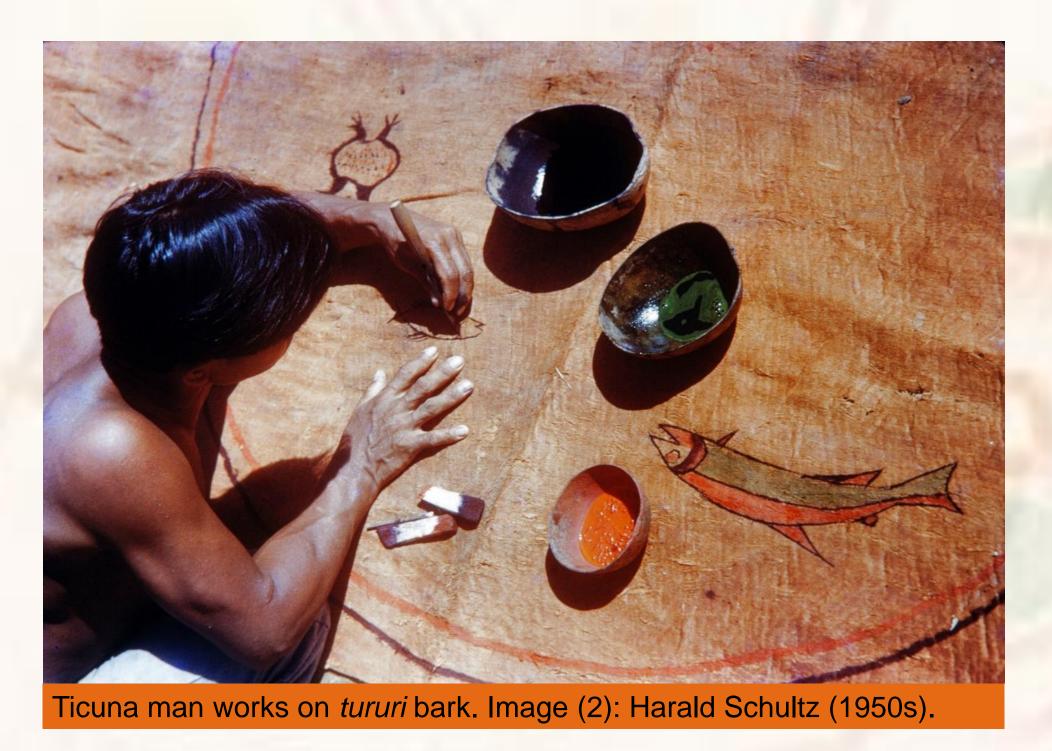


The climax of the Young Woman's rites happens when the 'ngo'o' attempt to kidnap the young women. Image (3): Harald Schultz (1950s).

### The Young Woman's Festival

Three-day festival with the participation of all the local Ticuna community, who prepare the village & produce artefacts to be used during the ceremonies, many of which with a local tree bark known as 'tururi'.

Trumpets, flutes, drums and dance masks bearing symbols of Ticuna clans and non-human creatures are made out of tururi and other organic materials. A 'seclusion room' is built in the house where the festival will take place. The masks, which can only be made and worn by men, are danced during the most important part of the ceremonies, when the 'ngo'o' (non-human creatures or evil spirits) attempt to kidnap the young women. Different ceremony stages involve important aspects of Ticuna culture and strengthen their cohesion whilst ensuring the safety of the women.





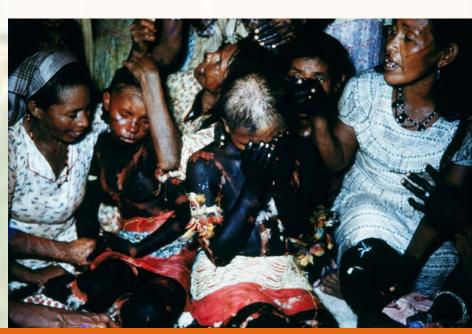
young women for the dangers of the forest and village.

# Preliminary results

EDXRF analysis and condition assessments performed on a sample of the MAE-USP Ticuna masks suggest that:

- Barks of different colours undergo different decaying mechanisms.
- Current condition may have been affected by previous undocumented treatments and pesticide applications.
- Fibre breakage and stains may have been caused during the manufacturing processes and original uses of the masks.





**Left:** Traditional

extraction of tururi.

Images (4): Harald

Left: Villagers prepare the 'seclusion room'. Right: The young women are prepared for the rites. Images (6 & 7): Harald Schultz (1950s).

The whole community gets involved in attempting to protect the young

women. The rites make the community more cohesive and prepare the

#### References

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Authors: Ana Carolina Delgado Vieira<sup>1</sup> & Renata F. Peters <sup>2</sup>

ana.carolina.Vieira@usp.br m.peters@ucl.ac.uk

<sup>1</sup> Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia, University of São Paulo, MAE/USP; <sup>2</sup> Institute of Archaeology, University College London.