

### PELAZÓN RITUAL

An administrative agreement was achieved in 2017 between San Martin de Amacayacu and the Amacayacu National Park (Newsletter 73). In the course of this year and in the framework of this agreement, a second maloka was built in San Martin de Amacayacu to give the people of the older generations a place to gather. This maloka was inaugurated last November 30th with a small version of the traditional Tikuna pelazón ritual. The Small World Foundation did not contribute to the event this time, but it is a nice occasion to inform you about this ritual!

A long time ago, before the arrival of the colonists in the Amazon, the pelazón ritual was the most important spiritual occupation of the Tikuna. Each such a ritual has so much preparative work and activities after, that it can easily take more than a year and a half to complete. The original aim of the pelazón is to be transported to another dimension forever, alive and as a community. This can be compared with the catholic people, who aim to go to heaven after death. To achieve this, it is also required to comply with certain steps first.



To get transported to this other dimension, the help of the spiritual world is needed and has to be actively attracted. Therefore, the pelazón revolves around one (or more) adolescent girl(s). The state of change she is experiencing to become a woman makes her susceptible for the spiritual world.

During at least a year before the most extravagant and visual part of the pelazón (“the main ritual”), the girl would be separated from the maloka in a small dwelling called a “turi”, in which she can only receive older female family members and go out at night. Like this, she is being shielded against the so-called negative properties of humanity (jealousy, hate, lust, laziness, etc.) and the sun. The visiting women taught the girls all kinds of handicrafts and prepare her for her life as a woman. She was treated like a treasure and the whole world revolved around her.

In the meantime, the rest of the maloka members assured that a special agricultural plot was planted and maintained in the right way and a lot of wild meat needed to be preserved by smoking. From far and wide, guests were invited to participate in the ritual. Pretty much every visitor made a mask of natural materials. Some masks required a unique dance and song, while others have a standard dance and song. Once a dance is finished, the dancer received a big chunk of meat and leaves the mask behind for the maloka.

The main ritual starts well before sunrise and with the very sacred “iburi” flutes that produce very low tones. This sound carries very far and announces the beginning. Everyone gathers to smear the pulp of the “huito” fruit on their hands and make drawings on their faces with it. A few hours later, the dark-colored hands and drawings become visible.



Very early in the morning starts the dance of the butterflies pursuing each other in long lines. Long yellow palm leaves are slung over the dancers' shoulders as wings and as many drums as possible produce the rhythm. After that, there is a wild-boar dance, possibly a turtle dance and later in the afternoon the individual masks will slowly arrive in the maloka. Each mask has to be watched carefully, because it is possible that the dancer is not an invited person, but a spirit. This spirit may try to steal the pelazón girl.

In the meantime, also the singers without a mask have started, each with a drum and accompanied by one or more butterflies, also often with a drum. Some of these singers are experts and can sing for more than 24 hours continuously, only to be interrupted at times to drink or pee. As usual, during each step of the complete ritual there is plenty of fermented cassava drink: Masato!

In the past, the main ritual could occupy up to five days, until all masks would have appeared and all masato was finished. During all that time, the pelazón girl has to remain on her feet because towards the end her hair had to be pulled out one by one (cut with scissors, these days), and buried around the maloka as a kind of ongoing magnet for wild animals, so that the hunting activities remain successful. Towards the very end of the ritual, the pelazón girl is carried to the river and everyone else jumps in the river downstream from her, to be washed in her powerful energy.

Today, this ritual is carried out very rarely. Girls go to school and instead of wild meat it is accepted these days to exchange the masks for all kinds of products such as boots, pans or machetes. So it becomes an expensive occupation! For a local family, it is only affordable on a small scale, which is just not the idea! A community can do it on a large scale (as is the intention), but only with donations of the National Park, an NGO or private person.



## CO<sub>2</sub> NEGOTIATIONS + ANT

At the beginning of December, the CO<sub>2</sub> negotiations were going to get a follow up, but the professionals weren't able to leave Bogotá to travel to the Amazon due to the second wave of Covid in Colombia. Everything has been postponed to 2021.

Of course, 2020 did not have a follow-up concerning the National Land Agency (ANT) and the application to get San Martín's ancestral lands as an indigenous reserve. We assume 2021 will be better!



## FISH PONDS

In an earlier newsletter we mentioned already that people in the community have had time to do a solid maintenance of their fish ponds. They did this really well and the National Amazon Research Institute SINCHI is interested to contribute some materials like shovels, drainage pipes and buckets and to deliver baby fish in about a month. What a beautiful end of 2020! .

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**Would you like to support the Tikuna indigenous community of San Martín together with the Small World Foundation, and stay informed about local developments in this remote corner of Colombia?**

Please transfer 15 euro yearly (or more!) to the following bank account in the Netherlands:

Account name: Stichting SMALL WORLD FOUNDATION

SWIFT/BIC Code: RABONL2U

IBAN code: NL28 RABO 0132 7262 03

Or check out the online contribution module on: [www.smallworldfoundation.org/?page\\_id=68](http://www.smallworldfoundation.org/?page_id=68)

Please DON'T FORGET TO INFORM US ABOUT YOUR NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS!!

([smallworldfoundation@hotmail.com](mailto:smallworldfoundation@hotmail.com))

The contributions will be spent exclusively on the development and realization of local initiatives in San Martín de Amacayacu in the Colombian Amazon. No wages are being paid to anyone. The expenses will be mentioned as much as possible in the newsletters.

For more information about this initiative, please check the website:

**[www.smallworldfoundation.org](http://www.smallworldfoundation.org)**.