

Bribri endogenous tribe



Tour de Artesanía
Milia Ca...

Bribri endogenous tribe

Our host
Catato Lopez Lopez



On our Bribri visit we were introduced to traditional medicines, crafts and activities.



Two of the interesting multipurpose plants used by the Bribri are annatto and turmeric.

The outer seed covering of Annato (*Bixa orellana*) is used as a natural red dye and a food additive for color and flavor.



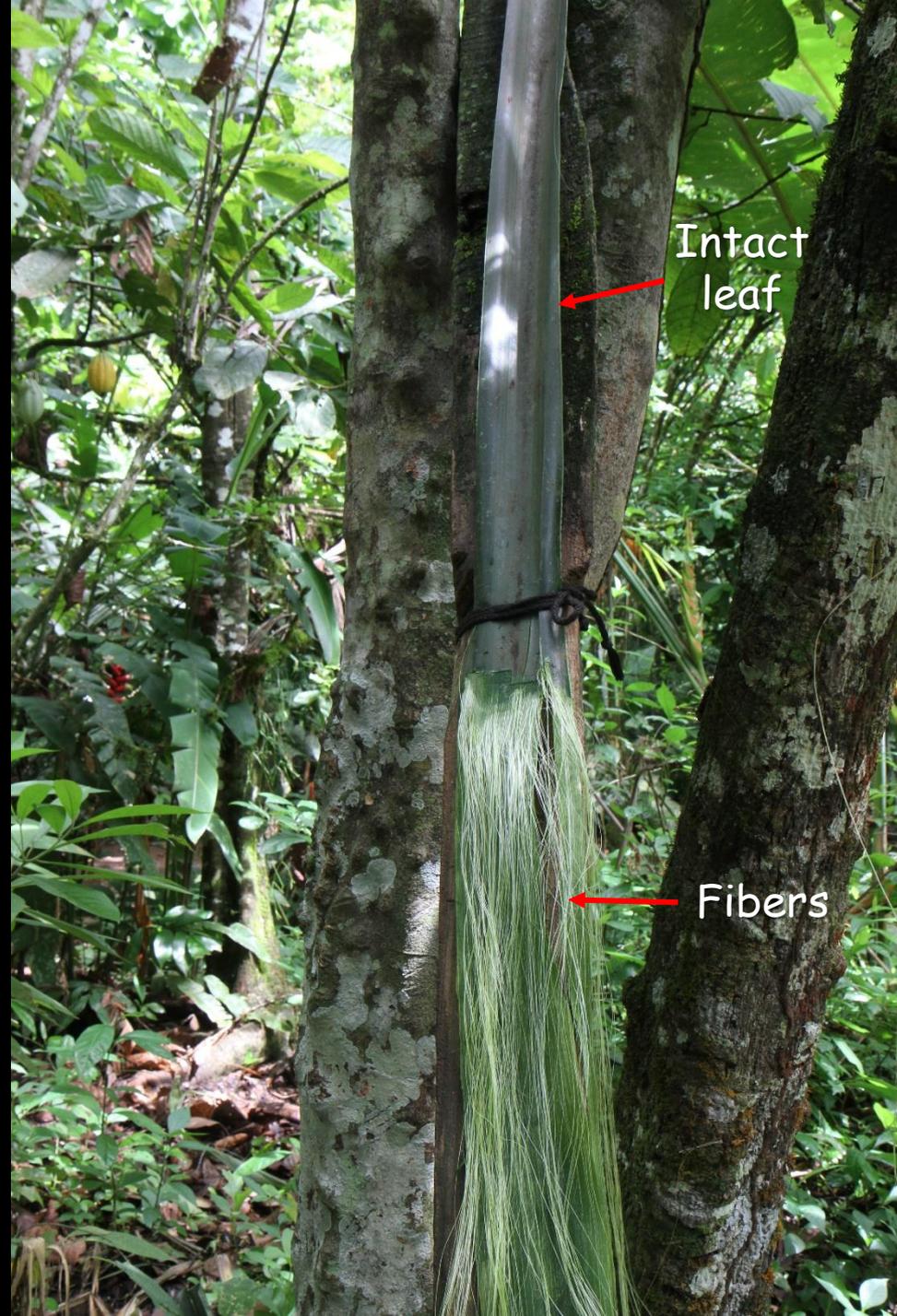
The underground rhizome of turmeric (*Cucurma*) is used as a natural yellow dye and a food additive for color and flavor.



Pita (*Aechmea magdalenae*) is a bromeliad used for its natural fiber production.



The fiber is removed from the leaves and used to make products like the satchels below.



Fibers are extracted by scraping away the covering parts of the leaf exposing the fibers.



The fibers are peeled away from the lower leaf surface.



Fibers peel away in long threads.



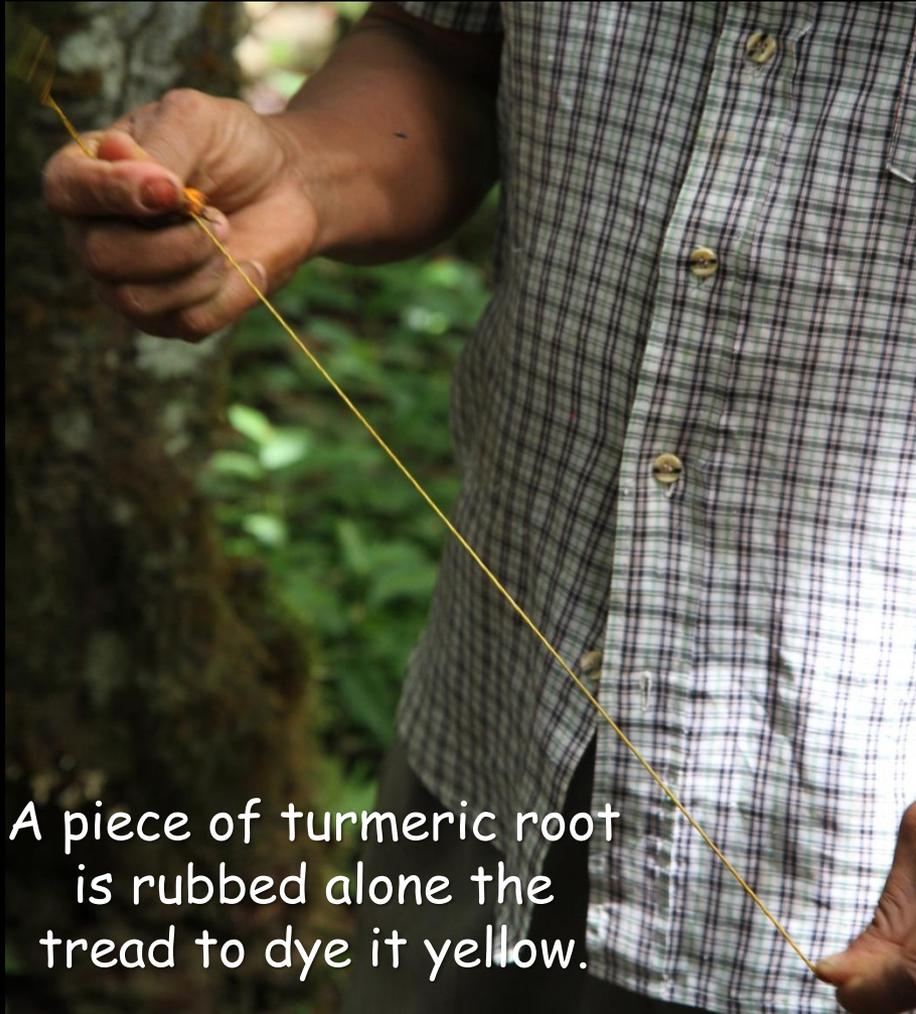
A small bundle of fibers are rolled together to form stronger threads.



A braided length
of pita thread.



The threads can be stained with natural dyes. Yellow is from turmeric and red is from annatto (*Bixa*).



A piece of turmeric root is rubbed along the thread to dye it yellow.



The red dye is from the soft seed coating of *Bixa*.



Natural fibers to
braided thread.

The finished Pita thread was given to Sarah as a gift.

The Bribri use the fruit segments from sandbox tree (*Hura crepitans*) as a necklace decoration because it looks like a dolphin.

It was used to decorate Sarah's Pita string necklace.



The other common name for sandbox tree is dynamite fruit because the fruit "explodes" to expel the seeds at over 150 MPH.



Sandbox tree (*Hura crepitans*)



Another use for Pita fiber was to string traditional bows. The bows and arrows are made from pejibaye or peach palm (*Bactris gassipaes*) wood.

Getting instructions on how to shoot a traditional bow and arrow.



Edgar looks very confident with the bow and arrow.

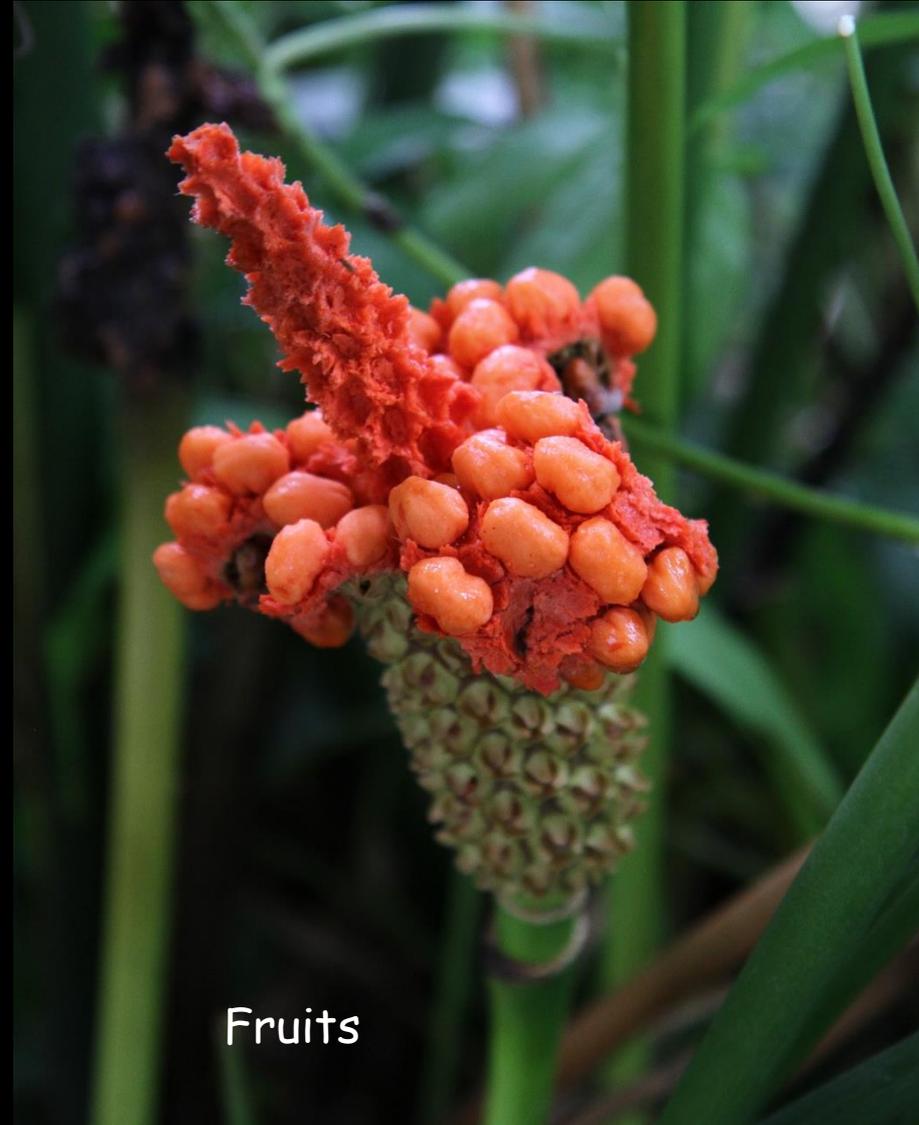


Time to show our talent with the bow and arrow.



Click the image to view the video.

The Panama-hat plant (*Carludovica palmata*) is also a plant used by the Bribri because of its high fiber content in the leaves and stems.



Fruits

The Panama-hat plant (*Carludovica palmata*) leaves are used to thatch a traditional Bribri structure.



The inner patchwork that holds the leaves of the Panama-hat plant in place to form the roof over a bamboo frame.



The fruit of calabash is used by the Bribri as cups and bowls.



Cleaned fruit
being sun dried.

Two species of calabash (*Crescentia*) that differ in fruit size are used by the Bribri.



Crescentia alata



Crescentia cujete

A large spoon is used to remove the inner pulp of the calabash fruit.



Dried calabash from both species of *Crescentia*.



Processed calabash as ornaments and a functional sieve.



Calabash being used as a ladle
and cup to serve chocolate.



Cacao (*Theobroma cacao*) is used by the Bribri as a natural medicine and as the traditional chocolate drink.



The outer skin on immature cacao fruits can be used as a topical application for skin irritations such as insect bites.



The gum (mucilage) from the inner portion of the immature fruit can also be used as a topical salve.



The chocolate drink is made from cacao seeds. The seeds are extracted from the fruit and outer pulp covering the seeds removed.



Seeds being processed
(fermented) to permit easy
removal of the outer seed pulp.



Seeds with pulp removed being
dried before they are ground
to make chocolate.



The seeds then are roasted. The Bribri do this in a heavy kettle over an open fire.



A sand bed separates the open fire from the rest of the wood constructed stove.



Roasting cacao seeds.



Teamwork is used to winnow the roasted seeds to remove some of the unwanted chaff following roasting.



Roasted cacao seeds were traditionally ground using a grind stone that was rocked back and forth to crush the seeds.



Tradition has given way to a more efficient grinding system.



Grinding the seeds results in the recognizable chocolate consistency.



Click the image to view the video.

However, at this stage the chocolate is bitter in flavor without the addition of sugar.



To make the hot chocolate drink, the ground cacao is added to hot water and stirred.



Additional ingredients included sugar, powdered milk and cinnamon.



Hot chocolate ready to taste in traditional calabash cups.



Alice, Jamie and Nancy drinking hot chocolate.



Bribri family story



Bribri kids



Finishing up on the extra
chocolate.



The Bribri visit ended with craft buying.

