

# Ethics: Tsantsas or 'Shrunk Heads' - the Removal of Human Remains

## Key Stage 3-5

**National Curriculum area:**  
Cross-curricular

**Length of session:** 60 minutes

**Maximum group size:** 32



## Session Outline

In a tour of the galleries, students will learn about self-representation, listening to the perspective of Shuar peoples to understand why it is crucial to consult with communities about how they would like human remains to be treated.

Through handling archival material in small groups, students will learn about the history of tsantsas or 'shrunk heads', understanding how coloniality has affected their production, function and trade.

Students will also have the opportunity to discuss and debate the history of other human remains that have been removed from display at the Pitt Rivers Museum.

## Learning Outcomes

- To understand why the museum has removed certain human remains
- To understand how and why tsantsas were made and acquired and what has happened to the tsantsas that were on display in the museum
- To learn what 'self-representation' means and why this is part of core values

## Pre visit activities

Discuss what can be classified as 'human remains'.

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Talk about why museums need to be 'ethical' and what that means.

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Find out where Ecuador and Peru are on a map.

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## Post visit activities

Find out more about Shuar peoples and Achuar peoples.

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Find out more about the recent changes and the removal of human remains from display <https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/human-remains-pitt-rivers-museum>

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Look at <https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/maasai-living-cultures> and <https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/labelling-matters> to learn more about two key projects connected to self-representation.

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For further details and how to book visit:

[www.prm.ox.ac.uk/learn](https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/learn)