Wood Finishes Used by Traditional Societies in Africa and Oceania, and by European Period Furnishings Restorers

J. Gérard\textsuperscript{1}, C. Gérard\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} Unité de recherche \textit{Biomasse, Bois, Energie, Bioproduits} (BioWooEB)
\textsuperscript{2} Délégation à l'Information Scientifique et Technique (Dist)
Origin of the topic

✓ A demand of the African and Oceanian Department of Sotheby’s – France:
  ✓ For a training session on tropical woods
  ✓ Including a specific module « Wood finishes Used ... »
  ✓ Literature review necessary for this specific module

➢ Training session organized (2014-07)

+ poster for WoodSciCraft
Main characteristics of Wood finishes used by traditional societies in Africa and Oceania

✔ Essentially composed of stains applied on wood items for decorative purposes

✔ Very often in connection with a precise ritual

✔ Come from ancient uses for fabrics dyeing

✔ Main components: vegetable pigments and minerals, diluted
Before applying finishes, sanding and polishing of wood surfaces, traditionally with the help of:

- Scrapers (metal, bone, scale)
- Rough trees leaves and/or containing silica
- Wet sands or earths
- Shark or skate skin (Oceania)

The first sandpapers in Asia and Oceania: parchments or banana tree leaves with shells or seeds fragments, or sands glued with natural gum.
## A lot of African and Oceanian vegetable-based stains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Organ</th>
<th>Region-Country</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baphia nitida</td>
<td>Wood decoction</td>
<td>South Benin – South-West Nigeria</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Yorouba masks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bixa orellana (rocouy)</td>
<td>Seeds integument (rocou)</td>
<td>South America – Africa – Oceania (New Guinea)</td>
<td>Orange-red</td>
<td>All products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caesalpinia coriaria</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>India - Madagascar</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>All products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cochlospermum tinctorium</td>
<td>Rhizome</td>
<td>Sudano-Sahelian area</td>
<td>Brown-yellowish</td>
<td>All products, decorative items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ficus glumosa</td>
<td>Bark</td>
<td>Central to Austral Africa</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>All products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haematoxylum campechianum</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>Various tropical countries</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>All products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigofera coerulea/.../tinctoria</td>
<td>Leaved branches</td>
<td>Africa then Asia-Oceania</td>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>All products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lannea velutina</td>
<td>Bark juice</td>
<td>West to Central Africa</td>
<td>Varnishes</td>
<td>All products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morinda lucida</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>West to Central Africa</td>
<td>Yellow to red</td>
<td>All products</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Noteworthy bibliographic references


Thank you for your attention!