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TRAPPING SUSTAINABILITY: AMAZONIA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FISHING TECHNOLOGIES

Author: Viviane Andrade Fernandes dos Santos Moura
Coordinator: PhD. Luiz Oosterbeek

Erasmus Mundus Master in Quaternary and Prehistory
Apheleia Ἀφέλεια Humanities International Association for Cultural Integrated Landscape Management
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
uniTwin
ipt Instituto Politécnico de Tomar
UNESCO Chair in Humanities and Cultural Integrated Landscape Management, Polytechnic Institute of Tomar
MAÇÃO VERDE HORIZONTE
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
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Introduction

Fluvial dynamics play an important role over in Amazonian environments, with fish consumption being fundamental to indigenous peoples which, over the millennia, have developed a deep knowledge of the ecosystem and the ethology of fish populations in order to create strategies that would allow a sustainable management. The results of this adaptive process are still visible, both in the plan of immaterial culture and in the set of specialized traps for catching fish.

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The northwestern Amazon region, and in particular the upper Rio Negro basin, represents a paradigmatic example of a highly challenging environment for capturing resources, including aquatic ones.

Brazilian upper Rio Negro. Map in: Cabalzar, 2005.

For thousands of years, this region has been inhabited by native populations — as expressed in their origin narratives and confirmed by archeological studies.

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Making Analyses…

- The technological system is deeply related to a complex of traditional knowledge that involves the production of mythical narratives about the origins of fish and different fishing techniques.
- The improved fishing traps reflect the need for selective capture, allowing all individuals not fully developed to pass, so as not to impact the species reproductive cycle.

The Traps

The traps made by the indigenous go beyond artifacts built for fishing, being highly linked to the narratives of the creation of the universe.

They can be permanent or portable, requiring some rules during their preparation.

Matapi

Making the Matapi Trap. Image: Cabalzar, 2005.

Illustration Matapi. Feliciano Lana (Desana), 2005.

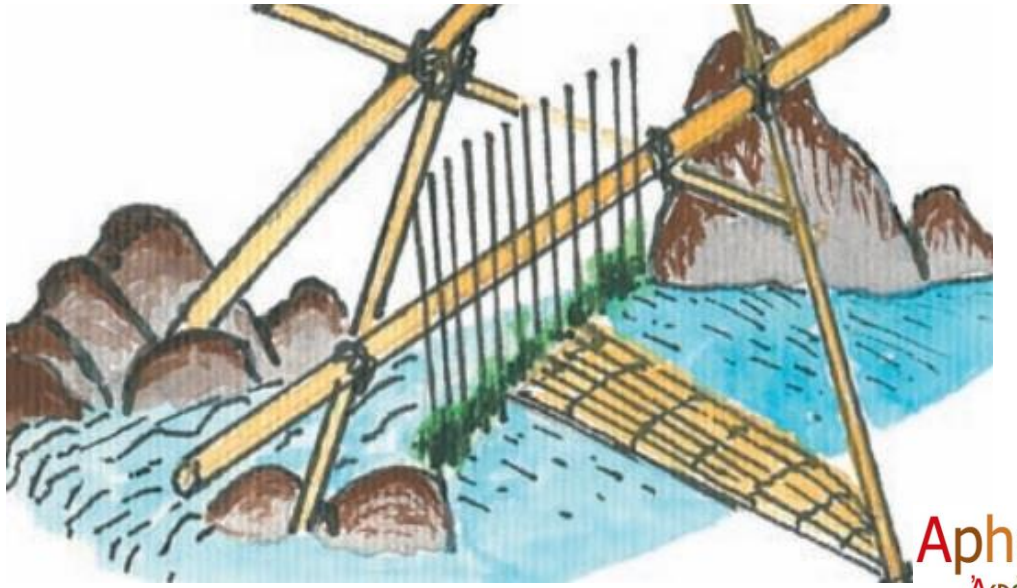
Caiá

Caiá installed in the waterfall. Image: Cabalzar, 2005.

Caiá in the Museum of the Amazon. Image: Viviane Moura, 2017.

Jequi

Indigenous installing Jequi. Image: Juan Soler.



Jequi embedded in the fence. Illustration: Feliciano Lana, 2005.

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Discussion

The potential of the sustainable relationship between the indigenous population with the environment can provide us some efficient alternatives to deal with the current forms of nature exploration, opting for less destructive paths.

The current demographic pression may indicate that these techniques are not enough to satisfy our needs, but perhaps, the conduct of indigenous communities tells us something about necessity vs dispensability.

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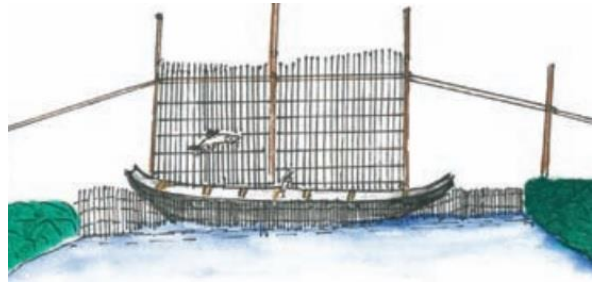
Conclusion



Understanding the relationship between indigenous populations and the environment in which they live, their adaptations over the centuries and their resilience, can not only be an exercise of curiosity / knowledge, but also to understand how we can extract what is a necessity in a less harmful way, respecting the planet.

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THANK YOU!
OBRIGADA!