

Perceptions, Knowledge and Spiritual Management of Fire in Indigenous Forest Landscapes

Understanding fire and the forest from other perceptions and dimensions

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In Colombian territory, many indigenous communities have a physical, emotional and spiritual connections with forests. The concept and management of fire in forest by indigenous communities encompasses a spiritual dimension, where fire is a spirit that can help, clean, design and build new forestspaces.

The fire purifies, heals and rebuilds living beings.

Methodology

For the current work, an immersion job was carried out using learning and description methodologies specific to the researchers from the 5 ethnic groups.



To see the three stages of the methodology please scan this QR code.

SEVEN recommend guidelines for fire management in forest areas outside indigenous lands.

1. Be aware that each territory has its own fire and water tree species.
2. Trees that are not native to the territory must be eliminated.
3. In the post-fire area, plant some water-native trees, because in this way the system can be balanced.
4. Prioritize the presence and well management of water, if the region lacks water, it is unbalanced.
5. The key issues for territory harmony are:
 - a. Recover the health of the soil (soil is a living system).
 - b. Make offerings to the Spirits who are the owners of the territory.
6. The territory claims, Territory and its spiritual owners must be harmonized.
7. Not think just about the profit, territory must produce beyond wood, it is also source of food, soil, water and health.

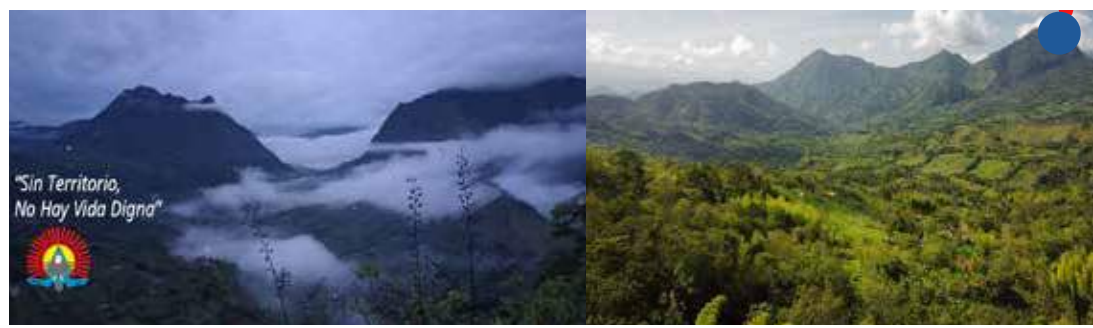


Figure 4. Embera territory Caldas department, Riosucio municipality. Andes Region. Source Resguardo Colonial Cañamomo Iomapieta 2023.



Figure 5. Uitoto territory Amazonas department, Leticia municipality. Amazon Region. Source Ana Maria Monsalve 2021

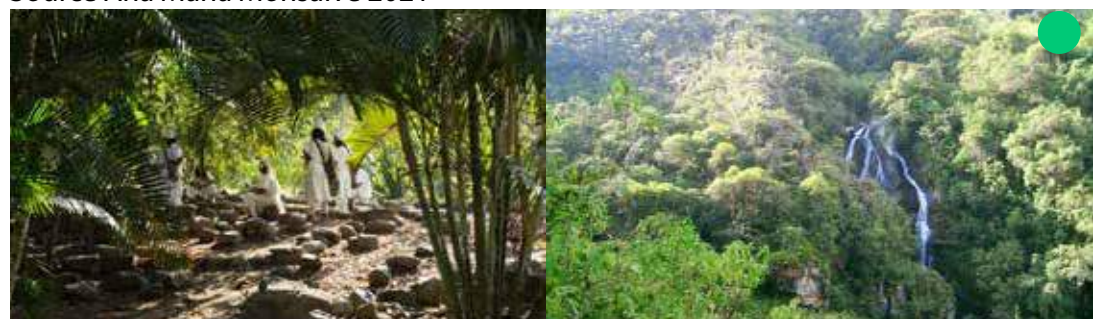


Figure 6. Arhuaco territory in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Source: Iwgija 2018, Monsalve 2019, Tayrona Indigenous Confederation 2020, Paz 2023.

They all consider that Fire and Forests are sentient beings, fundamental parts of life in the community.

Arhuacos
Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta

Uitoto and Tikuna
Amazon region

Embera and Panchiwua
Andes region



Figure 1: Offering in Embera territory - Caldas department, Riosucio municipality. Source Resguardo Colonial Cañamomo Iomapieta 2023.

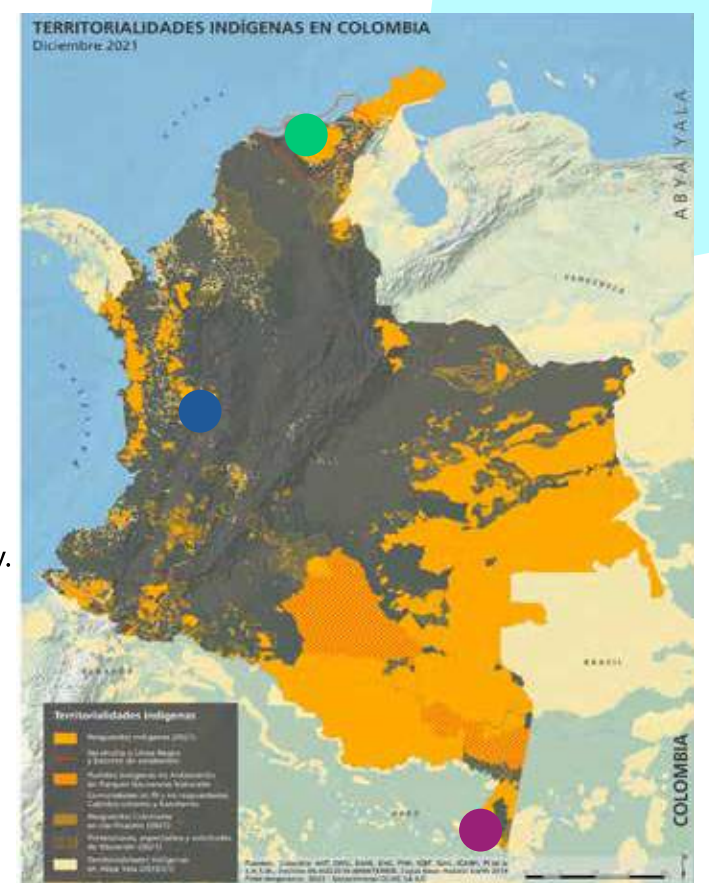


Figure 2: Indigenous territories in Colombia. Source <https://geoactivismo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/TI1221-scaled.jpg>

Perception and management of fire within territories of indigenous communities.

1. The territory is defined by its **geography**, and by the **people who occupy it and give life** to it.
2. Taking care of our **internal state** is a fundamental duty, since the identity and condition of a territory depend, to a large extent, on the state and disposition of its inhabitants.
3. In **indigenous communities** they do not have firefighters, the firefighters are themselves. In the event of fires, to make firebreaks and control the fire, the community organizes and puts out the fire.
4. In the case of fires in forests caused by humans, the responsible have to do a series of tasks to **balance or harmonize** the place of the fire. See Figure 7.
5. In fire events, not only trees are affected, but also the animals, the soil and are affected, and the mountain is left with wounds. Then the people in charge has to do a lot of **harmonization work** in this territory that can take from two months, sometimes even years.

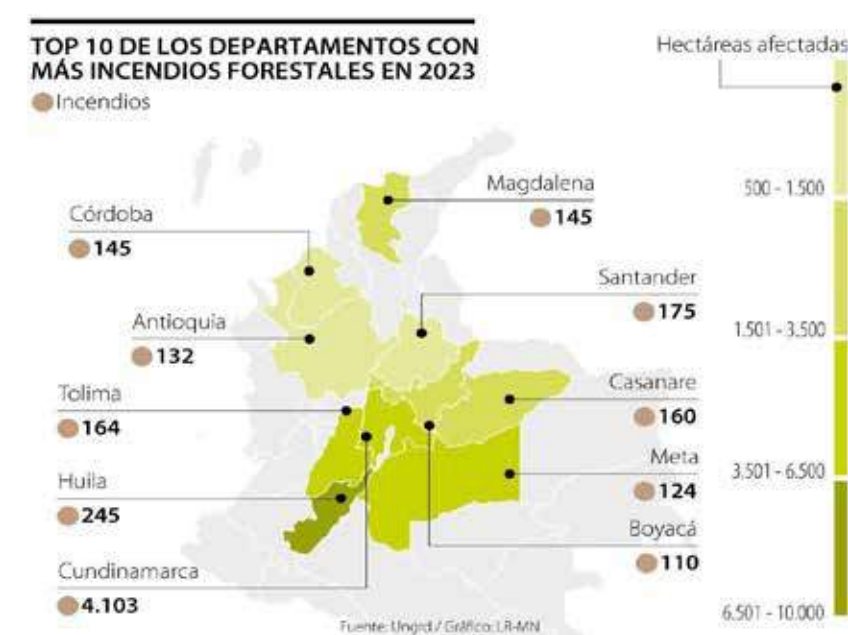


Figure 3: Top of 10 Colombia departments with more reported fires in 2023. Source: <https://www.agronegocios.co/clima/incendios-forestales-subieron-durante-2023-pero-las-hectareas-afectadas-bajaron-3721346>.



Figure 7. Offering in Embera territory Caldas department, Riosucio municipality. Andes Region. Source Resguardo Colonial Cañamomo Iomapieta 2023.



Water-Tree species

Trees that support, spread and produce water like *Ceiba pentandra*

Fire-Tree species

Trees that support, spread and produce fire like *Mauritia flexuosa*



Let's connect!



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