Twitter Thread by Camilo López Aguirre

Camilo López Aguirre
@cernestola

Ok people, the current hype in #Science around #Archaeology research in #Chiribiquete and #LaLindosa in #Colombia, albeit deserving, it's a clear example of how scientific discovery is colonised and monopolised. We need to have an awkward conversation

As a Colombian expat in #Science, I was always surprised with how places like Chiribiquete were pretty much unknown overseas, considering their scientific, cultural and biological value, and that almost any Colombian has heard about them 2/n

The last couple of weeks I started an increasing trend of people in "developed countries" talking about discoveries of ancient paintings in the Amazon, and managed to trace back the source to this paper from April 3/n
https://t.co/RixqTL4h0J

As people started reacting more and more to it, media coverage started popping up. At that point a narrative was clear: A British-led expedition just discovered a trove of paintings from the heart of the Colombian Amazon 4/n
https://t.co/8ZMDOVaCrW

The discovery was so F&%$ unbelievable that they kept it under the wraps until a @Channel4 documentary was shot and produced to be released later this month 5/n
https://t.co/iGFOCjn8k0

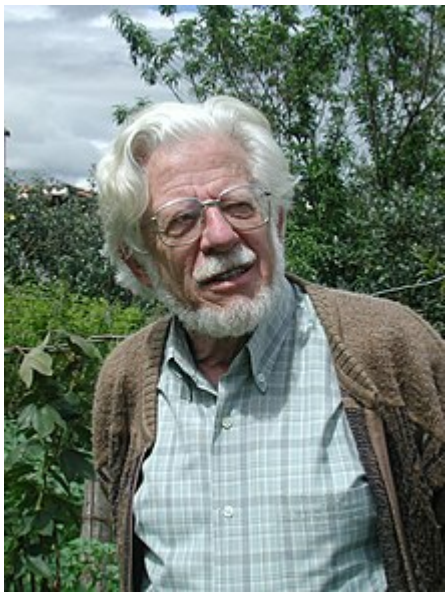
By now I'm just gobsmacked in disbelief: Colombians have known, researched and fought to preserve this site for decades. Let alone indigenous communities that even today (after millennia) have a direct connection with those sites. What the actual f&%$!? 6/n

You would argue that it's the language barrier to blame, but this happened not only for outlets in English, even @CNNEE that could have easily read and reached to Spanish-speaking sources sold the same narrative 7/n
https://t.co/4siTZOwWhw

So although I have very limited knowledge on the background history of the "discovery" of Chiribiquete and La Lindosa, here's a bit of vindication to the hundreds of people that have given their lives (literally and metaphorically) 8/n

@ccastanouribe is arguably the person who brought Chiribiquete and La Lindosa into the scientific sphere more than 30 years ago while he was the director of @ParquesColombia (National Parks Colombia) 9/n

Other researchers like Patricio von Hildebrand and Thomas van der Hammen spent decades living and exploring such sites uncovering their biological and archaeological richness 10/n



Multiple expeditions have been completed over the decades, efforts have been made to declare it a national park, then expand it (to almost 43,000Km2), and even in 2018 it was freaking declared world heritage by @UNESCO! 11/n

For decades it remained unreported to protect the sites and uncontacted communities that live in the area. As it became public, #LaLindosa was opened to the public as an archaeological park in a way to divert people from damaging #Chiribiquete, that remains closed 12/n

This has always been difficult territory. From the time they initially reported the sites, armed groups have been under control of the region, forcibly displacing indigenous communities, researchers and conservationists 13/n

The worst fears became true and as it grew in popularity, deforestation and forced displacement soared, creating a hostile environment for locals, researchers and conservationists 13/n
https://t.co/v9wQzbde5a

Anyway, hopefully someone from #CienciaCriolla that knows the story way better than I am will jump in to correct me and add what I've missed. If you're curious about our version of the story, here's a thread of sources to finish this off 14/n

This is a great interactive special by @RevistaSemana with great interviews to some of the researchers involved:
https://t.co/AkWuP8eBxf

This is an excellent documentary following one of the most recent expeditions by Colombian researchers by @RTVCco that's available on @RTVCPlay
https://t.co/ytSg4wzs6c

This is a fantastic talk by @maria_mimia, Colombian investigative journalist and @ccastanouribe's daughter
https://t.co/TKHFJ55Kj3

Last but not least, last year @ccastanouribe published with @mesaestandar a book everyone interested in Chiribiquete and La Lindosa should read
https://t.co/sC9GOJAcNW

Forgot to mention that the two first authors of the study behind all the hype are actually Colombian researchers from @UNALOficial and @UdeA but are vastly ignored in most of the coverage, with exceptions like (you guessed it)... a Colombian outlet
https://t.co/860ugx65o5

With this, I leave with this quote from "The solitude of Latin America" by Gabo: "The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own, serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary"

Since this seems to be getting some traction, I'll keep adding bits and pieces. It is also worth noting that while we discuss this issue, La Lindosa is surrounded by human induced fires and expanding deforestation, losing over 1000 ha of forest
https://t.co/dxYTYO4N6y

Here's some early work by Colombian researchers and Thomas van der Hammen on La Lindosa from 1990
https://t.co/1mMTbQGjHz

GUAYABERO I: UN SITIO PRECERAMICO DE LA LOCALIDAD ANGOSTURA II, SAN JOSE DEL GUAVIARE

GONZALO CORREAL

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Resumen

La excavación arqueológica en el abrigo rocoso Guayabero I, considerada como la primera investigación estratificada de un sitio precerámico en la Amazonia Colombiana, registra la presencia del hombre prehistórico a partir de c.a. 7000 A.P. Las lascas prismáticas, concoidales, triangulares y retocadas; y en menor frecuencia los raspadores circulares, discoidales y laterales, todos instrumentos de tipo Abriense recuperados de una capa de suelo arenoso pardusco, son evidencia de una ocupación precerámica en el sitio entre el 5000 y 2000 A.P. La reducida muestra de fragmentos cerámicos encontrados en los niveles más superficiales de la excavación, por su similaridad, recuerda las tradiciones cerámicas encontradas en las localidades de Araracuara y La Pedrera (región Amazónica). Muestras de polen, y análisis de semillas, ocre y resinas ampliarán esta primera evidencia de cazadores -recolectores en la región tropical de la Amazonia Colombiana.

Abstract

Archaeological excavation at the Guayabero I rock-shelter, considered the first stratified investigation of the preceramic period in the Colombian Amazonia, reveals human presence since c.a. 7000 B.P. in the region. The Abrian type prismatic, concoid, triangular and retouched flakes, and the less abundant, terminal, disk-like, lateral and circular scrapers recovered from a brownish sandy soil are evidence of a preceramic occupation between 5000 and 2000 B.P. Scarce ceramic fragments found at the uppermost levels of the excavation, due to their similarity, only suggest possible relationships to ceramic traditions of the Araracuara and La Pedrera localities, within the same Amazon region. Pollen, seeds, ochre, and resins analysis will probably expand this first evidence of hunter-gatherers in the eastern tropical lowlands of Colombia.

Just this year I was able to track at least three scientific papers describing new species from Chiribiquete 1/3:
By Jacquelyn A. Kallunki
https://t.co/14gu0dYu2M

Just this year I was able to track at least three scientific papers describing new species from Chiribiquete 2/3:
By Lima (@unicampoficial), Urbano-Bonilla and Prada-Pedreros (both from @UniJaveriana)
https://t.co/pEpKtRf2aZ

Just this year I was able to track at least three scientific papers describing new species from Chiribiquete 3/3:
By García-Alzate et al.
https://t.co/6njuWoLHAA