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Epistemic Dialogue for the Recognition of Indigenous Knowledge: The case of the Sia People's Mathematics in Colombia.

Short description / Abstract:

For thousands of years, the peoples of Latin America, the continent we call Abya Yala, have been recreating and conceptualising our knowledge, which has been disregarded and rendered invisible by 'Euro-science'. This presentation aims to highlight the wisdom of Indigenous Peoples and situate it within a context of epistemic dialogue, both within our communities and with other academic spheres, including those often referred to as 'Western'. In particular, the article explores the ethnomathematics of the Sia people, whose territory lies on the Colombian Pacific coast. Through the "CRISSAC project", a research initiative aimed at understanding the significance of territory, life plans and the worldview of Indigenous Peoples, the study found that Sia communities use a numerical base of 0 to 5, and evidence was found of the use of mathematics in house-building, weaving with their own iconography, singing, agriculture, and their own calendar. In Sia weavings, each geometric figure encodes a mathematical operation: what academia calls a 'fraction' exists among the Sia people as a proportion between colours, shapes, and the rhythms of the weaving loom. Sia ethnomathematics underpins complex operations across different spheres of community life, in addition to its value as a subject for teaching in formal educational settings, including as a distinct academic discipline in its own right. These findings have direct implications for curriculum design in Indigenous higher education: Sia ethnomathematics is not supplementary content, but a complete system of knowledge capable of structuring its own training programmes. The experience of the Sia people thus offers a concrete model of epistemic dialogue between indigenous knowledge and academia