

# Arrows and smartphones: daily life of Amazon Tembe tribe

October 1 2019, by Luis Andres Henao

---



In this Sept. 2, 2019 photo, seven-year-old Emilia Tembe pulls back on her handcrafted toy bow and arrow made of sticks and leaves as she stands on a fallen tree, in the Ka' a kyr village, Para state, Brazil. "This part used to be a native forest. This was primary jungle. But the fire arrived and it cleared the land," said Emidio Tembe, Emilia's grandfather and the Ka' a kyr chieftain who named the village. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)

They hunt with bows and arrows, fish for piranhas and gather wild plants, while some watch soap operas on TV or check the internet on phones inside thatch-roof huts.

They paint their faces with dyes from seeds to prepare for battle and also use video technology to fight illegal loggers and other threats.

Daily life in the remote Tembe indigenous villages in the Amazon jungle of Brazil mixes tradition and modernity.

They bathe in muddy brown rivers in the mornings, and play soccer in sandy fields wearing jerseys from European teams like Chelsea in the afternoons.

In a Brazilian state ravaged by deforestation and thousands of fires, the Tembe shoot photos and video to document the cutting of trees in their land by loggers and share them on social media. They also recently met with a non-governmental group that offered the tribe drones and GPS devices to track the encroachers in exchange for harvesting wood sustainably. And like their ancestors, they plant trees to teach their children the value of preserving the world's largest rainforest, which is a critical bulwark against global warming.

"I tell my children: I planted for you, now you have to plant for your children," Cidalia Tembe said in her backyard at the Tekohaw village, where she grows fruits, vegetables and medicinal herbs.



In this Sept. 3, 2019 photo, people gather for a meeting of the Tembe tribes in the Tekohaw village, in Para state, Brazil. Under a thatch-roof shelter in the Amazon rainforest, warriors wielding bows and arrows, elderly chieftains in face paint and nursing mothers gathered to debate a plan that some hope will hold at bay the loggers and other invaders threatening the tribes of the Tembe. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)

"These are our home remedies," she said. "We don't go to pharmacies in the city, we make our own medicines. We have more faith in what's ours."

She also proudly pointed to four sugarcane plants—each tended by one of her children—and avocados, coconuts, lemons and acai, the Amazonian berry that's a vitamin-packed breakfast staple in Brazil.

"This is paradise," her husband Muti Tembe said. "You don't see any smoke from cars that pollute because we don't have any. In the city, at midday it gets too hot. ... Here, you're at ease and you don't hear the noises. Only the calls of birds," he said as birds chirped on trees.

One of the trees was planted by Muti's grandfather, a Tembe chieftain and Tekohaw founder. For generations, members of the tribe have extracted a black dye from that Jenipapo tree in the couple's yard to paint their body during celebrations.



In this Sept. 2, 2019 photo, a chicken walks past a pair of Mickey Mouse flip flops, in the Ka 'a kyr village, Para state, Brazil. Daily life in the remote Tembe indigenous villages in the Amazon jungle of Brazil mixes tradition and modernity. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)

During the rite of passage that can last for days, tribe members also hunt monkeys and birds that they later cook, while the young who come into adulthood jump, sing and mimic bird sounds with other members of the tribe inside a communal hut to banging of feet on the floor and the shaking of rattles.

About 2,000 Tembe live in their 1,080-square-mile (2,766-square-kilometer) Alto Rio Guama homeland, which can only be reached after long journeys on boats or on dirt roads. Villages along the Guama and Gurupi rivers that divide the reserve can range in size from a few dozen people to hundreds. The indigenous reserve is officially protected, but it's constantly under siege by loggers who illegally try to extract prized hardwood.

The Amazon, 60% of which is in Brazil, is also home to 20% of the earth's [plant species](#), many of which are found nowhere else.



In this Sept. 4, 2019 photo, local photographer Orerero Tembe edits his coverage of a meeting of the Tembe tribes in the Tekohaw village, in Para state, Brazil. In a Brazilian state ravaged by deforestation and thousands of fires, the Tembe shoot photos and video to document the cutting of trees in their land by loggers and share them on social media. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)

Satellite data from the Brazilian Space Agency has shown a sharp increase in deforestation and [forest fires](#) in the past year. In August, the agency issued an alert that fires in the Amazon had increased 84% in the first seven months of this year, compared with the same period in 2018.

Concern about the Amazon's rainforest, has heightened since far-right President Jair Bolsonaro took office this year with calls to loosen protections for nature reserves and indigenous lands.

"We have to fight for the trees that allow us to breathe," said Gleison Tembe of the small village of Ka' a kyr, which in their native tongue means Green Jungle.

"The Amazon, nature, is my mother, because it raised me. The animals that it takes care of give us strength. My children only eat natural food and it all comes here from the forest, he said. "So, why deforest?"



In this Sept. 2, 2019 photo, a boa constrictor slithers across a red dirt road leading to Tekohaw, in Para state, Brazil, where members of the Tembe tribes gathered to debate a plan. Some saw hope in the sustainable development plan presented at the gathering. It would include drones and other technology to curb the encroachers while helping the Tembe profit by harvesting wood, bananas and acai berries in a limited way from a part of their jungle. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



In this Sept. 2, 2019 photo, the image of a child hangs on an adobe wall inside her home in the Ka 'a kyr village, Para state, Brazil. Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro believes past allocations of land to indigenous people were excessive. About 14% of Brazil is indigenous territory, a huge area for a relatively small population, according to Bolsonaro. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)





In this Sept. 4, 2019 photo, Cajueiro chieftain Sergio Muxi Tembe, stand by as the tank of his motorcycle is filled with gas, in Para state, Brazil. "We know Bolsonaro doesn't like Indians. He's anti-Indian," said the chief, wearing a headdress of macaw and other feathers and a traditional bone bracelet on his wrist next to a Casio digital watch. "We have a different culture and that culture must be respected." (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



In this Sept. 3, 2019 photo, moonlight illuminates the bow of a boat transporting indigenous leaders back to their villages after a gathering of Tembe tribes on the Alto Rio Guama Indigenous Reserve, in the Tekohaw village, in Para state, Brazil. Some had travelled long distances on dirt roads that cut through the lush jungle, or in boats along a muddy brown tributary of the Amazon River, all part of the Alto Rio Guama homeland that is officially protected but in practice under siege. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



In this Sept. 2, 2019 photo, a customer stands next to a calendar featuring a comic that pokes fun at indigenous people in a mechanic shop along the road between the city of Paragominas and the village Ka 'a kyr, in Para state, Brazil. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



In this Sept. 2, 2019 photo, a small shop owner, who sells a little bit of everything, is illuminated by brake lights while standing outside his home in the Cajueiro village, Para state, Brazil. Brazil's 900,000 indigenous people make up about 0.5% of the country's population and their reservations account for about 14% of its territory. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



In this Sept. 2, 2019 photo, Tembe children tend to the toddlers, as residents begin to gather for lunchtime in the Ka 'a kyr village, in Para state, Brazil. "This is paradise," Muti Tembe said. "You don't see any smoke from cars that pollute because we don't have any. In the city, at midday it gets too hot. ... Here, you're at ease and you don't hear the noises. Only the calls of birds." (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



In this Sept. 5, 2019 photo, a Tembe family cooks breakfast as a pot boils on top of a bicycle wheel serving as a grill outside their home in the Tekohaw village, in Para state, Brazil. The Tembe hunt with bows and arrows, fish for piranhas and gather wild plants. They also watch soap operas on TV or check the internet on phones inside thatch-roof huts. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



This Sept. 5, 2019 photo shows an aerial views of the lush Alto Rio Guama Indigenous Reserve saddled next to a deforested area owned by cattle ranchers, in Para state, Brazil. Satellite data from the Brazilian Space Agency has shown a sharp increase in deforestation and forest fires in the past year. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



In this Sept. 4, 2019 photo, villagers watch a soap opera in their home in the village Tekohaw, in Para state, Brazil. Daily life in the remote Tembe indigenous villages in the Amazon jungle of Brazil mixes tradition and modernity. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)





In this Sept. 2, 2019 photo, a Tembe child leans on a log as he holds on to a make-believe hat he constructed from a giant leaf, in the Ka 'a kyr village, Para state, Brazil. Like their ancestors, the Tembe plant trees to teach their children the value of preserving the world's largest rainforest, which is a critical bulwark against global warming. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



In this Sept. 2, 2019 photo, Tembe boys play soccer on a field in the Cajueiro village, Para state, Brazil. During the rite of passage into adulthood, that can last for days, tribe members hunt monkeys and birds that they later cook, while the young jump, sing and mimic bird sounds with other members of the tribe inside a communal hut to banging of feet on the floor and the shaking of rattles. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



In this Sept. 4, 2019 photo, Cajueiro cheftain Sergio Muxi Tembe leads villagers to the second day of meetings among the Tembe tribes in the Alto Rio Guama Indigenous Reserve, in Para state, Brazil. Under a thatch-roof shelter in the Amazon rainforest, warriors wielding bows and arrows, elderly chieftains in face paint and nursing mothers gathered to debate a plan that some hope will hold at bay the loggers and other invaders threatening the tribes of the Tembe. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



This Sept. 2, 2019 photo shows a cut tree that was felled by a fire in a deforested area near the village Ka 'a kyr, in Para state, Brazil. "We have to fight for the trees that allow us to breathe," said Gleison Tembe a resident of Ka' a kyr, which in the Tembe native tongue means Green Jungle. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



In this Sept. 4, 2019 photo, a child stands still as a woman paints a red mask around her eyes, in preparation for a gathering of tribes in the Alto Rio Guama Indigenous Reserve by the Tembe tribes in the village Tekohaw, Para state, Brazil. The indigenous reserve is officially protected, but it's constantly under siege by loggers who illegally try to extract prized hardwood. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



This Sept. 2, 2019 photo shows the remains of a charred tree in the middle of a farming area in the Ka 'a kyr village, Para state, Brazil. Concern about the Amazon's rainforest, has heightened since far-right President Jair Bolsonaro took office this year with calls to loosen protections for nature reserves and indigenous lands. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



In this Sept. 2, 2019 photo, a young man washes his clothes in a pond in the village Ka 'a kyr, in Para state, Brazil. Villages along the Guama and Gurupi rivers that divide the Alto Rio Guama Indigenous Reserve can range in size from a few dozen people to hundreds. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



In this Sept. 2, 2019 photo, siblings and cousins gather around a cellphone on a purple hammock to watch a children's cartoon on YouTube, in the home of Gleison Tembe in the village Ka 'a kyr, Para state, Brazil, Monday. "The Amazon, nature, is my mother, because it raised me. The animals that it takes care of give us strength. My children only eat natural food and it all comes here from the forest, Gleison Tembe. "So, why deforest?" (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)





In this Sept. 3, 2019 photo, women and children congregate around an out of order public telephone after a gathering of Tembe tribe members in the Tekohaw village, in Para state, Brazil. "The Amazon is ending and that's why we're here—so that it doesn't end," said Lorival Temb , the eldest chieftain, a founder of Tekohaw. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)

In a corner, he dried fish in the blazing sun on a grill held by bricks. Inside his home, some of his children and nephews gathered around a cellphone on a purple hammock to watch a children's cartoon on YouTube. Later, during a short forest trek, his 7-year-old daughter Emilia climbed on a fallen tree that had burned and pointed a bow and arrow that she made with branches.

"This part used to be a native forest. This was primary jungle. But the

fire arrived and it cleared the land," said Emidio Tembe, Emilia's grandfather and the Ka' a kyr chieftain who named the village.

"Our concern here is the food, the cutting of wood, the fires," said Emidio, who recently traveled to the state capital of Belem to sell his wooden handicrafts at a book fair.

"They worry us because we feed ourselves with fish, birds, what we hunt from the forest. So, for us, it's extremely important to remain in the forest, listening to the sounds of birds, the calls of the animals."

© 2019 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Arrows and smartphones: daily life of Amazon Tembe tribe (2019, October 1) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-10-arrows-smartphones-daily-life-amazon.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.