

## Those impacted on the indigenous education of the *Asurini* of the Xingu: Material cultural heritage x Belo Monte hydroelectric power plant



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### ABSTRACT

The *Asurini* of the Xingu are Indians of Tupi-Guarani origin and inhabit the Koatinemo Indigenous Land in the state of Pará. The investigation aims to understand the impacts on the *Asurini* indigenous education, especially on their

material cultural heritage, from the oppressions that came along with the construction of the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Power Plant – Belo Monte HPP. To this end, a qualitative study is developed, to enable the achievement of the objective set, using the bibliographic survey and the realization of semi-structured interviews in the field. For the analysis of the results, the method of Content Analysis is used. The results showed that after the unification of the indigenous peoples in a growing movement in search of their rights in the regional and national scenario with the riverside dwellers, fishermen, rural workers and residents of Altamira, they achieved the elaboration of a program, called Basic Environmental Plan of the Indigenous Component – PBA - CI. It is concluded that despite the elaboration of the plan by the Norte Energia Consortium and execution by the company hired by the consortium to work with the Program of Material and Intangible Cultural Heritage of PBA-CI, there were changes in the way of making the objects that are part of its material cultural heritage, due to external interventions and the demands of commerce.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Education, Material Cultural Heritage, *Asurini* Indigenous People of the Xingu, Belo Monte Hydroelectric Power Plant.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

This work is the result of dialogues built in a Master's research of the Graduate Program in Languages and Knowledge in the Amazon – PPLSA, as well as reflections with the Research Group on Education, Interculturality and Ethnic-Racial Relations (UNIFAP/CNPq) of the Federal University of Amapá - UNIFAP. It is proposed to understand the impacts on the *Asurini* indigenous education, especially on their material cultural heritage, from the oppressions that came along with the construction of the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Power Plant – Belo Monte HPP.

The work instigates the fight against indigenous inequality and invisibility, as well as encourages the appreciation of cultural heritage, the importance of indigenous education and respect for diversity. In this sense, a qualitative study was developed, according to the contributions of Minayo



(2008), using the bibliographic survey and semi-structured interviews in the field with the *Asurini*, FUNAI employees and employees of the company contracted by the Norte Energia Consortium, after sending the necessary documents to FUNAI, for authorization of data collection in *the Koatinemo* Indigenous Land and to the Ethics Committee, through Plataforma Brasil, for the authorization of interviews and images.

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Belo Monte Hydroelectric Power Plant is located on the Trans-Amazonian Highway, Km 52, s/n Sítio Belo Monte, in the Municipality of Vitória do Xingu – PA, near the Municipality of Altamira / PA, and was built in the Xingu River basin, in the southwest of the State of Pará.

According to Sevá Filho (2005), the environmental impacts caused by its construction occurred not only in the localities where the dam of the plant and the channel that diverted the course of the Xingu River are located, but also in the various indigenous lands, which were impacted in different ways, according to the different stages of the work, because, more than half of the area of the Xingu River basin is made up of indigenous lands and conservation units.

Thus, the *Koatinemo Indigenous Land*, located in the state of Pará, approximately 100 km from Altamira/PA, more specifically in the municipality of Senador José Porfírio, in the state of Pará, on the right bank of the Xingu River, where the three villages of the *Asurini* do Xingu, *Kwatinemo*, *Itaaka* and *Muyjrina* ethnic groups are located, *also suffered from the impacts of its construction*.

The *Asurini* From the Xingu they are currently bilingual indigenous people, originally speaking the Tupi-Guarani language, and recently the Portuguese language. This fact occurs especially from the contact, which began in the 70s, and intensified after the construction of the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Power Plant in 2011.

Indigenous education *Asurini* It stands out in the scope of its cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, defined by orality, demonstration, and everyday practices. According to Müller (1992), the *Asurini* From the Xingu they make canoes, benches, baskets, body adornments, weapons - bows and arrows, flutes, fabric, helmets, rope and ceramics. Müller (1992) clarifies that canoes are for transport; the bench to sit on; utilitarian objects such as baskets and ceramic items, for transporting, depositing and serving food; weapons for hunting and fishing; adornments for body decoration, such as earrings, bracelets, rings, and necklaces; the flutes for rituals; the fabric for the blouses and canvases; the helmet, for rituals, festivals and body ornamentation; and the rope for the nets.

In the case of intangible heritage, there are the *rituals TURÉ*, the ritual of the flutes, and *MARAKÁ*, the shamanistic ritual; and the practice of body painting. Müller (1992) states that body painting can be used by everyone, regardless of age and gender, the only division between the sexes is



related to the position of the painting. Horizontally for men and vertically for women, marking the womb and the phases of biological and social development.

### 3 RESULTS ACHIEVED

In order to highlight the impacts caused in the aforementioned *Asurini villages*, a survey was carried out based on the oral narratives of the Asurini indigenous people of the Xingu. And in his exhibitions, one can perceive his discontent motivated by the construction of the dam, related to the river, due to the lack of fish; food insecurity, because they now buy food in the city that they do not grow; and to material and immaterial culture, for engaging with different cultures.

In addition to these implications, there were also restructurings in the *Koatinemo* Indigenous Land, in this way, where we saw a scenario with mud and straw houses before the dam, built by the indigenous people themselves, today we can see a scenario with houses, schools and health centers in masonry, built by the Norte Energia Consortium. Therefore, the villages located in the *Koatinemo* Indigenous Territory were transformed physically and culturally with the arrival of the Belo Monte HPP, causing a highly relevant impact on these communities due to the intense contact.

In view of the above, the indigenous people of the Xingu basin conquered, after the unification of the indigenous people in a growing movement in search of their rights in the regional and national scenario with the riverside dwellers, fishermen, rural workers and residents of Altamira, the elaboration of a program, called the Basic Environmental Plan of the Indigenous Component – PBA-CI.

The PBA-CI is composed of 10 programs, namely: Institutional Strengthening Program, Communication Program for Non-Indigenous People, Indigenous Territorial Management Program, Indigenous School Education Program, Integrated Indigenous Health Program, Productive Activities Program, Infrastructure Program, Relocation and Resettlement Program for Indians living in Altamira and Volta Grande do Xingu, Environmental Supervision Program of the Physical and Biotic Environment and the Program of Material and Intangible Cultural Heritage.

In this work, only the Material and Intangible Cultural Heritage Program will be highlighted, which aims to strengthen and protect the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples who had their physical and cultural reproduction bases affected by the Belo Monte HPP. However, despite the fact that the Material and Intangible Cultural Heritage Program was created with the objective of valuing the cultural artistic expressions of indigenous peoples, its actions ended up modifying the ways of making the objects constituting the material cultural heritage of the *Asurini* of the Xingu, since, it was found, in the face of the interference of the company hired by the Consortium, the insertion of new elements in the way of making art. An example is fabric, which is used to make blouses and fabrics; industrialized paints, for the painting of these fabrics, as well as for the painting of the bench and body



painting in the exhibitions, thus reducing the use of the juice of the juice of the genipap fruit, together with charcoal; beads, for the making of body adornments, thus reducing the use of fish scales, monkey seeds and teeth.

These elements were inserted by the company possibly due to the practicality and agility that beads, nylon, and industrialized paints provide, causing an increase in production, and, therefore, profit for the company, thus meeting the demands of commerce and exhibitions at events and museums.

Thus, according to RIMA (2009), the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Power Plant can bring some misunderstandings between generations, as well as the search for other types of income and demotivation with cultural activities, which can hinder the transfer of traditional knowledge to new generations.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that despite the elaboration of the PBA-CI by the Norte Energia Consortium and execution by the company contracted to work with the Material and Intangible Cultural Heritage Program, during the construction of the Belo Monte HPP, there were changes in the forms of making the objects constituting the material cultural heritage of the *Asurini* do Xingu indigenous people, now made with a wide variety of natural and industrial elements, due to external interventions. In addition to the intensification of the rhythm of its confections, especially ceramics, body adornments and painting, to meet the demands of commerce and exhibitions at events and museums. It is important to emphasize, in this context, that even with the modifications, the *Asurini* cultural heritage serves as a testimony of their ways of life and their ideology, making indigenous education a way of keeping the ethnic uniqueness alive over the generations.



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