

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AT PEIXE ANGICAL AND SERRA DA MESA:  
MNEMOSYNE SUBMERGED OR DROWNED?**

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*Being a Goddess,  
Memory can be put to  
sleep but never dies.*  
(Ginette Paris, 1990, p. 134)

On the banks of the Tocantinzinho River, in the region of Serra da Mesa in Niquelândia, northern Goiás, an archeological site containing ancient rock inscriptions was found on gigantic limestone outcrops, and was called the Abrigo Pedra Talhada (Hewn Stone Shelter) site, GO-Ni 176. Besides Pedra Talhada, which is filled with pre-historic rock paintings, 90 other archeological sites were found and identified in 1995 in the Serra da Mesa region. In 1996 all those paintings and archeological sites were flooded by Furnas Centrais Elétricas S/A for the construction of the Serra da Mesa hydroelectric power plant (UHE), located at 22° 07' south and 42° 17' west, 250 kilometers from Brasília (GODINHO, 1996; MARTINS, 1998). This plant has 3 Francis Turbines, which produce 1,200MW per year of installed potency and 650 MW per year of firm energy. The flow rate (LTA) is 763 m/second in a flooded area of 1,784 km<sup>2</sup> and a total water volume of 11,000,000 m<sup>3</sup> (UCG, p. 2-3). It is the largest plant in Brazil in terms of water volume. The plant was first proposed in the National Electrification Plan in 1951 during the Getúlio Vargas administration, and begun for military regime purposes, which gave special privileges to contracting cartels and energy intensive industries. It was a project focused solely on economy and development, and which fails to comply with the Federal Constitution and all the environmental and indigenous protection laws created in the 1980s. It also goes against international accords, such as Agenda 21, that give priority to

environmental quality and the quality of life of local communities (TAUTZ, 1996). The flooded area affected the Avá-Canoeiro indigenous reservation and about 1,200 small farmers and their families residing in the region (IPARJ, 1995). This grandiose engineering feat was somehow able to reach its final stages without IBAMA (Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources) ever granting the necessary permit. The entire process was deemed urgent and was silently pushed through the National Congress. However, judges from Tocantins and Goiás, along with FUNAI (Brazilian National Indian Foundation), were able to negotiate some compensatory agreements with Furnas that would supply for at least minimal social and environmental needs in the region (AQUINO, 1996).

Several other hydroelectric plants are being planned and built along the Tocantins River, and the most recent one to close its flood gates and inundate was the Peixe Angical plant on January 14, 2006. Many archeological sites, petroglyphs, and precious records of our ancestral past were, and continue being flooded. Mnemosyne, the Greek personification of Memory, a Titaness of mythology, and goddess of creation, calls upon us to reflect.

This reflection is not a critical history of the Serra da Mesa or Peixe Angical archeological sites, nor is it an analysis of the ethnography of the archeological sites, their rock paintings, and lithic records and their specific historical and cultural details. The sites were flooded without leaving any in-depth research behind, other than that done by the so-called “contract archeologists”, or in other words, archeologists contracted by the company itself to prepare tedious reports in order to approve the construction of their own power plants. Obviously the reports are in the interest of the contracting company,

meaning the flooding will invariably be an approximate calculation, and will be addressed as an urgent need of the Brazilian people. The contracting company, therefore, is first and foremost seen as doing an “exemplary” job of social responsibility.

Mnemosyne will show herself in her complexity as a goddess, which by nature is not dogmatic and is interdependent on the sacred. As an archetype she is the creation of collective Western imagination connected to the arts, culture, and the history of ideas. We also invite the daughters of Mnemosyne, the Muses, to be present with poetry, helping us penetrate the dammed *sertão*\*. Guimarães Rosa, our *sertão* ambassador who loved its rivers to the point of wanting to become a crocodile, will help us portray the rich and profound wisdom and beauty of the *sertão* – the natural habitat of the peoples of the *Cerrado*\* and biome that keeps our Brazilian ancestral roots. The Serra da Mesa and Peixe Angical have concealed Titaness ancestry! When I visited the region in 1996, I was struck with the realization that I was dealing not only with an ecological disaster, but also with something laden with hidden and profound wisdom. Here I attempt to weave reflections of Carl G. Jung, James Hillman, David Miller, Theodore Roszac, Ginette Paris and other scholars of the unconscious, and offer it to you for your contemplation.

This is how I tell it. First I tell of the things that shaped the past for me more intimately. I will tell you. I will tell you of the *sertão*. What, I don't know. A great *sertão*! I don't know. No one yet knows. Only a few extremely rare people – and only these few streams, rivulets. What I truly thank you for is the gentility of your attention. (ROSA, 1986, p.84)

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\* Translator's note: *Sertão* [sehr-tuh-ong] means hinterland, sparsely settled interior of the country, in particular, the backlands of the Brazilian Northeast. Guimarães Rosa refers mainly to the northern half of the State of Minas Gerais, and this article refers mainly to the border area between northern Goiás and Tocantins.

\* Translator's note: *Cerrado*[seh-ha-doh] literally means 'closed' or 'no access'. It is used to describe the vast savannah region in Brazil characterized by huge biodiversity.

### **The Goddess of Memory**

Gaia gave birth to Uranus, and from that first divine generation was born six Titans and six Titanesses, known as beings that personify the elementary forces of nature. One of the Titanesses, Mnemosyne, who personifies Memory, gave birth to nine daughters known as the Muses, the culmination of nine nights with Zeus. The Greeks personified Memory as one of the gigantic goddesses of creation, with a feminine voice and soul, having a galaxy of feelings and emotions, being cosmically visionary, giver of identity to the past, present and future, and still, libertarian by re-inventing and creating new dimensions to imagery. Her daughters are sources of culture that inspire and delight us in the art of merging with the divine. Without Mnemosyne and her daughters we have no Memory, no stories, no images, no myths, no meaning, no music, no poetry, and no song. To dance with Memory personified in Mnemosyne is to commune with the past in order to catch a glimpse of a future filled with images and stories with archetypical qualities that allow us to weave associations in harmony with nature, our lives, hearts, and souls. Mnemosyne is above all an archaic generatrix.

Despite the apparent limitations and modernity of our minds, we know that the psyche is archaic, as Jung has said all along:

...it is not only primitive man whose psychology is archaic. It is the psychology also of modern, civilized man, and not merely of individual “throw-backs” in modern society. On the contrary, every civilized human being, however high his conscious development, is still an archaic man at the deeper levels of his psyche. (SABINI, 2002, p. 100, CW 10, par. 105)

Psychology itself is a devotion to the goddess Mnemosyne as it seeks to cure and bring back memories, to re-order them and *make* the soul. Psychoanalysis offices are Mnemosyne sanctuaries where we can, finally, permit our archaic to be expressed. The

entire work of our dear Nise da Silveira has the blessing of Mnemosyne and her daughters as she rescues the memories of her patients and beautifully expresses herself in colorful images and dense mythological content. The mother of psychology is Mnemosyne. The mythology's origin is Memory. Only the goddess of Memory, maker of myths, could be so complete and fertile as to give birth to the arts. Clio, Urania, Melpomene, Thalia, Terpsichore, Calliope, Erato, Polyhymnia, and Euterpe are the nine muses of the arts that Aristophanes referred to as the *didaskaloi*, or teachers, and whose poetry is *therapontes*, or therapy (MILLER, 1981, p. 126). Could it be that Psyche was the tenth invisible daughter of Mnemosyne, as suggested by James Hillman? (1983, p. 42). In the same manner that therapy is private, introspective, and vertical, Mnemosyne looks backward, inward, and downward (PARIS, 1990, p. 129). It is Mnemosyne who teaches us that the past is infinite and beyond human.

Putting down roots seems to be the fundamental basic condition necessary in the adventure of finding ourselves. To put down root where? My answer is, and will always be, in Nature – both inside and outside myself. In order to restore our inner geography and our soul we need to feel that our feet extend themselves as roots into the earth, and that the air and water flow and renew themselves in the innermost blood vessels of our being. Only then, by sitting before the inviolable Hestian flame, can we finally find the inner quiet that reconnects our hearts to the heart of the Earth. Let us not forget that mythology is the psychology of antiquity, and if we follow the intuitive path of its lineage we will not scorn the fact that the mother of Mnemosyne is none other than Gaia!

Silence, wonder, and gratitude.

We are Earth, we are Gaia. Do we recognize the powerful entity of Nature? Our ancestors and traditional communities recognize it. The rocks tell the story of the Earth, and the plants and animals tell the story of the evolution of life. But what of the history of human beings? Where is it? Drowned? In museums? Mutilated? In archives and libraries? In cutting edge technology that is soon out of date? That being said, do we run the risk of amnesia, or is it already a fact?

The *sertão* cannot be reversed. “Ancient *sertão* of the ages [...] The wind grows old there. And the fierce beasts in its depths...” (ROSA, 1986. p. 479). There is something beyond what is human and we must always remind ourselves of that. Mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms surround us, constantly impressing memory upon us, even if we spurn it. Recapturing the psychological gaze toward the world is a fundamental premise in reconstituting Self. As a human and a student of the body in my theater research, I see infinite memory carried in our very cells, bones, blood, muscles, the irrefutable unconscious, the micro within the macrocosmos, loving *terra mater*. We are archaic. As a daughter of Earth I cannot neglect calling attention to the crimes committed when the flow of a river is stopped and when Mnemosyne and her daughters are treated with contempt. The records our ancestors left inscribed on rocks invoke an art born out of doing, thinking and ritualizing through images, our divine mania that includes beauty, contemplation, magic, *logos*, and love. Yes, love. Some may ask, ‘but were they not hunters, brutes, and savages?’ They were human! Mnemosyne’s home is the heart, not the mind: “The heart grows on all sides. The heart is like a stream meandering through mountains and plains, forests and fields. The heart mixes loves. Everything fits.” (ROSA, 1986, p. 162.)

It is important to mention the research and dense work of Theodore Roszak (1993), when he proffers the Collective Unconscious and the Id to the world. In order to understand the evils of the soul, one must look at the evils of the world. We must leave the confines of our cities, families, and societies. Ecopsychology assumes that the most profound level of the psyche is attached to the Earth, to Gaia, who has nurtured us since our primordial existence. I believe that one of Mnemosyne's messages to psychology, as daughter of Gaia, is above all a call to recognize that we are truly children of the same Mother. She beckons to be taken care of, and at the very least we should resist that which disintegrates. *Religare* idea-mother.

Ginette Paris, along with other scholars of archetypal psychology, agree that psychology should be amplified so that Mnemosyne is be given the space worthy of her status as Titaness:

Psychoanalysis has served as a refuge for Mnemosyne but at the expense of restricting her territory to the tragedies and suffering that justify the attention of a therapist. [...] The modern era invented psychoanalysis, the therapy of personal memory. That's at least one for Mnemosyne! But since we can't put all of humanity on the therapeutic couch, how shall we treat our collective memory? Mnemosyne is trapped in personal memory which blocks imagination. Memory more and more is restricted to accurate records and documented events, while each of us is left alone with private memories and the culture has no voice. (PARIS, 1990, p. 125)

### **Anamnese**

I went to Goiás! "Do you, senhor, see where the *sertão* is? Its edges, its middle? ... Everything really comes out of dark holes, except what comes from heaven. I know" (ROSA, 1986, p. 527). When I visited the Serra da Mesa region in the heart of Brazil I did not know it would be an unforgettable trip, much less that I would be visiting a

desolate valley of tears impregnated with the smell of death. Ah, that unforgettable green  
darkness:

*Malaria, yellow fever, dengue, cholera*  
*Malignant tertian*  
*Water rising, mosquitoes arriving*  
*An ecosystem 60 million years old*  
*Destroyed in 30.*  
*Cerrado living thing of memory-beauty*

*Serra da Mesa*  
*Place to get reacquainted with the sertão*  
*Sertão a Roman word, for desert*  
*Prehistory, Grottos, Shelters*  
*Sacred Temples*

*Aroeira, Ipê, Angico, Sucupira, Araticum, Caraíba, Macaúba, Jenipabo,*  
*Copaíba, Jequitibá, Gameleira, Pau Santo!*  
*and Buriti, and Buriti, and Buriti\**  
*Giant anteater, deer, maned wolf, fox, armadillo, tayra, monkey, peccary*  
*paca, tapir, wild boar, capybara, porcupine, hog-nosed skunk*  
*Ocelot, puma*  
*Jaguar!*  
*All of them on the run.*  
*Dread and fear among the birds.*  
*The Flower of beauty-memory.*

*Turned into a lake, deserted.*  
*A marvel of engineering*  
*Brute force*  
*An ecological-cultural-historical-archeological-memorial disaster*  
*Ah! The Tocantins...*  
*How do I tell Guimarães Rosa?*

*The ribeirinhos\* - may God protect them!*  
*The Avá. Brave Avá-Canoeiro!*  
*Faithful resistance.*  
*Good with the canoe,*  
*But what of the river?*

*Serra da Mesa – Peixe Angical*

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\* Scientific tree names: *Astronium fraxinifolium*, *Tabebuia*, *Parapiptadenia rigida*, *Bowdichia*, *Annona*, *Bignoniaceae*, *Macauba palm*, *Jenipabu*, *Copaifera*, *Cariniana*, *Ficus doliaria*, *Zollernia paraensis*, *Mauritia Flexuosa*.

\* Translator's note: *Ribeirinhos* are communities that live along rivers in the isolated interior of Brazil.

*Pedra Talhada – Cruzeiro*  
*Goiás – Tocantins*  
*Authentic Brazilian culture*  
*Terra Brasilis*  
*Beloved Mnemosyne*  
(Luciana Aires Mesquita).

The region was typical of tableland *cerrados*, with shrubby plateaus transitioning into equatorial forests in the form of gallery forests, mountains that come and go, lowland marshes, river edges, swamps, and water springs. The *Cerrado* is extremely biogenetically varied and is considered the second richest region on the planet in terms of plant diversity. The flooded land is equal to the municipal area of São Paulo and Belo Horizonte together, and today has become a lake on which noisy jet skis zoom back and forth. The Tocantins River was a powerful water highway that connected central Brazil to northern Brazil, extending from its source in Goiás to its mouth in the Amazon delta, emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. It is safe to assume that ancient communities traveled up and down this river by canoe. Today there is only one indigenous group with six remnants of the once great Avá Canoeiro nation in Goiás, which has accepted contact from FUNAI. They are: Matcha, Tuya, Nakwacha, Iawi, Trumak, and Putdjawa. Other Avá Canoeiros have isolated themselves, possibly a sign of authenticity – better to be isolated and faithful to themselves! Their descendants were annihilated by the colonizers, which include the bandeirantes\*, military force, and farmers. This is the last indigenous group in the state of Goiás. It is thought that there might be fourteen or thirty-five more members of the Avá Canoeiros nation along the Tocantins and Araguaia rivers, and maybe in Minas Gerais and Bahia. However, before the hostilities, there were

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\* Translator's note: The 'bandeirantes' were colonial scouts that led expeditions called 'bandeiras' intended to search for minerals on indigenous land, which usually ended in the massacre of thousands of native people.

approximately 2,250 Avá Canoeiros (IPARJ, 1995, p.42). In Goiás, there were at least five indigenous nations up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that inhabited the entire state, and these maintained communication with five other nations from Tocantins: the Caiapó, Goiá, Akroá, Xavante, Canoeiros, Xerente, Tupinambá, Aricovê, and Krahô. Our ancestors were nomads and expert canoeists who left irrefutable markings on the great rock walls along the Tocantins River. Both Pedra Talhada at the Serra da Mesa plant, and Pedra do Cruzeiro at the Peixe Angical plant contain pre-historic paintings. It is not known how many thousands of years ago these painting were recorded, but it is a fact that the blue paint used in the Pedra Talhada is among the oldest known to modern man. Both sites have been flooded.

Itaparica hunter-gatherers? Uru, Una, Tupiguarani, and Aratu ceramists? Others of the Pleistoceno traditions? (DE BLASIS, 2000). We had at hand a rich source of ancestral cultures and diversities, but we know nothing of our Amerindian past, and if left to the technocrats, we'll never know any of it. It is possible to care for what we love, but why do we drown the unknown? Without permission, respect and wisdom, dams are being built devoid of adequate information about the cultural and mineral wealth of the affected regions, due to precise and concise calendars that do not permit in-depth research, but instead demand efficiency to a progress I can't understand. Robust engineering that generates billions of dollars for the powerful few destroys and bars a chance to understand our own roots in order to provide electricity to cities already too tense. A question for Apollo.

I really don't understand how a "Project to Save Prehistoric Archeology," put into action by a team of professionals from the Archeology Laboratory of the Anthropology

Museum of the Federal University of Goiás (Universidade Federal de Goiás – UFG), in collaboration with other national research institutes such as the Institute of Anthropological Research of Rio de Janeiro (Instituto de Pesquisas Antropológicas do Rio de Janeiro – IPARJ), directed at the time by Darcy Ribeiro, can connive with Furnas and receive financial contributions to conclude that:

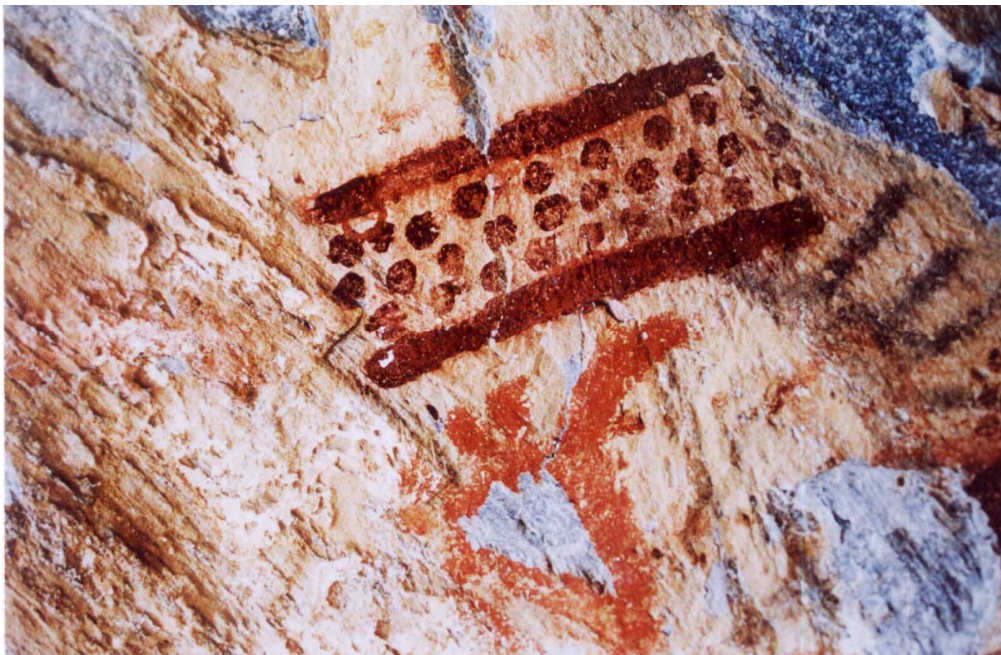
The environmental damage is indisputable. However, if not for the construction of the plant, no archeological site would have been discovered. Dilmar Martins, professor and archeologist at UFG and research coordinator at the pre-historic sites (GODINHO, 1996).

Furnas' commitment to the Avá can be seen as marker of sustainable development policies for the region. Furnas respects the indigenous people not only for their value as humans, but also for the long-term benefits that can result from a partnership between them, and seeks to merge fundamental economic development projects with prudent environmental interference (IPARJ, 1996, p. 87).

With the humor of “the devil in the street in the middle of the whirlwind,” *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, Guimarães Rosa reminds us that, “the *sertão* is good. Everything here is lost, everything here is found...the *sertão* is confusion amongst great excessive calm...” (1986, p. 400). I left the confusion of the city streets and entered the *Cerrado* that was already feeling the threat of rising water. What I found was a great confusion of alarmed birds soaring and flitting to and fro, snakes in a hurry to survive, and the deep sadness of greenery saying its farewell. Occasionally a hat, lost and drowning in mud. Surrender and desolation. At the gate, carefully hand-painted: “I came back because I love you”. We entered and arrived at Senhor Sebastião Pires’ house. Resentment and anguish. The water had already reached his yard, and all his fruit trees were rotted. To protect themselves from the mosquitoes, his three young daughters always covered themselves in black; were they mourning? His house, already semi taken apart, still sheltered the family that

had nowhere to go. Their barn was still full of corn. They would build a shelter a ways ahead, on a hill where the water surely wouldn't reach them. But it would. Fear and insecurity. Rejane, the five-year-old, using ecopsychology, told us about the ants that drowned trying to build new homes on higher ground. She couldn't show us the most beautiful flower, which she called "the mother of them all." We had come too late. We helped rescue some desks from the small country school where they studied that would soon be under water. We set out by canoe to see the swollen river that would soon become a lake. The Buriti trees and the whole forest were only half visible, drowned. Pedra Talhada was already underwater, a vast and deep lake of mysteries.

Pedra Talhada:



*Rock painting at the Pedra Talhada Shelter site in Serra da Mesa, before the flooding.  
Photo: Bismarque Villa Real (1995).*

We know the cost of a hydroelectric plant and the billions it generates. But we don't know the cost of a river, a flower, Rejane's reflections, Senhor Sebastião's indignation, the uprooted natives, a spider web, a peaceful serpent, a barn full of corn, the

song of a bird celebrating the sun's rays, a rock inscribed thousands of years ago. How much is the memory and sacred writings of a people who live within us worth? "... we'd do well to remember once in a while that images and letters are really blood relatives" (GOMBRICH, 1988, p.30).

Using Gombrich's quote as a stepping-stone, I'd call attention to the image below. It is a picture of Pedra do Cruzeiro, taken by Rui Faquini first sent to me by Elyeser Szturm, and used with the permission of Rui and Liana Faquini. It is a nocturnal photograph of part of the Pedra do Cruzeiro in the stream bearing the same name, situated on the left bank of the Tocantins river, which has been recently flooded during the construction of the Peixe Angical Hydroelectric Plant:



*Pedra do Cruzeiro. Photo: Rui Faquini (2005).*

This is writing similar to that on the Pedra de Ingá in Paraíba – sacred writing, as in *hieros*, or sacred (hieroglyph). Our Rosetta Stone!!! Submerged. Remember: “the

*sertão* is good. Everything here is lost, everything here is found...the *sertão* is confusion amongst great excessive calm..." A hierophany.

*I no longer need to laugh.  
Fear's long fingers  
Have let go of my forehead.  
And the waves of suffering have dragged me  
to the eye of the whirlwind  
that now spins furiously inside and outside of me...*

*I no longer fear climbing the peaks  
Where clean, thin air is an outer weight,  
Nor to let the strength of my muscles drain  
and lay down in the mud, my thoughts as if on opium...*

*I let the inevitable dance around me,  
the sword dance of all times.  
And I should laugh, if there were any laughter left in me,  
At the torments that saved the depths of my soul,  
at the disasters that missed their mark on my body...  
(ROSA, 1997, p. 146)*

The sphinx will sleep in secret, the waters will protect it, and with its worms and fertile ground will offer the necessary protection for the inscriptions until we can, who knows, initiate a more vertical project into the dammed water or, who knows, allow the river to return to its beautiful flow? Since our world is governed by power, I leave here the power of this idea. Iphan, UNESCO...are you listening? After all, we are nearing the 10-year mark of when the rock paintings in the Serra da Mesa were flooded in absolute silence, and are inaugurating the flooding of our "Rosetta Stone", once again in complete silence. How can we not hear the blasts? Will we have the power to reverse our distorted values in the so-called 'big business' in the stock market? Will we be able to direct a new focus for ecology with a cosmological perspective? Will we be able to undertake love, compassion, solidarity, the arts, our roots, and our home? "God is urgent and not in a hurry. The *sertão* is his. Yes" (ROSA, 1986, p. 444)! Meanwhile, we already know:

“*Sertão*: it is in us” (ROSA, 1986, p. 270). One thing I know and tell you: the *sertão* is also “Spring on the Mountain”:

*Hot sunlight on a brazen morning  
The sun must have put on new glasses,  
and brightened all the dark spots  
with lavish light.*

*Ten squadrons of green parakeets  
received their orders for take off,  
leaving for the fire-colored macaws  
the dead pequi fruit tree.  
And the tree, clipped and dry, becomes green,  
Red, and brown, among the mochoqueiros,  
braúnas, jatobás, and imbaúbas residing on the hill  
on the landscape that a colorblind painter  
painted on the back of a chameleon.*

*And the side of the mountain is so beautiful and bright,  
that even an owl,  
dizzy and near-sighted in the light,  
wearing large round glasses,  
perches on a termite hill all day long,  
immobile and hunched up, admiring the colors,  
fatigued, maybe, from so much erudition...  
(ROSA, 1997, p. 141)*

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- UCG. Vice-Reitoria de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa, Instituto Goiano de Pré-História e Antropologia, Furnas Centrais Elétricas S.A.. Relatório de Pesquisa: a usina hidrelétrica de Serra da Mesa e a população de sua área de influência.

Key words: Pedra Talhada, Pedra do Cruzeiro, archeological sites, hieroglyph, rock paintings, flood, Mnemosyne, Titaness, UHE Serra da Mesa, UHE Peixe Angical, *sertão*, *cerrado*, ecopsychology, “contract archeologists”, Furnas.

**Abstract:**

An area of 1784 km<sup>2</sup> was inundated in Goiás to build the UHE Serra da Mesa hydroelectric plant, affecting 91 archeological sites. Other hydroelectric plants are being built along the Tocantins River, the last of them being the UHE Peixe Angical, inaugurated January, 2006. All the research regarding the affected areas has been done by so-called “contract archeologists,” used to facilitate approval of the project by the contracting company. Their research has no real depth, and therefore, prevents society from knowing its Amerindian roots. Memory, personified in Greek mythology by the archetype Mnemosyne will be used as a lens through which to analyze the issue. Mnemosyne is presented as the mother of psychology, the origin of myth, and mother of the Muses who are sources of culture. Without Mnemosyne, there is neither memory nor art. As the daughter of Gaia, she reconnects us to the Earth by giving us back a deep sense of ecology and demonstrating that the psyche is archaic and psychology needs to turn its gaze toward the world. The entire text is interwoven with poems by Guimarães Rosa to give a sense of the poetry of the *Sertão*. Presenting the recently flooded Pedra do Cruzeiro as our “Rosetta Stone” is both surprising and alarming. The answer to whether or not these archeological sites have been drowned or are simply submerged is within us, sleeping deeply in our psyche.