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**Into and Out of the Forest:
Change and Community in Céu do Mapiá**

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Change and Community in Céu do Mapiá**

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents who have always supported me while I have been on the circuitous paths I have taken to get here.

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Abstract

Into and Out of the Forest: Change and Community in Céu do Mapiá

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Céu do Mapiá is a community of people living in the rainforest in the southwestern quadrant of Brazil. It was founded in 1983 by ex-rubber tapper Sebastião Mota de Melo and a collection of followers of the religion known as “Santo Daime.” These men and women were seeking to create a “New World,” separating themselves from a society that was undergoing a great deal of upheaval as the period marked the initial phases of major deforestation in the Amazon. The community, therefore, offered a chance of escape from the devastation around them and the freedom to practice their religious beliefs. ‘The Holy Gift,’ as it translates in Portuguese, Santo Daime is a religion that melds together popular Roman Catholicism and indigenous ayahuasca use, as well as Afro-Brazilian spirit possession, Amazonian *encantaria*, and most recently, New Age beliefs and concepts. Ayahuasca is a concoction of two plants, *B. caapi* and *P. viridis*, that produces psychotropic effects and has been widely consumed among indigenous tribes in the Amazon. However, in the context of Santo Daime, it has been deemed a kind of sacrament, the central force of a religious movement that has expanded

from its corner in the Amazon into urban centers across Brazil and into Europe, North America, and Japan. Though maintaining a fairly small following of 10,000, Santo Daime has become a global religious movement.

This thesis attempts to unravel two seemingly contradictory processes embodied in the community of Céu do Mapiá: separation and expansion. First, I outline the trajectory of the community from its initial ideals to its later entanglements with state and other international actors. Second, I trace the network of people, ideas, and goods that have become a part of Santo Daime's international expansion. Third, I discuss the contemporary everyday rhythms in the communities and how they have been shaped by the various relationships that have developed through this expansion, positing that place is a nexus of relations.

Keywords: Amazon; religion; Santo Daime; intentional community

Table of Contents

List of Figures	x
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Orientation I: Walking Through the Site	1
Orientation II: Santo Daime, a Brazilian Ayahuasca Religion	6
Orientation III: The Geographic and Social Contexts	11
Writing the Amazon: Theoretical Perspectives	14
Methodology & Positionality	21
Layout of the Work	28
Chapter Two: Liminality and Legitimacy: The Historical Roots of Santo Daime	31
Introduction	31
The Rubber Boom and Northeastern Migration	35
Life in the <i>Seringal</i>	38
The Religious Milieu of Acre	40
Movement into the City	45
Conclusion	49
Chapter Three: An Evolving Home	52
Prologue	52
Introduction	54
The Crisis	61
Settling in Céu do Mapiá	64
Entanglements with the Outside	68
The Turning Point of the 1990s and the Limbo of Modernity	74
Conclusion	83
Chapter Four: Plant Routes and Global Shamans	87
Introduction	87

Despedida, or the Origins of the Santo Daime Network	92
The Spread of Santo Daime into Europe	97
The Ayahuasca Milieu	102
Santo Daime on the Global Stage	106
'Following the Daime'	111
Conclusion	115
Chapter Five: Another Green World.....	118
Introduction.....	118
Sounds in the Morning.....	121
Céu do Mapiá in the Afternoon	127
Ritual Nights	130
Conclusion	132
Chapter Six: Conclusion	133
References.....	138

List of Figures

Figure 1:	Photo: The church under construction	4
Figure 2:	Map	12
Figure 3:	Photo: A <i>mapiense</i> in her home	28
Figure 4:	Photo: Bridge across the <i>igarapé</i>	30
Figure 5:	Photo: Raimundo Irineu Serra with followers	36
Figure 6:	Old newspaper photo of the community	66
Figure 7:	Timeline	79
Figure 8:	Photo: On the Purus River	93
Figure 9:	Photo: Sandy trail through the forest	122

Chapter One: Introduction

Orientation I: Walking through the site

The early morning air in Céu do Mapiá is heavy as the humidity from the night condenses on the leaves. You can hear the drops hitting the ground in the hour before the sun rises high enough to evaporate the moisture. The sounds of various motors cut the air: the motors of diesel generators that start cranking up around 7 am, the outboard motors of the boats navigating up and down the various slow moving creeks and streams, going back and forth between Mapiá and Boca do Acre, the nearest major settlement. Motorcycles, too, dart along the narrow dirt paths that connect the houses scattered through the forest and small cleared fields. These dirt paths were once *varadouros*, the trails that linked the rubber trees scattered through the forest, forming an integral part of the *seringuieros*, or rubber tappers, morning routine. One can see the scars where tappers sliced into the trunks of *hevea* trees and collected the latex, but no one in Mapiá taps rubber anymore. Instead the paths are taken by kids walking to the newly installed school, villagers walking to pay a visit to a friend or attend an early morning rosary, and visitors, like myself, out for a morning walk.

Emerging from the forest and into a clearing at the highest point of the community is the site of the new church under construction. Adjacent to the old wooden church, which has been gutted, this new church is the third one the community has built since its founding in 1983. The first one was a multi-purpose squat wooden building with dried palm fronds serving as a roof. Simultaneously a living and worship space for the original pioneers of the community, they would have to push the hammocks hanging

from the ceiling against the wall in order to have their ceremonies, which they call *trabalhos*, or works. The church currently being built will be a towering construction by comparison. It will have concrete walls and vaulted ceilings with room on the floor for hundreds of people to dance in unison to their hymns of mazurka and waltz rhythms around a white table adorned with images of Jesus, saints and the Virgin Mary, known here as “Queen of the Forest.” These services involve the ritual ingestion of Santo Daime, a psychotropic concoction of plants also known as ayahuasca.

The church has been in construction for over three years with funds and labor power coming intermittently from donors and the influx of visitors. It is now mid-July, a few weeks removed from the June festivals when the numbers of the village swell to nearly double their normal population and the injection of cash buoys the community for the rest of the year. If it were a Monday, it would be *mutirão*, or group work day, meaning there would be dozens of males working on the grounds. Some would be shoveling out clay earth to level the floor, dumping a wheelbarrow of earth at a time outside of the church. Others would be high up on scaffoldings, installing shingles on the roof. Back in the early days, I was told, every day was group work day as the task of carving out a life deep in the rainforest; a “new life” and a “new world” as their founder, Padrinho Sebastião put it, required a total group effort.

Moving down the hill, I pass a pond constructed a few years back, funded by a Dutch daimista with the idea of creating a fishery to provide a source of food and perhaps income for the community. Somehow the money dried up in between the filling in of the

pond and the stocking of the fish, and the pond sits festering. Amidst the recent malarial outbreak, blame was often directed at the pond as a breeding ground for mosquitos.

The road continues downward and curves to the left, then rises to meet the main plaza, which marks one of the first places opened by the original settlers. It is a shadeless plaza avoided during the heat of the day. It is surrounded by a handful of shops, restaurants, an inn, and the headquarters for the village association. There is loudspeaker attached to the roof that blares periodically throughout the day, announcements for activities and events, as well as recordings of the religious hymns.

Just adjacent to the plaza is a café, a small green building filled with furniture and toys made from recycled plastic, a place to buy a piece of pie or juice made from starfruit. Sonia¹, the owner, worked in conjunction with the World Wildlife Fund of Brasil in the mid 2000s to find a solution for the rising amount of consumer waste in the community. One of which was a recycling program in which each kilo of trash a household washed and sorted was traded for a packet of powdered milk. Waste such as plastic bottles were then filled with sand and used as bricks for chairs and tables. Also on the walls of Sonia's café is a detailed Mayan calendar complete with pictograms and stenciling of moons and stars. It is a particularly passionate subject for Claudia, one of the employees at the café, who enjoys explaining the calendar to those frequenting the place. On a table underneath the calendar are the backcopies of the café's newsletter, a hodgepodge of New Age spiritualities and dire predictions of environmental calamity.

¹ With the exception of 'public' figures, such as Padrinho Alfredo and Alex Polari, all community members have been given pseudonyms

Down a ways from the café, one reaches the main bridge across the creek. Walking along the bridge, I strike up a conversation with two construction workers, taking apart the roof of a small old shack built upon the bridge. They tell me the plan, envisioned by the current leader of the community, Padrinho Alfredo, is to renovate the building and start a hardware supply store to hopefully cut down on costs of building supplies in the village. One of the workers is Max, the son of a prominent family who amidst his rapid-fire speech brags to me of the children he fathered with a blonde German woman who visited the community a few years ago, and the terrible time he had in Berlin when he went to visit. He and his workmate complain bitterly about a European music producer building a mansion on the outskirts of the village, complete with trellised gardens, a swimming pool adorned with the statue of a pink dolphin, and satellite internet. They claim he pays them thirty percent less than the rate established by Padrinho Alfredo and they go on to list how expensive various daily items such as rice, candles, meat, and Coca-Cola are.



Figure 1: The church under construction (photo by author)

What kind of place is this? Where rural Amazonians father children with German women and music producers build mansions in the middle of the rainforest, partially in preparation for December 21st, 2012. A place whose inhabitants speak nostalgically and proudly of the old days when money was unnecessary and now complain bitterly about how the price of chicken skyrockets due to the boat trip from the nearest urban center, Boca do Acre to here.

What kind of place is this? This was the question that has continuously turned in my head from the very inception of this project, and up to now it still seems like the most proper distillation of what drives this investigation. For if we take the social world to be messy and heterogeneous (Law, 1994) and ‘place’ to be a bundle of relations (Massey, 1993), then we can think through ways to understand and talk about livelihood and mysticism simultaneously, or how they can be in relationship together. For, as a point I will make at several points throughout this work, an attempt at an integrated understanding of Céu do Mapiá requires holding multiple strands together.

This project then is an attempt, echoing the call of Bruno Latour (2007) to draw out and “trace” these relations in an effort to illuminate the various contours of a particular site, i.e., Céu do Mapiá, as well as to use that site to discuss a whole host of issues from global environmental concern regarding the Amazon, New Age spiritualities, Amazonian livelihood, and culture. Doing so requires telling a story, as humanistic social science is telling stories about the social world (Law, 1994). In general, I try to follow the guideposts set by Law, Latour, and others (see: Whatmore, 2002), in keeping the story heterogeneous and non-reductionist. The story is about a group of people who

together create a place based partially on the ideals of separation and freedom, and the continual rearticulations they make with each other, with the broader social worlds from which they came, and natural worlds.

Orientation II: Santo Daime, a Brazilian Ayahuasca Religion

Céu do Mapiá is located in Amazonas state, extremely close to the border with Acre, Brazil's southwesternmost state. It has been called the “flagship community” (Labate, Macrae, & Goulart, 2010, p. 15) of the Santo Daime church, a “Brazilian Ayahuasca Religion” (Labate & Araújo, 2002a). The term ‘Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions’ is used to describe those religious groups originating from this southwestern quadrant of the Brazilian Amazon. Their religious practices are marked by a hybrid, or in their own idiom “eclectic,” sensibility in which the forms and symbols of popular Catholicism (rosaries, crosses, images of the Virgin Mary, saints, Jesus) are combined with the ritualized consumption of ayahuasca, a psychotropic or entheogenic tea made from boiling a vine (*B. caapi*) together with the leaves of a *chacrana* plant (*P. viridis*). Beyond these two major sources, the Santo Daime movement², as well as the other two major organizations- Barquinha and ‘Union of the Plants’ (UDV), incorporate Afro-Brazilian spiritualism, Amazonian *curandismo*, Kardecism, European esotericism, and more recently Eastern religious practices and beliefs.

Santo Daime was the first of these religions to develop, founded by Raimundo Irineu Serra in the 1920s and 1930s on the outskirts of the city of Rio Branco, capital of

² The designation of Santo Daime as a religious ‘movement’ is broadly used across the literature. See: Labate, et al (2010), Dawson (2007, 2013), Schmidt (2007). It will be explained further below.

the state of Acre. Serra, or *Mestre Irineu* as he known among adepts, was of African descent, from the Brazilian Northeast, and he moved to Acre in the 1910s to work as a rubber tapper. While working deep in the rainforest in the rubber camps, Irineu came into contact with ayahuasca, which was consumed by indigenous groups as well as the *caboclo*³ and *ribeirinho* (river dwellers) populations. It is said he had a vision of the Virgin Mary, going by the name “Queen of the Forest,” who directed him to found a religion that was to “Christianize” ayahuasca use.

He established a community outside of Rio Branco, known as *Alto Santo* (Holy Rise), in the 1930s, which despite not being part of the official Roman church grew to be semi-respected within the local cultural landscape. In the mid-1960s, a man named Sebastião Gregorio de Melo, also a rubber tapper, came to see Mestre Irineu in Rio Branco, desperate for a cure to his kidney disease. Successfully cured, de Melo became one of Irineu’s closest followers. When Serra died in 1971, de Melo vied for leadership. He was thwarted and in the mid-1970s settled his own community, also just outside Rio Branco but on the opposite side of town, named *Colonia Cinco Mil* (Colony Five Thousand). De Melo, who by that time was known as *Padrinho* (lit. “godfather”) Sebastião, named his new community CEFLURIS, which stood for Eclectic Center of Universal Flowing Light, Raimundo Irineu Serra.

By the early 1980s, Padrinho Sebastião was set upon moving from Rio Branco and settling a new community in the depths of the rainforest, far removed from

³ The term has come to mean a ‘fusion’ between indigenous populations and non-indigenous colonizers (Nugent, 1993; Wagley, 1964). Beyond a kind of racial category, similar to ‘mestizo,’ it also signifies a person with a rural (i.e agricultural, fishing) livelihood. The term is often used pejoratively (Nugent 1993).

civilization. The motivation for the move came from the larger social upheavals at the time, as ranchers from the south of Brazil were invading the land and destroying the forest for pasture land at an alarming rate (Hecht & Cockburn, 1989), as well as problems the community was facing from the authorities (Macrae, 1992). After first establishing a community named *Rio do Ouro* (River of Gold) that lasted only two years, he established Céu do Mapiá (Heaven of Mapiá) in 1983 in the state of Amazonas. Having attracted a fairly large contingent of foreigners and urbanites from the south of Brazil, Sebastião's movement began to spread, first to Brazil's cities, then eventually into Western Europe and North America. Today, CEFLURIS has centers on all continents, except Antarctica, and 23 countries (Labate, Macrae, & Goulart, 2010).

From the 1930s until today, the Santo Daime ritual repertoire has undergone great elaboration and diversification (Dawson, 2013). Generally ritual services are called *trabalhos*, or works, and are enacted under a liturgical calendar. The two major types of work are the *concentração* or 'concentration,' and the *bailado*, or dance. The *concentração* takes place on the 15th and 30th of every month, reflecting an esoteric calendric system, as opposed to a Christian one (ibid), while the *bailado* takes place according to a variety of annual festivals, which occur on a sporadic basis with large clusters of festivals surrounding December and January (for Christmas and New Year) and June (for the feast days of St. John and St. James). The major difference between the two is that the *concentração* is spent sitting down, with long periods of silence mixed with singing of hymns. The *bailado*, is typically much longer, usually starting just after dark and often

continuing till dawn. Almost the entire service is spent standing, singing and dancing in a basic 8-step pattern around a white table in the shape of six-point Star of Solomon .

This white table is the innermost sanctified space within the ritual space, it is where the most respected elders of the community sit and is the source of energy transmitted and received from the higher spiritual plane *daimistas* refer to as the ‘astral’(Cemin, 2010). The table is draped in white cloth and decorated with images of Jesus and Mary, a Bible, a ‘Caravaca Cross,’ a glass of water, a jar of flowers, and three lit candles that represent the Holy Trinity (ibid). The floorspace where the other practitioners are, is also laid out in a Star of Solomon pattern, with congregants divided first by gender, and then by age and status (Dawson, 2013). There is a kind of ‘liminal zone’ where people can take a limited break or if they need to vomit or defecate (a common experience under the effect of ayahuasca), followed by an outer zone, beyond the realm of the ritual space, which one is not allowed to enter during the work except under extreme circumstances. Usually, there are two tables set on either side of the room (one for men and one for women) where the *daime* is served and at regular intervals throughout the work, people line up at the table to receive the *daime*, in a way reminiscent of Roman Catholic communion. Indeed, the *daime* is often described as a kind of ‘sacrament’ (A. P. de Alverga, 1992; Macrae, 1992).

As perhaps the most wide-ranging scholar on the phenomenon of Santo Daime and the other Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions, Bia Labate is a principal point of reference across the literature. She is the co-editor of several books on the phenomenon, including the first major edited volumes in Portuguese, *O Uso Ritual do Ayahuasca* (Labate &

Araújo, 2002a), and English, *Ayahuasca, Ritual and Religion in Brazil* (Labate & Macrae, 2010), as well as a bibliography on the subject (Labate, Rose, & Santos, 2009). An anthropologist by training, she has approached the religion in terms of its spread into urban centers (Labate, 2004), the use of ritual and music (Labate & Pacheco, 2010), its historical origins (Labate & Pacheco, 2002; Labate, & Pacheco, 2011), its cultural impact in the state of Acre (Labate, 2012), drug policy (Tupper & Labate, 2012), and health (Labate & Bouso, 2011). Also, dozens of articles can be found on her website⁴.

Edward Macrae, a Brazilian anthropologist, has also been a major contributor, in both Portuguese and English, starting with the monograph, *Guiado pela Lua* (Guided by the Moon) (Macrae, 1992), which explored the cultural roots of Santo Daime through antecedents in *curandismo* and local concepts of illness, as well as the ritual structure of Santo Daime ceremonies. These two topics of ritual structure and issues of illness and healing have been the predominant topics for Santo Daime research.

As for research on Céu do Mapiá particularly, Alberto Groisman (1991) carried out ethnographic research there for his Master's thesis. The first major work in English was Kristina Schmidt's *Morality as Practice*, based on extensive fieldwork carried out for her doctoral dissertation (Schmidt, 2007). In it, she analyzes the moral categories and assumptions of Santo Daime adepts, ranging from personal, interpersonal, and ecological relations. Andrew Dawson has done fieldwork in Mapiá, producing papers on his experience and positionality (Dawson, 2010) as well as millenarianism within Santo Daime (Dawson, 2008). He has also recently published a book that offers a full analysis

⁴ <http://www.bialabate.net/my-texts>

of the movement's history and rituals, as well as its spread into the industrial world (Dawson, 2013).

Research on the internationalization of Santo Daime has been very scant. Alberto Groisman published his doctoral dissertation on the development of the Santo Daime church in the Netherlands (Groisman, 2001), as well as publishing a book chapter on topic of Santo Daime representing some form of cultural appropriation by the West as well as colonial reparation (Groisman, 2009). Carston Balzer published an article detailing the difficulties and incongruent expectations that arose with the initial ritual enactments in Germany (Balzer, 2004). The recent edited volume, *The Internationalization of Ayahuasca* included several articles detailing the legal battles Santo Daime churches, as well as other ayahuasca-using groups, have faced in European and North American countries (Labate & Jungaberle, 2011).

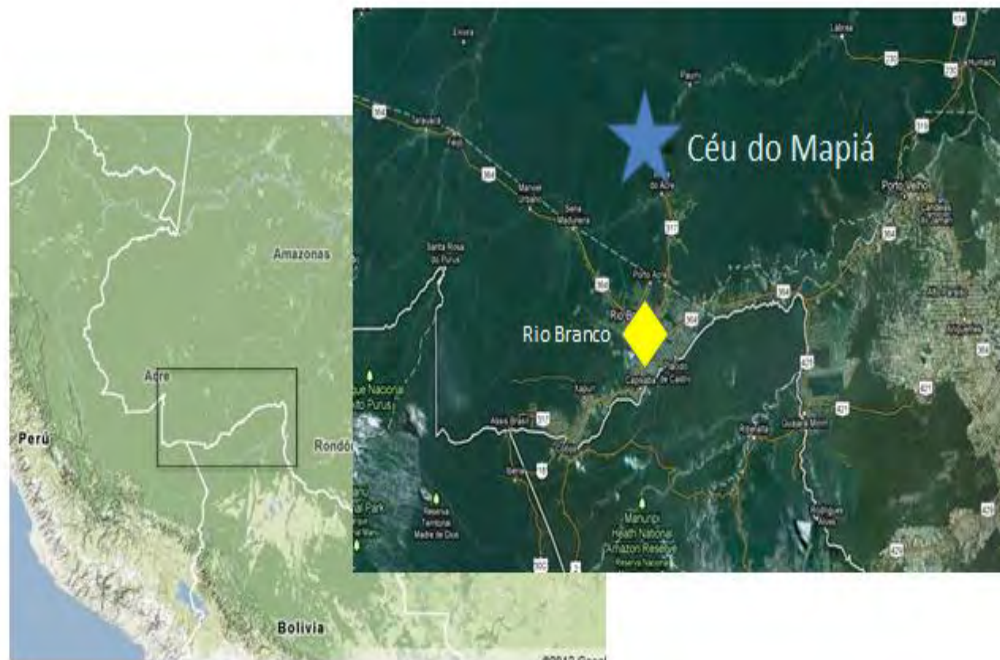
Where I hope this present work fits into prior research is to use Céu do Mapiá as a site to think through the international expansion of the movement and vice versa. I seek to analyze the trajectory of the community of Céu do Mapiá in relation to the movement's internationalization and the effects that has had on the community's livelihood and self-understanding. By holding Mapiá as a local site in conjunction with its global expansion, I hope to open up new angles for understanding both.

Orientation III: The Geographical and Socio-Cultural Contexts

The Santo Daime movement was born in the state of Acre, the westernmost state of Brazil, and which shares borders with Peru and Bolivia. In fact it once belonged to Bolivia. In 1902, the people of Acre, or *acrianos*, wishing to have more control over

their rubber production, achieved independence through war, and were briefly an independent nation until being annexed by Brazil (Tocantins, 1961). It was not until 1962 that Acre was officially made a state of Brazil. It is a small state, with just over half a million people (IBGE, 2005); it has developed distinctive cultural identities and political policies that simultaneously celebrate its rubber tapping roots while also pointing the way towards environmentally-friendly policies in the pursuit of development known as *Florestania*, or “Forest Citizenship.” (Kainer, et al, 2003; Vadjunec, Schmink, & Gomes, 2011).

Figure 2: Map of Geographic Region and Location of Study Site. Source: Google Maps



While the Amazonian rubber market had collapsed by the 1910s, rubber tapping, as well as other extractive practices, remained important to the local population in the

region. In the 1970s, these practices came under threat due to the military government's plan to open the Amazon up to outside investors, leading to a massive wave of land invasion, dispossession, deforestation, and violence (Bakx, 1988; Hecht & Cockburn, 1989). The conflict led to the formation of the celebrated rubber tappers' union, CNS, headed by Chico Mendes, which strived to make the linkages between social justice, traditional land uses and rights of local peoples (indigenous and non-indigenous alike), and environmental conservation (Vadjunec, Schmink, & Gomes, 2011). The movement attracted international attention, particularly following Mendes' assassination in 1988, and culminated in the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve established in 1990. The creation of such reserves allowed Acre to become a leading voice in the issues of curbing deforestation and cultivating 'sustainable development' (ibid).

In 1999, the "Forest Government" came into power, led by *acriano* governor, Jorge Viana. The goals of this administration were to bolster the extractive industries of the state in order to generate income and reverse the trend of deforestation (Viana, 2004). The state also pursued various public-private ventures in projects like sustainable timber management and furniture-making (Kainer et al., 2003; Vadjunec, Schmink, & Gomes, 2011). The successes of the programs are notable as 90 percent of the state's forests remain standing and economic growth has continued at a steady climb (Vadjunec, Schmink, & Gomes, 2011; Viana, 2004).

Santo Daime fits into this context simply by virtue of being a movement born in Acre, but in other, more specific ways as well. For one, the term *Florestania* was coined Antônio Alves (Vadjunec, Schmink, & Gomes, 2011), who has been an advisor to the

state government of Acre in various capacities, who is also a *daimista* who attends Serra's original church in Alto Santo. There are other prominent *acriano* politicians, such as Arthur Leite, that are *daimista* as well. Jorge Viana has related how his father used to take him to visit the church in Alto Santo when he was a child⁵ and the church, run by Serra's widow, remains a powerful cultural and political force today. In the 1980s, Vera Fróes (1988) estimated that between one-third to one-half of all inhabitants of Acre had tried ayahuasca at some point. In my conversation with him, Alves referred to ayahuasca-using communities in the state as a kind of 'anchor' to political and social life, playing a role in the resistance movements of the 1970s and 1980s and the creation of extractive reserves in the 1990s. There have been movements to designate ayahuasca as "cultural patrimony" in the state as well as Brazil as a whole (Labate, 2012). All this is to say, that Céu do Mapiá as a Santo Daime community is far more a part of Acre's social and political context, despite the fact that it resides in Amazonas. Also, as it pursues strategies of agroforestry and other sustainable development initiatives, it does so as part of a larger dialogue that has permeated the region.

Writing the Amazon: Theoretical Perspectives

In the words of Bruno Latour (1999), "the entire world is interested in the Amazon" (p. 27). Indeed, the grip the Amazon has on the world's psyche is strong and the evocative conceits at the writer's disposal are plentiful: lush, immense, emerald, dangerous, humid, savage, disease-ridden, potential cancer cures, biodiversity, threatened, "lungs of the earth," deforestation, El Dorado, Eden, Green Hell, Counterfeit

⁵ <http://mestreirineu.org/jorge.htm>

Paradise, and so on. The history of researching and representing the Amazon is deep, complex, and paradoxical. For centuries, the flow of information from the Portuguese colony was tightly controlled, thereby fuelling wild dreams and desires of a mysterious land of riches and dangers (Hecht & Cockburn, 1989). Through various iterations, the “New World” documented by Gaspar de Carvajal (1934), to the ‘Lost World’ of the Victorian naturalists Spruce, Wallace, and Bates, to the ‘Abandoned World’ after the collapse of the rubber boom, to the New World II in which the Amazon re-emerged as planetary resource, a cornucopia of pharmaceutical potential and linchpin of the global ecological systems (Nugent, 2004), the Amazon has been subjugated and exploited by the Western world materially and psychically for centuries. This story is often told with an air of tragedy (see: Hecht & Cockburn, 1989; Hemming, 1987; Maxwell, 2003), with the contemporary events of highway construction, deforestation, dams, gold mines, cattle, and, most recently, soy as just the latest chapters.

This destruction is often contrasted with what Bill Denevan (1992) called the “Pristine Myth,” or the idea that the Amazon’s landscapes were “pristine, virgin, a wilderness, nearly empty of people” (p. 369). As he forcefully argues, it was not true, as the forest was heavily modified by human action (ibid; also see: Heckenberger, 2005). The idea of the ‘empty’ Amazon extends beyond pre-Colombian times, however, despite the fact that the region has been part of the global economy for over five centuries. Portraying it as an empty, ‘natural’ environment is what keeps the Amazon continually “ripe” for modernization and development (Nugent, 1993). The Amazon, and the peoples residing within it are often seen as passive recipients of modernization, thereby

reinforcing the bipolar notion that there is a kind of primordial, pristine Amazon in contrast to the modern, technological Western society. It is this image of the Amazon as savage and untrammeled that in invites conquest and serves the interests of non-Amazonians. On the other side of the same coin, the image of the pristine Amazon also invites preservation. Indeed, the Amazon has been ground zero for global environmental concern (Hecht & Cockburn, 1989; Nugent, 1993; Slater, 2002).

Both of these conceits, the Amazon as a jungle to be tamed and then developed, and the Amazon as the vulnerable rainforest that must remain untouched and protected, require Western intervention (Beyer, 2009). Both of these conceits have been reinforced through the centuries through various images, media, and representations, from “Save the Rainforest” posters to iMax films to advertisements of beauty products (Beyer, 2009; Slater, 2002, 2003). Through statistics that convey the enormity of the Amazon (‘the amount of water flowing from the mouth the Amazon could fill Lake Ontario in about three hours,’ ‘there are more species per square kilometer, etc.’), and other de-historicized imaginaries (Nugent, 1993) serve to construct an Amazon that is an impressive but homogenous void, simultaneously vulnerable and unsurpassable, and, importantly, empty of social activity. The “giant” nature of the Amazon serves to provoke attachment and concern and conceal injustice and division (Slater, 2002, p. 9).

The cumulative effects of these eco-discourses and constructed imaginaries of edenic paradises and social vacuums and modernization and development, is to obfuscate

the fact that there are over twenty million people⁶ living in greater Amazonia⁷, over half of whom live in cities and almost all of whom are non-indigenous. People such as the river dwellers, nut-collectors, rubber tappers, ex-runaway slave communities, Jewish communities and Japanese immigrants are ‘peripheral’ to the idioms of the international academy and developmental agencies, Brazilian national society, and the “officially” marginalized (Nugent, p. 5).

A collection of scholars from various disciplines have pushed back, such as the aforementioned Denevan piece as well as Candace Slater’s work on various narratives and discourses surrounding Amazonian imaginaries (Slater, 1996, 2002, 2003). Several papers from the volume *Editing Eden* (Hutchins & Wilson, 2010) serve to promote “more nuanced ways of thinking about the Amazon and its inhabitants and the complexity of evolving exchanges with others who do not call this place their home” (p. xi). A recent issue in the *Journal of Cultural Geography* on “New Amazonian Geographies” turned its eyes on the diverse social groups of the Amazon: “transnational activist networks; borderland indigenous peoples; rubber tappers; urban dwellers; riverside and forest inhabitants; palm nut breakers; primordial and newly recreated indigenous groups” (Vadjunec, Schmink, & Greiner, 2011, p. 14). The idea behind their project was to explore the “diversity of changing identities of those inhabiting the region, and of the cultural and political landscapes they are constructing” (p. 2). As Céu do Mapiá in particular, and the Santo Daime movement in general, is a kind of heterogenous social

⁶ Figure cited in Slater (2002) & Vadjunec, et al (2011). Slater’s makes reference to a 1992 UN report.

⁷ “Greater Amazonia” defined as Amazon River basin, which is concentrated in Brazil, but also touches on Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Guyana, Suriname, and French Guinea (Vadjunec, Schmink, & Greiner, 2011)

movement originating in the Amazon, it is within this context of Amazonian socialities, of livelihood practices and political strategies, and the dynamism they exhibit, that this research is situated. The terms ‘movement,’ ‘social movement,’ and ‘religious movement’ are standard usage across the scholarly literature on the topic (see Dawson (2013), Labate, et al (2010), Schmidt (2007)). “Movement” is useful in conveying the changes and expansion that Santo Daime has undergone in its existence, impacting the local cultural landscape of western Amazonia, as well as the globalized phenomena of consciousness alteration and new combinations within religious practices (Robbins, 2009). In many respects religious and social movements are similar, as they can mobilize groups of individuals towards a common goal, fostering a collective identity that is often in tension with greater society (Beckford, 2003, cited in Schmidt 2007). It is this last point that is also pertinent to the intentional community element of the Santo Daime movement. Robert Schehr (1997) categorizes Intentional Communities as “New Social Movements.”

The study of Santo Daime presents particular challenges in that it is a movement that has globalized, emanating outward from its roots in the Upper Amazon and spreading to urban centers- first in Brazil and soon after into Western Europe and North America (Dawson, 2013; Labate et al., 2010). By tracing this expansion, one finds that Santo Daime as a social movement quickly comes into contact with a myriad of other social discourses, practices, and movements, from ayahuasca tourism (Dobkin de Rios, 2008; Winkelman, 2005), environmentalism and the conjunction of ecology and spirituality (see: Taylor, 2010), to the international issue of the drug trade and religious

freedom (Beyer, 2009; Labate & Jungaberle, 2011). In other words, in the universe of Céu do Mapiá, it is only one degree of separation between attending to the issues of Amazonian livelihood to talking about the global quest of altering consciousness in contemporary counterculture (St. John, 2011). Santo Daime is a sprawling phenomenon, and as it spreads in influence and through physical space, it affects in profound ways the lifeways in the particular site of Céu do Mapiá.

The phenomenon of Santo Daime, and ayahuasca use in general, has attracted an increasing level of English-language media attention (Bellos, 2012; Boggan, 2008; Marshall, 1996; Piccalo, 2008). In these reports, journalists typically mention a collection of things: the historical background involving rubber tapping; the ‘syncretic’ elements of popular Catholicism, indigenous ayahuasca usage, and Afro-inspired practices; its expansion into North America and Europe and the concomitant controversies surrounding ‘drug’ use that follow it; its purported psychological, physiological, and moral effects, both ill and beneficial; and, if there is specific reference made to Céu do Mapiá, such a reference usually includes the terms ‘religious,’ ‘community,’ ‘ecological,’ ‘amazon.’ As Bruno Latour has repeatedly pointed out (Latour, 1993, 2007), the newspaper shows a world of hybrids among culture, politics, nature, science, and technology, despite attempts to keep them distinct and separate.

This discussion leads us again towards Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which holds that “society, organizations, agents, and machines are all effects generated in patterned networks of diverse (not simply human) materials” (Law, 1992, p. 380). While many seek out the theory simply by virtue of its incorporation of the vogueish word

“network” (and often end up disappointed-- see Latour, 2007, pp. 141-156), ANT has a distinctive use of the term in that it “bundles” all the various ‘networks’ (technologies, economies, political formations, and social processes) together into heterogeneous associations (Murdoch, 1998, p. 359). Or, “ANT seeks to analyse how social and material processes (subjects, objects and relations) become seamlessly entwined within complex sets of association” (ibid). It is principally from this attending to heterogeneity that I draw inspiration from ANT, as exploring Santo Daime and attempting to understand Céu do Mapiá involves traversing varied terrain and speaking to a wide array of topics.

As Murdoch claims (1998), much of what geographers have said about relational concepts of space is congruent with some of ANT premises-- from the aforementioned Doreen Massey’s ‘progressive sense of place’ (1993) to David Harvey’s (1996) notion that space is “structure of relations of some sort”, a set of ‘ordering systems inherent within social practices and activities’ (p. 252, cited in Murdoch, 1998, p. 359), and even Sack’s (1997) ‘relational framework.’ Perhaps by striking against what has been the dominant notion of ‘absolute’ space, Euclidean and grid-like, the work of these geographers, and others (Whatmore, 2002), is often imbued with a sense of ethics and moral concern. By conceiving of space and place relationally, it necessarily draws the scholar herself into the web. Or, as Sarah Whatmore (2002) puts it: “hybridity and corporeality trip those habits of thought that hold ‘the body’ apart from other bodies and the ‘the human’ apart from other mortals” which unsettles “how the ‘we’ of ethical communities is to be renegotiated on account of its heterogeneous, intercorporeal

composition” (p. 166). Santo Daime as a social phenomenon demands attending to its heterogeneity and hybridity, and its materiality demands attending to its corporeality. My position within this array must be addressed in some way as well.

Methodology & Positionality

Ayahwasca as an object of study began in earnest in the late 1960s and early 1970s, starting with anthropologists studying its usage among indigenous tribes and mestizo urban healers (Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Harner, 1973; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1975). As an object of study, especially within the methodology of participant-observation, ayahuasca (and other psychotropic substances) poses a particular challenge as it offers the potential for a deeply personal experience within the context of ostensibly trying to understand a social group. The danger is that one can detract from the other. One researcher put it like this: “Fieldwork and personal investigation under the effect of a plant of power are both projects that are strong, deep, intensive, and long, but in my opinion, difficult to be conducted together” (Soibelman, 1995, pp. 70-72, cited in Labate, 2004, p. 43, translation mine). On the other hand, how possible is it to study such a phenomenon without participating? Kristina Schmidt (2007), as she writes in her ethnography of Céu do Mapiá, found out early on in her research that her informants often felt it was pointless to talk to her because there was no way she could possibly understand what they were telling her without drinking *daime* herself. Participation then is for two reasons: gaining understanding and gaining access. Andrew Dawson (2010) discovered his willingness to participate fully in Daimista rituals made members far more open towards him.

Researchers on ayahuasca in general, and Santo Daime in particular, often seem to have a propensity for developing a deeper level of involvement with the subject. Michael Harner, for example, as one of the first anthropologists to study ayahuasca shamanism, created his own shamanic system (Harner, 1990), started leading workshops, and can be thought of as one of the key figures in what is known as ‘neo-Shamanism.’ A large portion of scholars of Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions were involved in a church prior to starting research or became a member during the process- including perhaps the two most prominent: Bia Labate and Edward MacRae. On top of this, there is the tradition of writing a portion of work from the first person perspective based on one’s experience under the influence of ayahuasca (Luna & White, 2000; Taussig, 1986). Much of this work falls, at least partially, under the long shadow of Carlos Castaneda, that discredited anthropologist (de Mille, 1990) of narratives of tutelage under a wise Indian man and lurid descriptions of soul-flight and talking to coyotes (Castaneda, 1968).

I should state here that the preceding paragraph essentially names some of my deepest fears going into this project. I had tried ayahuasca a few times before, on previous trips to Brazil and Peru, so I was not afraid of doing it again, but I was uneasy at the prospect of participating in a context that is meant to foster a long term commitment to a religion, unlike my prior experiences. I also was quite concerned about there being any trace of ‘castaneda-ism’ in my work. Looking at it now, I was perhaps overly worried about it, but as my research project progressed, the phenomenological aspect of the ayahuasca experience (Shanon, 2002), mine or anyone else’s, became a tertiary concern.

While in the field, I did participate in four works: three in Céu do Mapiá, and one in a Barquinha church in Rio Branco. In my honest assessment, none of them were particularly blissful or nightmarish; I did not vomit, I did not forget who I was, nor did I experience anything resembling ‘soul flight,’ or traveling on the ‘astral plane.’ In two of the ceremonies, I felt close to nothing at all. Admittedly, that was kind of how I wanted it, as I tend to side with Soibelman. Fieldwork and personal exploration are not mutually exclusive activities, but it is perhaps best to focus on one over the other, especially given the brief amount of time I had in the field. However, it may not have been entirely up to me. A couple of people in Mapiá referred to the *daime* as an “adaptogen,” which meant it adapts to the needs of the individual and will often not affect someone. The *daime* does not call everyone, they would say.

Céu do Mapiá is only accessible by motorboat⁸ and I arrived in under the cover of darkness after a grueling eight hour trip, four under the baking sun on the Purus River, followed by another four up the *igarapé Mapiá*, a slow moving, winding stream. The last hour and a half of the journey was in the dark, the boatman using a headlamp to navigate the twists and turns, overhanging branches and floating logs of the stream. I spent close to three weeks there, before returning to Rio Branco for a two weeks, with a few days layover in Boca do Acre, the small riverport town from which all journeys to Mapiá are launched.

I then spent close to three weeks in the village, where I was hosted by a middle-aged couple in their newly completed home. My first week, I spent principally orienting

⁸ Except there is the occasional government official arriving by helicopter.

myself to the village. I went on walks along the alternately clayey and sandy trails. I introduced myself to people and told people what I was doing. It seemed most were rather blasé about a researcher in their midst, as several academics, journalists, and filmmakers had already been there (though I do believe I was the first geographer). I worked in the group workday in the church they were constructing, digging out the clay earth and hauling it in a wheelbarrow, then dumping it into a pile where it would later be turned into brick. I spent afternoons sitting in on a workshop facilitated by a Daimista from an outside community in southeastern state of Minas Gerais.

Into my second week and third weeks, I scrambled to interview as many people as I could, oftentimes interviewing two people a day, and a couple of times up to four, getting a total of 22. I was very fortunate to catch and interview a couple of the leaders, in particular Padrinho Alfredo and Alex Polari, before they began their annual travels in which they visit many of the satellite churches in southern Brazil, Western Europe and North America. I was lucky in general that so many people were willing and able to give some of their time to speak with me. Interviews, most of which were recorded when I received permission, were semi-structured, touching on several themes. If I was speaking with a long-term member of the community, I would always ask about the changes and continuities he or she had seen over the decades. I would ask about their personal affinities for the forest, and what role Mapiá played in greater Amazonia and the world. Over time, a few themes emerged: a sense of loss and nostalgia for earlier times when Padrinho Sebastião was still alive and communal spirit was strong; a sense of unease and anxiety in needing cash to survive in a place that was designed to be separate from a cash

economy; a sense of pride in the solar panels attached to their roofs; a sense of joy and privilege in being able to live in the rainforest, often accompanied by naming all the fruiting trees and plants in the vicinity of their homes; a sense of annoyance at the new sounds, such as motorcycles and generators, found in the village.

In an article in *The Professional Geographer*, Juanita Sundberg (2003) lamented a silence that has prevailed in discussing the politics of fieldwork in Latin Americanist geography. She attributes this silence to “masculinist epistemologies” that privilege the researcher a kind of objectivity that obscures how knowledge is produced as well as the power relations between researcher and research subject (Gregory & Barnes, 1997). As the politics of doing fieldwork are fraught with gender, class, and race differences, it is necessary to articulate “situated knowledges” (Rose, 1997). As a white, North American, heterosexual male, I have enormous privilege that is intrinsic to the research project itself, i.e., my ability to conceive, plan, and carry out fieldwork in this location is directly tied to my position in society. My access to the resources of a university, my ability to “select” this topic as an object of study has as much to do with a social structure that affords me opportunities than it does my individual choices. Therefore, it is imperative to openly discuss “how gender and other unequal social relations fundamentally shape our research questions, fieldwork experiences, and—most importantly—the production of knowledge about Latin American people’s lived experiences.” (Sundberg, 2003, p. 186). An integral part of such a discussion involves reflexivity, or “self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious *analytical* scrutiny of the self as a researcher” (England, 1997, p. 72, italics in the original).

Looking back, it is difficult to tease out these various factors in my interactions with research subjects in the field. In the context of Brazil, it has been commented that the myth of Brazil's 'racial democracy' often lures white researchers into not considering the racial inequalities that exist within the country (Warren, 2000, cited in Sundberg 2005). In Latin America, being white and being male often opens doors, providing access to information or top officials that otherwise would be difficult (Mullings, 1999; Sundberg, 2003). On the other hand, the researcher's status as 'outsider,' and the unequal power dynamics that are usually present can provoke resentment and/or make building trust problematic. This can especially manifest itself across gender lines, as male researchers may have trouble accessing female research subjects, and vice versa. On the surface of things, I did not have significant trouble finding women members of the community willing to be interviewed- of 22 members of the community interviewed, 10 were women. However, I did neglect to make effort to differentiate between the experience of men and women living in the community, which considering the ways in which the religion is gendered (Schmidt, 2007), is a significant shortcoming.

Such a shortcoming can partially be attributed to lack of time. I had two and a half weeks in the community, a timeframe that could have obscured some of these dynamics. If I had more time, perhaps the myriad ways in which my positionality affected all my interactions would have become clearer. It is difficult to know if and when someone agreed (or did not agree) to an interview, as well as the things he or she said (or did not say), was due to my status as a student researcher. The same goes for the

questions I asked and the observations I made. As such, the account given here is partial and incomplete, as any knowledge production is (Sundberg, 2005).

I must raise two issues briefly before moving on, both of which involving ‘participation,’ both of which have their own problematics that were compounded by lack of time. There has been a move towards “participation activist” research in geography (Sultana, 2007) as well as other fields (Hale, 2001), in which scholars write ‘with’ rather than ‘about’ their research subjects, ideally in the service of improving their lives in some way. Beyond offering my labor and money, as any other visitor to the community is expected, this was a call that largely went unmet, and something I hope to redress in any future research endeavors.

Participation also refers to “participant observation,” which is ‘shorthand’ for a methodology that involves a mix of ritual participation, interviewing, and “experimental stimulation” (Whyte, 1979, p. 56: cited in Dawson, 2010, p. 174). It is a complex task of playing multiple roles and donning masks while simultaneously building rapport and trust. Such a process often produces guilt and/or anxiety (Peshkin, 1984), as the researcher can feel simultaneously manipulating and manipulated. This can especially be true, as it was in Peshkin’s case, in religious settings as the researcher must be sensitive to difference but also be aware of the potential agendas pursued by research subjects to convert ‘outsiders.’ This is doubly fraught in the case of Santo Daime, in which the religious practices involve the ingestion of a powerful psychoactive substance.

In conclusion, just as I make the case throughout that place and space are relational, so is the research I present here. It is rooted in relationships and interactions

forged during my stay at Céu do Mapiá, and the ways it inspired me to think through a set of concerns: community, place, environmentalism, identity, change and modernity, among others. In sum, this work is a fiction, in that it has been made or ‘fashioned’ (Clifford, 1986), primarily by me (i.e. any shortcomings fall on my shoulders), but by others as well. As such, it is partial and limited by my perspective and other constraints, and by no means should be seen as the final word on the matter. However, it is my hope that the work makes a contribution to Latin American geography in particular (Knapp, 2002) and human and cultural geography as a whole.



Figure 3: A *mapiense* in her home (photo by author)

Layout of the Present Work

Chapter one looks at the historical origins of Santo Daime. Several large narratives are engrained in the story of Mapiá, in particular the story of rubber in the Amazon. The rubber boom attracted a massive migration from Brazil’s northeast, including Santo Daime’s founder, Raimundo Irineu Serra. There in the rubber camps,

Serra comes into contact with ayahuasca, a context I argue is liminal at several levels. As a hybrid cult of Christian and Indigenous forms, among others, Santo Daime has access to the liminal, subversive “power of the weak” as well as a need to be legitimate. The chapter explores this tension between liminality and legitimacy as it played out in the early history of Santo Daime.

Chapter two sketches out a trajectory for the community of Céu do Mapiá, the flagship community of the Santo Daime movement. Founded in 1983 in response to social, political, and environmental pressures resulting from the influx of ranchers from southern Brazil, the community’s initial vision and self-perception was that of a “utopia,” a place where the faithful could practice their religion peacefully and more fully, and in the process of doing, re-arrange and re-articulate social, economic, and environmental relations. Longevity in intentional communities is hard to muster, however, and the community found itself instead entangled in a host of relationships with the Brazilian state. Over time, the community had to temper its original utopian visions of self-sufficiency, and find new sources of livelihood. They found an unlikely source by becoming the main hub of a global spiritual network.

Chapter three picks up by then tracing the contours of that network. The Santo Daime movement, after remaining localized for several decades started emanating outward in the 1980s, first to Brazilian metropolises, and later into Europe, North America, and Japan. In the process of doing so, the movement influenced, and was influenced by, a wide variety of other social and political phenomena, from global environmental concern, pan-indigenous spirituality, and the global drug market.

Chapter four returns to the site of Céu do Mapiá, this time to analyze the sensual, daily geographies of the community. Of particular importance is the soundscape of the community which marks the community's transition into a village more integrated into the surrounding locales as well as the hymns that articulate the doctrine of Santo Daime. The chapter also shows the evidence on the cultural landscape of the various ways its traveling has wrought on the community.



Figure 4: Bridge across the *igarapé* (photo by author)

Chapter Two: Liminality and Legitimacy: The Historical Roots of Santo Daime

Introduction

Raimundo Irineu Serra was a migrant rubber tapper working in the borderlands between Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru in the 1910s when he was introduced to the indigenous psychoactive tea known as *ayahuasca* (Quechua for ‘vine of the souls’) by a Peruvian mestizo shaman⁹. In one of their sessions, he was staring up at the moon when he saw it coming closer and closer to him, up to the point where he could see inside it, where he saw a woman seated on a throne. “Who do you think I am?” she asked. “The Universal Goddess,” he answered. “Very well,” she responded. She then told him to spend eight days in forest in preparation for receiving her full instructions, at which point she would turn the world over to him to govern. During this time, he was not to eat anything except unsalted manioc root and abstain from tobacco, alcohol and sex- he was not even to view a “woman’s skirt from a thousand meters off” (Fróes, 1988, p. 34). So, for those eight days he drank ayahuasca and tapped rubber trees. His companion stayed home and prepared the manioc root. One time, to test Serra, he pretended to put salt into the pot. While Serra was out in the forest, the spirits told him that his companion had pretended to put salt in his manioc. When Serra confronted him about it, he was pleased and said he was truly learning.

After four days, it is said that even the sticks began to move and change colors (Fróes, 1988, p. 34). Serra began communicating with the drink itself. He interrogated

⁹ This is a composite of stories compiled by Fróes (1988), Monteiro (1983), MacRae (1992), and Meyer (2002)

it, saying, “if you are a drink that comes to give [a good] name to my Brazil, I will take you to my Brazil; but if you are going to demoralize my Brazil, I will leave you” (Silva, 1983, pp. 103–4) . The woman from his original vision returned at the end of eight days, and now having fuller clarity, Serra discerned that she at once was the Universal Goddess and the Virgin Mary, coming to him now in the Amazonian rainforest as the *Rainha da Floresta*, or the “Forest Queen.” As promised, she transmitted the full instructions to him and Serra was struck by a vision of a cross circumnavigating the world. He left the forest some time afterwards, and began spreading this new doctrine, which became known as “Santo Daime,” from the Portuguese, “Dai-me força, Dai-me amor” (Give me strength, give me love).

This founding myth of the Santo Daime church serves as an instructive starting point for this chapter as it draws out three themes that continually arise throughout the historical trajectory of the religious movement and its many communities: the socio-economic context of rubber extraction in the Brazilian Amazon, the movement’s relationship with endogenous ayahuasca use and the migrant rubber tappers’ encounters with it, and the movement’s efforts to thereafter Christianize the use of ayahuasca. These latter two can be thought of conjointly, perhaps most obviously as a hybridization or syncretism, but also in terms of linkages, transmission, and hierarchy. These foundational myths make explicit claims of being linked to the indigenous knowledge of the Amazon and to Christianity. This puts Santo Daime in a delicate position, necessitating a balance between the subjugated Indian and the colonizing Christian.

I explore this tension by thinking about the Santo Daime movement in terms of its liminality and its legitimacy. From Irineu Serra's initiation into ayahuasca, to the far-removed location of the rubber camps in relation to other settlements, to the fact that the rubber camps were located in a frontier region, liminality is operating on several layers. However, legitimacy has often been a concern for the movement, exemplified by Serra's cozy relationship with local political elites in Acre and contemporary attempts by the various branches of the ayahuasca churches to be designated national cultural patrimony (Labate, 2012). I turn to the concepts of liminality and legitimacy in an effort to avoid binary concepts of domination and submission, and its counterpart, domination and resistance (see: Scott, 1990). I argue that the vastness of Amazonia was such that the main mechanism driving its economy at the turn of the 20th century, rubber extraction, was decentralized to such an extent that social and economic relations between patrons and clients was complicated beyond simply dominance and submission. Additionally, this vastness created the spaces, both the rubber camps in particular and the region of Acre as a whole, that allowed for the Santo Daime religion to form in combination with popular Catholicism, indigenous ayahuasca use, Afro-Brazilian spirituality, and Amazonian *encantaria* (Macrae, 2010).

Liminality as a concept was developed by Victor Turner in the 1960s (Turner, 1967, 1969) to describe a condition of ambiguity for an individual or for a group in which "they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (Turner, 1969, p. 95). He likens the liminal state to darkness, invisibility, and the wilderness, among others (ibid). What is particularly

intriguing about the theory is that while those that are within a state of liminality are ostensibly submissive and stripped of status, they also take on what he calls the “power of the weak,” which under certain conditions represent threats to the status quo. An example from which he gets a lot of mileage is that of St. Francis and his 12th century movement which for a time was viewed as a threat to the institutional Church. The idea of liminality is discussed in James C. Scott’s (1990) notion of ‘infrapolitics’ in which subordinate groups make symbolic and material gestures of resistance. Another striking example comes from Michael Taussig’s explorations of “wildness” in the Peruvian and Colombian rainforests in which the indigenous persons of the lowest social stratum, known as *aucas* are imbued with the highest degree of spiritual power (Taussig, 1986).

Another relevant element to Turner’s conceptions of liminality is its dialectic relationship with “structure,” i.e. the institutions, laws, taboos, and norms that govern a given society. Liminality is temporary and those existing within it are either subsumed back into the pre-existing structure, or they constitute their own new structure which would subsequently face its own anti-structural challengers. When this happens, that which was originally liminal can potentially gain a greater institutional status, or legitimacy, while simultaneously losing its liminal power. A state of liminality, and whatever weaknesses and powers associated with it, are therefore inherently relational. One must examine the positionality of a social movement in relation to a myriad of other interactions and contexts. In the case of Santo Daime, I put forth the idea that because it formed in a liminal context, the rubber camps of a frontier region, it took on a kind of liminal, illicit power in the form of ayahuasca consumption. However, in its local

context, via a process of institutionalization, and a claim to be Christianizing ayahuasca use, it became a more “legitimate” power, developing a positive relationship within the overall society of its locale.

The Rubber Boom and Northeastern Migration

In the city of Rio Branco, in the *O Museu da Borracha* (The Rubber Museum), there is a display of Mestre Irineu and Santo Daime, dubbed the “Religion of the Forest,” that recounts the story of Serra “learning the secrets of the plants and animals” while working in the rubber camps. The display holds the classic photo of him, a tall (about 6’8”) man of African descent, standing in a row with a handful of his followers. He towered over them, squinting and staring straight at the camera. Also on display a bottle of *daime* (the name refers to the tea as well as the whole religion), and various paraphernalia such as a caravaca cross draped in a chain of stars of David and a rattle used in the singing of their hymns.

To see such a display at the premier public museum of the state capital shows a level of prominence the story of Irineu and the use of ayahuasca has in social history of the region. It is embedded within the story of the Amazonian rubber boom, which brought hundreds of thousands of migrants from the drought-stricken northeastern region of Brazil (Ferrarini, 1979). It is a story of violence, as war broke out between Brazil and Bolivia at the turn of the 20th century in a territorial dispute (Tocantins 1961), and exploitation, as indigenous peoples were often captured and pressed into labor. It is the story of a boom-bust economy, the development of a global network that saw the latex drained from the *Hevea brasiliensis* by rubber tappers make its way along a commodity

chain of landowners, local merchants, the wholesalers known as rubber barons in the big cities of Manaus and Belém, then shipped to Liverpool and New York where it ended up in industrial centers, like the Goodyear Tire factories in Akron (Barham & Coomes, 1996; Dean, 1987; Weinstein, 1983).



Figure 5: Raimundo Irineu Serra with followers

It was not until the discovery of vulcanization by Charles Goodyear in 1839 that there was a global demand for rubber, though the true craze kicked in during the 1890s with rising popularity of the bicycle and shortly thereafter, the automobile (Weinstein, 1983). For sixty years, from 1860 to 1920, the Amazon was the premier supplier of rubber to the global market, before a huge increase in supply from Malaysia plantations, owned by the British, collapsed the price (Barham & Coomes, 1996). Before the collapse, the biggest piece of the pie went to the large wholesalers in the major port cities such as Belém and Manaus; the latter famous for the construction of its opulent Opera

House. Hundreds of local traders, known as *aviadoras*, sprung up all along the tributaries of the river, got the next highest cut, followed by the *seringalistas*, who owned the property on which the rubber tappers, or *seringueiros*, would collect rubber.

As the Amazon was thinly populated, and because many of the indigenous tribes were weakened by disease or resisted being pressed into service (Hemming, 1987), there was a great need for labor power. People from the drought-stricken northeast region of Brazil, known as the *sertão* began migrating into the Amazon (Ferrarini, 1979). These *Nordestinos* were recruited into the Amazon forest by the thousands to supply the labor power necessary to meet global demand. Roberto Santos estimates that between 300,000 and 500,000 migrants found their way into the Amazon between 1872 and 1910 in order to tap rubber (Santos, 1980). As Samuel Benchimol writes, “Amazonia, in truth, forged itself in the image of the *cearense* (a man from the state of Ceará) and the *seringa*” (Benchimol, 1992, p. 8, translation mine) Many boarded steam ships off the coast in the states of Ceará, Maranhão, and Bahia, among others, and made the arduous journey up the Amazon River.

Raimundo Irineu Serra was one such man, leaving Maranhão in 1912 and arrived in Acre, the westernmost state of Brazil. While one would assume that Serra was just one of thousands of men from that region to make that trip for economic reasons, it seems he was mostly driven by a familial incident. Serra’s father was absent and he was raised primarily by his uncle. One day his uncle ordered him to fetch some hay for the horses and Serra rebelled which caused his uncle to pull him by the ear and hit him (Labate & Pacheco, 2002, p. 308). The young man of almost twenty years, left shortly thereafter,

taking a steamship up the Amazon River. He arrived in the westernmost frontier of Brazil in a town called Xapuri (also the home of a much later famous rubber tapper, Chico Mendes). From there, far removed from civilization, Serra went to work in the *seringa*.

Life in the Seringal

Serra's days were most likely spent rising at 4 or 5 a.m. to circuit the *estradas*, the teardrop-shaped paths through the forest that connected 100 to 200 rubber trees (Weinstein, 1983). Tappers would slice the bark of the tree, leave behind a bucket to collect sticky substrate that oozed out and then return later in the day to collect the buckets. The paths began and ended at the rubber tapper's home, usually a small hut that he shared with about half a dozen other tappers on an estate in which a handful of other huts were scattered through the forest (ibid). The drudgery and hardship of the routine led the Amazonian historian Leandro Tocantins to describe the *estrada* as "the diagram of his existence; an arbitrary coming and going, dulling. A sterile short-circuit, disheartening. His hut, always at the mouth of the estrada, is the wall of lamentations" (Tocantins, 1961, p. 166, cited in Meyer, 2003).

However, the fact that Serra was a *seringueiro* was extremely important to the older generations of *daimistas*, and to a certain extent still is today. Sandra Goulart relates an interview from her fieldwork in which a *Daime* adherent states: "Master Irineu was a rubber tapper, like I was, like a lot of the people who today are the people of the *Daime*. During that time, the people of the *Daime* were a people that knew the *seringa*" (Goulart, 2002, p. 281, translation mine). As it was made clear in the opening of the

paper, the context of the rubber camp is explicitly made an integral part of Irineu's reception of knowledge of the forest. Meyer posits that this valorization of the *seringueiro* served as an "inversion of the dominant social order" (Meyer, 2003, p. 2) imposed by the rubber boom. The thought being that both the migrant and native 'caboclo' rubber tapper, as an indebted, subjugated peon, was excluded from the wealth-making process of rubber extraction, but his being in close contact with the forest gave him access to its power in the form of *ayahuasca*.

There can be no denying the inequality and hardship associated with its socio-economic relations. As Oliveira (2002) puts it: "living in the rubber camp had one objective, to work" (p. 30). Migrants usually arrived already in debt due to the passage from their homelands, their tools, food, and homes were also fronted by their patrons, and it was nearly impossible to pay back what they owed (Dean, 1987; Weinstein, 1983). Any and all activities of subsistence, such as fishing, hunting, and farming were heavily restricted in order to make tappers dependent on their bosses (*ibid*). However, the social and economic dynamics of the time seem to be too complicated to be couched in terms of dominance and submission (and potentially resistance). For one thing, the tappers were not the only ones indebted. Rather, it seems that those belonging to every step of the hierarchy were indebted to those above: "the Amazon is the land of credit. There is no capital. The *seringueiro* owes the '*patrão*,' the *patrão* owes the 'aviador house,' the aviador house owes the foreigner, and so it goes" (Weinstein, 1983, p. 23). Furthermore, according to Weinstein, the debts incurred by tappers did not lock them into a kind of serfdom. Rather, the "tapper was much too mobile and too far removed from the

patrão's control for his debts to operate as an effective means of restraint (ibid).” It seems the system in which patrons paid their clients by fronting credit and the clients paying the debt back in the form of latex developed due to the fact that there were few liquid assets to go around.

While not everyone agrees with Weinstein's assessment of patron-client relations (see Barham & Coomes, 1996), the complexity of the situation should be acknowledged. A crucial element here is the great distances involved in transporting the rubber from the camps to the major ports. The vastness made for a risky, decentralized economy in which abuses from all parties were rampant (ibid); an extreme case being the violence on the Putomayo River reported in the Casement report cited by Michael Taussig (1986). What I would like to suggest here is that while the rubber economy had a hand in enormous amounts of suffering, it is perhaps inaccurate to characterize the socio-economic dynamics only in terms of a dominant-submissive, or dominant-subversive, binaries. For many of these far-flung regions, Acre in particular, it is unclear to what extent a social order as prescribed by the Church and/or the State was able to establish itself. This could hold true for both the overall society coalescing at the time around 1910, in the years preceding and immediately following the rubber market's collapse, and the rubber camps themselves.

The Religious Millieu of Acre

Turning away somewhat from the socio-economic context of the rubber camps of Acre, and more towards the cultural and religious, it has been remarked that the Catholic Church had very little presence in the region at the turn of the twentieth century (Azzi,

1978; Oliveira, 2002). Therefore, the result was despite the fact that the lives of *seringueiros* were difficult in many ways, they had very little guidance/authority regarding their religious practices. Oliveira describes how the *patrão* would allow prayer meetings, catechetical instruction, singing, and praying the rosary in his compound. These meetings were by necessity led by lay people, and often were led by women (Oliveira, 2002, p. 32). This degree of liberty however is just one small example of the dizzying array of religious practices that existed at the time. The *caboclos*¹⁰ had a similar composite of beliefs but were augmented with *visagens* and *bichos encantados*, or enchanted beings that inhabited the forest and the rivers (Galvão, 1955). Also characterized by what he called “visagens,” which are enchanted beings in the forest. The pink river dolphins that could emerge from the water to become human serve as the most famous example (see Slater, 1994) but under this cosmology, any generic forest creature can be imbued with magical powers, such as the ones that warned Irineu about his companion putting salt in his manioc.

There were the northeastern migrants brought their “religious baggage” of saint cults, brotherhoods, and a propensity for messianic movements (Oliveira, 2002). Celebrated cases such as Padre Cicero and Canudos are well-known examples from the northeast, but Amazonia had its share of examples as well. One such was the “Miraculous Souls of Nova Olinda,” two brothers who were killed by Indians in the beginning of the 20th century, who came to be worshiped as saints, their tombs still

¹⁰ By *caboclo*, I follow the lead of Meyer in that I do not refer the individuals labeled as ‘caboclo’ but to the social category itself “created in the encounter between indigenous peoples of Brazil and non-indigenous Brazilians” (Meyer, 2003, p. 5).

visited by pilgrims today. Another example includes the tomb of a rubber tapper said to be a healer who was killed by his boss (Oliveira 2002).

Also needing to be mentioned here are the myriad indigenous practices associated with ayahuasca use. Its use was, and continues to be widespread through the Amazon basin (Gow, 1996; Langdon, 1996). While practices vary from tribe to tribe, some of the general characteristics of ayahuasca shamanism have been outlined by Langdon:

The idea of a universe of multiple levels in which visible reality always presupposes an invisible one; a general principle of energy that unifies the universe, without divisions, in which everything is related to the cycles of production and reproduction, life and death, growth and decomposition; a native concept of shamanic power which is tied to the system of global energy... through which extra-human forces exercise their powers in the human sphere and through which humanity, mediated by the shaman, in turn exercises its powers in the extra-human world; a principle of transformation... (by which) spirits adopt concrete human or animal form, and shamans become animals or assume invisible forms such as those of the spirits...; the shaman as mediator who acts principally for the benefit of his people; and the ecstatic experiences which are the basis of shamanic power and make the mediatory role possible. (Langdon, 1996, p. 27-8)

Also important is the practice of non-indigenous ayahuasca use collectively described as *vegetalismo* (Dawson, 2007; Luna, 1986). It is presumed that this transmission occurred due to contact between rubber tappers in remote jungle regions coming into contact with indigenous peoples (Franco & Conceição, 2002). *Vegetalismo* has a couple of continuities with indigenous shamanism in that its use is primarily therapeutic and only a select few become specialists in its use.

Added to this mix were also the Afro-Brazilian practices and beliefs brought into the region by the migrants from Brazil's Northeast. Scholars are somewhat split as to the role of Afro-influenced spiritism, practices such as spirit possession and the like (see

discussion in: Labate, & Pacheco, 2011). Compared to indigenous and non-indigenous ayahuasca practices, and popular Catholicism, Afro-inspired elements of the Santo Daime repertoire have been understudied, but Irineu was said to be a member of the *Tambor da Mina* (lit. “Mine’s Drum), which are ‘the possession cults of his home state of Maranhão (Fróes, 1988). In essence, the western Brazilian Amazon played host to a whole suite of religious practices derived from Catholicism and shamanism, where experimenting was common, categories were fluid, and religious authority was scant.

It was in this context that we find Serra marching off into the forest both under the direction of a Peruvian mestizo shaman and a vision of the Virgin Mary, where he is protected by the voices of the forest that he hears under the influence of the ayahuasca, and where he finally receives the mission to take this wild forest medicine and Christianize and codify it. Santo Daime therefore, at least from the insider’s perspective, represents not just an amalgamation of various beliefs and practices, but a culmination or fulfilling of them. One prominent daimista leader has described the faith as a ransoming and purifying of Christianity from the stain of colonialism by incorporating indigenous knowledge (A. P. D. Alverga, 1999). The Santo Daime doctrine supersedes both indigenous knowledge (by ‘taming’ or civilizing it) and Christianity (by purifying it).

Thus far I have concentrated primarily on the Catholic-Christian and shamanic-indigenous elements that made up the Santo Daime doctrine, and I have neglected some of the other aspects that have influenced Santo Daime practices and doctrine, namely: Kardecism, Amazonian *encantaria*, Afro- inspired spirit possession, and esotericism. Though scholars have disagreed on the ratio of ingredients (see: Labate, & Pacheco,

2011), each of them have played a part, and there is evidence of Serra participating, or at least being exposed to each of them. While it is debatable to what extent the African elements of Santo Daime have been neglected by scholars (Cemin, 1998; Goulart, 1996), and/or downplayed by Daimistas themselves (see MacRae, 1992), it is fairly clear that the principle elements of Santo Daime as popularly understood are the symbology of popular Catholicism grafted onto the indigenous/*acriano* practice of ayahuasca consumption, coupled with a propensity to absorb from various traditions.

It is thought that Mestre Irineu stopped tapping rubber around 1920, and moved to the city of Rio Branco, leaving behind the seringal and joined the national guard (Fróes, 1988, p. 37). The timing here is important as the region was undergoing a rapid shift because of the collapse of the rubber market due to the establishment of plantations in Malaysia, causing a wave of seringueiros to come into the city to look for work or set up around the outskirts of the city to try agriculture (Souza, 2002). When he quit rubber tapping, Serra joined the army. Little is known about this decade of his life, as the original visions he had took place sometime in the late 1910s and the Church was officially established in Rio Branco in the early 1930s. He is known to have participated in a vegetalismo-type group known as the *Circulo da Regeneração e Fé*, while in Xapuri, where he presumably started his ayahuasca training. The group is said to have fractured sometime in the 1920s due to leadership disputes (Macrae, 1992). But once again we see Serra's life mirror a larger movement of people, first from the northeast of Brazil to the Amazonian rubber camps, and then from the camps to the city. He quit the army in 1932, having risen to rank of corporal, to become an agriculturalist.

Movement into the City

The first official Santo Daime work took place on May 26, 1930. It was an informal affair. Serra had yet to develop the kind of disciplines in terms of dress, behavior, ritual space, dance, etc., that came later. The group of participants was small, three people according to Jose das Neves, one of Irineu's contemporaries, and resembled what became known as the "concentration," in which participants are seated and silent (Fróes, 1988, p. 37). "Before then, there wasn't this type of work in Rio Branco, it was a secret of the jungle. Mestre Irineu opened this knowledge for others," (ibid).

The development of the Daime repertoire intensified in the latter part of the decade, as Irineu began receiving more detailed instructions from the astral plane. The doctrine became centered around hymns that Irineu received from the Forest Queen. One story relates how the Forest Queen commanded Irineu to sing. "I don't know to sing," he replied. "Open your mouth, and I'll teach you," she said. "I'm commanding you." By the late 1930, Serra had compiled his first *hinario*, *O Cruzeiro*. Also by that time Serra instituted the standard *farda*, or 'uniform,' of a blue pleated skirt with a white shirt and bowtie for women, and blue pants, white shirt, and a tie for men. Both these hymns and the dress show striking similarities to the local practices of Serra's home state of Maranhão (Labate & Pacheco, 2002).

The move from being a "secret of the forest" to being a part of the fabric of the city was accompanied by an increased attention from authorities. Prohibitions against "witchcraft," of which the use of ayahuasca fell under, had been on the books as part of Brazil's penal code since 1890 and all the ayahuasca using groups in Acre faced

widespread persecution from the police (Macrae, 2010). This was also the time of the “Romanization” of the Catholic Church. Starting in the year 1920, the Brazilian Catholic Church began attempting to rein in all the various practices such as pilgrimage cults and roadside chapels that they deemed quasi-heretical, as missionary priests were sent out into the rubber camps and river outposts throughout the Amazon, in order to administer the sacraments as well as “proper” religious instruction (Azzi, 1978; Oliveira, 2002).

It in this context that a Lieutenant Costa, known for his cruelty, invaded Serra’s congregation in the neighborhood of Vila Ivonete in the late 1930s in an effort to break up the community (Maia, 1988). The details of what happened next are few, but somehow in the process of resistance and negotiation, Serra and his followers managed to make friends with powerful authority figures, including the governor of the state, Guimard dos Santos (ibid). It was through this connection that the group was able to secure a piece of land on the outskirts of the city, which became known as *Alto Santo*, or ‘Holy Ridge,’ where Irineu and his followers established a community that exists till this day. It seems then that the nascent Santo Daime movement held a paradoxical and precarious position in regional Acrean society: bolstered by powerful political figures and what seemed to be a flexible and creative religious scene, while also confronted with accusations, hostility, and outright attacks from both state and religious authorities.

There were approximately 45 families living at Alto Santo and the community members banded together in agricultural production and rubber collection, as the land the governor had given them include three fairly extensive rubber trails (Cemin, 1998). Agricultural work was done in traditional collective fashion of *mutirão*, in which small

tracts of land were opened up via controlled burn and crops such as manioc, rice, and beans were planted and the produce was sold in local markets (Oliveira, 2002). The mid-1940s were yet another time of economic struggle as the brief uptick in demand for Amazon rubber during World War Two, driving a second migration from the Northeast, ended just as quickly as it had started. Alto Santo, along with the other land collocations put aside by the local government, became a kind of refuge for struggling migrants, ex-rubber tappers, and other peasants suck into the capital during economic hardship.

So it went through the decades of the mid-20th century as Santo Daime established itself within the socio-economic and cultural-religious landscape of Rio Branco. The police ran intermittent raids on Santo Daime churches, which resulted in upturned altars and chairs, destroyed images and broken cups (Oliveira, 2002). The atmosphere of religious persecution at the hands of the Church persisted, culminating in a massive burning of ‘subversive’ religious literature in 1947. Yet Irineu maintained strong relationships during this time with key political figures, not only the aforementioned governor Santos, but also the head of the Territorial Guard, Colonel Fontenele, who protected the Alto Santo community from further harm¹¹. Mestre Irineu himself stood as a controversial figure. It seems he was well-respected by many, no doubt in part due to his political alliances. His physical stature as a near-giant man of African descent and his reputation as a powerful healer inspired both fear and awe (Maia, 1988), but he, and his

¹¹ It seems that another branch of the Ayahuasca churches, ‘Barquinha,’ led by Danel Mattos caught the brunt of the raids during this time (see Oliveira 2002).

movement, were subject to prejudice and persecution, associated with the poor, black, and illiterate peasantry.

Nagging questions remain of the complicated relationships between the local population at large, local government and police, the local Catholic Church and the burgeoning *Daimista* communities that are beyond the scope of this chapter. It is not clear how Serra managed to foster and maintain alliances with political elites, nor is it clear to what extent the Catholic Church was able to accomplish its aims of “Romanization,” especially since it managed to alienate the cultural and political elites as well as the lower classes (Oliveira, 2002). Despite this see-sawing back and forth between a variety of social actors, the overarching trend was for Santo Daime to obtain an increasing sense of legitimacy in the region. In the year 1966, the state of Acre’s Secretary of Health declared that ayahuasca consumed in a ritual context posed no threat to public health and was part of the cultural fabric of the region (ibid). This was the first such declaration from a governmental institution in what has been a long process of both legitimacy and legalization of ayahuasca use in Brazil and worldwide.

MacRae posits that it is because these groups sprung from the lower strata of society- black, mestizo, *indio*, that caused the group to be persecuted (ibid). It is also posited by MacRae, and others, that the nascent faith emphasized its white, Catholic element, and downplayed elements associated with shamanism and/or spirit possession in order to appear more upstanding in the eyes of mainstream society and thereby gain the political protection they sought (Macrae, 1992). Coupled with that is the invocation of “Brazil” in the origin histories that perhaps may have been included to quell fears of any

political revolutionary tendencies within the religion (Meyer 2002). Acre was briefly an independent republic following the territorial dispute with Bolivia and independence fervor still existed in large quantities (Tocantins, 1961).

Conclusion

The purposes of this chapter are several. First, becoming familiar with the basic history of religion, and the social context from which it comes, is helpful in guiding our overall understanding. More importantly, the early history of Santo Daime displays several themes that continue to surface throughout its trajectory. First, there is the dialectic between liminality and legitimacy. Second, we can see the propensity to absorb and amalgamate with a variety of different religious forms. Third, the origins and subsequent growth of Santo Daime took place in an era of social upheaval, a theme that arises again in later chapters. And fourth, there is the burgeoning creation of a community that existed not only through religious practice and ideology, but through socio-economic ties as well.

I have argued that Santo Daime came into being within various types of liminal spheres. This was true at several levels, from the overall territory of Acre being far from the arms of power of the Church and State and the rubber camps were far removed from urban settlements. Raimundo Serra's initiation into ayahuasca usage mirrored almost exactly Turner's rite of passage structure in which the ritual subject goes through a stage of separation. Even as the movement transitioned into the urban center of Rio Branco, it maintained a kind of liminality, as ayahuasca usage was looked on with suspicion by various authorities. However, trailing behind this trend towards liminality, there was the

movement's quest for legitimacy, as seen first by a movement closer to a center of power in Rio Branco and its subsequent standardization of its ritual repertoire. Serra's friendships with powerful local political figures as well as the later general acceptance of the religion within Acre are evidence of both a desire and attainment of a kind of social legitimacy. This tension continues to play out as the movement moves away from the city, initiating another kind of liminality then finding itself fighting for a kind of legitimacy in the struggle for religious freedom and its foray into environmental politics.

Santo Daime is the eclectic amalgamation of a great diversity of religious forms, from popular Catholicism of both Northeastern Brazil and the Amazon, as well as African-influenced spirit possession cults, Amazonian folk beliefs, and indigenous shamanism. Part of the movement's *modus operandi* from its origins, it seems, has been to continually absorb the cultural practices and beliefs that surround it. This continues later on as the religion moves into urban centers and comes into contact with the milieu of New Age religions (Dawson, 2007; Labate, 2004) and Eastern spirituality, and absorbs elements of both, further expanding the interpretive repertoire of the movement.

Serra was initiated in the use of ayahuasca at the very tail end of the rubber boom, and the growth of the movement came in the aftermath of the collapse of that boom. The movement functioned to provide a means for people in this time of great social upheaval, both in terms of religious practice but also in socio-economic terms as well, as the community in Alto Santo provided a mechanism for livelihood in times of social and economic strife. Such a pattern can be seen later on, the 1970s witnessed another period of social upheaval in Acre, as the splinter line founded by Sebastião Mota de Melo,

disciple of Irineu Serra, moved his brethren to start the new community, Céu do Mapiá, in the wake of the environmental destruction and social turmoil, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Three: An Evolving Home

Prologue

Sebastião Mota de Melo was born on October 7th, 1920, in the rubber camp of Adélia on the margins of the Juruá River. The future founder of Céu do Mapiá, Sebastião's childhood was marked as one with health problems and spiritual experiences (Fróes, 1988). In many ways, he was the embodiment of the Santo Daime ethos discussed in the previous chapter. He was born and raised in a rubber camp, where he underwent a wide variety of spiritual and religious experimentation, including serving an apprenticeship with a master of spiritualism and mediumship (ibid). He also followed the general phenomenon of moving out of the difficult economic conditions of the rubber camps and into the city.

In 1959, he moved with his wife and extended family to an agricultural settlement on the outskirts of Rio Branco, known as *Colônia 5000*, where he continued training as a spiritualist. He fell ill with constant stomach problems, and after searching for a cure from both spiritualist centers and conventional doctors to no avail, he arrived at the door of *Mestre Irineu*, in order to drink *daime*. It was 1965, and by that time Irineu was a famous local healer, and his community had obtained a tentative level of legitimacy, though still a year away from being officially sanctioned by the Department of Public Health. Sebastião began frequenting Irineu's community in Alto Santo, and quickly rose up the ranks of the community due to his healing prowess.

In 1971, when Mestre Irineu passed away, the issue of succeeding became fractious. While some did not approval of Irineu's uncle-in-law, Leônicio Gomes, taking

over, there were even more who saw Sebastião as still a kind of novice and did not take kindly to his assertions that he was destined to succeed Irineu in leadership of the community (Fróes, 1988). The tension grew to the point that by 1974 Sebastião split off from Alto Santo and formed a new community at his home in Colonia 5000. Though originally a regular agricultural allotment set aside by the government, by 1976 nearly all the families living there were connected to Sebastião's movement.

Colonia 5000 then passed into being a kind of alternative, intentional community based equally on practices the religion of Santo Daime as well as subsistence agriculture. In the words of Vera Fróes, a daimista historian:

With the transformation of the relations of production, the symbolic universe of the community also encompasses aspects of material life. The very contradictions of capitalism make possible the arrival of experiences which invigorate non-capitalist relations... The doctrine of Santo Daime, a specific religious manifestation of the Amazon, was the principal responsible for the existence of new communal relations" (Fróes, 1988, p. 73).

It is unclear if this kind of explicitly anti-capitalist discourse was truly representative of the community's ethos or if it is merely Fróes projection. Nonetheless, the community did offer a kind of alternative, a response to what was occurring in Acre at that time. The year 1971 not only marked the year of Irineu Serra's death, it was also the year that the first ranchers and land invaders arrived in Acre from the south of Brazil, setting off a practice of land grabbing, deforestation, cattle ranching on a massive scale (Hoelle, 2011). The social upheaval became so great in Rio Branco and the surrounding areas that Sebastião decided it was time to found a new community. One that was deep within the rainforest where they could practice their doctrine more fully.

On the front of the *Colônia 5000* church there is a dual panel façade. A white line runs through the middle, on one side is a representation of *Mestre Irineu* and on the other is the Virgin Mary, *A Rainha da Floresta*. From her flowing white gown emerges a green forest and blue rivers and waterfalls. Red and pink wildflowers pop up from forest canopies and vines wrapped around tree trunks. On the other side, Mestre Irineu presides over a scorched yellow and brown earth, engulfed in a wall of red and orange flames. The painting, said to have been done by a Chilean resident of the community, is emblematic of the times, in which the land across the state was in flames, and the choice Sebastião made to leave behind a few families and with the rest seek what he put it as “New Life, New World, New System, New People” (A. P. de Alverga, 1998). Céu do Mapiá, or ‘Heaven of Mapiá,’ was to be the name of the new community, was to serve as a refuge from the ravaged world of Acre, a place where the followers of Santo Daime could go deeper into the source of their faith and together build a new home.

Introduction

Céu do Mapiá, as well as its precursor Colônia 5000, stand within the long tradition of intentional or alternative communities, groups that choose to exclude themselves geographically and/or psychologically (Meijering, 2006). The idea of restructuring society has resonated throughout the ages (Buber, 1966). The pattern goes back millennia, at least to the Essenes and early Christian communities resisting Romanization, and continuing with monastic communities in the Middle Ages (Rexroth, 1974), and continued with various responses to the industrial world (Zablocki, 1980).

Most communities died out after a brief blaze, but Céu do Mapiá has lasted thirty years, making it an exceptional example.

The object of this chapter is to trace the “life course” (Meijering, 2006) of Céu do Mapiá, its evolution and transitions from an initial group of forty families in the early 1980s to having over 1,000 inhabitants in the 1990s and early 2000s to settling around 600 residents in 2013. Along the way, it has changed from being a local movement of mostly Amazonian rubber tappers and agriculturalists to being an international one, playing host to a constant stream of visitors and serving as the headquarters of a globalized religious network. The sources of income and livelihood have changed as well. In the early days the community subsisted on agriculture and whatever income they could manage through rubber tapping. Today, rubber tapping is no longer economically viable and agriculture is practiced on a limited basis. Instead, the community has come to rely on its international network, mainly in the form of its visitors that come during the festival seasons of December and June, to provide a source of income. The vision of the community has changed as well. Whereas the original vision of the community was utopian in nature (“New World, New People,”) and separationist from greater society in intent, over time the community has become entangled within various mechanisms that have reintegrated the community back into the mainstream. Admittedly, such a construction is overly simplified, and it will be complicated further into the chapter as the narrative of the community takes shape. But for now, this basic sketch serves a baseline for understanding Céu do Mapiá as not just a site of “social and spatial practice” (Meijering, 2006, p. 16), but also as a ‘process’ that is dynamic and fluid (Liepins, 2000).

The term ‘community’ pops up continuously throughout Western thought and discourse (Delanty, 2010), from talking about larger scale nation-states (Anderson, 1983), ‘traditional’ ruralities (Tönnies, 1957), to urban neighborhoods (Delanty, 2010). ‘Community,’ then has come to mean a mode of belonging. Delanty (2010) argues that before the 19th century, ‘community’ and ‘society’ were more or less synonymous and the bifurcation between the two developed as the result of modern capitalism. It was Tönnies (1957) in the late 19th century who claimed that essence of ‘*Gemeinschaft*’ (community) was rooted in tradition and ‘organic’ while ‘*Gesellschaft*’ (society) was ‘imaginary and mechanical’ (p. 33), the end result being that society replaces community as the principle mode of social relations. Consequently, ‘community’ came to be understood as something ‘lost’ under the thumb of modernity, and the varied attempts at recovering it stood in contradistinction to modernity and dominant society (Delanty, 2010; also see Nisbet, 1969; Schehr, 1997). Or, as theologian Martin Buber (1970) claims, modern institutions cut human beings off from the relational, the reciprocal, and the communal.

Intentional and/or alternative communities snugly fit into this discussion. Pivoting off of Victor Turner’s (1967, 1969) theory’s on liminality and *communitas*, Susan Love Brown (2002) posits that intentional communities are products of state societies and cultural critiques of such societies. Historical examples abound, from Robert Owen’s New Lanark and New Harmony communities in Britain and the U.S., respectively, which attempted to re-articulate labor relations in the wake of industrialization (Heilbroner, 1999) to the countercultural communes of the 1960s which

for all their indulgences struck at the underpinnings of Western society (i.e. the “establishment”) (Melville, 1972; Miller, 1999). The Hutterites of 16th century Moravia were Radical Reformers who wanted to return Christianity to its apostolic age and cut all ties between itself and the state (Shenker, 1986). The Oneida community in upstate New York was established by John Noyes became notorious for flouting societal norms in terms of gender and sexual relations (Rexroth, 1974). Koinonia Farm, a multiracial community in the 1950s American South constituted a rejection of segregation (Brown, 2002). Freetown Christiania in contemporary Copenhagen is a semi-legal squatter settlement, seen as a commentary on contemporary mainstream society (Thörn, Wasshede, & Nilson, 2011). All of these examples, as well countless others, are marked by rejection of some kind of dominant order- social, political, economic, religious- and by withdrawal, which is spatial to varying degrees.

Part of the ability of these communities to criticize the dominant order comes from their liminal status (Turner, 1967, 1969). Turner’s ideas are derived from the work on rites of passage by Arnold van Gennep (1960), which describe a process in which those undergoing a transformation ritual are separated, symbolically and spatially, during the course of the ritual, and it is through this separation that the transformative power of the ritual lies. However, the transformation is not complete until the ritual subject is ‘aggregated’ back into the social structure. Turner later expanded the concept of liminality far beyond the Ndembu tribe of his initial research to Franciscan movement of the 12th century, participants in Halloween and Diwala festivals, pilgrims, and the hippies of the 1960s (Turner & Turner, 1978; Turner, 1969, 1974).

Kamau (2002) delineates four reasons why intentional communities should be considered liminal. First, intentional communities generally seek spatial isolation, often in remote rural areas far from cities. Second, intentional communities are often at odds with the capitalist economic system, often finding ways to subvert it, such as collective ownership of property, or check out of it altogether. Intentional communities often exhibit gender and sexual roles that differ from societal norms- trending towards extreme celibacy, the Shakers for example, or promiscuity, e.g. Oneida. Finally, intentional communities usually foster a religion, ideology, and/or worldview that rub against the grain of the dominant societal norms. Céu do Mapiá exhibits all of these to some degree, with its spatial isolation, alternative worldview, and its initial attempts at economic independence especially being pertinent.

The liminal moment, the “betwixt and between” as Turner puts it, is one of great complexity. Those in the liminal state are conferred with, or given access to, certain powers. The freedom to not be subject to social normativities and roles and the creativity to form new ones (or at least the potential to do so), Turner referred to this generally as *communitas*, that space in which emerges a “society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, or community” (Turner, 1969, p. 96). Subjects in the lower strata of society are often thought to have “powers of the weak” (Turner, 1969), mystical or dangerous abilities, such as the *auca*, the lowland shamans of Amazonia (Taussig, 1986). However, this freedom and power usually comes at great socio-economic cost and social stigmatization. Also, liminality, as well as the *communitas* that it facilitates, is necessarily ephemeral. *Communitas* develops its own

structure that then is resisted or challenged in some way. Turner differentiates between three types of *communitas*: **a)** *existential* or *spontaneous*, which is the initial burst of excitement and creativity of a social movement; **b)** *normative*, in which some kind of social control or organization emerges; **c)** *ideological*, in which the initial energy and charisma has become routinized and stable (Turner, 1969, p. 132). The spirit having fled, the only things remaining are some outward institutional or ritual forms accompanied by a discourse of, and likely nostalgia for, the past.

Because liminality and *communitas* are better suited as short-term relief from structure, the moments of liminality either fade out, or are subsumed into structure, or outright destroyed by force, sustaining intentional communities is enormously challenging. The overwhelming majority of them cast barely a flicker of light on the cultural scene (Pitzer, 1997). Céu do Mapiá has lasted 30 years now, putting it in rather select company. While there are some venerable examples such as Findhorn in Scotland and The Farm in Tennessee, the number of intentional communities that span into multiple generations are few and far between. The challenges of maintaining a vision of alterity and distinction in relation to the dominant society while also maintaining a way of subsistence, not to mention enthusiasm, is often too much to bear. Many are simply ill-conceived, such as the aforementioned Robert Owen's New Harmony community in Ohio, or the "Latin Farmers" of the Texas Hill Country described by Michael Conzen (2000) as those who read from the classics while behind the plow and conceived the utopian visions of the community for the other, lower-class members of the community to carry out. In most cases, survival of a community requires a constant recalibration of

ideals, as well as relationships beyond realm of the community. There often exists a tension, therefore, between a community's identity that is wrapped around certain ideals, such as separating from greater society and/or a set of practices and beliefs, and the relationships that must be cultivated with the larger society. Such a tension need not be thought of hypocrisy or contradiction, but rather as the result of complicated relationships that need to be negotiated. It is a process that often leads, and Mapiá is no exception, to a sense of loss of what was there before.

The long-term survival of a community depends upon its economic integration within the national economy (Janzen, 1981). For example, the In Search of Truth (ISOT) community, a neo-Pentecostal community in northeastern California, has adopted various livelihood strategies over its four-decade history (Siegler, 2002). First starting out as subsistence farmers while finding employment in the forest service and on local ranches, their economic livelihood came to depend almost exclusively on providing care for foster children. From the late 1970s to 1992, they operated a Group Home in relationship with the state of California, which was desperate for dealing with troubled youths close to going to juvenile prison (ibid). While this operation provided greater financial security, it demanded a separation of their work and religious lives and simultaneously opened them up to greater scrutiny and exposure to the larger society. The Shakers in the 19th century became prominent furniture makers (Brewer, 1986). The Oneida community were initially failures at farming, but later became a steel-trap manufacturer and when they dissolved as a community they maintained a silverware business that still operates today (Kanter, 1972).

This question of livelihood takes on an added dimension when considering the social and geographic context of Mapiá. The Amazon has long been a contested region even in terms of the extent to which it can sustain populations (Heckenberger, 2005; Meggers, 1971). Mapiá, as I will attempt to show, finds itself at a crossroad, with a suite of livelihood strategies from agroforestry to eco-tourism at the beginning stages of development. Their original sources of small-scale agriculture and rubber tapping having been eliminated by the 1990s, they currently survive on a kind of spiritual tourism and donations from their European and North American brethren.

From this brief sketch of intentional communities, there are two things that are most important to glean: firstly, communities are *responses*, and secondly, that communities are *processes*. Following from that, they are just not sites, but situations of relationships. In what follows, I trace the creation of Céu do Mapiá in response to the social crisis in which it was embedded, namely the land invasions of Acre in the 1970s and 1980s, its attempts to construct a new world of rearticulated social and ecological relations, and the events that have entangled it further into the mechanisms of the State and other outside actors.

The crisis

The year 1971 was pivotal for two reasons. It was the year Irineu Serra died and it also marked the arrival of the *Paulistas*, the ranchers from the south of Brazil who were spurred by government incentives to colonize the Amazon (Hecht & Cockburn, 1989; Schmink & Wood, 1992). Under the directives of governor Wanderley Dantas (1971-1974), Acre saw a huge influx of foreigners and capital, setting off a chain of land grabs,

violence, and social upheaval. Dantas invited ranchers to come to Acre to produce cattle with the opportunity (never fully realized) to export via the Pacific (Bakx, 1988). During his term, over five million hectares of land changed hands, roughly one third of the surface area of the state (ibid). The majority of these exchanges involved absentee rubber camp owners--remnants of the old rubber economy--and southern investors (ibid). The process often ignored the fact that many of the old rubber tappers still inhabited the land, participating in a diverse array of economic activities, from Brazil nut gathering to small-scale agriculture, since the collapse of the rubber market a few decades prior. This thereby set up a conflict over the land, with ranchers increasingly taking to evicting the tenants, by force if necessary, and then clearing the land in order to put cattle on it. INCRA, the Brazilian federal agency in charge of mediating land conflicts and issuing titles, was resource poor and unable to offer proper oversight in the process of land speculation.

As Bakx points out, this left two choices for the rural population: “(1) to abandon their land and migrate either to the urban centres or to rural areas not yet reached by the “ranching” front, and (2) to counter the activities of the ranchers despite the impressive array of forces against them” (Bakx, 1988, p. 154). A good portion chose the former option, as 10,000 migrants crossed the border over into Bolivia and over 20,000 moved into the capital city of Rio Branco (ibid). Those that chose to fight the ranchers unionized and formed an alliance with the Catholic Church’s Pastoral Land Commission. The nascent movement eventually became the celebrated environmental/labor movement led by Chico Mendes (Keck, 1995). Amidst this background of social turmoil, violence,

and government ineffectiveness, a third kind of response emerged, that of escape and starting over; a creation of a new system that Céu do Mapiá would attempt to embody.

By that time Colonia 5000 had grown extensively, attracting members of various segments of society: ex-rubber tappers and various migrants due to the military dictatorship's Amazon colonization schemes (Almeida, 1992), liberal professionals, and hippy travelers (Abreu, 1990). Many were seeking cures for mental and bodily illness or perhaps comfort and orientation during trying times. The environmental destruction resulting from such rapid deforestation and pasturing was vast, with smoke often filling the sky and pests adversely affecting agriculture (Macrae, 1992). The evisceration of the rural economy resulted in the influx of migrants to Rio Branco, a trend seen across Amazonia (see: Browder & Godfrey, 1997), and the community of Colonia 5000 served as kind of a refuge, much as Alto Santo had during the turmoil of the 1940s.

Padrinho Sebastião however began to feel the pressure of the times and started to talk of moving the community far away from the city, back into the rainforest where they would be freer to build the bonds of the community and carry out the doctrine of the rainforest. He claimed to have received a message from the "astral plane" instructing him to move the community:

I'm going to move from here because I'm tired from so much fighting and the fields are so poorly divided and planting does not yield. The earth is hard and there's no money for a tractor to turn the soil and living conditions keep getting more difficult and the price of things keeps rising. It won't do for me anymore. I'm going to try in the *seringa*, it's already in the forest, it's set there, but by trying to watch over it, it'll provide what to eat. Here won't work anymore" (Fróes, 1988, p. 61, translation mine)

Other factors likely played a part as well. Besides the aforementioned social turmoil, the community had suffered a couple of raids at the hands of the police because of the community's marijuana cultivation, which the community had adopted in 1970s as a result of the contact with hippy backpackers (Abreu, 1990). As a newspaper report put it at the time: "they are fleeing from devastation, from pollution, from civilization. In the new colony, he and his followers will return to planting and harvesting together in the system of *mutirão*, leaving behind money, as well as praise and competition" (Martins, 1983).

The first site they attempted to carry out this plan was in *Rio do Ouro* (River of Gold) in the early 1980s. It was an old rubber camp set aside for them by INCRA, Brazil's agency for land reform and colonization. It folded after a few years due to monetary problems as well as the fact that a southern landowner turned up claiming he was the original owner of the property. Sebastião claimed it was not the right place to build the "New Jerusalem" anyway, and the group was relocated to another tract of land in the state of Amazonas, right off the Purus River.

Settling in Céu do Mapiá: 'New Life, New World, New System, New People'

The move into the rainforest is often referred to by *daimistas* as the "*chamado da floresta*," or "call from the forest. One woman who was a part of the original founding group put it this way: "[We were called] to build a place in the middle of the forest where money had not yet bought the land, where it was still holy and purified, where the blood of men had not been spilled, for us to build a church for the Forest Queen." Another community leader said "Padrinho Sebastião received a vision that he ought to go out from

the city and seek to live in the forest, where he could feel more deeply the sacrament, that is the *daime*, and the doctrine. It was living like this, inside the forest... New world, new system, new life, where man could really live the doctrine of the *daime* in their daily life.” Padrinho Alfredo, son of the founder, Sebastião, referred this attempt as “um grande estudo,” or a great study/experiment. The experiment was whether or not a life of dignity in the rainforest was possible, if it were possible to live in the rainforest as a community.

In January of 1983, Padrinho Sebastião and his cohort built their own canoes and set out down the Purus River. They had no motors, so it was paddling by hand for four days before turning into the *igarapé Mapiá* (a slow-moving stream) and going upstream for three more days. When they came to a juncture where the stream met another branch, Sebastião decided that this was the spot. The place was actually an old *seringal* abandoned decades earlier, with faint remnants of rubber trails still remaining. Far away from the *varzea*, or floodplain, of the Purus River, and in *terra firme*, they had to clear away secondary growth that had come in following the abandonment of the old rubber camp.

The area was deemed somewhat poor in resources and some of the men felt it best to continue searching. Padrinho Sebastião felt determined to stay (“*Céu do Mapiá 20 anos*,” 2002). Laid up with an injured foot he reportedly said, “I’m going to stay. The rest of you can go. Except my son (Alfredo), he needs to stay and take care of me” (Mortimer, 2000). Supplied with only sacks of manioc flour, sugar, and rice, they began hacking their way into the forest with machetes, setting up makeshift shelter on the banks

of the stream and started hunting, fishing, and gathering fruits. It was a life of extreme difficulty, of suffering due to harsh living conditions, malnutrition, and malaria. It seems nearly everyone had a bout of malaria at some point. Mapienses (residents of Mapiá) often speak with pride and nostalgia of this time, whether they were present for it or not, when everything functioned collectively and the communal bonds were high as the original members there were united in hardship and shared vision.

A group of men dubbed the *Grupo de Trabalho Pesado*, or ‘Heavy Work Group,’ would take on the most demanding tasks, such as cutting down the trees needed to build shelter and clearing land to plant crops. Within a few months, they had built one big house that slept 60 people. Fields of corn, rice, and beans were planted, and when they came to be harvested, Sebastião curbed the practice of hunting.



Figure 6: Old newspaper photo of Padrinho Sebastião, his son Alfredo, and other leaders Alex Polari and Mário, relaxing on a felled tree in Céu do Mapiá. Source: *Jornal do Brasil*, 3/23/1986

As was their plan, the primary source of income for the community was rubber tapping. They cut *estradas* through the forest and collected the rubber collectively. They were able to collect 1.5 to two tons a month, which was taken to Boca do Acre, the nearest urban settlement, where it was sold. With the money from the sale, members of the community made purchases on behalf of the whole community- sugar, oil, soap, diesel fuel, shampoo (“*Céu do Mapiá 20 anos*”). As such, money did not circulate through the community. So, technically the community was not completely self-sufficient, it still had linkages to the outside economy. But the fact that currency was not used within the community and everything was shared collectively is the basis for describing the community’s system, as some members have, as “primitive communism” (Bellos, 2012), or anarchism.

The days of Mapiá during those first few years are often described in idyllic terms. Here is a passage from Alex Polari, a present-day leader of the community and its chief chronicler:

Towards the end of the afternoon arrived the pioneers. Some came from the roçados, others from the riverbanks and sawmills, others carried bales of straw for roofing. The hunters arrived with quarters from a tapir and the fishermen with big catches. As the manioc had not had time to grow, Padrinho Sebastião had allowed hunting, as it was a matter of survival.

The movement in the big house quickened, as almost everyone slept there. Around six o'clock, some women began cleaning, sweeping up the floor, pushing the hammocks to the wall, and as if by magic, the hut turned into a church: on the table was a candle and an embroidered cloth, and flowers around the cross, creating an prayerful environment. (A. P. D. Alverga, 1999, p. 63)

In 1986, a newspaper reporter from a major Brazilian daily arrived in Mapiá to do a story. “What is life like in Heaven?” (Sant’Anna, 1986) he asks rhetorically. Here in Mapiá, he

goes on to report, there was no private property, marriages were mostly common law ones, no alcohol was consumed, and everyone was working hard to build a life in this tract of land in the Brazilian rainforest. It was a place where “caboclos” and other “fugitives from civilization” had come to live together (ibid).

The article is fascinating because it provides a contemporaneous representation of Mapiá from the outside, one that generally reinforces the idea of the community as a kind of idyllic jungle utopia. However, the very existence of the article itself is indicative of something else. After only a few years of existence, Céu do Mapiá was becoming increasingly less isolated from the outside world. By the mid-1980s, there were at least half a dozen satellite churches clustered mostly in southern and southeastern Brazil (Macrae, 1992, p. 78-9). The movement began attracting media attention on a national scale, with even a delegation of television actors visiting Mapiá in 1985 (*Céu do Mapiá 20 anos*). Through various mechanisms, from drug enforcement agencies, the media, land management agencies, and NGOs, Mapiá became further integrated, entangled, and ultimately dependent on the relationships it had with the outside world, thereby altering its original utopian vision.

Entanglements with the Outside

In July of 1986, Céu do Mapiá received a delegation from CONFEN (the Brazilian Federal Council of Narcotics), which was sent to investigate ayahuasca usage in a variety of its communal and ritualistic settings. The previous year, the Brazilian government had put ayahuasca on its list of controlled substances, stemming from pressure from the political right and some alleged incidents involving its use (Macrae,

1992). A petition from União do Vegetal (“Plant Union”), another of the Brazilian Ayahuasca Churches, protesting the decision led to the creation of an ad-hoc committee of anthropologists, psychiatrists, and doctors that was sent to churches in Rio de Janeiro as well as all throughout the state of Acre. By the time they arrived in Mapiá, they had already visited the Céu do Mar community in Rio de Janeiro and Alto Santo on the outskirts of Rio Branco.

According to Alex Polari’s account, the delegation arrived when the community was undertaking the *feitio*, which is the ritualized creation process of making *Santo Daime*. Traditionally, men go deep into the forest to collect the vine, *jagube*, and bring back bushels on their back, where back in the village they pound the vine until it is a pulpy mess. Meanwhile, the women pick the leaf, *chacrona*, from the twigs. *Daime* is continuously drunk throughout the ritual, which lasts off and on for days, as the leaf and vine are eventually boiled together in union with the final product being the *Daime*, the thick, viscous liquid that goes down bitterly (Dawson, 2007).

It was not an accident that the community timed performing the *feitio* ritual in conjunction with the presence of the delegation: “It was very important for the Feitio to be happening in the presence of all the researchers in order to make a strong case for the legitimacy and legality of the ritual drink, which some members of the health department suspected to be a potent and dangerous hallucinogen” (A. P. D. Alverga, 1999, p. 144). At stake was the very legitimacy of the community, and the Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions as a whole, in the face of state power threatening to criminalize their actions.

By placing their most elaborate ritual on display, the community was attempting to convince the commission of the validity and power of their practices.

Such a moment in this case was refracted and interpreted through the religious faith of the community. Again, Alex Polari chronicles:

The members of the commission observed the work with a lot of attention, but they certainly could not perceive the real significance of many things they were seeing: the secret, spiritual treasure that Christ said was open to all who are peaceful and humble in their hearts. Those with these traits will always see, regardless of their form or name. If our visitors believed they would find something similar to cocaine production, even the little that they would understand was sufficient to destroy this suspicion. What is made in the Feitio is the pure and genuine alchemy of a sacrament (A.P.D. Alverga, 1999, p. 146)

Polari claims that the Confen commission left “very impressed with everything they had witnessed, felt, and learned. Once more, with God’s blessings, the authorities who visited us left as friends, both parties benefitting mutually from an intense time together” (p. 153). The end result backs up such a sentiment as the report released in 1987 concluded that ayahuasca usage in the ritual and communal context exemplified at Céu do Mapiá and other Santo Daime communities posed no threat to society and their belief systems and practices were completely congruent with Christian values (Macrae 1992). *Becoming (officially) the “Guardians of the Forest”*

In 1988, Alfredo Gregório de Mota, eldest son of Padrinho Sebastião and future successor, traveled to Brasília with the objective of obtaining some kind of land designation for Céu do Mapiá. In an interview with me, he stated that they wanted some kind of dispensation from the government, to be designated as a kind of land cooperative. The extractive reserve system had not been fully implemented at that time, but as the

rubber tappers union led by Chico Mendes was gaining momentum and other indigenous groups were uniting in the fight for land rights across the Amazon (see Hecht and Cockburn, 1989), the leaders of Mapiá saw an opportunity to improve their lot. Their reliance on rubber tapping had increasingly become untenable and they were sinking further and further into debt with the merchants in Boca do Acre. Their vision of a self-sustaining community was beginning to wear at the seams.

A rich benefactor by the name of Paolo Roberto arrived on the scene around this time. He was originally from São Paulo and a member of one of the Daimista churches there. He single-handedly paid off a large chunk of the community's debt and offered to help navigate the vagaries of the Brazilian government's land tenure and designation system, accompanying Padrinho Alfredo to Brasília. An exact account of what happened next is difficult to come by. However it appears that IBAMA, the Brazilian environmental agency, had designs on the land and were not in communication with the community or INCRA, the land colonization agency. While Alfredo was in communication with various officials in Brasília, IBAMA demarcated a large swath of land, of which Céu do Mapiá was part, as a National Forest, or FLONA.

This was not exactly what the community had in mind, because it placed harsher restrictions on land use, in terms of taking down trees and raising cattle, than the community would have wanted. However, there were certain benefits as the designation fit in with the community's burgeoning self-image of being "Guardians of the Forest." As Alfredo said to me: "What went right was that spiritually we always had a lot of respect for nature, always seeking how to disturb the least amount possible to survive.

But the community was already big, we had animals, cattle, and we had some intention to increase that, but that wasn't possible within this new designation. Living in the forest [we had] to preserve and seek other alternatives for life, like artisan crafts, extrativism and developing relationships with the outside.” It was these relationships with the outside that would be crucial later on in order for Mapiá to survive.

In March of 1989, over 250,000 hectares of forest surrounding Céu do Mapiá was officially christened as National Forest. A newspaper from Rio Branco reported on the event, describing a delegation from IBAMA arrived in Mapiá via helicopter to celebrate the occasion (Luis, 1989). Ministry officials and community leaders were quoted as stating that this designation is a step in the community's fight for “a life with dignity and harmony with the forest” (ibid). Steps were outlined in developing the extractive economy of the reserve, rubber and brazil nuts, in particular, and promises were made to provide schools and telecommunication capabilities.

The article also mentioned the surge in visitors and foreigners present in Mapiá. While foreigners had been a presence from the community's early days back at *Colonia Cinco Mil*, those initial connections were beginning to pay off. Those young backpackers from urban centers in Brazil the Southern Cone, and later Western Europe and North America, often brought back a little bit of *daime* with them to their home and started their own communities. The aforementioned Alex Polari, for example, was one of those young seekers who founded the church Céu do Mar in Rio de Janeiro. These better-connected urbanites soon became integral in helping Mapiá make ends meet but also in fashioning Mapiá's image as an ecologically-friendly community.

A Spaniard connected to Engineers Without Borders got solar panels installed in the homes of 35 families (“*Céu do Mapiá 20 anos*”). A North American NGO, Healing Force of the Forest got projects under way such as a forest medicine center, a health clinic, and a general kitchen that served communal meals on collective work days. Such projects were just the beginning of such associations that contributed to Mapiá’s livelihood, culminating with the World Wildlife Fund’s entrance into the community in the mid 2000s. As for being a FLONA, it may have given the community some social cachet and capital, but it also restricted their activities. As one informant told me, “before we could do what we wanted, but now the law is on top of us.” Still today, a representative from IBAMA periodically comes by to make sure they are fulfilling their obligations.

Both of these instances exhibit Céu do Mapiá entering into increasingly entangled relationships with the State. I do not mean to suggest that the social movement behind Céu do Mapiá was explicitly anti-State, or even anti-Establishment in the manner of some the radical anarchist communities in 19th century or the hippie communes of the 1960s. In fact, the Santo Daime movement has often gone to pains to show that they are not “anti-Brazil” (see: Meyer, 2003), and have actively cultivated relationships with political elites (as seen in the previous chapter). The designation of Mapiá as part of a National Forest was at least in part initiated by its own leadership. Also, the movement’s expansion that was underway simultaneously with the implementation of the Mapiá project betrays that the movement was not purely about separation from larger society. Nonetheless, the community founded itself with a certain set of ideals- being able to

practice their religion freely and in greater communion with its “source” of the rainforest, to live communarily and self-sufficiently, and to operate outside the larger economy, to the extent that it was possible. These ideals, particularly self-sufficiency, became increasingly untenable as time wore on. The CONFEN commission may not have had an adverse impact on the community, or the movement at large, and the designation as a FLONA brought a mixture of benefits and costs. However, both were harbingers of things to come as Mapiá became increasingly entangled and subsequently dependent on the outside world for its survival and identity.

The Turning Point of the 1990s and the Limbo of Modernity

Padrinho Sebastião died in January of 1990 after many years of suffering from liver problems and his son, Alfredo, took over. The following decade saw a great many changes in the face of the community. The community had accumulated debts in Boca do Acre, as their rubber production was not matching the increasing needs of their community. The price of rubber dropped dramatically, no longer making it a viable economic activity. In the early 1990s, the Brazilian government’s cessation of the rubber subsidy made rubber collection in the community completely nonviable. The soil also was not of good enough quality to sustain agricultural production. As Polari (1999) puts it: “questions concerning the communities were very present in my mind. It was a hard struggle to affirm a material base for the Daime centers and the communities that were growing in Brazil and beyond” (p. 204).

The problems Mapiá faced in terms of livelihood and identity were widespread throughout western Amazonia. The celebrated Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve was put

in place in 1990 only to see the price of rubber drop dramatically and the federal government to end the tax incentives and other subsidies previously in place to protect the rubber industry (Vadjunec, Schmink, & Gomes, 2011). Rubber tappers residing in the reserve were therefore forced to turn to alternatives, other extractive practices such as brazil nut harvesting, but also cattle ranching, in order to survive (ibid). Throughout the 1990s, governments at local, state, and federal levels did little to cushion the transition.

Mapiá came to rely more heavily upon its network that had formed around it over the course of the 1980s and into the 1990s. The contours of such a network are the subject of the next chapter, but for now suffice to say that the Santo Daime had made significant inroads into urban centers in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, in particular, as well as Western Europe, North America and Japan. As the central node and mother church of this network, Céu do Mapiá came to depend upon the traffic generated this network. The padrinhos of the Church traveled the world as spiritual leaders guiding the nascent communities and soliciting donations that were sent back to Mapiá (Labate et al., 2010). Perhaps more important were the semiannual festivals held every December and June where the population of the community would swell to close to double its normal size as faithful adherents and curious seekers would arrive to participate. The festivals revolve around the Catholic holidays leading up to Christmas and New Year's in December and Saints Antonio, John , and Peter in June. Not only have they become the central pillars of liturgical life for the community, but their main source of income. Without the buttressing from Daime communities in the rich world, from sending visitors, plying income to the community, as well as development projects, such as the

various NGOS that installed solar panels in families' homes, it is possible Céu do Mapiá would not have survived. However, the influx of people, ideas, and goods wrought rapid change upon the community.

People arriving from outside brought money with them. Part of the appeal of visiting Mapiá, or even becoming a permanent resident, was the fact that it operated, as little as possible, outside the cash economy, and in general was envisioned as a counter or antidote to modern, urban living (Schmidt, 2007). It is ironic then, perhaps bitterly so, that those urbanites who came to Mapiá brought with them the very things they were seeking to avoid, thereby altering the cultural landscape of the community. As one longtime resident put it: "Many cultures arrived... money came, and television came, and everything that came into the community created a mixture among the people, and now most people get their food from the *rua*.¹²" The arrival of newcomers had both a material impact as well as an effect on the values and identity of the community.

Another woman, who has lived in Mapiá for about ten years, broke it down like this:

The Mapiense population is a very heterogeneous population. We have one part, though I don't like the term, *caboclo*, which are the people from here. And a part of the population of people who come from the outside. Many of them also came with *o Padrinho*. From São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, other countries... Some of them have lived here over 20 years. .. Those that came from outside, came fleeing the city, fleeing a system they no longer believed in, that *o Padrinho* also did not want. And many of these *caboclos* never saw this system. They never had the opportunity to know it. So, they don't know that it's bad. Many think that it's good. Many don't have the ability to leave here. So, what happens? One brings here what the other would like to have. Television came and now the majority of households here have television, and many are really connected (*ligado*) to it.

¹² *Rua*: literally means "street," but in this case means buying foodstuffs from Boca do Acre

Indeed, television is often a major sticking point here. First introduced in 1998 for the World Cup, after much deliberation, it is a great source of debate within the community. During my stay in the community, I participated in a kind of community-building workshop in which television was brought up frequently as an issue. While the idea of removing television from the community remains untenable, it nonetheless is often discussed as something to be mitigated or limited in some manner. One of my informants lamented to me that she is worried that the young people in the community, a second generation born and raised in the village, are losing their *firmeza* or commitment, in part due to the influence of the images they see on television and the frustration they felt in their lack of opportunities.

Kanter claims that the biggest challenge facing intentional communities is commitment in the face of external temptations. Following Tönnies, Kanter argues that community, or *gemeinschaft*, is more totalizing than society (Kanter 1973). Though conceived as a free choice made by the members, rather than an imposition, it is a choice that restricts subsequent choices. As communities move past their first generation, issues arise in maintaining commitment and enthusiasm. Brewer (1986) writes of how the second and third generation Shaker children became increasingly unwilling to submit to the demands of living in the Shaker villages. However, the problem in Shaker villages was the result of prosperity from their success as furniture makers, while many of Mapiá's problems stem from struggles in finding ways of earning a living in this village that had once made a choice to check out, as best it could, from the economic order, only to find itself completely in a cash economy and lacking the means to thrive within it.

One informant told me that since the year 2000, Mapiá has undergone a “radical change,” that has seen it grow increasingly dependent upon Boca do Acre, the local urban center of about 40,000 people for the majority of their supplies and foodstuffs. “Before,” he says, “we didn’t have this concern about paying and having to work in order to be able to pay. And now, it changed, changed, changed, so quickly. A radical change that we start imagining where it is going to go. I start imagining where it’s going to go.”

In February of 2003, the social and environmental wing of the Mapiá organization, IDA, invited the World Wildlife Federation of Brasil to help them implement a community management program. The idea behind which was to greater utilize the community’s resources, cultural and ecological, to improve the lives of their inhabitants. Over the course of the next few years, WWF worked in conjunction with other groups, particularly the CTA (the Amazonian Workers’ Association) in achieving this goal. This is significant because it represents a major shift in the ethos of the community. Where once there an ethos of self-sufficiency, with a concomitant romance of living off of manioc and rice in the jungle where everyone was infested with malaria and there was a notion of living all together for a common purpose, there was now an emphasis on the language of sustainable development and agro-forestry.

All this is not to say that Céu do Mapiá is inevitably heading into a decline or that their original vision of themselves has been irrevocably corrupted. Rather, as all such ventures do, the community is going through a period of flux and change, the result of which is not clear. But at the moment, there is a palpable level of anxiety and

precariousness. As one community member told me: “I know that now we are building a [new] church, but I don’t see any objective in the other sector of the day to day.”

The Trajectory of Céu do Mapiá

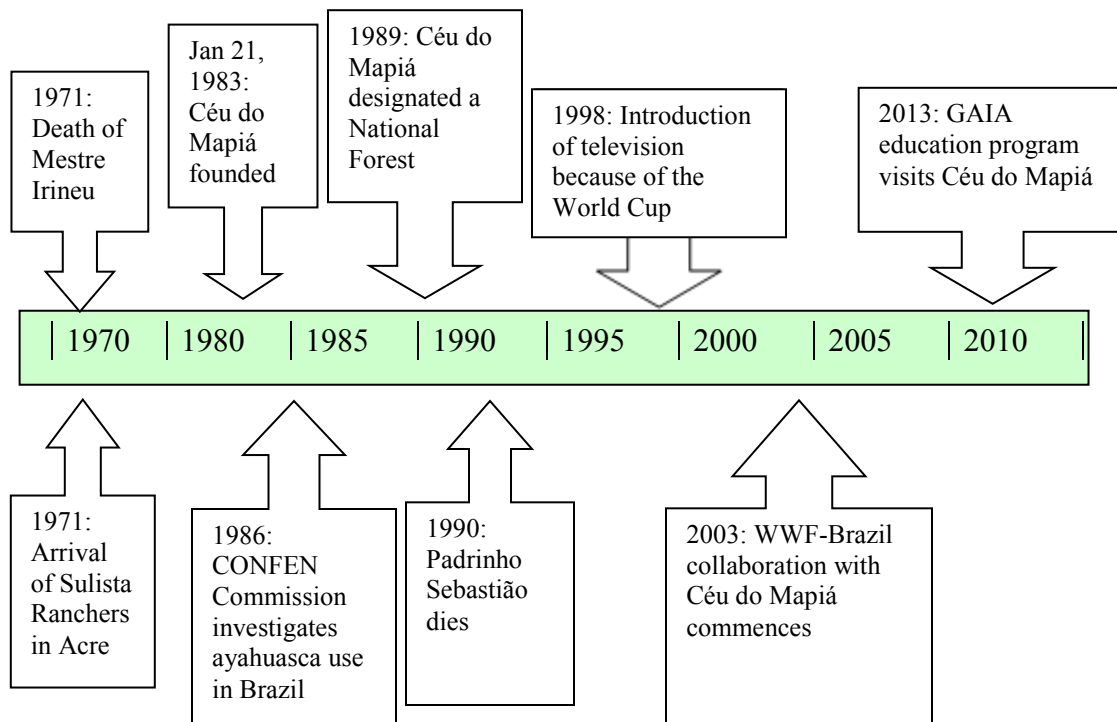


Figure 7: Timeline of key events in Mapiá

The community then, seems to find itself at something of an impasse, and based on the conversations I had, it is unclear what there is to be done about it. At heart, there seems to be a conflict in the articulation of the community’s vision. This is true, not just in terms of staying true to Padrinho Sebastião’s original vision, but also in terms of how to move forward from the current predicament of now having to live within a cash

economy in a community that originally displaced itself, both spatially and philosophically, from such a system.

For some, the solution lies in what is known as agroforestry (Padoch, Inuma, Jong, & Unruh, 1985; Zarin, Alavalapati, Putz, & Schmink, 2004), a system in which in which cultivated plants and animals are grown and raised alongside wild-growing trees and other plant life. It is said such a system can help to curb deforestation as well as rehabilitate degraded areas as well as help mitigate economic risk as practitioners can potentially diversify their sources of income. A few such projects are underway in Mapiá, in the settlements of Cachoeira and Fazenda São Sebastião, but according to a 2005 study carried out, it makes up only 17 hectares, a miniscule amount (Brandão, 2005). It is unlikely that number has gone up significantly over the last eight years.

Many of the Mapienses I spoke to talked about reinvigorating the *roçado*, which is a land tenure and swidden-style agricultural system in which a community's territory is collectively owned, but those who put the labor into clearing the land into *roças*, or cultivated patches, are the provisional owners of those particular plots until they need to go fallow (Lima, 2004). It is a widespread system throughout Amazonia, with a handful of variations (ibid). Its practice hearkens back to the genesis of the group: the agricultural colonies outside of Rio Branco during Raimundo Serra's time as well as Colonia 5000, but especially the early days of the community itself when Padrinho Sebastião would send a couple of men around every morning at seven a.m. to wake everyone up to begin the workday. The *roçado* is tied, both in Santo Daime communities (Goulart, 2002) and in Amazonia at large (see Lima, 2004), to a practice of working

communally known as *mutirão*. *Mutirão* is still in practice in Mapiá on Mondays, with most of the labor energy currently being directed towards building the new church, but its prominence has been diminished markedly since the time when Sebastião was still alive. Going back to it then, is not just about finding the proper means to subsist, but also tightening the communal bonds that have seemed to have slipped somewhat in recent years. One woman told me she continues doing her ‘*roçadinho*’ every year in order to give an example and because she thinks it is valuable to “*resgatar a cultura caboclinho*,” or “reclaim the caboclo culture.”

“The reason so few people practice roçado in Mapiá these days is because it does not compensate,” Bartolomeu told me. He is a Daimista, originally from Brasília, who lives in Boca do Acre, and organizes a variety of different development projects in the region based on extractivism, including cacao and copaíba palm oil. “It’s hard work, and for the most part people find it easier to buy their food from the Boca do Acre.” Again, this seems to point to the *roçado* being more of a symbolic gesture rather than a viable means for subsistence, at least in the context of Céu do Mapiá.

However, there are other constraints as well. According to the agreement the village association signed with the environmental department, IBAMA, each household is able to clear three *tarefas* (a plot of 50 square meters) annually, which amounts to 150 meters squared per family. Depending on the household, this generally is not enough space to grow a sufficient amount of crops to live on (though it could certainly make an impact). IBAMA has taken to enforcing these regulations fairly tightly, with a couple of residents telling me that the “law is on top of us.”

As previously discussed, Mapiá was able to grow a substantial amount of beans, rice, manioc, and corn in order to feed itself for the first seven or eight years of existence. However, as they are situated in *terra firme*, the higher ground that does not flood in the rainy season, thereby having a nutrient-poor soil, they were unable to maintain their production as the village population grew. The soil remains poor today, but according to Pedro Brandão (2005), the alluvial soils in the lower *igarapé Mapiá*, where it flows into the Purus River are quite rich and would be able to sustain agriculture. This is the site of the Fazenda São Sebastião, a project started in the early 1990s by a few members associated with the Daime community in Mapiá. Its land sits just outside the boundaries of the National Forest delimited by IBAMA, and is not subject to its regulations. I was not able to visit the site during my time, and at the time of writing I have not been able to get to the bottom of what exactly is going on there. I was able to speak to Brandão, who is also a Daimista, but part of a community in the state of Minas Gerais, while in Mapiá, as he was there at the tail end of the June festivals and he told me that the project was “mature,” and “ready to implement,” but many other residents I spoke to had little beyond a vague notion as to what was going on there.

Some of this could possibly be chalked up to cultural difference between those native to Amazonia and those from further afield, either southern Brazil or Europe. Brandão comes from the southeast of Brazil, Bartholomeu comes from Brasília; they are trained in forest management and economics, respectively, and they come to the situation of livelihood for Mapiá’s residents with those frames of reference in mind. On the other hand, there is a certain pride associated with being caboclo. One community resident

lamented “the main deforester is the *sulista* (“southerners,” but presumably referring mainly to ranchers), not us.” Another resident stated: “he who takes care of the forest is the one that lives within it and doesn’t destroy it, not those that studied ‘there’ and come ‘here,’” revealing a bias against those university-trained experts coming from outside.

One fact that needs to be considered here is that because most of the people involved here, as both ‘insiders’/residents and ‘outsiders’/visitors, are all *daimistas*, the “geographies of care” (Lawson, 2007) are calibrated uniquely. In a sense they are all part of one movement, and based on my observations, I would say that the sentiments of earnest gratitude and desire for collaboration outweighs those of resentment and social division. Summing up the situation, the issues of subsistence and income in the community and their change over time from one that was mostly self-sufficient in terms of food production and reliant on rubber tapping, to one that is dependent upon a tourist economy and purchasing food from an outside market, is due to a range of factors, such as a collapsed rubber economy and the changing dynamics of the community’s makeup.

Conclusion

In his discussion of *comunitas* and the development of a structure that allowed the Franciscan Order to endure, thereby altering its initial egalitarian and spontaneous spirit that marks the liminal state of existential *comunitas*, Victor Turner comments that:

One might think this is quite unequivocal, but any developing structure generates problems of organization and values that provoke redefinition of central concepts. This often seems like temporizing and hypocrisy, or loss of faith, but it is really no more than a reasoned response to an alteration in the scale and complexity of social relations, and with these, a change in the location of the group in the social field it occupies, with concomitant changes in its major goals and means of attaining them (Turner, 1969, p. 147).

Such a take on cultural change fits within Turner's overall framework in which anti-structural forces, movements, and/or people push the boundaries of a society's structures. And, once the boundaries have been extended that movement is successful in various degrees, those involved within find themselves back within similar institutional mechanisms that existed previously. After a burst of radical energy, change comes incrementally or not at all. By stating that alterations in a movement's ethos are "no more than reasoned responses," Turner is warning against a kind of nostalgia or tendency to mourn or resent. This is perhaps easier said than done. As a handful of communities members expressed to me, many people have *saudades*, or longing, for the time in which Padrinho Sebastião was running things. "This is not what Padrinho Sebastião wanted," one informant expressed to me.

However, as I hope I made clear, the "scale and complexity of social relations" within and beyond the community has altered considerably over the last 30 years, as well as the "means and goals." Responding to the social crisis and upheaval wrought by the invasion of ranchers, which led to land dispossession of native peoples, deforestation, and increased urbanization, Sebastião and his followers attempted to carve out a new life in the rainforest. They built a community based around a set of ideals of separation from society, a self-sufficient livelihood derived from the rainforest that was coupled with a reference and worship of the rainforest, as well as a disconnection from the materialism of urban society. As time wore on, such ideals became harder to maintain as the community attracted the attention of disaffected urbanites—many of whom became adepts of the religion, the media, the state, and eventually sustainable development-

mindful NGOs. While such changes and incursions caused a recalibration of some of the ideals, i.e. separation and self-sufficiency, other ideals—and identities—emerged as well. Namely, by being designated as part of a national forest, the community was able to cultivate an ecologically-friendly image of themselves as being “Guardians of the Forest.” Also, the network of Santo Daime churches that extended nationally and internationally from Céu do Mapiá proved to be crucial to the community’s survival. Daimistas from around the world donate money and goods, travel to Mapiá on a kind of pilgrimage, and sometimes set up NGOs to aid in the community’s development; without which, it is questionable the community would have been able to survive.

The issues of livelihood and development in the Amazon are not unique to Céu do Mapiá (see: Moran, 1993; Zarin, Alavalapati, Putz, & Schmink, 2004). Also not unique is the relations, reliances, and alliances formed between Amazonian communities and movements, and outside actors. The rubber tappers movement led by Chico Mendes, which united *acriano* rubber tappers with international environmental groups, is a celebrated example. Various indigenous groups, such as the Kayapó, exhibit great savvy in utilizing international networks in pursuing their own agendas (Dove, 2006). In the state of Acre, these networks, as well as the discourses that undergird them, have a distinctive edge to them, as the state is the site of policy initiatives under the “Forest Government” that promotes sustainable forest management and supporting the livelihoods of traditional peoples (Kainer et al., 2003; Vadjunec, Schmink, & Gomes, 2011). Santo Daime and other ayahuasca-using groups feed into this model by adopting a kind of ‘environmentalese’ (Slater, 2002) and participating in various extension projects

throughout the region. Pedro Brandão and Bartholomeu, as well as the project initiated by the WWF-Brasil exemplify this kind of network. However, in the case of Santo Daime and Céu do Mapiá, this is just one part of this network that has an international reach and touches on the subjects of environmentalism, indigeneity, and the international drug trade. It is to the contours of this network that the next chapter will turn.

Chapter Four: Plants Routes and Global Shamans

Introduction

If we recall chapter one, when Irineu Serra received his divine mission from the Queen of the Forest, it was accompanied with a vision of a cross circumnavigating the globe and a directive to “indoctrinate the world.” By the time Serra died in 1971, the Santo Daime church had remained a steadfastly local phenomenon, existing in and around the city of Rio Branco. It was not until Sebastião’s then-breakaway community of Colonia 5000 that marked the beginning of the Daime’s expansion into Brazilian urban centers and later Europe and North America. In something of a paradox, the push into the rainforest discussed in the previous chapter was accompanied simultaneously by an equally strong push into urban centers, marking the transition of the Santo Daime religion from a “rural and peasant religious repertoire to one that is now predominantly middle-class and urban in nature” (Dawson, 2007, p. 92). One community leader described to me these twin movements of expansion and separation as “two hands” that complement one another.

It is this notion of expansion complementing the separation that serves as the jumping off point for this chapter. If the previous chapter dealt with process in which Céu do Mapiá made, and struggled to maintain, itself separate economically and socially, this chapter deals with the expansion of the Santo Daime doctrine, the ways in which Céu do Mapiá and its inhabitants push outward into the world. A term I employ to help understand the connections Céu do Mapiá makes with the world is *extensibility* (Adams, 2005). Employed by Paul Adams in his work on personal extensibility in virtual space, it

was also taken up by Chris Gaffney (2006) in his analysis of South American football stadiums. I take it up here to mean the distanced relationships and flows that help define the makeup of sites of places.

While the previous chapter dealt with Mapiá as a fixed site and examined the various interventions the community incurred over the past three decades, the present chapter finds the members of Mapiá, the Doctrine of Santo Daime, and the *Daime* itself, intervening in an array of platforms from discourses of environmentalism, neo-shamanism and the global religious arena, to the international politics of the illicit drug trade and the debate playing out in various countries on the use of drugs in religious contexts. Along the way, we find Mapiá and its residents far from being isolated but fully enmeshed in social and political life on a global stage, echoing Doreen Massey's (1993) formulation that 'place' can be thought of as a "particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus" (p. 66). If the image of expansion and separation merely being two complementary principles is too pat for our liking, we can at least recognize that as a real-world set of phenomena, it is intrinsically messy, calling for what John Law (1994) calls a "modest" social science that is "relational, with no privileged places, no dualisms and no a priori reductions" (p. 13).

Like the *jagube* vine that makes up one half of the ayahuasca concoction, that corkscrews and wends itself around the trunk and branches of a thick tree or runs along the ground, Santo Daime as a social process is entangled in a whole array of relationships and discourses. As such, this chapter is essentially about two things in relation to Santo Daime: movement and relationships. I divide the movement, or perhaps better said as

diffusion, into three parts: there is the movement of a) people, b) ideas and c) things, in particular, the *daime* itself. As these three things wind through the world in a gyroscopic pattern, they tighten a web between Mapiá in its isolated site and the rest of the world.

The image/concept of the network has been a common motif for scholars studying ayahuasca. Bia Labate (2004) lays out a case for an “urban ayahuasca network,” which includes the allied Santo Daime churches as well as offshoots that incorporate an array of ideas and practices. The term is not only confined to describing the modern ayahuasca scene. Brabec de Mori (2011) posits a communicative network in which ayahuasca spread rapidly among indigenous peoples. He makes a tantalizing case that such a spread in post-Columbian times occurred via “Catholic missions and rainforest mestizos” (p. 27). Indigenous tribes, he claims, swept up in the migration movements associated with the rubber boom were exposed to a suite of cultural practices, including loan words connected to ayahuasca practices and the *iqaro* musical form, that were associated with ayahuasca. To accept his thesis does not mean that missionaries and colonists had a hand in the discovery and production of ayahuasca. Rather, it means that the communicative network established via missions, and later the rubber industry, facilitated the spread of ayahuasca in colonial times- the implication being that ayahuasca usage does not go back millennia to some primordial age, and is thus not purely ‘indigenous’ in the pre-Columbian sense of the word.

Luna, in a somewhat gentle rebuttal (in contrast to some other reactions Brabec de Mori has received), points to the fact that good archaeological evidence exists for other

psychotropic plant medicines such as San Pedro that suggests its use goes back thousands of years (Luna, 2011). This coupled with the existence of ancient trade routes between the Amazon and the Andes suggest that the ayahuasca phenomenon could indeed be quite old. In either case, the image of the network applies. As Saéz (2011) puts it: “indigenous ayahuasca organizes networks: networks of shamanic information, of commercial or martial relations, of images of the other, of psychoactives” (p. 143). There is not space to delve too deeply into the history of ayahuasca usage here, but it should be kept in mind moving forward that the contemporary iterations and expansions of ayahuasca use in general, and the growth of the Santo Daime church specifically, echo prior historical patterns of networking, movement, and communication.

This chapter, then, is an effort to ‘trace’ the pathways generated by the movement, emanating from Céu do Mapiá, of people, ideas and the *daime* itself (Latour, 2007). “Following the Daime,” is a phrase used by anthropologist Kristina Schmidt (2007) to describe the moral practice among *daimistas* in relation to their daily lives. However, I take up the term here to describe the movements of *daime* through the world. The chapter follows the following outline. First, I will describe the pathways emanating from Mapiá, starting with the motorboat journey to the nearest settlement, Boca do Acre, which takes place for some Mapiense or visitor nearly every day. From there, I trace the movement of the people associated with the Santo Daime movement within the network they created, starting with centers opening in urban centers and later in Europe, North America, and Japan.

Once I have established the contours of the Santo Daime networks, I contextualize them within what I call “the Ayahuasca milieu,” which I borrow from Colin Campbell’s ‘cultic milieu’ (Kaplan & Löow, 2002) and Bron Taylor’s “environmental milieu” (Taylor, 2010). By milieu, I mean the diverse set of practices and discourses associated with ayahuasca use across the globe, from autochthonous use in the Amazon to shamanic workshops in California and Santo Daime works in Japan. As it has been pointed out, “the word *ayahuasca* evokes and gives meaning to diverse things, practices, ideas, and relations and constitutes a resource for the traversing of geographic, symbolic, and “spiritual” frontiers” (Groisman, 2009, p. 188). But beyond this, I also refer to the larger contexts in which these movements take place. They are multiple, but for this chapter I explore three: global and regional (i.e. southwestern Amazonia) environmental concern, the interest and appropriation of indigenous/Amazonian knowledge by various parties, and the global issue of drug trade and religious freedom. Having made this journey, I return to conclude back where we started from, in the village of Mapiá.

In sum, as Luis Luna (2011), a leading anthropologist on *vegetalismo* and other ayahuasca-related practices states: “*Ayahuasca* in the contemporary world is a complex phenomenon and it is here to stay. The genie is out of the lamp. He will not go back inside.” (p. 128). Also helpful here is the concept of “hybrid geographies” (Whatmore, 2002), that are “fluid, not flat, unsettling the coordinates of distance and proximity; local and global; inside and outside.” (p. 6) It is this last sentence that is of particular importance here, as I set out to argue not only for the fluidity of Céu do Mapiá, but also

to trace some of the streams that flow in and out of Mapiá, with the goal of “unsettling” the distant/proximate, local/global, inside/outside .

Despedida, or the Origins of the Santo Daime Network

In Céu do Mapiá, the early morning is usually a time of saying goodbye. Perhaps it is a daimista visiting from her home community in Amsterdam or Minas Gerais or Japan, or Padrinho Alfredo or one of the other community leaders setting out on a journey to a series of the satellite churches now scattered around the globe. Leaders often bring a contingent of musicians and song leaders, called a *cometiva*, in order to train these nascent communities. Or perhaps it is a villager needing to go to Boca do Acre or maybe even Rio Branco to take care of some business or to find some temporary job. In any case, the scene is similar. Up to half a dozen motorboats wait on the banks of the *igarapé* while people mill about in the treeless plaza, some lean on the posts of the storefronts, others sit on the top of the four-foot high cinderblock fence lining the eastern edge of the plaza. In groups of two, three, or four they talk. Those leaving are usually scrambling about, packs slung over one shoulder, buying some last minute bread from the bakery saying some final goodbyes and embraces. If it is a visitor, *Obrigado por tudo*, is often the refrain, “thanks for everything.” *Volte sempre*, is the response, “always return.”

The boats leave before the sun rises above the canopy of the trees, giving the travelers a few hours of shade before the grueling passage up the Rio Purus to Boca do Acre, the nearest urban settlement, about eight hours journey in total. Boca do Acre is an urban area that sprouted quickly to over 40,000 inhabitants. For the boatmen who navigate the shiny aluminum motor boats or the wooden canoes with outboard motors,

this is usually as far as they go. They hang out on the steps outside the Hotel Floresta or at the docks where the River Branco and the River Purus join, smoking and laughing, and perhaps taking advantage of the opportunity to buy beer, or cachaça, something prohibited back at Mapiá. Most will stay a few days, buy supplies in bulk for their families and others, and wait to have a few passengers to take back to Mapiá. Others will work temp jobs in construction or on a nearby cattle ranch before going back home. One man I interviewed had a job working as a campaign assistant for a local politician who also happened to be a daimista. For these men, as most of those who make this type of journey, Boca do Acre is the end point. Barring a rare trip to the capital city of Rio Branco, this urban outpost representing an escape from the community demands of Mapiá as well as a threatening, insecure environment. As another informant told me, “we have to go to Boca do Acre, but it’s not because we like it.” He went on to say that he and others often get stomach problems from the food there.



Figure 8: On the Purus River, heading towards Boca do Acre (photo by author)

But for others, Boca do Acre is just the beginning. Those on a kind of pilgrimage to Mapiá from abroad or Rio or São Paulo take a bus or a taxi to Rio Branco, passing on the way the expansive cattle pastures this corner of Amazonas State has developed, a flat horizon of yellow-green, with only the occasional Brazil nut tree spiking in the distance. From Rio Branco, they board a plane to Brasília, São Paulo, or Rio, and then perhaps from there, there is a flight to Europe, Japan or the United States. It is these journeys, ever increasing in its range and frequency that make up the pathways from which the religion of Santo Daime has spread on a global scale.

These paths began being cut back in the late 1970s and early 1980s when hippies and backpackers began passing through Sebastião's original community of Colonia 5000 on the outskirts of Rio Branco (Abreu, 1990; Groisman, 2009). The community had a privileged position on the so-called "ayahuasca trail," that loosely affiliated collection of shamanic centers in the upper Amazon, particularly Peru and western Brazil, that catered to western spiritual seekers (Dobkin de Rios, 2008; Groisman, 2009; Winkelman, 2005), many of whom inspired by countercultural icons like Allen Ginsburg (Burroughs & Ginsberg, 1963), Alan Watts (1962), and Terence McKenna (1991). The so-called trail incorporated sites that represented Inca power, such as Machu Picchu and Isla del Sol in Lake Titicaca. Relatively close by, Colonia 5000 became a part of this milieu. By that time, the region in general had developed some renown for its ayahuasca culture. While Santo Daime was not shamanic in the strictest sense (Dawson, 2007), it nevertheless attracted people from a broadly defined counterculture, whose practices were marked by an interest in psychedelics in the service of attaining spiritual enlightenment, an interest

in indigenous and/or eastern religious practices. While it seems the other lines associated with Santo Daime, such as Alto Santo and Barquinha, were not particularly tolerant of the outsiders, Sebastião welcomed them openly- according to the registry book, by 1980 people from over a dozen countries had signed it, designating who had taken Daime for the first time (Fróes, 1988). This led the community to increasingly expand its religious and symbolic repertoire, introducing concepts such as past lives and reincarnation (Macrae, 1992) Sebastião also began to let marijuana be smoked in tandem with the *daime* in rituals, much to the chagrin of the other Daime communities (ibid).

These traveler-seekers then became the conduit through which the Daime spread first to urban centers in Brazil and soon after into Western Europe. Loaded with a few liters of *daime* to take back home, they became the leaders for satellite communities, the first one, *Céu do Mar*, or “Heaven of the Sea,” opening in Rio de Janeiro in 1983. Much of this was informal, with the leaders each having a fair degree of latitude in how they carried out the ritual elements of the *daime* (Dawson, 2007). The remoteness of Mapiá made it a less than ideal place to act as a kind of central command center. Back in the 1980s, great effort was needed to maintain communication and establish links between the mother community of Mapiá and its satellites.

One prominent resident of the Mapiá related to me a story of how she was a member of one of the very first delegations to travel *en masse* to Mapiá together from Rio de Janeiro. Lúcio Mortimer, one of the aforementioned former backpackers who had risen to become one of Sebastião’s right hand men, was in charge of escorting the group of twenty city-dwelling daimistas on what was then a weeklong journey from Rio Branco

to Céu do Mapiá. There, they were instructed in the ways of Santo Daime in things like how to make Daime, how to sing the hymns, and other ritualistic and organizational elements. The hardship, and the kind of romance associated with it were detailed in chapter two, but one can imagine the potential for incongruence among the rural Amazonian people and these urbanites. Yet the two groups managed to forge deep bonds that translated into an expansive network of communities. The initial inroads were made in 1983 with the opening of *Céu do Mar*, or 'Heaven of the Sea,' in Rio de Janeiro, and the process continued with half a dozen other churches established by 1986, when ayahuasca was scheduled under the Brazilian government.

Religious scholar Andrew Dawson characterizes the expansion of CEFLURIS as moving from a rural-agricultural setting to an urban-industrial one, and from a primarily peasant movement to a middle class one (Dawson, 2007). He points out three factors in its concomitant diversification repertoire. One is that the middle-class professionals drawn into the Daime were largely already familiar with a kind of neo-esoteric vocabulary, already a part of an alternative religious scene. Second, is the inherent flexible, absorptive quality of the CEFLURIS line, as Padrinho Sebastião encouraged. Third, there was a reliance on 'charismatic' leadership in lieu of 'bureaucratic' leadership as the Daime network was decentralized, with each leader allowed a fair amount of freedom to create his or her own community practices.

As the Daime pushed out from the Amazon, it encountered an increasingly amalgamistic, hybridized religious milieu in urban Brazil, with neoesoteric practices, influenced by Amazonian shamanism, eastern traditions, among several others (Labate,

2004). The expansion of Santo Daime fit well into what Brazilian scholars of religion called a “new religious consciousness” (Soares, 1990). Bia Labate (2004) uses the term “reinvention” to describe the shift in practices, claiming that the “*neo-ayahuasqueiros*” form an intersection between the networks that compose the New Age universe and its roots, on one side, and the “traditional” ayahuasca religions on the other” (p. 88). Or in other words, the urban use of ayahuasca, of which Santo Daime was intricately a part, while fragmented, incorporated an array of reference points including Eastern thought, Jungian philosophy, New Age ideals, neo-shamanism and eco-spirituality (Dawson, 2007).

While many of these elements were part of the Santo Daime repertoire first in Cinco Mil and then Céu do Mapiá, thereby predating the expansion of Daime into urban centers, it can be said that the relational network reinforced such associations. As adepts from urban centers continue travelling and spending extended periods of time in Mapiá, the multiplicity of the religious forms will continue to expand, as was soon after seen from the expansion of Santo Daime into Europe.

The Spread of Santo Daime into Europe

By the mid-1980s, it was not only South Americans transporting *daime* back to their homes and constructing new communities, but Europeans as well. The year 1985 is said to be the first year *daime* entered Europe, with a Spaniard bringing it from Colonia 5000 (López-Pavillard & De las Casas, 2011). For those first few years, the works were rather unstandardized and it was not until 1989 that the first official Daime work was held, utilizing the hymnal and carrying out the prescribed ritual order (ibid). In 1992,

Céu dos Ventos opened in The Hague, marking the entrance of the church into the Netherlands (Hanegraff, 2011).

Carsten Balzer (2004) gives a detailed analysis of one of the very first instances of a Daime work in Berlin. He reports a kind of “mistranslation” between the Daime leader, from Céu do Montanha in Rio de Janeiro, and the German organizers. The event was publicized as a “shamanic workshop,” featuring “AYAHUASCA- the legendary shamanic ritual of the Amazon” (Balzer, 2004, p. 61). This particular padrinho (unnamed in the article), though being a psychologist from Rio, was also dubbed a “shaman.” He explained the history of Santo Daime from its roots in rubber tapper migrants and their contact with indigenous tribes. However, when he began emphasizing the Catholic elements of the doctrine, with its concomitant importance placed on figures such as Jesus, Mary, and Saint John, several audience members interjected, voicing displeasure at the prospect of participating in such a Christian-inflected ritual. As the crowd was of the New Age variety, there was an expectation, according to Balzer, of participating in a “primitive” ceremony, and with many of them having previously rejected Christianity, the idea of participating in something so rich in Catholic symbolism was distasteful.

After this info session, the subsequent ceremonies did not go well. Not only were the rituals substantially modified from the normal protocol, there were widespread reports of intense reactions to the ayahuasca, and also disruptive behavior on the part of the participants (ibid). The leader attended to these issues by making changes on the fly to the ritual, attempting a Kardecist form of healing, and imploring people to trust in God and his saints. While the author does not say so explicitly, the implication of the latter

being that such supplications did little to assuage the participants' anxieties and only served to exacerbate the situation and highlight the chasm between the two.

Other Daime rituals shortly thereafter were subject to scrutiny in the press, with a major expose in *Der Spiegel* (Rohde & Sander, 2011), and a police investigation was launched, causing the ceremonies planned for later in the year to be cancelled (Balzer, 2004). Problems continued to plague various efforts in Germany to establish the Santo Daime church, as the padrinho of the German churches, Lúcio Mortimer, had trouble fostering harmony among the disparate groups that mixed several different types of practice (Rohde & Sander, 2011). According to Balzer, the reason the Daime rituals failed to “transpose,” or better perhaps *transplant*, was due to the different expectations from both sides, resulting in the: “shaman’s healing plant that had become the religion’s holy sacrament, was turned into a consumable commodity, an exotic and forbidden fruit in the supermarket of religions” (p. 66).

However, the Daime church did further establish itself in Germany in the late 1990s. A handful of Daimistas were able to get a hold of an abandoned mansion where they were able to establish a community, dubbed *Céu dos anjos* (Heaven of Angels), which became an unofficial center of the fragmented landscape of the German Daime church network. By 1999, there were about 100 official adepts and 100 more frequent attendees (Rohde & Sander, 2011). These nascent efforts were thwarted once again. This time, however, it was due to police intervention, with raids being carried out across the country. Many of the members of Céu do Anjos went into the Netherlands where their practices were more firmly respected by the law. The Santo Daime Church made

inroads around the same time as other pioneer nations, Spain and Germany, with the first church being established in The Hague in 1992.

Due perhaps to a more tolerant atmosphere, the Dutch experience of the Daime has been a great deal more diversified. For example, a group in the Netherlands who had formerly belonged to a spiritual movement led by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh converted en masse to Daime, inspired by an interview in Shaman's Drum magazine of Alex Polari, a prominent *daimista* leader. The Dutch were impressed with the interview, which described "a religion from the Amazon, founded by a black man the beginning of the century, that uses a potent psychoactive beverage in its rituals, and which was considered influenced by shamanism" (Groisman, 2009, pp. 192–3). These Daime groups in the Netherlands also invoked an affinity with North American indigenous traditions, dubbing the place where they held works "Sitting Bull." Today, the Dutch Santo Daime network is the strongest and afforded the most freedom of any other Santo Daime church in Europe.

The diffusion of Santo Daime into Europe has had an impact in a variety of ways on both the doctrine as a whole and the village of Céu do Mapiá in general, as the knowledge associated with "being a '*Daimista*' (singing, dancing, playing instruments, knowing the hymns by heart) is increasingly valued as 'specialized knowledge,' a type of expertise" (Labate, Macrae, & Goulart, 2010, p. 16). For example, delegations made up of senior leaders, singers, and musicians, known as *cometivas*, often travel from Mapiá to the satellite churches in order to teach the local members there the hymns and rituals of the spiritual works. These *cometivas* often receive money or other favors from their

hosts, thereby generating an income for Mapiá and even creating a new ‘social category’: “the Santo Daime follower who goes away to live abroad, or who returns to Mapiá after spending a period outside” (ibid). The connections Mapiá leads to other such instances, as one man I met had fathered a child with a German woman who stayed for a time at Mapiá, and he was able to visit her, though he had a hard time dealing with the cold and the racism of Berlin.

The calibrations of the doctrine change as well. Matthew Meyer points out how the rubber tapper elements of Santo Daime’s origin myths gets left out in the dislocation of the doctrine from its Acrean roots to urban, western world (Meyer, 2003). Fitting into an imaginary of the Amazon that erases human beings from it, except perhaps indigenous peoples (Lima, 2004; Slater, 2002), this makes sense. Indeed, it seems when Santo Daime is put into new contexts, the referents are a combination of New Age, Native American, and Eastern Spiritualities. Though Santo Daime has achieved some success in its creation and expansion of a network, and the lifeblood of its mother community of Céu do Mapiá is now thoroughly dependent upon it, the transplanting of the Daime into these new contexts has come with some level of difficulty and negotiation, as evidenced by the examples of the German church. In sum, when members of Céu do Mapiá venture out from their community, they come into contact with a wide array of different cultures and peoples, and as its doctrine continues to expand through the world, it will continue to confront, negotiate, and incorporate the practices and discourses of an ever-multiplying and fractured global religious and cultural landscape.

The Ayahuasca Milieu

In many ways, the expansion of Santo Daime is very much a product of its time. Estimates of the number of the number of adepts of CEFLURIS, the Santo Daime lineage associated with Sebastião and Céu do Mapiá, is put around 4,000 and the total number for the Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions as a whole is around 20,000 (Labate et al., 2009). While, the number of those who have participated in a Santo Daime ceremony is likely much higher, it is still quite small considering that there are churches in close to two dozen countries around the world. Santo Daime has gone transnational in the age of globalization while operating at a quite small scale of people, something that would be near impossible in earlier times due to geographic and communication restrictions. Having traced the contours of the ways in which Daime has moved and inserted itself into new geographic and cultural contexts, I now will delineate these contexts.

The term I wish to employ here in attempting to make sense of these multiple contexts is ‘milieu.’ The term was influentially used by Colin Campbell (2002) in a 1970 paper entitled “The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization,” in which he defined the cultic milieu as the “cultural underground of a society... it includes all deviant belief systems and their associated practices” (p. 14). Bron Taylor takes up the term some decades later when he describes the “environmentalist (or environmental) milieu” to describe the collection of environmental activists and philosophers that held the earth to be sacred and deserving of reverence, and the diverse set of practices and political views linked to such views (p. 14). The ‘milieu’ in both of these concepts is thought of as kind of a ‘bricolage,’ of what Taylor calls “an amalgamation of bits and pieces of a wide array

of ideas and practices, drawn from diverse cultural systems, religious traditions, and political ideologies” (ibid).

In describing the ‘milieu,’ Taylor uses, somewhat confusingly, the image of both a building fused together and the images of incubation, cross-fertilization, and diffusion. One implies a kind of permanent structure while the other fluidity and creativity. It is this flexible element I wish to stress here, in which elements can be combined and changed in a multitude of strange and surprising ways. For example, one scholar has examined how the racist right in Sweden were also animal rights and environmental activists (Kaplan & Löw, 2002) while the protests at the 1999 WTO meetings in Seattle drew a diverse collection of Christian clergy, environmental activists, gay rights activists, Zapatistas, trade unions, and charities (Kaplan & Löw, 2002). As for Taylor, his “environmental milieu” includes violent, anarchistic, ‘monkey-wrenching’ environmental groups like Earth Liberation Front and Earth First!, surfers, deep ecologist Zen poets like Gary Snyder, the Council of All Beings developed by Joanna Macy and John Seed, all of which draw on diverse traditions such as Buddhism, contemporary Paganism, and indigenous cultures (Taylor, 2006).

What I would like to put forth then is a kind of global ‘ayahuasca milieu,’ in which Santo Daime is part. The ayahuasca milieu includes then the autochthonous use of ayahuasca and similar psychotropic plant medicines in the Amazon among indigenous tribes as well as non-indigenous use, such as the urban mestizo shamans in Iquitos (Dobkin de Rios, 1972) the *vegetalistas* (Luna, 1986), and of course the Brazilian Ayahuasca Churches in the western Brazilian Amazon. Then there is the urban use in

South America outside of Amazonia, particularly prevalent in Brazil (Labate, 2004). It also includes phenomena of ayahuasca tourism and the shamans-in-motion who travel around the world offering ayahuasca workshops and sessions (Dobkin de Rios, 2008; Winkelman, 2005). Lastly, there is what Jonathan Ott (2011) refers to as the “psychonauts,” a term which refers to those individuals who use pharmacological substances to explore the inner worlds of consciousness, and for Ott, use ayahuasca privately with little to no ritual. In sum, these are the phenomena most closely linked with ayahuasca use in the world.

However, the ayahuasca milieu refers also to the larger contexts in which it takes place. The most of proximate of these, perhaps, is the rising interest and appropriations of indigenous spirituality and knowledge, in particular North and South American peoples. Things like sweatshop lodges and shamanic training workshops, media outlets like *Shaman's Drum* are part of it as well. It is then connected to the kind of “New Age” or alternative spiritualities which becomes a hodgepodge of neo-pagan, various esoteric, and Buddhist and other Eastern traditions (Heelas, 2008). The dangers and awkwardness of these seepages have been addressed elsewhere in depth (Sturm, 2011; Clifton, 1990)

Because ayahuasca comes from the Amazon, it is often gets plugged into the realm of global environmental concern, vis a vis this global interest in shamanism. For example, in the aforementioned *Shaman's Drum* profile of Alex Polari, Santo Daime leader, the author writes that Santo Daime was a “distinctly Amazonian approach to the universal search for love, harmony, truth, and justice,” and offering a “personal way to save the Amazonian rainforest” (Richman, 1990, p. 40). What a ‘personal way to save

the rainforest’ means is not entirely clear, but it does exemplify what Taylor (2006) refers to as the “messy impulse to connect with nature.” Indeed, with indigenous peoples often talked about as the “original ecologists” (Slater, 2002), the globalized shamanic practices often go hand in hand with a broadly-defined environmentalism. Santo Daime’s involvement at the Global Forum at the Rio Earth Summit, in 1992, is one example to be discussed below. This is not confined only to a cultural level, but a political level as well. Both of which can operate at multiple scales.

Céu do Mapiá’s relationship with the WWF-Brasil and the Amazonian workers syndicate, CTA, demonstrate a kind of network that is present in Acre. The state has elected officials that call themselves the “Forest Government,” and the city of Rio Branco has been remade into a “Forest City” with various public buildings, such as the stadium and library, renamed after the forest (Vadjunec, Schmink, & Gomes, 2011). The city has become a hotspot for environmental activists and ecologists (Hoelle, 2011). The ways in which Mapiá develops such relationships with extension agents and NGOs, the environmentalist discourse that permeates the state, plus the generally wide acceptance in Acre of ayahuasca usage is a complex example of how the ‘ayahuasca milieu’ manifests itself regionally.

A third piece of the ayahuasca milieu is its presence on international markets and the concomitant issues of the drug trade and illicit drug use. It is said that ayahuasca is now “enmeshed in two worldwide markets- one for medicinal plants and one for psychoactive- and in the attempts of national governments and international agencies to control these markets, through mechanisms of patent law, international treaties, and

criminal sanctions” (Beyer, 2009, p. 338). This shade of a globalized ayahuasca milieu echoes the similar trajectories that played out during the formative period of Santo Daime in Acre as well as a national level in Brazil in the 1980s (and continuing to this day).

Santo Daime on the Global Stage

In Flamengo Bay, Rio de Janeiro, a caricature of a Viking ship dubbed “Gaia” sailed into the harbor, announcing the beginning of what known as the “Global Forum,” a sprawling gathering of NGOs, various religious leaders, indigenous, and other community leaders, as well as artists and musicians, in conjunction with the “Earth Summit,” the U.N. meeting of world leaders meeting some forty kilometers in a conference center on the outskirts of Rio. Dubbed “Rio ’92,” the megaevent was supposed to be a watershed moment in which the institutional bodies of the world came together in an effort to stem the tide of impending environmental disaster. While the results of the meeting were decidedly mixed (Thomas, 1994), the event displayed the broad-based milieu in which environmental politics and religion can come together, as well as providing a point of entry for Santo Daime on the global scene.

While the official Earth Summit was housed in the staid confines the conference center RioCentro, the semi-official Global Forum, ostensibly sanctioned by the UN conference though held at both a geographic and discursive distance, was held in the grounds of Flamengo Park in what became a sea of green and white tents (Brookes, 1992). Part networking conference for NGOs, part street fair, political demonstration and events, the conference drew about 18,000 participants plus 200,000 local residents (Parson, Haas, & Levy, 1992). Dozens of white and green tents were set up under huge

tropical trees, stages of different sizes for performances were arranged between rows of booths where groups showed off their programs, publications and wares. Workshops, conferences and meetings were held by different groups in the tents, and individual speakers presented their ideas. Celebrities and performers from all over the world gave concerts, politicians held press conferences, and environmental celebrations of all kinds took place under the trees. It was easy to make contacts and meet people from all over the world. There were many representatives of alternative and indigenous groups and social movements, Brazilian and American Indian tribes, as well as spiritual leaders from India and Tibet, China and Japan. There were several workshops, one of which was one on medicinal plants in which some members of the CONFEN group that determined that ritual ayahuasca use posed no threat to society participated (Beynon, 1992).

On June 4th, the second night of the festival, there was an all-night vigil in which over two dozen religious traditions took place (“Memórias, ações e perspectivas do Movimento Inter-Religioso do Rio de Janeiro,” 1993). It was organized by a Brazilian NGO, ISER, and full spectrum of Brazilian, and global, religious diversity was on display. Candomblé priestesses worshipped with Roman Catholic clergy; Lutherans celebrated next to Hare Krishnas and Buddhists. The vigil lasted all night and the throng was then addressed by the His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In one tent was a contingent from Santo Daime, holding an all-night work that was open to all passersby. It was *bailado*, the non-stop dancing ceremony in which the hymns resounded through the night. According to reports, there were up to 600 people in the tent and the Daime was available for anyone to drink (Beynon, 1992).

Opinions about the efficacy of the Earth Summit and Global Forum have been mixed. Some scholars have commented on how the Global Forum was discredited by the press and limited by its lack of proximity to the main event hosted by the UN (Dalby, 1996). However, it was a rather significant event for the Santo Daime community, as the Forum provided a global stage for them, a chance to not only expose their beliefs and practices to new audiences, but also cement their status as an “ecological religion,” a faith born out of the Amazon rainforest, wise in its ways and inherently respectful of it (Cemin, 2010).

Santo Daime, and ayahuasca in general, is often spoken of in these terms, as being able to open a kind of ecological consciousness (A. P. D. Alverga, 1999; McKenna, 1991). Such opinions are not confined to popular literature, but to scholars as well. Luna offers optimistically that “perhaps the growing interest in *ayahuasca* may contribute to a more rational and ecological use of the rainforest, as well as a source of income to some of its inhabitants, indigenous, mestizo, or newcomers” (2011, p. 128). In the case of Santo Daime, the movement has increasingly played up their ecological credentials in the forging of networks with various NGOs, including Friends of the Amazon Rainforest and WWF-Brasil (Dawson, 2007). However, this discourse of environmental ethics affects multiple facets of the ayahuasca milieu: “as the shamans themselves increasingly took the role of national or global representatives of the indigenous world, shamanism has undergone a process of moralization and environmentalisation” (Labate, & Pacheco, 2011, p. 135).

Santo Daime occupies a somewhat strange space in relation to indigenous use of ayahuasca. Firstly, it is resolutely a non-indigenous use of ayahuasca (Labate & Araújo, 2002b; Labate, 2004), with some members claiming “There is no shamanism in Daime” (Dawson, 2007, p. 96). However, there seem to be some sources of confusion. Padrinho Alfredo proclaimed to me in our interview that he was “practically indigenous,” citing the fact that he was born in the forest (in the rubber camp of Juruá), and has the skills required to survive within it, if necessary. I recall one time a visiting daimista from São Paulo asked me what I had expected to find at Mapiá. “Did you think you’d find Indians (*indio*)?” he asked me. “No,” I replied. “Oh, so you knew you’d find Whites (*branco*)?” To me, the exchange belied perhaps a (mis)conception that Mapiá was an indigenous community and that Santo Daime was an indigenous tradition.

This dynamic gets played outside the confines of both the site of Mapiá and the realm of the Santo Daime network in the example of the “Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers.” The Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers is a “*global* alliance of prayer, education, and healing for our Mother Earth, all Her inhabitants, all the children, and for the next generations to come” (Schaefer, 2006, p. 1, italics mine). It is a collective of women elders from indigenous traditions from all continents (Tibetans, Siberians, West Africans, Mayans, Lakota, and Hopi, to name a few) who meet twice a year to hold open ceremonies and workshops in different locations. The first meeting, in October of 2004, was the result of the efforts of a woman who goes by the name of “Jyoti” (née Jeneane Prevatt), an American academic who had studied indigenous traditions at the Jung Institute in Zurich. She began praying to find a way to “preserve

and apply the teachings of the original people” (Schaefer, p. 8-9). She had a series of visions in which she saw a council of female elders from around the world to come together. Through various contacts she sent out letters of inquiry to 16 women, describing her vision and requesting the presence of each on the council. Thirteen eventually arrived at the first meeting in upstate New York, many of whom proclaimed a deep calling and prophecy for their participation (Schaefer, 2006).

Two of the women who make up the council Maria Alice Campos Freire and Clara Shinobu Iura, are part of the Santo Daime and live in Céu do Mapiá. Both women were born in the southeast of Brazil, with Clara being the daughter of Japanese immigrants, neither woman would fit in a narrow definition of ‘indigenous.’ Both women took a circuitous path to find Santo Daime and Céu do Mapiá. Both were political radicals during the upheaval of Brazil’s military regime before falling in with some spiritual group. For Maria Alice it was Umbanda, where she received a visitation from *Mestre Irineu* which led to her initiation on the path of the Daime. Clara became involved with a group of Bagwan Rajneesh disciples, which put her on a path of being “visited” by various noncorporeal beings, culminating with a three-month-long encounter in which she was visited by extraterrestrial beings who imparted with her a message of warning for planet Earth: to stop the destruction of the planet due to being too wrapped up in material and technological enterprises (Schaefer, 2006). Soon after, she encountered Santo Daime in the mountains outside of Rio de Janeiro and subsequently moved to Céu do Mapiá to serve as Padrinho Sebastião’s personal healer as he suffered from his kidney ailments at the end of his life.

The brief biological sketches of these women exemplifies the breadth of spiritual practices to which Santo Daime is linked, as well as the environmentalist ethics associated with them. Maria Alice founded the *Centro de Medicina da Floresta*, the Center for Forest Medicine, in Mapiá, a forest garden used to raise and cultivate the medicinal native plants of the forest, in contrast to both the modern forces behind deforestation and biodiversity loss as well as the pharmaceutical industry that seeks to extract the life force out of plants and put them in a pill form (Schaefer, 2006).

Leaving aside for now the complicated problematics of labeling these two female *daimista* elders “indigenous,” it is worth pointing out the global vision of the group as well as the global cachet they have achieved. They held an audience with the Dalai Lama and offered up prayers at the Vatican coupled with a demand to rescind centuries-old papal bulls that justified the seizures of land in the New World (Hart & Hart, 2009). The author of a profile on the group states that “the native peoples with their Earth-based wisdom, have been excluded from the world’s discourse” (Schaefer, 2006, p. 11). The existence of the group then can be seen as a corrective to that, a counter discourse of which valuation of indigenous therapeutic and spiritual knowledge, demands for social justice, the healing of the colonial past, and environmental concern are all of a piece.

‘Following the Daime’

When we speak of the expansion of Santo Daime, it is not only people in motion and ideas in dialogue, but there is the material form of the *daime* itself, moving around the world, expressing a kind of transformative power or agency in the places and people through which it passes. Attending to the Daime itself as a kind of agent is justified if

only for the fact that Daimistas proclaim it to be the true director of events. It is the *daime* itself that reveals, acts, transforms, and moves (Schmidt, 2007). It is the *daime* itself, according to this emic perspective that is responsible for the chain of events that have led to its own expansion. In Schmidt's (2007) ethnography, she speaks of "following the *daime*," which is taken to mean the ways in which Santo Daime shapes the moral practices of its adepts. In what follows below, I take "following the *daime*" to refer to the various pathways and routes it traverses once it leaves the fairly secure confines of Céu do Mapiá and ventures out into the world where it confronts the international system of drug regulation, global subcultures of that consume consciousness-altering substances, the issues of stigmatization and prejudice at regional, national, and international scales.

The majority of the *daime* produced (meaning for consumption in all the Daime churches) is cultivated in Mapiá. Traditionally, the materials for the making of *daime* were a major part of the ritual, as scout parties would go off for days into the forest with the mission of harvesting enough plant material for the production. This too involved taking *daime* in order to heighten the senses and facilitate finding it in the dense tangle of foliage (A. P. D. Alverga, 1999). However, with the growth of the movement, there not enough plant material to meet demand solely through harvesting what is in the wild. The issue was foreseen back in the 1980s when Padrinho Alfredo instituted the "Daime Forever" program which began the propagation of the plants to ensure supply.

Santo Daime is transported two ways. Either a person attempts to smuggle it him/herself or it is shipped via the post. The active ingredient, DMT, has been on the list

of prohibited substances since the International Convention of Psychotropic Substances of 1971. However, the plants themselves are not controlled, thereby producing a great deal of confusion in the issue of legality (van den Plas, 2011). Through the 1980s and into the 1990s, it seems that customs officials paid little attention to the entry of what for them must have been a bizarre, dark brown concoction, and the police at various levels also did not seem to mind these developments as well. Perhaps it was a rash of press, both good and bad, that began drawing the attention of the authorities. In Germany, *Der Spiegel* published an alarming piece on the dangers of ayahuasca use (Rohde & Sander, 2011). In the UK, an article ran in *The Guardian* (Marshall, 1996).

Starting in 1999, there was a rash of raids on Santo Daime establishments and seizures of Santo Daime. In October of 1999, the Dutch police raided a ceremony in Amsterdam, arresting the three leaders and taking the pitcher of daime sitting on the altar (Groisman, 2009; van den Plas, 2011). The German daime community, Céu dos Anjos, was raided in September of the same year, while a Brazilian comitiva was visiting (Rohde & Sander, 2011). In November of 1999, the French leaders of a church in Paris were indicted on charges of drug trafficking (Bourgogne, 2011). In April of 2000, three people were arrested at Barajas Airport in Madrid with possession of illegal substances (López-Pavillard & de las Casas, 2011). A similar trend took place in North America as the Canadian police seized a shipment of Daime in September 2000 (Tupper, 2011). In May of 2000, the spiritual leader of the Santo Daime church in Ashland, Oregon was arrested by federal agents upon receiving a shipment of Daime to his home (Haber, 2011).

All of these events led to subsequent legal motions that resulted in varying degrees of success. In the U.S., for example, the Ashland church won its case, allowing for the ritual use of ayahuasca in its ceremonies. The right has been extended to only the churches in the state of Oregon, not the rest of them. The Netherlands eventually granted full freedom for the consumption of ayahuasca in a ritual setting. France, on the other hand, made ayahuasca legal in January of 2005, only to reverse course about 100 days later.

These debates have often been framed in terms of religious freedom versus the state's ability to police drug use in the name of public health. Something that has often been in the Santo Daime's favor has been its proximity to the Christian religion in terms of symbology and values. As discussed in the previous chapter, it served them well in the process of obtaining legal rights in Brazil as the team of experts assigned to investigate the various ayahuasca-using groups affirmed that they did not stray far from the values of Brazilian society (Macrae, 1992). The judge in the case in Oregon (*Church of the Holy Light of the Queen v. Mukasey*) made a similar judgment, thereby allowing Santo Daime to practice their religion (note that it was *only* Santo Daime, not ayahuasca use in general). The Netherlands has also legalized ayahuasca use in a religion context. All of this echoes the earlier efforts the Native American Church went through from the 1960s to the 1980s in order to legalize peyote (Beyer, 2009; Kimber & McDonald, 2004).

This appealing to its Christian side has helped out the Santo Daime movement in the past. Recalling the early days of the movement that were delineated in chapter one, several scholars have posited that Irineu Serra emphasized the Christian elements of its

religious repertoire in an effort to keep the authorities at bay (MacRae 1992, Dawson 2007). It is somewhat paradoxical, then, that often what attracts people to Santo Daime is the perception that it represents a kind of ‘primitive,’ alternative path, and, as in the previously mentioned case in Germany, the failure to live up to such perceptions can provoke disappointment. Herein lies one of the great paradoxes of the Santo Daime, its ability to straddle these multiple worlds. On one hand the movement works through the legal mechanisms of the State in an effort to gain legitimacy, while on the other hand it derives a large part of its allure from its subversiveness, from its very ‘otherness,’ and its ability to absorb multiple alternative viewpoints.

Conclusion

One mid-morning in Céu do Mapiá, just as the heat was beginning to rise, I was towards the tail end of my interview with Padrinho Alfredo when I asked him what it was like to live in Mapiá, in relative isolation but to have the opportunity (or perhaps responsibility) to travel the world. It was actually to be his last day in Mapiá for a while, as he was to set out the next day for Peru, where he was going to be leading works in Cusco and Machu Picchu, followed by a tour through the U.S. and Europe in what is essentially an annual circuit for him, leaving him far from home for up to six months out of the year. He compared it to the indigenous groups, perhaps like the Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers, that suddenly in the modern world have the chance to “suffer in the outside world... expanding something, speaking of something, showing our doctrine.” He told me of the discomfort he feels being in strange cities, often in a cold climate, unaccustomed to the environment, and feeling frightened by what for city

dwellers are just a normal occurrence. “It seems crazy,” he said, referring to role in expanding this religion: “It’s a complicated mission, and even dangerous at times. But, we firm ourselves in our spirituality to have a protective light in order to avoid that which isn’t good or useful.”

Just before my interview with Padrinho Alfredo, while on the veranda outside his house, I made small talk with an Argentine man who had been in Mapiá for a few months, but needed to return home within the next month or so. He too was waiting to see the Padrinho, so when he stepped outside, the Argentine stood up and kissed his hand and then sat back down on the floor as Padrinho Alfredo took a seat in a chair. After speaking about how much he loved it in Mapiá, the man told of the reason for his visit. He was hoping Padrinho Alfredo would be willing to give him some *daime* to take back with him to Argentina and to start leading informal ceremonies there. The Padrinho asked him about how much he would need to start. About ten liters, the man replied. Padrinho nodded and said it would be good. The Argentine beamed. *Obrigado, Padrinho*, he said, kissing his hand again. Another link in the Santo Daime chain, it seemed, had just been made.

In this chapter, I have tried to argue that Céu do Mapiá should not be thought of as only a site, but also as a bundle of relations, as the central node of a diffuse network in which people, ideas, practices, and goods (i.e. *daime*) move and are transmitted. It is the links on this circuit--environmentalism, globalized shamanism, and the like--that defines, alters, and expands upon the meaning of Céu do Mapiá as place. I do not mean to suggest that the local and global are equivalent. Their differences can still be deeply felt.

Padrinho Alfredo told me he breathes a sigh of relief when he returns home, having been gone for months at a time. “I feel like I’m in my castle,” he says. The following chapter turns back to the local landscape of the everyday in Céu do Mapiá and how its residents move and feel within it.

Chapter Five: Another Green World

Introduction

One evening, in one of my last nights in Mapiá, I was eating dinner with my hosts, a middle-aged, childless couple. It was dark, the table lit only by candles, as they were trying to conserve the battery from their solar generator. The husband asked, “Do you know what a *moenda de cana* is?” I responded that I did not. “It’s the machine used to press sugar cane and separate the juice from the leaves of the cane. That’s what Mapiá is like. That’s what it can do to people.”

Another resident, a man who has lived in Mapiá since he was eight, told me: “To live here you have to have a lot of *firmeza*,” meaning constitution or firmness, “because Mapiá is strong, each day is a test.” I asked him to elaborate. “Here, we see each other, we work together, we get to know each other...it’s in the day-to-day that we make our journey together, here in earth as it is heaven, as the prayer says.”

There was another evening when I interviewed Marisa sitting on her porch as the sky turned from hazy blue to inky purple. “A lot of people think the things from the city are comfortable. Air conditioning is comfortable, an easy chair is comfortable. But I consider being in the forest comfortable; the pure air, taking a bath in the *igarapé*, walking in the forest.”

Another resident relates Céu do Mapiá to the urban environment in a different way: “one of the things that is clear is that the people from outside have a place within the forest, where, if something happens, they have a place to go. If this world starts to

balançar, or correct its ‘imbalances,’ whether it be a giant wave, a big fire, an earthquake, a civil war, the daimista who lives in São Paulo knows he has a place to go.”

“Development brings with it these consequences, a lot of motors and noise,” Padrinho Alfredo puckered his lips and made a kind of puttering sound and a circular gesture with his index and middle fingers, mimicking the rotation of a generator. He then looked towards the sky and made a kind of whistle, “before, it was only forest,” he said. My hosts said something similar, comparing the spiritual power of their works with nothing but the buzzing of the forest behind them. “Healings were a regular occurrence back then,” Tier says. “But now there are hardly any healings anymore.”

However, the power and energy in the forest of Mapiá is still strong according to some. As one of the original residents put it: “our conscience is this...The entire world exists because of this tract of forest. So, it has to be well taken care of, well esteemed, adored as you would adore God. Because this is the presence of God alive in the earth- the forest, the waters, the people, the creatures...God is not in the cement, in the brick, or dead wood....God left us a paradise [here]. Just look, it’s all green. Are you seeing how I live here? My *terreiro* and green all around.”

A green, sanctified world; a refuge from urbanism or potential global calamity; a spiritual testing ground; a natural paradise slowly being choked out and losing its spiritual efficacy. All of these quotes above coming from residents of Céu do Mapiá each exemplify a perception of place- the role(s) it plays, the power it has, and the ability of humans to dwell within it. The second chapter outlined the life course of the community,

delineating a diachronic change in how residents engaged with Mapiá as a site, as well as the outside world. The third chapter looked outward, tracing the extensibility of Mapiá via its multitude of relations across the globe. This chapter turns back towards Mapiá again, this time looking at how the various perceptions of Mapiá have accumulated into the everyday experiences and perceptions of the place.

In order to do so, I hearken back to the very scenes with which I introduced this work as a whole: the sounds of the forest juxtaposed with those of motorcycles and generators, conversations with construction workers on the bridge, talking with frequenters of a local café. My hope in doing so is to illuminate a deeper understanding of said scenes, which in the very front of the work served as evocative hints or allusions to larger themes, and should now come across as more full-bodied. In conjunction with retracing our steps, I also hope to sketch out the sensual, everyday rhythms of life in Céu do Mapiá: how life in the rainforest is perceived in the rainforest, and how their religious practices fit into that. The obvious reference point for such an angle is Yi-Fu Tuan and his concept of ‘topophilia’ (Tuan, 1974, 1977). Such a line of inquiry grew out of my initial interest in connecting the ritual use of ayahuasca with a kind of ‘ecological consciousness,’ a question I feel I did not gain much traction with while in the field and afterwards, but one that lurks in the background here. To be more specific, I look at sound and music in how they shape the experience of Mapiá, as well as the mundane practices of sitting on porches and cafés smoking and talking, baking bread, and bathing in the stream. This culminates with examining a particular ritual setting, the *concentração*, an important work in the Daime repertoire. Returning to the idea that this

work is focused primarily on story-telling, the words of Michel de Certeau (de Certeau, 2011) are appropriate: “every day, [stories] traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories... Every story is a travel story- a spatial practice. For this reason, spatial practices concern everyday tactics” (p. 115-6). This chapter should perhaps be thought of as a kind of return journey, one that makes the spatial practices within Céu do Mapiá become clear.

Sounds in the Morning

In a 1994 article, Susan Smith calls for a kind of “audio-ethnography” because “‘thick description’ seems soundproof.... We generally *hear* very little about the content and meaning of everyday life” (p. 233, italics in original). The sounds of a place offer a more full-bodied understanding of it, not only from a sensorial level, but a socio-historical level as well, for sounds can connote change and contestation. According to Matless (2005): “sonic geographical understanding alerts us to the contested values, the precarious balances, the battles for beauty and peace and excitement, which make up a place. Sounds echo into social debate over what a place has been, is and might be” (p. 747). Steven Feld (1996) calls for an ‘acoustemology of place’ that pays attention to the variety of ways in which a place is ‘sensed.’

Attending to the soundscape of Céu do Mapiá is particularly pertinent as the prime way in which Mapienses interpret the changes in their environment is via sound. Things like solar panels and satellite dishes that now sit on the roofs of many households may stand out in the visual landscape to some degree, and there has been a visible

expansion of homes and buildings over time. However, the real harbingers in the change of everyday life in Mapiá, as well as the greatest sources of consternation among residents, have been *sounds*. In particular, the sounds of generators and motorcycles.

Starting early in the morning and continuing throughout the day, both make their presence felt in the soundscape of Mapiá, cutting through the dripping sounds of condensation pinging against the leaves as the moisture steadily drops from the canopy to the ground, and the constant, whomping hum of insects and the interjected screeches of birds and monkeys. The two are quite different. The diesel generators are used for generating electricity in the homes and small businesses of the community, and increasingly to power groundwater wells. The sound they make, after the stutter of firing them up, is a steady chug, a sound that has become ubiquitous throughout Mapiá. Motorcycles, on the other hand, are startling. They can descend upon you suddenly, from behind or ahead while one is walking along the sandy trails. Sometimes, when the wind is just right, you can hear their roar emanating in the distance.



Figure 9: Sandy trail through the forest
(Photo by author)

This may strike some as trivial, but the impact of the arrival and proliferation of these machines has been immense. There were very few extended conversations that I had that did not complain about the disturbance of generators, motorcycles or both. Together they served as referents to the changes seen in the community, each standing as a kind of antithesis to what the community stood for. The generators, which run on diesel, do not fit into their fashioned image of being an “ecological” community. The motorcycles, though certainly having practical purposes, are often seen as facilitating idleness, as the young men in the village, many of who have grown up there, would spend hours zipping up and down the old dirt and sand paths. Again, this conversation around generators and motorcycles was constructed and interpreted via sound. It was by in large the sound, not the sight, of these things that was disturbing or spoken of terms of change.

Another major source of sound in the soundscape of Céu do Mapiá is that of “organized sound” (Blacking, 1995, cited in Labate & Pacheco, 2010) that is, the music, as Santo Daime is a “musical religion” (Labate & Pacheco, 2010). The hymns of Santo Daime are considered the doctrinal heart of the religion, sometimes referred to as a “Third Testament” (ibid). They will be explored in their ritual context further below, but music in Céu do Mapiá also operates on the everyday landscape of the village: wafting out of homes on stereo systems; interjected into conversations; played over the loudspeakers of the PA system. Music plays a central role in the daily life of villagers, in the production of religious meaning and in the “construction of bodies and subjectivities” (Labate and Pacheco, 2010, p. 19).

The public address system is on the second floor of the headquarters of the village association building, located in the central plaza. At what seemed to be sporadic times of day, though usually at some time in the morning, someone would turn it on make some sort of announcement, usually incomprehensible to me, and then play loudly a handful of hymns through the loud speakers. I would rarely wander around the village without hearing the sound of hymns coming through the windows of homes. Hymns were often stuck in the heads of residents, and I would hear them singing softly to themselves while working in the home or outside, or while walking. Occasionally, usually as a point of emphasis, residents would quote lyrics from a hymn or burst into song. Kristina Schmidt talks of how the *hinario*, or hymnal, of Santo Daime structures everyday moral practice, exhorting adepts to “pay attention” (Schmidt, 2007, p. 203)

Instead of being thought of as compositions, hymns are said to be “received” from the astral plane, as “messages or revelations that emanate from spiritual entities” (Labate & Pacheco, 2010, p. 35), usually while under the effect of the Daime, though not always. The practice began in the early days under Mestre Irineu when he received the first hymn, *Lua Branca*, or ‘White Moon,’ from the Queen of the Forest by instructing him to simply open his mouth and sing (Fróes, 1988, p. 35). The hymns are usually of simple melodic structure, typically ascending then descending the scale. Rhythmically, they exhibit three different beats: *march* (in 4/4 time), *waltz* (triple time), and *mazurka* (triple time with an accented second or third beat). Notably, each rhythm is European in origin and corresponds to a different dance.

The hymns are organized in hymnals (*hinários*), typically according to the daimista leader who received them. Mestre Irineu's hymnal is called *O Cruzeiro*, and is composed of 132 hymns, which according to Andrew Dawson (2013), are populated with images of God the Father, the Virgin Mary, and Jesus the Son as holding a kind of celestial court, while the members of Santo Daime are a kind of family, organized into battalions and locked in a cosmic battle of good and evil: "The members of the community constituted by the mutual consumption of Daime are much misunderstood by the world of illusion but assuredly on the 'way/journey' to 'salvation' and 'another incarnation'" (p. 61). The hymnal also makes reference to the astral bodies like the moon, sun, and stars, as well as earthly elements and the flora and fauna of the rainforest. Similar themes are taken up in Padrinho Sebastião's hymnals, "The Justice Maker," and the "New Jerusalem," but with Mestre Irineu seeming to displace the references to Jesus.

Padrinho Alfredo's hymnals, *O Cruzeirinho* (the 'little cross) and *Nova Era* ('new age'), are beloved among daimistas for extolling the beauties of nature and for having a more modern feel. He told me, "my *hinário* reflects a knowledge, a clarity of knowing of the value of natural things, which is to say, the way of our communities, which is comprehensible in the light of Mother Earth, Father Son, Mother Moon, and the Forest within you."

His hymnal is peppered with titles like "The Enchanted Master of the Forest," "Sun, Moon, Star," "From the Forest," "My Rose in the Garden," which reveal an earthy sensuality that are equal parts Amazonian *encantaria*, i.e. popular beliefs in the beings of the forest as 'enchanted,' or infused with special powers; 19th century Romanticism, and

New Age spirituality. Within his hymnal you can also find lines like: “He who destroys nature is injuring our father,” or “In the forest we have everything/it is mother and father/fount of all wealth/nature and beyond.” A verse of the hymn *Valorizar*, or “placing value” states:

*A rainha da floresta
Cria tudo harmonizado
Toda cor e toda flor
Dentro do jardim dourado*

The Queen of the Forest
Creates everything in harmony
Every color and every flower
Within this golden garden

All in all, Alfredo’s hymnal reveals a set of concerns that can look awfully close to those of deep ecologists (see: Devall, 1985; Næss, 1989) or, what Bron Taylor (2010) refers to as “dark green religion,” which flows from a “deep sense of belonging to and connectedness in nature, while perceiving the earth and its living systems to be sacred and interconnected” (p. 13). It is a worldview, an understanding of the environment, which is biocentric, as opposed to anthropocentric (though perhaps a bit anthropomorphized). It is not without cause that Santo Daime has been branded an ‘ecological religion’ (Labate et al., 2010), as the set of ideals is evident in the doctrine. It is the realization of that vision that has been complicated.

In sum, the sonic geography of Céu do Mapiá, from its ‘natural’ sounds contrasted with its ‘urban’ ones, both filtered through a music repertoire, act to ‘enfold’ together the ecological, aesthetic, and social (Matless, 2005, p. 763). In one of the final hymns of Alfredo’s hymnal, he states:

*Eu sou o plantador de tudo
Eu planto paz e planto amor
Eu sou colhedor de tudo
Eu colho fruto e colho flor*

I am the planter of everything
I plant peace and I plant love
I am the harvester of everything
I harvest fruit and I harvest flowers

Such a hymn may strike us as ironic given the difficulties the community has encountered in its agriculture. However, the relationship Mapienses have with their environment has developed beyond the functional and into a more symbolic or perhaps affective relationship (Thrift, 2008). It is to this relationship that we now turn.

Céu do Mapiá in the Afternoon

At lunch, the people of Mapiá eat the typical Amazonian (and Brazilian for that matter) fare: rice and beans topped with *farinha* (manioc flour), fried or boiled manioc root, occasionally augmented with fish or meat. Most importantly, there is the variety of fruits available for making juices or eating raw. The people living in Mapiá love to talk about fruit. In most extended interviews, the subject would come up in one way another. Either in terms of what they hoped to plant in their small plots; or gather from the various trees already scattered across the village, growing wild or cultivated; or they would list with a kind of beaming pride all the different *fruteiras* (fruit trees) surrounding their house. The list was always extensive: banana, mango, cashew, pineapple, guava, starfruit, açai, guaraná, acerola, orange, passion fruit.

Afternoons in Mapiá are unbearably hot and the shadeless plaza in the middle of village is usually desolate. The crew of men working on the construction of the new church usually dwindles to just a handful after lunch. Many go to the streams to bathe and wash clothes. The place many people go is Sonia's small café, adjacent to the main plaza, where she serves juice and sweets. Sonia moved here with her mother from Rio de Janeiro when she was eight years old, which was over twenty-five years ago, and she has run this café for over a decade. When the WWF came to implement a variety of

projects, including a program in which Mapiense households would trade every kilo of trash or recyclables for a kilo of powdered milk. Thus, Sonia became one of the main proponents of raising the ‘ecological conscience’ of the village. She marshaled many the children and adolescents of the village to construct trash cans with messages like “Protect Mother Nature” or “Trash in the Trash” (as opposed to on the ground, in the stream, etc). Another project she instituted, and continues today, was using recycled plastic soda bottles, filling them sand and using them as a kind of brick that when wrapped in plaster can be used to build tables and chairs.

Her café establishment is the site of all of these projects, so stuffed in various corners are half-completed chairs, paint cans, and plastic bottles filled with sand. On the shelves are plastic toys made from recycled plastic and books of spiritual, ecological, and esoteric content. Taped to the wall is a detailed version of the Mayan calendar, drawn on thin rollout parchment paper with markers. On more than one occasion, I listened to a young woman, of about 30, explain to another all the intricacies of the calendar with its various dates, cycles, ‘mystical moons,’ and the like. I did not follow her too well. Underneath the calendar was the newsletter, printed once a month. From what I could gather, the material seemed to be collated from various websites and book predicted various types of environmental calamity: enormously reactive volcanoes, giant waves, plagues, etc.

This streak of millenarianism and apocalyptic thinking is something understudied in the Santo Daime movement. Andrew Dawson (2008) claims that the particular brand of millenarian thinking found in Santo Daime comes is a confluence of traditional, rural

millenarianism found in Brazil due to systemic social marginalization coupled with middle-class anxieties associated with late modernity and capitalism. Traces of millenarianism can be found throughout the Santo Daime hymnals, with frequent references to a world *em balanço*, or a world teetering on the brink of transition. As quoted in the initial section of this chapter, Céu do Mapiá is seen by some as a potential safe haven in the event of some major calamity, a vestige of the community's early days in which the end was imminent and need to be self-sufficient seemed to be imperative.

Less than one hundred yards from Sonia's café, working on the bridge across the *igarapé*, these concerns of the coming of the end of the world are far away. In the late afternoon hours, when begins to barely cool off before dark, they work on fixing up an old shack that was attached to the bridge, envisioning to turn it into a hardware supply store. I introduce myself to them and explain to them as best I could what I was doing. "You should talk to me and Pedro," says Max, the worldly one who had fathered two children with a German daimista, "and get our perspective." Pedro, who is halfway up the ladder leaned up against the building, nods in agreement. "Everything here is really difficult," he says. "Everything is really expensive and there's no capital." They also complain about the mysterious Irishman who has built a mansion on the margins of the community. Supposedly, he is a kind of music producer/DJ who became *fardado* some years ago and has Mapiá a kind of second home to come to when he is not in New York, L.A., London, or Dublin. "He always wants a bargain," Max says. "If the regular price for labor is 50 reais a day, he wants to pay 40. When he gets back, we're going to have a conversation. I'm not going to work for him anymore at that price." The three of us

agree to meet later after they finish working. We talk more about the community and the direction it is heading in, as the dusk turns to night.

Ritual Nights

Most *trabalhos* at Céu do Mapiá begin at night and one can see the little flecks of light from flashlights carried by villagers coming from all directions, and hear the sounds of shoes sliding against the red clay earth, dried and cracked from the day's sun.

Everyone gathers in the construction site of what will be the new church. Interspersed among the thick concrete pillars that will serve to buttress the roof of the finished church are thin metal poles that support a white canvas tent that covers over the ritual floor. The cement floor is covered with a rubber mat, one inch thick, marked with the layout of a hexagon, the six different sections designating where different groups sat.

Before the ceremony starts, people are up and milling around and talking. Men and women mingle, but will sit separately before the ceremony starts. The table is draped in a white table cloth with a caravaca cross with a rosary dangling, white candles alight, photos of Mestre Irineu and Padrinho Sebastião, and icons of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. A generator chugs in the background, as the overhead florescent lights are on.

The ritual starts with everyone standing at their chair and stating the Lord's Prayer and three Hail Marys. They form two lines, one for men and one for women and approach a long white table where two people serve the daime. Usually served in small, plastic cups, each one takes a cup, holds it high, perhaps press it against their forehead or make a sign of the cross before downing it. Everyone returns to their seats and begin to work through Padrinho Sebastião's *hinário*, *O Justiciero*.

The music starts with a one or two acoustic guitars and a couple of maracas. Soon they are joined by flutes. Usually, about one third of the way through, the work, youngsters with electric guitars and amplifiers show up and plug in. The music brings about “intensification of *mirações*... various feelings, such as sadness, ecstasy, and communion, in addition to subjective, interior exploration, religious revelation, etc.,” (Labate & Pacheco, 2010, p. 19). According to Abramovitz (2002), the *concentração* is marked by van Gennep’s stages of liminality, and as the music intensifies, participants begin to pass into a liminal zone, as the effects of the *daime* begin to kick in.

The liminal phase reaches its peak over an hour and a half into the ceremony, when there is a period of silence (ibid). The lights are turned out. A leader of the community, Alex Polari, dressed in white with a long, white beard, leans his head back and closes his eyes. “*Concentração*,” he calls out. Quotidian time stops. The only sounds are exhalations, the occasional sigh of relief. Men rest their forearms on their thighs and tilt their heads back and unclench their fists.

The lights turn back on and the music and singing continue as the second half of the hymnal is covered. Some get up take another cup of daime. The work closes with everyone again standing, the ritual cycle complete with the repetition of the Our Father and Hail Mary. After the final prayers, the ritual work is closed and everyone moves around the room, embracing and greeting each other. Eventually everyone filters out and returns to their homes to get a few hours of sleep before starting another day.

Conclusion

Other scholars have noted that daily life in Céu do Mapiá revolves around ritual life and agricultural activities (Dawson, 2007; Schmidt, 2007). While this is still true to great degree (though increasingly less so in agriculture), the quotidian rhythms of the community are often harder to grasp than the stereotypical image of the rural community, intentional or otherwise, as centered around work and prayer (Zablocki, 1980). Work is often sporadic and tenuous and there are many who feel the commitment to the ritual structure of the community is flagging. Yet despite the difficulties the community faces, daily life is steeped in an appreciation for the beauty of living in the rainforest: for being surrounded by greenery, being able to bathe in the stream, and pick fruit from trees. It becomes clear upon listening to the hymns that structure ritual, but it is also embedded into fabric of daily life. This gets thrown into sharp relief when there are incursions that diminish the beauty, such as the sounds of motors that piece the sonic landscape of the community. It is perhaps this sense of beauty that members of the community hold onto in the face of uncertainty.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

In his comprehensive study of mestizo shamanism in the Upper Amazon, Stephan Beyer (2009, p. 339-341) speaks of the incredible absorptive abilities of ayahuasca practitioners. Shamans incorporate biomedical imagery in which spirits of plants appear as doctors, even wearing scrubs and their travel into alternate realities take place in hospitals. Spirits may dress in military uniforms, fly in jet planes, or talk in computer code. Adoptions of such contemporary imagery, we are told, is not a new phenomenon. Older generations plied the imagery and language of electricity, magnetism, and radio when they were newly-introduced technologies. Such sponge-like characteristics extend into philosophical influences as well; first with popular Catholicism, later with Hindu deities, and currently with New Age terms and concepts.

These observations bring up three thoughts for me. First is the rather obvious one that ayahuasca practice is a dynamic phenomenon, and the Santo Daime context that I have focused on here is not unique in its eclecticism, its omnivorous nature in philosophy and practice. Secondly, it makes me think seriously about agency and the difficulty of defining it. As Kristina Schmidt (2007) went through pains to explain throughout her ethnography of Céu do Mapiá, the *Daime* is what has control in the eyes of her followers. The *Daime* controls its movement, both literal and figurative through the world. Such a notion may be difficult to understand completely from an etic perspective¹³, but observing the ability of ayahuasca and its practitioners to absorb new meanings, harness

¹³ Though the idea of plants having agency has been suggested elsewhere. See: (Pollan, 2002; Tompkins & Bird, 1989)

and facilitate networks, and not only receive ‘modernity’ in the form of new people, ideas, and goods, but also reach and extend outward into the world: the idea has slowly sunk in that the phenomenon of Santo Daime offers evidence that we ought not to “limit the range of entities at work in the world” (Latour, 2005, p. 160).

This brings me to my third thought, which is that Santo Daime will always remain elusive. This goes in terms of paths of knowledge that it proposes, of which I know very little, to its role as a binding agent in a diverse group of other social actors, practices and policies, which a set of phenomena that is changing more rapidly than I am able to follow. As Thrift (1996) puts it: “Understanding is not so much, then, about unearthing something of which might have been ignorant, delving for deep principles or digging for rock-bottom, ultimate causes (Diamond, 1991) as it is about discovering the options people have as to how to live” (p. 8). As with any research endeavor, the study of Santo Daime has opened up more space for questions and options than it has explained.

Before arriving in Céu do Mapiá, I had two related ideas or hypotheses. One was to try and understand Santo Daime as a kind of mechanism of that facilitated communal living, in particular ecologically-friendly living. I was interested in Céu do Mapiá as an intentional community and trying to understand the role that the set of practices surrounding the ingestion of Santo Daime had in terms of ‘greasing the wheels’ of communal living. Relatedly, I was curious as to whether or not taking Daime opened up a kind of “ecological consciousness,” as had been purported. Neither idea, particularly the latter, gained much traction while I was in the field. Instead, by the time I left the village on a motor boat back to Boca do Acre, I was gripped by a different set of

observations. I was fascinated with how the place that is Céu do Mapiá ‘hung together’ (Mol & Law, 1994): its extreme isolation mixed with a heterogeneous, almost cosmopolitan population; the comingling of mystical, otherworldly concerns and livelihood concerns. I also wanted to trace the historical trajectory of the community to understand how its unique elements came to be. However, my original lines of inquiry are still valid, I believe, and provide a jumping off point for a discussion of future research directions.

From its beginnings at Alto Santo, to the later communities Colonia 5000 and Céu do Mapiá, Santo Daime has been organized around community, and often ‘intentional community,’ in terms of people residing permanently together in order to live out a set of ideals and/or practices. The trend has continued as Santo Daime has spread through Brazil and other parts of the world. One community in Santa Catarina, a southern state in Brazil, has met many of the benchmarks needed to be designated part of the Global Ecovillage Network (Gerhardinger, et al, n.d.). There are also two Daimista communities in Minas Gerais, one called Matutu and another near the university of town of Viçosa, that also have similar aspirations of being an ecologically friendly community. In Europe and North America, Santo Daime communities, akin to the persecuted early Christian communities, usually meet in secret in someone’s home or rent a space in order to hold works. As Santo Daime is still an illicit activity for the most part, constructing ecovillages is not likely to come to pass. In February, 2013, the GAIA trust, which is a global education network for building and training ecovillages, made a consultation visit

to Céu do Mapiá. In sum, there is a lot more to be teased out from Céu do Mapiá's, and Santo Daime's as a whole, in terms of their communitarian and ecological commitments.

In the state of Acre, other ayahuasca-using groups are on similar paths. The União do Vegetal has a similar eco-village project called "Novo Encanto," which is quite close to Mapiá. The CEFLI (The Eclectic Center of the Illuminated Lotus Flower) line of Santo Daime, led by Luiz Mendes, is based in a community that also has some sort of ecological principles. Alto Santo, the original Santo Daime community, functions more like neighborhood today, but it also inhabits environmentally-protected land. These ecological commitments as they manifest in Acre are therefore part of a larger framework of the aforementioned *Florestania*, or Forest citizenship.

One shortcoming of the present work is that I leap from the local to the global and back, and I spend very little time discussing the regional. As I have briefly touched upon, Acre is a unique state in terms of its ayahuasca culture, but also for being an "Amazonian experiment" (Kainer et al., 2003) in which the government has implemented policies intended to curb deforestation and stimulate economic growth, some of which have had some success (Vadjunec, Schmink, & Gomes, 2011). Hordes of environmentalists, extension agents, and others interested in conservation and 'sustainable development' have descended upon Acre (Hoelle, 2011). How ayahuasca-using groups fit into this milieu is complicated and needs further exploration. It is complicated partially by the fact of the political divisions between the different groups. As things stand now, Céu do Mapiá, Colonia 5000 and the CEFLURIS line of Padrinho Sebastião that has expanded all over the world is deeply criticized by the other churches in Acre, and have been

excluded from the dialogue and movement to designate ayahuasca as ‘cultural patrimony’ in Acre (Labate, 2012). Any regional lens applied to the ‘ayahuasca milieu’ in Acre would have to pay close attention to these debates and divisions, as well as spend more time in the field understanding the cultural and political landscape that fosters this ecological discourse, both of which I was not equipped to do here.

Hecht and Cockburn start their seminal book (1989) with the question: “what is the relation of people to nature, how do people perceive the obligations of this relationship?” (p. 1). For the people of Céu do Mapiá, this question is of central concern as the community continues to negotiate and redefine itself in how community members relate to each other, the social worlds outside, and the physical environment they inhabit. And despite all the reasons to be anxious, i.e. livelihood and millenarianism and change, the people of Mapiá exude a strength that comes from their unique story. I give the final word to Vitor, a longtime community member: “We can conform to the life that God gives. We are in a kind of battle, but we are happy.”

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