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## Religion, Place, and Identity at the Intersection of Cultural Bricolage: The Miami Santo Daime Church Revisited

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

RELIGION, PLACE, AND IDENTITY AT THE INTERSECTION OF  
CULTURAL BRICOLAGE: THE MIAMI SANTO DAIME CHURCH REVISITED

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

GLOBAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL STUDIES

by

Alfonso Matas

2020

To: Dean John F. Stack, Jr.  
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by Alfonso Matas, and entitled Religion, Place, and Identity at the Intersection of Cultural Bricolage: The Miami Santo Daime Church Revisited, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Albert Wuaku

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Jean Muteba Rahier

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Guillermo Grenier, Major Professor

Date of Defense: October 8, 2020

The dissertation of Alfonso Matas is approved.

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Dean John F. Stack, Jr.  
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

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Andrés G. Gil  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2020

## DEDICATION

Dedico esta dissertação à Rosane Faria por suas muitas contribuições à minha pesquisa e, portanto, por possibilitar essa dissertação. Como educadora, artista, gerente de produção cultural e crítica social inata, Rosane também é antropóloga no coração. Como verdadeira representante da hospitalidade e charme carioca, Rosane me ajudou de várias maneiras. Ela me ajudou a garantir grande parte da literatura brasileira que usei para minha pesquisa; ela me hospedou em sua residência no Rio de Janeiro por longos períodos de tempo, proporcionando, juntamente com seu filho Kim, um ambiente muito acolhedor e solidário. Com a ajuda dela, pude realizar minha pesquisa no Brasil com muita liberdade e muito prazer. Enquanto estava na casa dela, ela me levou para várias igrejas e locais espirituais de interesse para minha pesquisa, como centros espíritas Kardecistas, terreiros de Umbanda, centros da União do Vegetal, igrejas de Santo Daime e até ao local de um antigo quilombo. Mais importante, Rosane despertou em mim um interesse e amor pela cultura brasileira que excedeu, em muito, os limites do meu trabalho.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION  
RELIGION, PLACE, AND IDENTITY AT THE INTERSECTION OF CULTURAL  
BRICOLAGE: THE MIAMI SANTO DAIME CHURCH REVISITED

by

Alfonso Matas

Florida International University, 2020

Miami, Florida

Professor Guillermo Grenier, Major Professor

This dissertation is an exploration of the Santo Daime Church in Miami, focusing on the challenges of balancing institutional stability with continual growth and innovation.

Santo Daime—whose central ritual entails the consumption of the mind-altering ayahuasca brew—is a new religious movement that amalgamates indigenous Amazonian, Afro-Brazilian, and popular Catholic traditions. Between June 2016 and December 2018, I employed participant observation, semi-structured interviews, exegesis of sacred songs, and document analysis to investigate the meanings and lived experiences of church leaders and adherents as they relate to their religious identity and agency. Specifically, this study asks three research questions: What global processes facilitated the expansion of Santo Daime in Miami? What changes have occurred at the organizational level of the Miami-based churches? Lastly, how have these impacted the identities of this church and its followers in the city of Miami? To answer these questions, a theoretical framework utilizing postmodernism and bricolage was used to anchor and unify the factors influencing the global expansion of Santo Daime and its receptivity in Miami. In terms of identity, postmodernity involves the deconstruction and reconstruction of the self as fluid,

fragmented, and eclectic. These characteristics of the new postmodern self permit an equally eclectic pick and choose attitude of spiritual traditions. I use bricolage as a theoretical tool to describe the bundle of diverse religions promoted under the Santo Daime canopy as well as the postmodern willingness to combine symbols from disparate codes, even at the cost of disjunction and eclecticism. Using Weber's theory on authority and leadership, I analyze how intra-church and inter-church power struggles among two Miami-based Santo Daime churches tested their capacity to resolve the conflicts between and among the leadership and devotees as well as consolidate their position in Miami and globally. This study suggests that the Americanization of Santo Daime found in one of its Miami churches undermines Church orthodoxy and hierarchies both in Miami and Brazil, Santo Daime's birthplace. The dissertation concludes that the Santo Daime churches reproduce the same divisions, inequalities, and discrimination found in the Miami social environment, yet maintained their healing efficacy among practitioners.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASC	Altered state of consciousness.
CAM	Complementary alternative medicine.
CEFLURGEM-AN	Centro Ecletico de Fluente Luz Universal Rita Gregorio de Melo-America Nord (Eclectic Center of the Fluent Universal Light Rita Gregorio de Melo-North America), the umbrella organization encompassing the U.S. and Canadian Santo Daime churches.
CEFLURIS	Centro Ecletico da Fluente Luz Universal Reimundo Irineu Serra (The Reimundo Irineu Serra Eclectic Center of the Flowing Universal Light).
CEFLI	Centro Eclético Flor do Lótus Iluminado (Eclectic Center of the Illuminated Lotus) - whose founding patron is Mestre Luiz Mendes do Nascimento, with headquarters in Capixaba - Acre, Fortaleza Community.
CICLU	Centro de Iluminação Cristã Luz Universal (Illumination Center Christian Universal Light). Original Alto Santo and first headquarters for spiritual works founded by Irinu Serra in 1954. Irineu Serra started working with daime in the 1930s at his residence in Vila Ivonete, Rio Branco.
CDLC	(pseudonym) Céu da Lua Cheia (Heaven of the New Moon). First Miami Santo Daime church founded in 2007.
CDNE	(pseudonym) Céu da Nova Era (Heaven of the New Age). Second Miami Santo Daime church founded in December 2015.
CECP	Circulo Esoterico de Comunhão do Pensamento (the Esoteric Circle of the Communion of Thought). A Brazilian spiritualist society dedicated to developing humanity's latent mental and psychic powers, which was frequented by Irineu Serra.
CONFEN	The Federal Narcotic Council of Brazil. In Brazil, CONFEN (the Federal Drug Council) has consistently upheld the right of the Daime Church to practice its religion and healing practices using the daime.
CRF	Circulo de Regeneração e Fe (Center for Regeneration and Faith) - in the town of Brasiléia, Acre, during the 1920s. Raimundo Irineu

Serra joined this group. CRF is considered today by scholars to have been a forerunner to Santo Daime. It obeyed a hierarchy design following military ranks ranging from "soldier" to "marshall."

DMT	Pharmacologically speaking, the leaf contains the powerful hallucinogen N-N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT). When orally ingested, however, DMT alone will provide very little psychoactive effect, if any. Harmala alkaloids from the vine happen to be Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOs), a class of chemicals that bypass certain human gastric enzymes. When used in conjunction with MAO inhibitors, DMT thus is rendered orally active and potently.
ICEFLU	Igreja do Culto Eclectico da Fluente Luz Universal (Church of the Eclectic Cult of the Universal Flowing Light). In order to separate the religious from environmental responsibilities in 2003, CEFLURIS reorganized into ICEFLU and IDA. For practical purposes, this dissertation will only use the CEFLURIS acronym to refer to the Padrinho Sebastião group.
IDA	Institute de Desenvolvimento Ambiental (Institute of Environmental Development).
IDEA	A CEFLURGEM-AN fundraising initiative.
NRM	New Religious Movements.
UDV	União do Vegetal- Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal (The Beneficent Spiritist Center Union of the Vegetable). UDV is a religious society founded on July 22, 1961 by José Gabriel da Costa, known as Mestre Gabriel. UDV is one of the so called, three Brazilian "ayahuasca religions."

LIST OF COMMON PORTUGUESE WORDS WITH THEIR ENGLISH  
TRANSLATION

Alto Santo	Alto Santo is one of several dissident groups founded after the death of Mestre Irineu in 1971.
Ayahuasca	A South American entheogenic brew made from the Banisteriopsis caapi vine and the Psychotria viridis plants. Also, see Daime.
Caboclo	(1) the more evolved entities of the Yoruba spiritual tradition that are related to the spirit of the natives of the forest. (2) The term caboclo is also used to refer to a person of mixed Brazilian Indian and African or European ancestry, which is the dominant racial mix of most of the contemporary mestizo populations living along the waterways in the Brazilian Amazon basin.
Candomblé	Is the most important afro-Brazilian religion in Brazil. Candomblé means, “dance in honor of the gods,” and as the name indicates, rituals in this religion are feasts of music and dance rooted largely on African traditional religious beliefs and practices. Candomblé is very similar to the afro-Cuban “regla de ocha” religion. See Orixas.
Céu do Mapiá	Haven of Mapiá. Daimista community founded by Padrinho Sebastião in the 1980s. With a population of about nine hundred people, it is characterized by great beauty, cleanliness, education, and a balanced relationship with the surrounding environment.
Daime	Give me. This word has two uses: 1) name use to refer to the ayahuasca brew and 2) short for the Santo Daime religion.
Daimista	A Santo Daime practitioner.
Fardado	In uniform. Officially inducted Santo Daime church member. They wear a uniform at the ritual ceremonies.
Feitio	Preparation. The name used by the Santo Daime church to refer to the various activities involved in the production of daime (ayahuasca). According to the church of Santo Daime, the feitio is indisputably the religion’s most important ritual because it is designed to produce daime, which is the Church’s sacrament.
Hinário	Hymnbook. The book of sacred channeled hymns received by members of the Santo Daime Church.

Jaguve	Vine. One of the two daime producing plants (Banisteriopsis Caapi). It is believed to engender a potent staying power and an all-encompassing grounding effect for participants.
Madrinha	Godmother. A female spiritual leader in the Santo Daime tradition.
Mestre	Master.
Padrinho	Godfather. The male spiritual leader in the Santo Daime tradition.
Protector the light	Protector. Commander, Santo Daime church leader, the keeper of
Rainha	Queen. Here it refers to the Virgin Mary, who is addressed as the Queen of the Forest, Sky, and Sea. Rainha is also the name given to the feminine plant of the two used to produce daime (Psychotria Viridis).
Santo Daime	Holy Daime.
Trabalho	Job; work. The name given to the Santo Daime ritual in which the daime is offered as Eucharist. A synonym for ritual.
Umbanda	Afro-Brazilian religion. The Umbanda pantheon is disproportionately weighted towards Brazilian spiritual agencies. Indeed, Umbanda's pantheon of gods includes pretos velhos (the spirit of old black slaves), crianças (literarily the spirit of small children) and caboclos (spiritual entities from the Amazonian rainforest) as well as an oriental line which contains gypsies and other spiritual agencies.
Vegetalista	Vegetableist. A mestizo shaman who gained his knowledge and power to cure from the plants in the region.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

### 1.1. *Introduction*

I became interested in the history and development of the religion of Santo Daime in 2010 when I was introduced to its rituals and practices. In this introduction to the dissertation, I present some of this history, as well as my involvement with the religion, which has driven my enthusiasm to explore its roots and consequences.

Santo Daime drew its first breath in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century at a time when taming the Amazon jungle was a daunting undertaking. Santo Daime's founder, Raimundo Irineu Serra, and subsequently, *Padrinho*<sup>1</sup> Sebastião, endured many hardships during those early years in the inhospitable Amazonia; they often had to move their tent further into the rainforest so as to escape the persecution mounted by the Brazilian government. These arduous jungle living conditions became a catalyst for the development of the foundational themes of the Santo Daime church, namely: 1) a pseudo-siege mentality manifested in the need to stand firm like a regimented battalion during rituals; 2) a millenarian outlook provoked by persistent government vigilance and harassment; and 3) a doctrine characterized by a carefully-woven tapestry of beliefs which includes local indigenous themes, Afro Brazilian religious elements and popular Catholic motifs.

These characteristics eventually played themselves out in different geographies and contexts as the doctrine first expanded into the major urban centers in Brazil and then globally in the 1980s. Luis Eduardo Soares, a Brazilian anthropologist, found an

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<sup>1</sup> Male spiritual leader in the Santo Daime tradition.

especially urban middle-class adherence to Santo Daime, attributing it to what he calls the *new religious consciousness* made up of a cultural and religious experimentalism, and a revival of interest in alternative practices (Soares 1994). Soares argued that people who are traditionally connected to critical and free-thinking movements are more receptive to believing in a doctrine such as Santo Daime. He suggested that some of the social aspirations espoused by these upwardly mobile people found new avenues of interpretation in Santo Daime. Thus, he posited that social and political revolutions had been substituted for mystical-ecological holism as a way for these classes to fulfill their social aspirations. Similarly, he claimed aspirations for social equality and communitarian fraternity had been transformed into cosmic unity and that sexual freedom was converted into transcendental spiritual liberation. Santo Daime, in his analysis, promoted the re-invention of Brazil and national identity, in which native Amazonia and the *caboclos* (persons of mixed Indigenous Brazilian and European ancestry) figure prominently and are valued as being profound and essential beings. In other words, he understood Santo Daime to be a symbolic representation of the Brazilian nation within a religious project (ibid).

I set out to research the Santo Daime church eight years ago in 2012 while pursuing a master's degree in Religious Studies at Florida International University. As a discipline, Religious Studies is considered part of the humanities. However, given the interdisciplinary nature of Religious Studies and the fact that the Religious Department offered a course on Religious Ethnography, my MA thesis, entitled *Ritual Performance of the Santo Daime Church in Miami: Co-constructive selves in the midst of impediments to local acculturation*, focused on its relatively early stages using social science and



anthropological theory (Matas 2014). This research centered on the acculturation difficulties that *Céu da Lua Cheia*<sup>2</sup> (CDLC, Heaven of the New Moon), was experiencing at the time in Miami.

My thesis theorized that Santo Daime's difficulties in becoming accepted in Miami were exemplified by CDLC's diminishing membership numbers. This claim was supported by a noticeable 15 percent membership decline since I had joined the church, reflecting an even grimmer reality than the situation in other Santo Daime churches throughout the country. This lack of growth, I maintained, was in stark contrast with the hundreds that were joining the church every year in Brazil. While I identified the clandestine status of the Santo Daime church as an obvious limitation to its growth, I theorized that most of the responsibility lay with CDLC's insistence in preserving a strict, rigid, Brazilian ritual style. Indeed, at the time I argued that the Santo Daime Church was resisting accommodation to secular modernity, moved by a desire to maintain at all cost its Brazilian military-style ethos. This pervasive martial attitude, I maintained, was impeding its reception from smoothly unfolding in Miami. I concluded that Santo Daime's resistance to becoming "Americanized" posed an imminent danger of extinction for this church on U.S. shores. In addition to this, I theorized that since New Age religiosity promotes the incessant quest for new experiences available in an expanding religious marketplace, individuals were no longer motivated to commit to a single religion. This attitude, I posited, impeded the loyalty needed for Santo Daime members to stay put with their religion, further exacerbating its nonacceptance. Additionally, I

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<sup>2</sup> Pseudonym.

claimed that the inherent difficulties characterizing a Santo Daime ritual—namely the physically exhausting quality of their rituals and the elevated cost of participation as well as other burdensome pre-ritual requirements—could indeed discourage a public that was increasingly giving in to the sirens of convenience and comfort insofar as religious matters are concerned. Finally, I asserted that the enduring illegality of ayahuasca in Miami and other U.S. cities was clearly hindering Santo Daime’s expansion (Matas 2014).

Two theories, each dealing with conditions that either foster or impede religious institutional change from occurring, provided the intellectual framework supporting my prior work. The first one was linked to the analysis of religious authority, developed by the German sociologist Max Weber (Weber 1922; 1946). The second theory led directly to the contemporary debate developed around the forces of secularization and pluralism where Peter Berger figures prominently (1967; 1999). Max Weber's analysis of the transition from charismatic domination to bureaucratic authority in the context of religious institutions functioned as an important framework for analyzing Santo Daime’s impediments to acceptance in Miami. Weber explored the consequences resulting from the death of the charismatic founder of a religion and the ensuing gradual transformation that needs to take place if the religion is to survive (Pals 2006, 157). According to Weber, the brand of charismatic authority associated with the founder must be converted into a priestly or bureaucratic type of authority to ensure institutional continuity. He identified this process as the “routinization of charisma” (Weber 1947). This involves the creation of formal structures and a stable matrix of norms, roles and statuses that would enable the religious group to survive upon the death of its charismatic leader. Weber insisted that

such transformation must take place if the community is to survive and be spared divisive conflicts amongst followers. Within this context, his prescription for institutional continuity requires several action steps. To begin with, the founder's oral teachings must be collected and translated into a sacred canon or sacred writing. Secondly, a systematized rule or creed must be elaborated to nurture favorable membership conditions and hence simplify teaching. Should the community itself become at odds with the wider society, then apologetic writing defending said religion becomes necessary. Thirdly, worship and regulations must also be standardized, based on the teaching and practices of the founder. Finally, Weber claimed that church members must mobilize under the helm of official lines of authority and function in a way that separates clergy from laity. Ideally, this routinization of charisma should also be embodied in a constitution (Livingston 2009, 132).

In this regard, my thesis argued that the founding Santo Daime church in Brazil had not completed Weber's process of transitioning before it extended its influence globally. Santo Daime, I posited was still experiencing growing pains as it attempted to transition from a charismatic movement to a formal religious movement. For example, the oral teachings and practices of the church founder, a charismatic figure, had not been systematized into an official canon, a situation that I posited, had created a significant degree of doctrinal confusion among those that may be potentially interested in this religion. Also, while the Santo Daime church hailed its sacred "hymns" as the official doctrine, these songs did not stand up to the test of standardization established by Weber, required for conditions of continuity. Likewise, instead of formulating an explanation regarding the controversial use of ayahuasca that would enhance its universal

acceptability, the church in Brazil opted to remain silent. Given that this matter was settled in favor of the church in Brazil after a very lengthy site investigation conducted by the Brazilian authorities, it would seem that leveraging off of this strong precedent should have been a *fait accompli*.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, I claimed, the leadership in Brazil hardly had time to reflect on strategies that would enable the church's successful rooting in new cultural, socio-political and legal contexts.

While the present work is a continuation of my MA thesis, it takes the investigation into a different analytical plane. Instead of exploring the narrow question about Santo Daime's incorporation into South Florida, my dissertation takes a wider glance at the internationalization of Santo Daime as it encounters postmodernism, a late 20<sup>th</sup>-century movement characterized by broad skepticism, subjectivism, relativism, and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power. In this sense, this study is an inquiry into how some of the most salient postmodern themes are played out within Santo Daime's religious and cultural milieu or, alternatively, it is an examination as to how Santo Daime may potentially mirror or represent postmodernism. Since postmodernism is an epistemological shift of major proportions in world civilization, these questions are significant. To the extent that religion is aligned with postmodernism's basic tenets, this emerging cultural force will become better understood and hopefully more predictable and manageable.

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<sup>3</sup> In 1985, the Federal Narcotic Council (CONFEN) of Brazil completed an extensive study of the Santo Daime Church and Uniao do Vegetal (UDV) to determine whether the Brazilian government should permit the use of the ayahuasca tea in the context of religious services. After traveling to many villages in the Amazon, visiting churches in various cities and observing Church services, members, and their communities, the CONFEN found Church members should be permitted to use the sacramental tea for religious purposes.

Therefore, one of the major themes this dissertation explores is the production of religious meaning through the disposition to mix unrelated religious symbols (Atglass 2014; Handler 2007). Likewise, this study examines the related phenomena whereby religious practitioners pick and choose discrete elements from multiple religious traditions in a fashion that reminds us of the activities proper to an economic marketplace (Iannacone 1992; Rey and Stepick 2013). In a like manner, the modern Western desire for the consumption of the exotic propped up by essentialist ideas about the subaltern “other” is discussed with reference to transnationalism and spiritual tourism (Appadurai 1996; Turner 1978; Said 1978). Similarly, elements of power, a major postmodern theme, are explored within the context of specific intra-church and inter-church dynamics in Miami. Power is also explored within the context of other, ostensibly more religious-symbolic planes of relating, such as in the culture/nature discourse underpinning the *feitio*, the ritual production of *ayahuasca* by the Santo Daime church.

Another important theme touched upon by this study is the function of religion in the construction of identities. In the view of many analysts, the fluidity of identities in the face of multiculturalism reflects the rejection of cultural and ethnic integration into Western society (Adogame and Spickhart 2010). Likewise, the effects of the decentered quality of modern life and the sacralization of alternative healing methods (Erickson 2008; Kleinman 1980)—all of which occurs within the context of a rampant consumer culture—are among the theoretical discussions in this dissertation.

Using the metaphor of a funnel, the current research takes a top-down approach by first asking what macro and micro global processes facilitated the incorporation of Santo Daime in Miami (Research Question 1). Secondly, and moving down this

conceptual cone, this study focuses on the changes experienced at the organizational level of the Santo Daime Miami church (Research Question 2). Lastly, the scope of inquiry narrows to the congregation itself, zeroing in on the impact these processes have had on the identity of this church and its followers in the city of Miami (Research Question 3).

### *1.2. Research methods*

My dissertation employs ethnographic data collection methods and analysis (Corbin and Strauss 2015). Unlike quantitative research methods, which require rigorous statistical analysis intended to make broad generalizations from large data samples, I opted for a qualitative approach. The purpose was not to avoid statistically representative or valid findings, but to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations by my informants of the research questions. Furthermore, since I am working with a relatively small sample on a subjective topic, the qualitative method approach is more suitable for my purposes.

The hallmark of anthropology is the exploration of the complexity and nuances of human interactivity and culture. As a research discipline, anthropology combines humanistic and social science strategies. The method that sets anthropology apart from other disciplines is ethnography, the qualitative process of exploring in depth the whys and hows of human culture, behavior, and expression. The ethnographic method uses multiple data collection techniques. In this study I used the following approaches: participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, exegesis of sacred songs, and document analysis, all aimed at investigating the meanings and lived experiences of local church adherents, especially as they relate to their sense of cultural and religious identity and agency. Using the ethnographic method, I was able to uncover unexpected

insights that are best gained by studying a topic in person, over time, and from diverse perspectives.

Under this data collection methodology, published and unpublished documents and records were collected and analyzed to understand how knowledge and religious discourses about nature and culture are historically constructed and represented (Corbin and Strauss 2015). I view the field as text, meaning that the “field” is not an entity out there that awaits to be discovered but rather it is constituted by the ethnographer’s writing and subsequently, by the reading of the text by interested parties. As Paul Atkinson has stated, the field is co-constructed in a three-way process which not only involves writing but reading as well: “First, it is constructed through the ethnographer’s gaze. Secondly, it is reconstituted through his or her ability to construct a text-of-the-field. Thirdly, it is reconstructed and recontextualized through the reader’s work of interpretation and contextualization” (Atkinson 1992, 9). This so called, “emic” approach to understanding behavior and personality describes belief or behavior in terms meaningful to the actors within the culture being studied.

Although my research principally rests on interviews with both present-day and former members of the two Miami Santo Daime churches, my experience as an active church member at the time also facilitated my access to places, events and processes an outsider researcher would have been denied. I have visited and participated in ceremonies in at least three other states including New York, Texas, and Maryland. Because of this exposure, I have developed valuable connections amongst Santo Daime followers who

describe themselves as brethren. I have been privileged to interview *padrinhos*<sup>4</sup>, during their annual tours to the United States. I am generally described as a committed and helpful *fardado*,<sup>5</sup> and have been invited to participate in various Santo Daime annual Plenary meetings in the U.S. Therefore, my standing among the church leadership and members has opened doors for me insofar as access to additional social capital and is an example of the privileges afforded to me as an insider. This has positively contributed to the amount of resources available to me and therefore, to the depth and breadth of my work. These are unique opportunities for exploring the many areas of interest and issues of contention confronted by churches in the U.S., be they in the religious, political or legal spheres.

On February 2018 I received final Internal Review Board (IRB) approval to use human subjects in my fieldwork both in Brazil and the United States. Given that Santo Daime operates in a clandestine fashion in Miami, I have used maximum discretion concerning names, locations, or any other information that may reveal the identity of church members or their ritual partaking. I have protected the identity of my informants as well as the name of both Santo Daime Miami churches by using pseudonyms, as well as maintaining confidential the location where ceremonies take place in Miami.

This study explores Santo Daime religiosity from the viewpoint of different church practitioners, present and former members as well as from the perspective of my own liminal status as an “outsider/insider” initiate. This is a term I will use to describe the predicament of an ethnographer trained in the academy but who concomitantly is an

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<sup>4</sup> Church elders.

<sup>5</sup> An officially inducted Santo Daime church member.



inducted member of a tradition. I understand that my outsider/insider positionality vis-à-vis the present study may influence various aspects of the study, for example, the type of data collected or the way in which it is interpreted (Bryman 2012, Saldaña 2009). Despite the privileges this positionality affords, it also comes with its own set of problems precisely because it is associated with such privileged status (see section 1.3. for a full account of my positionality).

### *1.2.1 Initial design and preparation*

Although my research site is the Greater Miami Metropolitan Area—extending from Fort Lauderdale to Homestead to the North and South, respectively—during the early stages of research design preparation, I conducted extensive preliminary research in Brazil. I felt that firsthand knowledge of some of the most prominent Santo Daime churches in Brazil—including their leadership—as well as a deeper understanding of the various religious traditions that constitute the backbone of this religion, was paramount to my research. As a result, between June 2016 and July 2018 I conducted three visits to Brazil for a total of 75 days.

In Brazil I interviewed the two all-important church elders or *padrinhos*. They are Padrinho Paulo Roberto in Rio de Janeiro and Padrinho Alex Polari in Visconde de Magua. In addition to this, I participated in padrinho-led rituals in Miami that gave me the opportunity to interview Padrinho Alfredo. In addition, I visited and participated in rituals at the local *Barquinha* church located in Niterói, a municipality of the state of Rio de Janeiro as well as rituals at a UDV church located in Barra de Guarativa, Rio de Janeiro. The importance of these two churches is that together with Santo Daime, they constitute the so-called Brazilian group of ayahuasca churches. While in Rio, I also

immersed myself in many of the religious traditions which conform the Santo Daime religious quilt. A short list of the churches visited, and rituals experienced at this stage include the Afro Brazilian traditions of *Umbanda* and *Candomblé*, *Espíritas Kardecistas* centers, as well as various Santo Daime churches. In all of them I participated in official church rituals and mixed with devotees asking questions and taking notes.

Before commencing my preliminary Brazilian research, I embarked in an intensive Portuguese language acquisition program in Miami and Rio de Janeiro. It began with formal basic and intermediate Portuguese courses at FIU's Language Institute and concluded with a six-week immersion into Portuguese and Brazilian culture at IBEU, a language institute in Rio de Janeiro, made possible through a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship. Portuguese proficiency was necessary to interview Portuguese-speaking subjects and because some of the Santo Daime literature is only available in the vernacular language. Finally, the churches' sacred hymns are mostly sung in Portuguese.

### *1.2.2 Study site and participants*

As already outlined, my Miami fieldwork expanded throughout two South Florida geographies, namely Broward and Miami Dade counties. This long geographic stretch, spanning more than forty miles from North to South, harbors two Santo Daime churches with physical presence in four locations. Although Chapter Five provides a full history and description of these churches, I present a brief description of the two Miami Santo Daime churches: *Céu da Lua Cheia* (Heaven of the New Moon) CDLC and *Céu da Nova*

*Era* (Heaven of the New Age) CDNE<sup>6</sup>, in order to place chapters One through Four in context. However, before I turn my attention to describing these two churches it should be noted that Santo Daime is not a monolithic institution. As Chapter Four explains, *Centro Eclectico da Fluente Luz Universal Reimundo Irineu Serra* (The Reimundo Irineu Serra Eclectic Center of the Flowing Universal Light) or CEFLURIS, is Santo Daime's most prominent group, and is the driving force behind the Church's globalization efforts. Most U.S. churches including the two Miami churches are aligned with this organization.

CDLC was founded in 2007 and constitutes the first Miami Santo Daime church. Its leader is Alberto, a physical therapist from South America. At the time of this study, CDLC counted with a membership of some twenty people. The church, which is known for upholding a very traditional leadership style, operates out of a rented yoga studio located in Fort Lauderdale. On average, CDLC holds rituals twice a month, usually on Fridays or Saturdays. David, an American attorney, founded the second Miami Santo Daime church, CDNE, eight years later, in December 2015. As this study argues, CDNE promotes a progressive leadership style that is subverting traditional Brazilian ways. In contrast to CDLC, CDNE follows the Brazilian-instituted official ritual calendar. This means that CDNE holds a few more rituals than CDLC and schedules its rituals according to "official calendar" dates. As noted before, while CDLC operates from a rented yoga studio in Fort Lauderdale, CDNE has secured its own places of worship at two distinct locations in Miami-Dade County: a house in South Miami and an estate in the Redlands, an agricultural area of Miami-Dade. In addition to this, CDNE often

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<sup>6</sup> Pseudonyms.

conducts Santo Daime rituals at a South Beach residence of one of its leaders. Church leaders and their spouses own all CDNE sites, some of them being quite impressive. Finally, both CDLC and CDNE are members of CEFLURGEM-AN or *Centro Eclesiástico de Fluente Luz Universal Rita Gregorio de Melo-America Nord* (Eclectic Center of the Flowing Universal Light Rita Gregorio de Melo-North America), the umbrella organization encompassing all U.S. and Canadian Santo Daime churches following the lineage of Padrinho Sebastião or CEFLURIS.

Given my longevity as a *fardado* at the CDLC, and the fact that I regularly attended rituals at both churches, everybody knew me and thus there was no need to go through the formality of introducing myself. Furthermore, I had received permission and assistance from the leadership of the two Miami churches to interview their members. They helped me by sending emails to all the individuals I wanted to interview. Nevertheless, every time I met with an informant, I clearly explained the purpose of my research as well as the type of identity protection put in place. Before conducting each interview and requesting verbal informed consent and permission to record the conversation, I would describe the purpose of the study and state that I had their leaders' permission to conduct the interviews.

The interviews involved thirty individuals split evenly between the two churches. These subjects were classified in four groups: 1) the leadership of both churches; 2) present-day inducted members, 3) recurrent guests; and 4) members who had decided to leave the church. As part of the interviewing process I gathered standard demographic information from each group; combined, the age-range fluctuated from thirty-one to sixty years old. As far as gender, the sample was evenly split between men and women.

Concerning education levels and race, beginning with the leadership itself, CDLC registered a lower level of education than CDNE. Although a few professionals formed part of the rank and file at CDLC, most had technical degrees of some sort, and some had no education beyond high school. Many worked in the healing or health industries as physical therapists or as yoga teachers. Racially, CDLC is more mixed, showcasing a largely South American population, with about one third consisting of nonwhite members. Barring an ancestry DNA test, coming up with exact race or ethnic percentages is impossible, however, given the Latin-American origin of the group I am referring to, the mixture was tri-racial, including African, Amerindian, and European ancestry. The CDNE membership, on the other hand, was better educated and predominantly white and North American.

Given Miami's pluralistic religious ethos, this city turned out to be an ideal testing-ground for evaluating the receptivity of migrating Latin-American and Caribbean religions currently flowing into this region. Due to the illicit status of ayahuasca in Florida however, beyond what has been described, I cannot provide more concrete information regarding these sites.

### *1.2.3 Background of the problem and research questions*

A question that begs for an answer in this research is: why would Santo Daime, a subaltern and exotic third-world religion that declares ayahuasca—an illicit substance in the United States—as its holy sacrament, be welcomed in this country and particularly in Miami? Or, more broadly, why should Santo Daime's perceived otherness be granted authenticity by developed Western societies?

Considering Santo Daime's classification as part of the New Age movement (Dawson 2007; Dawson 2013; Lavate, Canvar and Freedman 2014) and given this movement's influence on the construction of postmodern spiritual identities, the above questions should be partly answered with reference to New Age teaching and practices. However, before a coherent and complete answer may be offered, several additional questions need to be addressed first. Some of the issues this dissertation examines with respect to the Santo Daime–New Age connection are: why has third-world exoticism in the form of spiritual traditions caught the interest of the global North? Why would individuals be attracted to foreign religious traditions, and to Santo Daime, especially? Why has postmodernity assigned primacy to the individual as the locus of authority? Concerning this, Paul Heelas asks the following: “why has the self become a spiritual resource? That is to say, what is it about modernity that has facilitated Self-sacralization?” (Heelas 1996, 135). Regarding this issue, Giddens has asserted that if traditional authorities no longer structure people's lives as they once did, then individuals are left to produce their own biography and identity through personal choice (Giddens 1991, 75). Yet, notwithstanding its popularity, this idea of Self-sacralization is problematic. Considering the calamities and upheavals experienced by the West in the 20<sup>th</sup> century—two world wars and practically continuous warfare and human rights violations—this postmodern belief, namely, a utopian view of human nature, is surely not defensible.

Regarding additional New Age tendencies, we may also ask: why have prosperity teachings since the 1960s developed in significance? Is Santo Daime a response to the cultural uncertainty of our time? If so, what does the acceptance of Santo Daime tell us

about contemporary society? Does Santo Daime's popularization entail its transformation? The task then is to explain why apparently sensible individuals should turn to what the great majority of their peers regard as incomprehensible and bewildering. With respect to this, we should note the New Age movement runs counter to the great canons and assumptions of modernity: the attainment of progress through scientific expertise, the application of reason to the management of social and individual affairs, the faith in consumer culture, and the loss of faith in religion, particularly in northern Europe (Heelas 1996).

This study will attempt to explain such paradoxes with reference to postmodern ideas. For example, I will argue that in terms of identity, postmodernity involves the deconstruction and reconstruction of the self as fluid, fragmented, decentered, culturally eclectic, and hybrid-like. These characteristics of the new postmodern self, I will argue, permit the adherence to an equally fluid, decentered, and eclectic idea of spiritual symbolic resources. To explain this predicament, I have chosen the term *bricolage*. This term was originally coined by Claude Lévi-Strauss to describe the characteristic patterns of mythological thought whose characteristic feature is that it expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire (Lévi-Strauss 1966). As understood by Elliot and du Gay, "identity in the post traditional world of the postmodern, becomes principally performative, depthless, playful, ironic, just a plurality of selves, scripts, discourses and desires" (2009, xii). It is with attention to these dynamics and the ongoing shaping and re-shaping of the U.S. religious milieu, that this study will probe three key questions about Santo Daime:

RQ1. What micro and macro global social processes led to the establishment of a Santo Daime church in Miami?

RQ2. What changes have taken place in the traditional organizational structure of the Santo Daime religious tradition and how effectively have they contributed to the church's receptiveness in Miami?

RQ3. What changes have taken place within the congregational (devotees) dynamics of the Santo Daime church in Miami and what do these changes tell us about modern religious identities?

The following set of three sub-questions for each research question is designed to further unpack and make operational each research question. Moreover, the commentaries provided illustrate how the theories and the research questions are connected. The findings outlined in chapters Three, Four, Five and Six will refer to these hypothetical assumptions considering the research findings:

*RQ1. What micro and macro global social processes led to the establishment of a Santo Daime church in Miami?*

This question builds on the insights from scholars who theorize on globalization and its effects on modern identities (Berger 2002; 1994; Harvey 1989; Appadurai 1996; Heelas 1996; Stark 2003; Rocha 2013; Groisman 2003). These global social processes include secularization, religious transnationalism, exoticism and religious pluralization. As I have theorized in this work, these processes have enabled, at the macro level, the internationalization of Santo Daime. The following sub-questions address this phenomenon:

- *How have social forces associated with late-modernity and globalization influenced the establishment and receptivity of Santo Daime in Miami?*



- *What structural and doctrinal characteristics of Santo Daime have facilitated the church's entry into the Miami religious field?*
- *How is the Miami religious field constituted and what aspects of it have contributed to the receptivity of Santo Daime into this city?*

*RQ2. What changes have taken place in the traditional organizational structure of the Santo Daime religious tradition and how effectively have they contributed to the church's receptiveness in Miami?*

Significantly, the establishment of a second Miami church about five years ago doubled Santo Daime's membership overnight. This expansion has broadened—from Homestead in the south to Fort Lauderdale in the north—the geographic and ethnic reach of Santo Daime in South Florida. A noticeable difference regarding orthodoxy vs. flexibility can also be detected between the two churches. The following sub-questions explore these concerns:

- *What has been the consequence of the ritualistic changes that have taken place in the Santo Daime Miami churches?*
- *In what ways have Santo Daime's "exotic religious resources" been disseminated and appropriated in contemporary practices of bricolage?*
- *How has Santo Daime's bricolage of beliefs impacted its recruiting capacity?*

*RQ3. What changes have taken place within the congregational (devotees) dynamics of the Santo Daime church in Miami and what do these changes tell us about modern religious identities?*

It is hypothesized that attitudes about doctrinal purity vs. acceptance of bricolage beliefs can fundamentally affect the religious direction of Santo Daime participants. Modern ideas about the sacredness of the self as a new ontological category (Heelas

2008; Lasch 1980), coupled with the permeability for the adoption of alternative spiritualities by Santo Daime followers, may open broader pathways for re-interpretation of this religious experience by Miami devotees. The following sub-questions will further elucidate their experiences with Santo Daime:

- *What identity features from potential Santo Daime devotees in Miami renders them suitable as possible candidates?*
- *In what way has the ontological “turn to Self” facilitated the receptivity of Santo Daime in Miami?*
- *What is the appeal of entering into an altered state of consciousness (ASC) by new agers once inducted as Santo Daime members in Miami?*

#### 1.2.4 Fieldwork

The Miami research interview phase spanned approximately six months between July and December 2018. In this fieldwork I conducted interviews with 30 Santo Daime church members and ex-members. During this process I regularly attended ritual ceremonies in Miami. The interview process commenced very smoothly with both churches fully cooperating.

Each interview was carried out in the interviewee’s preferred language: Portuguese, Spanish or English. Out of a sample size of thirty *daimistas*, four were conducted in Portuguese; ten in English and sixteen in Spanish. This provided an extra challenge because for purposes of transcribing, it was necessary to translate all Portuguese and Spanish interviews into English. Furthermore, not all the participants resided in Miami. Padrinho Paulo Roberto was interviewed at his home in Rio de Janeiro and Padrinho Alex Polari at Vizconde de Magua. Of the thirty interviewees, five were Brazilian, eight were American and the rest from different South American countries.

Racially, five were mixed race mestizos. The interviewees were also classified in terms of the commitment to the church. Thus, I selected twenty-one *fardados* (members), six recurrent guests, and three individuals who were no longer Santo Daime members. Single interviews were later transcribed using “Transcribe,” an application software I purchased and downloaded onto my mobile phone (and translated to English when necessary) and coded during the ethnographic writing phase using NVivo qualitative coding software, described in the next section. Each interview gathered quantitative information: occupation, gender, age, education level, among others, and qualitative information: experiences with the Santo Daime ritual and its healing potential, theology understanding, the principal reason or motivation for joining the church, their interest and feelings about Brazilian culture and their interest in New Age practices. Besides the semi-structured interviews described above, informal, and unstructured interviews and participant observation were carried out at every ritual and social gathering with church members I attended between 2013 and 2018. Even though everyone knew what I was doing, no one expressed any problem with my data gathering methods. Furthermore, I purposely refrained from discussing matters concerning my research when gathered with *fardados* in official ceremonies. Regardless, these colloquial talks were extremely enriching and provided much of the knowledge and information both about Santo Daime followers as well as the institution. They included conversations with members of Santo Daime churches in New York, Austin, Texas, and Maryland where I developed a very close rapport with a few *fardados* and the leadership. I visited these churches because prior to CDNE’s founding, padrinho-led ceremonies hardly ever took place in Miami. This situation occurred due to CDLC’s lack of adequate infrastructure to accommodate

the *padrinhos* (church elders) and their *comitivas* (entourages). The ethnographic study in Miami culminated in early December 2018.

### *1.2.5 Data collection and analysis*

*A. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews.* As mentioned earlier, my research methodology fundamentally relied on participant observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews. These standard ethnographic practices are needed in order to investigate meaning and the lived experiences by Santo Daime members, especially as they relate to their sense of religious and non-religious identity and agency (Corbin and Strauss 2015; Bryman 2012; Elliot and du Gay 2009). Since there is a close correlation between demographics and construction of worldviews, my objective was to determine levels of education, race or ethnic affiliation, profession, and country of origin. This chapter's section 1.2.2 provided an overview of the interviewees' demographic information. Nevertheless, by using mostly open-ended questions, I set out to document the subjectivities underlying church participation and the type of discourses that motivate church participation. The questions formulated helped answer RQ3, on the effects of macro and micro global processes on the identity of this church and its followers in the city of Miami, as well as portions of RQ2, which explores the changes experienced at the organizational level of the Santo Daime Miami church.

*B. Documents analysis.* The most meaningful document analysis this research contemplated corresponded to the Santo Daime hymns. Hymns, or more aptly, *hinários*, are the focal point of the Santo Daime ritual ceremony as well as the principal form of the doctrine's transmission. The "force" accessed via the consumption of the ritual ayahuasca sacrament is harnessed and integrated by individual ritual participants into a collective

“current” through the shared singing of these hymns (Dawson 2014). The Santo Daime compendium of *hinários* comprises thousands of songs yet I have concentrated on just a few of them. This selection was made on the basis of the songs’ frequency (e.g. how many times they are played at each church during the length of the research), content (e.g. the theological tradition presented), and legacy (e.g. where they originated). Understanding this doctrine therefore requires the exegesis of Santo Daime *hinários*.

*C. Data Analysis.* My approach to the analysis of documents and texts (including interview transcripts) followed rigorous anthropological data analysis guidelines. This means that interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed for further analysis. In an effort made to quantify content in terms of categories, derived from the testimonies provided by informants, I utilized the coding techniques detailed in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (2009, 3).

Working with hard-copy transcriptions, interviews and *hinários*, I derived codes from the words and ideas presented by my informants. For example, I created codes when ideas, expressed in words and phrases became frequent, indicating an area of concern had merged. I also examined the transcriptions and tried to identify hidden meaning in them. Codes for each data point collected in interviews or documents were then grouped into categories addressing each of the research questions. To some degree, however, coding is a judgment call since we bring our subjectivities, our personalities, and our predispositions to the process (ibid, 7).

### *1.3 Researcher preparation, positionality, and qualifications*

Sometime in November 2010, while attending a Course in Miracles lecture at Unity on the Bay church in Miami, I befriended a woman who had participated in ayahuasca centered shamanic rituals in the Peruvian Amazonia. This person also happened to be a CDLC member, the only Miami Santo Daime church at the time. She told me, in glowing terms, how worshippers sang the most beautiful songs in this church and how deeply these simple songs moved them. This narrative drew my attention to the church. I had been trying to understand religion for some time and was disillusioned by my lack of progress in this endeavor. As far as religion is concerned, when I met this woman, I wore “two hats.” One was a religious non-faith-oriented approach typical of religious study programs. This approach highlighted phenomenology or the study of subjective structures of consciousness as experienced from a first-person viewpoint. The other one was more scientific, primarily centered on sociology and anthropology. While I felt these two approaches were not mutually exclusive, I was struggling with the experiential promise ostensibly offered by phenomenology. Even after my exposure to a vast repertoire of religious practices such as Zen Buddhism, Yoga, A Course in Miracles (ACIM), Vipassana meditation, and having read many books in the arts of transpersonal psychology (an attendant spiritual literature), I still felt I was getting nowhere as far as the subjective “experience” of spirituality was concerned. In addition to this, about a year before meeting this friend, I had gone through a very toxic divorce. My life was in disarray and I felt the need to find answers to my dreadful existential condition.

Obtaining permission to attend my first Santo Daime ritual required a long wait. At the time, and because of the illegal nature of ayahuasca in the U.S., the church was

very cautious about receiving new people. Several hurdles had to be cleared before one could participate in a Santo Daime ceremony in Miami. First, the process required the sponsorship by an inducted member of the church. Second, once the sponsor presented the name of the new candidate, a long waiting period followed. Finally, when the green light was given, the candidate was asked to participate in a new member orientation meeting, which, in my case, I completed with three other individuals who were seeking to experience Santo Daime as well. Because of the lengthy waiting period and my eagerness to experience the effects of ayahuasca, I decided to participate in a different type of ayahuasca ceremony that happened to be on offer at another Miami spiritual healing center. At this ceremony, which was conducted by a Peruvian shaman, I had an extraordinary and satisfying religious experience that included clear, unmediated revelations. Through this introduction I received my first taste of the ayahuasca religious experience. Two months after my initial application to participate in a Santo Daime ritual, I was invited by CDLC to participate in a “concentration” ritual. Just like my friend had described it, during this ritual I found myself engulfed by the effect of Brazilian music sung in Portuguese from the *hinários* (hymnals). The Santo Daime experience bolstered my conviction that the tradition had the answers I was seeking, so I began attending Santo Daime “works” on a regular basis as a “guest.” After a year and a half of attendance as a guest, in 2012, I decided to formally join the church by becoming a *fardado*, an officially inducted church member.

I understand that my outsider/insider positionality vis-a-vis the present study may influence various aspects of it, for example, the type of data collected or the way it is interpreted (Madison 2012). My positionality in the current study requires that I place

myself as another subject under observation (Madison 2012). Hence, I am not only the author's voice but also part of the story. I have a subjective voice; I write from a first-person perspective.

One important element regarding this postmodern way of carrying out ethnographic work is that the researcher must disclose his or her subjectivities and personal biases (Madison 2012). Positionality in my case forces me to acknowledge my own power, privileges, and biases. This is also understood as reflexivity, an inward gaze upon oneself. When this is done, we are accountable for our own research and who ultimately benefits from it. For me, my positionality is to be personally involved and to tell the story as I see it. In addition to that, I hope my work and findings contribute to the evolution of this church in America and beyond. In this sense, my positionality is rather activist (Madison 2012). Postmodernists contend that truth and knowledge are plural, contextual, and historically produced via discourses. There is no objective or subjective research. Put differently, I intend to direct my focus beyond subjective selves, understanding that my own subjectivity will inform me as I dialogue with others.

As noted earlier, this project builds upon my previous studies, though concomitantly drawing from a new spectrum of social theory to ask a different set of questions. Thanks to a Dunnick Fellowship in Religious Studies from FIU's Religious Studies Department, in 2014 I completed my first research on the Santo Daime church in Miami. My MA thesis attempted to answer what I viewed at the time as a serious form of resistance to assimilation in Miami. Since that time, I have conducted preliminary fieldwork in Brazil where I met both local *daimistas* as well as foreign inducted members participating in a three-week retreat. This work was undertaken during the summer of



2015 at *Céu da Montanha*, a Santo Daime church located in the hills of Visconde de Magua run by Padrinho Alex Polaris, an important church elder. In July 2018, I returned to Brazil to continue my preliminary fieldwork. At this time, I was privileged to have the assistance of Rosane, someone I had befriended during a previous trip to Rio de Janeiro in July 2017 to advance my Portuguese studies. This program, called “UF in Rio- Language and Culture,” was an intensive six-week Portuguese learning program administered by the University of Florida and financed by a Foreign Language and Area Study Fellowship (FLAS), U.S. Department of Education. Rosane took me to several religious places in Rio de Janeiro including *Céu do Mar*, the first Santo Daime church to be founded outside of *Céu do Mapiá*, led by Padrinho Paulo Roberto, an important church elder married to *Madrinha*<sup>7</sup> Rita, the daughter of Padrinho Sebastião.

I believe my previous fieldwork in Miami and preliminary fieldwork in Brazil greatly contributed to my doctoral dissertation research. Furthermore, my own participation as a bona fide member of the Santo Daime church in Miami significantly enhanced all aspects of my fieldwork. In addition to my advanced Portuguese proficiency, I am fluent in English and Spanish and therefore I was able to conduct interviews in these languages.

#### 1.4 *Summary of dissertation chapters*

This chapter: *Introduction and methodology*, describes the methodological instruments and research design, organized into three phases: research methods, data collection and analysis, and the researcher’s positionality. In this study—which is an

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<sup>7</sup> Female spiritual leader in the Santo Daime tradition.

inquiry into the interface of globalization, transnational migration, and religion with attention to the commodification of culture and production of identities within the context of late modern capitalism—I focus on the two Miami Santo Daime churches. The chapter claims the methodology used complements traditional anthropological qualitative methods including the exegesis or textual analysis of sacred *hinários*. Regarding my positionality, the chapter elaborates on my role of a researcher inducted into the Santo Daime tradition. It makes clear that my decision to actively participate in this study situates me as another subject, allowing me to provide testimonies and interpretations of my own experience.

*Chapter Two: Theoretical framework and literature review*, introduces the various conceptual themes underwritten by this dissertation. The first hypothesizes the contribution to the overseas expansion of Santo Daime by late modern tendencies such as religious transnationalism and globalization. The desire for exotic consumption of subaltern religions is considered with reference to theories about religious transnationalism and spiritual tourism. The second part examines secularization and pluralization's sway in setting up a suitable cultural stage for the reception of Santo Daime. Important lines of inquiry are the construction of identities, the development of a religious marketplace and the advent of New Age spiritualities. This chapter also introduces *bricolage*, a concept signifying cultural mixing used to bring theoretical rigor to this dissertation. Finally, the third part juxtaposes biomedicine and ethnomedicine in the context of Santo Daime's healing.

*Chapter Three: The localization and globalization of Santo Daime*, which relies on testimonies and primary sources including exegesis, is divided into two parts: the

history of the early church and the macro-social processes that led to the globalization of Santo Daime. The first part traces the history of the early Church culminating in the preeminence of the CEFLURIS group. This narrative details how CEFLURIS accelerated a proclivity for cultural mixing already present in the early Church and posits that such expression of bricolage was critical to the effectiveness of Santo Daime's international expansion. The role played by *padrinho comitivas* (entourages) in the formation of foreign churches is also highlighted. The second part discusses the contribution by socio-global processes to the globalization of Santo Daime. Critically among them is the impact of New Age and attendant ideas about the self. Finally, the late shift concerning cultural attitudes about the consumption of entheogens<sup>8</sup> is reviewed in the context of Santo Daime globalization efforts.

*Chapter Four: Feitio politics: The convergence of pre-modern and postmodern cultural productions*, combines the analysis of primary sources, exegesis, and testimonies to explore the ontological nature of the *feitio*, Santo Daime's most important ritual. This chapter is organized into three fundamental building blocks: the appropriation of the culture/nature discourse by Miami *daimistas*<sup>9</sup>, the deconstruction of the *feitio* and the politics of power concealed by this important ritual. The first block discusses how *daimista* interest in upholding the culture/nature binary is driven by postcolonial representations concerning the subaltern "other", including the rainforest. The next block

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<sup>8</sup> Entheogen ("that which reveals the divine"), is a chemical substance, typically of plant origin, that is ingested to produce a nonordinary state of consciousness for religious, spiritual, or shamanic purposes. The term was coined in 1979 by a group of ethnobotanists and scholars of mythology to replace the more popular yet imprecise and depreciative terms hallucinogens and psychedelics.

<sup>9</sup> Santo Daime practitioner.

sets the stage for a thorough examination and deconstruction of the feitio ritual. Finally, the last block makes the case that the feitio discourse, like all discourses, embodies certain interests. The chapter closes with a discussion identifying how those interests have been nurtured by the Santo Daime structure in Miami to generate religious capital.

*Chapter Five: Miami: A city of two churches*, which largely relies on testimonies, identifies two contrasting leadership styles in the Miami churches and pays attention to their impact on the church's receptivity. In addition, the difficulties which led to the creation of the second church in Miami, are examined within the purview of CEFLURGEM-AN. A similar comparative line of inquiry probes how access to material resources has both enabled and constrained the Miami churches' expansion efforts. The Church's receptivity challenges are further examined through the tensions found at the interface between Miami and the two Santo Daime churches. Miami's characteristics as a postmodern global city elucidate this discussion. On a related topic, the Santo Daime ritual is scrutinized, paying attention to its symbolic content and overall impact upon devotees. Finally, using ethnographic data, this chapter explores Santo Daime's healing efficacy and attendant production of identities.

*Chapter Six: The administration of power: Sacred and secular strategies*, uses ethnographic data to probe into various local and Brazil-oriented strategies by the two Miami churches. Extensive transcriptions from interviews of *daimistas* at both churches are introduced to support the different claims I make concerning these strategies. The principal sacred strategies reviewed by this chapter include the two leadership styles practiced by each church. The related ascendancy by CDNE within the organization and corresponding subordination of CDLC are also examined. This chapter also highlights

several important ritual interventions that support the argument that CDNE is firmly invested in changing traditional Santo Daime ways. Equally significant, a series of secular strategies implemented by CDNE indicate this church is seriously contesting established Santo Daime hegemonies. The chapter ends by addressing the apparent elitist character of Santo Daime, suggesting that Miami's own discriminatory practices are reproduced within the church itself.

The final chapter, *Summary and Conclusions*, includes two sections. The first briefly outlines the main points of each of the chapters and the second concludes the dissertation by returning to the three research questions that guided the study. Additionally, the second section describes a recent event that has once again shaken up the organizational dynamics and leadership of the burgeoning Santo Daime churches. While I contend that the charismatic leadership style found at CDLC caused the first schism leading to the creation of CDNE, the second Santo Daime church in Miami, tensions within CDNE resulted in another split and the formation of a third church. These intra-church and inter-church power struggles, conflicts, and resolutions in Santo Daime's Miami churches demonstrate the complexity of balancing institutional stability with continual growth and self-actualization.

## CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *Introduction*

This dissertation builds on and contributes to several key areas of emerging research in the literature of religion. Lines of inquiry include the complex relations among religious transnationalism, globalization, secularization, and pluralization; the fit between postmodern geographies and new religious movements (NRMs); as well as the effects of leadership styles upon religious institutions. Additionally, the dissertation explores the construction of identities in the context of religious rituals and symbolic healing; the organizing effects of a religious “marketplace;” the impact of New Age spiritualities on emerging NRMs; and the concept of *bricolage* as a synthesis for postmodern cultural dynamics. The emergence of power, both as conflict and as a strategy designed to increase religious capital at the Miami Santo Daime churches, is a theme considered throughout the dissertation and is explored using Max Weber’s understandings of charisma and bureaucracy (1922; 1946).

As I will explain, each one of these topics relates in more than one way to this dissertation’s three research questions. Firstly, religious transnationalism, globalization, secularization, and pluralization constitute macro-social processes targeted in research question (RQ) 1. Within this scope, the influence upon religious institutions and membership brought about by late modern tendencies such as globalization, secularization, and pluralization figure prominently. Significantly, these macro-social forces brought into existence the resurgence of the desire to consume the bizarre and mysterious. As discussed with reference to transnationalism and spiritual tourism, the

global traffic of subaltern spiritualities has also been propped up by essentialist ideas about the "other" (Appadurai 1996; Turner 1978; Said 1978). Similarly, this study argues that the homogenizing influences produced by globalization have produced identities of resistance and closure somehow confounding this process (Meyer, Birgit and Geschiere, 1999). Regarding the same research question, this study gives considerable attention to the New Age movement which includes Santo Daime among its constellation of traditions (Dawson 2013; Lavate and Pacheco 2011). In this context, the modern preeminence of the self (discussed in section 2.4.3.), a concept wholeheartedly adopted by new agers, is argued to have facilitated the international expansion of subaltern spiritualities to the global North (Hanegraaff 1998; Heelas 2008). From a human geography perspective this study also claims that Miami's characteristic as a transient and fragmented metropolis, lacking a deep-rooted identity (Nijman 2011; Croucher 1997; Stepick et al., 2009) also plays into the hands of new agers' desires since it mirrors their own fractured identities. Within the context of global neo-liberalism and attendant commodification of culture, the existence of a religious marketplace is presented in this study as an important micro-social process positively correlated to religious transnational flows to the global North. The "pick and choose" attitude promoted by this idea—by now wholly incorporated into the New Age ethos—is an example of market influences over postmodern spiritualities of life (Iannacone 1992; Rey and Stepick 2013) which this study views as worthy of consideration.

The central argument advanced as a plausible answer to research question (RQ) 2—dealing with the changes taking place in the traditional organizational structure of the Santo Daime religious tradition—derives from Max Weber's "routinization of charisma,"

an argument linked to his theory on authority and leadership (Weber 1922; 1946; 1947). The routinization of charisma involves the creation of formal structures and a stable matrix of norms, roles and statuses that enables religious groups to survive the death of its charismatic leader (see Chapter One, section 1.1.). However, more important to this study is the proposed argument that charisma and bureaucracy may produce two markedly different outcomes. This study theorizes that these two leadership styles may influence those religious institutions that have adopted them in diametrically opposite ways, either complicating or facilitating the adaptation process in the host community. Furthermore, should the resulting impact extend beyond administrative and ritual domains into the faithful, the same theory potentially provides answers to RQ3: what changes have taken place within the congregational (devotees) dynamics of the Santo Daime church in Miami and what do these changes tell us about modern, religious, identities? Additionally, certain arguments advanced as tentative answers to RQ1, such as the consumption of exotic religious resources or Miami's characteristics as a postmodern city, including the viability of a religious marketplace, are also proposed as theories pertinent to RQ2—on changes experienced at the organizational level of the Santo Daime Miami church. An inverted conception of spiritual tourism, that is, a tourism ostensibly promoted by the churches in the host country to visit “religious” sites in the country of origin is also considered. As Chapter Six argues, this new version of reversed tourism is part and parcel of a series of secular strategies promoted by Santo Daime Miami ostensibly designed to gain religious capital.

It is fair to assume that given their overreaching influence, all macro and micro social phenomena may either directly or indirectly affect the behaviors of the religious



participant. As indicated previously, plausible answers to RQ3 include the peculiar cultural character of Miami (Nijiman 2011; Croucher 1997; Stepick et al., 2009), the religious marketplace (Iannacone 1992; Rey and Stepick 2013) and the impact of two prominent leadership styles (Weber 1922; 1946). Considering this, this study proposes identity theory possesses the most solid arguments in connection to RQ3. In this sense, two perspectives concerning identities are considered: a macro-social identity model which focuses on broad population behavior in specific geographies (Bauman 1997; 2009; Giddens 1991) and a private, subjective, identity associated with religious membership (Beck and Beck-Gernshim 2009; Elliot and du Gay 2009; Turner and Oaks 1986) including attendant ritual undercurrents (Bowie 2000; Asad 1998; Comaroff 1985; Douglas 1966). Concerning the first category, this dissertation contends that postmodernity involves the deconstruction and reconstruction of the self as fluid, fragmented, culturally eclectic, and hybrid-like. I argue that the postmodern self matches an equally fluid, decentered, and eclectic architecture identified with postmodern spiritual symbolic resources, thus producing a natural fit between them. Regarding the second category, the literature on identity and ritual mediation allow us to make the case that rituals shape two identities, a personal and a social identity. To elucidate upon these dynamics, I propose the apprehension of personal identities and social identities be broadened to include a discrete spiritual identity within the personal category and a non-religious or secular identity within the social category. Also, by synthesizing macro-social identities with individual identities, this research proposes a more coherent and comprehensive understanding of the full impact of identities upon church followers.

My research proposes the use of *bricolage*, a term originally coined by Claude Lévi-Strauss, to describe the characteristic patterns of mythological thought. As he put it, it is a “science of the concrete” which attempts to “fit together,” to grasp the world as a network of relations and correspondences (Lévi-Strauss 1966). Notwithstanding, the bricolage metaphor moved beyond structuralism when post-structuralist researchers and scholars adopted it. In this new context, bricolage became “an approach to meaning-making” that challenges the basis of structural rationality. Specifically, it challenges the epistemological and ontological assumptions that the world has universal structures that exist independently of human rationalities. I use bricolage as a multivalent term, as a theoretical tool linking New Age and Santo Daime spiritualities to urban, modern social attitudes promoted by postmodernism itself. In this study, bricolage furnishes theoretical import to four variables: 1) the unlimited assortment of religious traditions classified under the “spiritualities of life” or the New Age rubric; 2) the bundle of diverse religions promoted under the Santo Daime canopy; 3) the religious pick and choose behavior displayed by certain delocalized individual *bricoleurs* in globalized urban centers; and 4) the postmodern willingness to combine symbols from disparate codes even at the cost of disjunction and eclecticism. In simple terms, bricolage is a metaphor which depicts the eclectic combination of disparate elements needed to form something new. I also claim that this theory acts as a unifying, theoretical force, tying the string of ideas supporting this dissertation’s claims. In this sense, bricolage reveals postmodernity’s homogenizing potency.

A final line of inquiry presently unexplored in the context of Santo Daime but examined in this work, focuses on emerging questions concerning power. Several issues

at the center of church practice including its religious ritual as well as the unfolding economic asymmetries within the U.S. Santo Daime community have triggered these new dynamics. Power, as a way to either attain or augment religious capital, has also been found to be an important element driving decisions at the religious, institutional level at the Miami-based Santo Daime churches.

## 2.2 *Globalization and religious transnationalism*

The internationalization of the Santo Daime church is unfolding on the coattails of a galloping globalization characterized by the disembedding of social relations and culture from their local referents and their re-circulation in new global networks and flows (Giddens 1991; Harvey 1990). Understanding the nature of the global social processes that led to the establishment of Santo Daime in Miami is critical to my research. For example, RQ1 precisely asks about the nature of the macro-social forces that have facilitated the migration of such an uncommon faith to the global North.

As this dissertation will attempt to show, the dynamics theorized by Giddens and Harvey, among others, have both enabled and problematized the understanding of the various processes involved in the incorporation of the Santo Daime church into the local Miami culture. Prominent lines of inquiry about Santo Daime's international expansion have typically centered on wider global socio-cultural topographies thus resulting in broad, generalized, findings (Dawson 2013; Goulart 1996; La Roque Couto 1989; Lavate and Pacheco 2011). However, as already stated, this study attempts to address these concerns by focusing on the church's interface with a singular geography. More importantly, this study emphasizes the ways in which city-specific, cultural

characteristics, have impacted Santo Daime's institutional and rank and file levels, as set forth in RQ2 and RQ3, respectively.

Transnationalism overlaps globalization but typically has a more limited purview. Whereas global processes are largely decentered from specific national territories, transnational processes are anchored in and traverse two or more nation-states. Starting with the well-known assertion by Victor and Edith Turner that "a tourist is half a pilgrim, and a pilgrim is half a tourist" (1978, 20), other scholars have argued that tourists may also travel for authenticity or in search of meaning and the experience of the transcendent (Winkelman 2005). In turn, pilgrims engage in leisure, consumption, and sightseeing activities and use the same infrastructure as tourists in their journeys (Cohen 1992; Coleman and Eade 2004; Preston 1992). Taking this as a cue, some researchers have engaged in the exploration of concrete and symbolic ways in which adherents travel and engage in transnational connections, and the way in which alternative religions and practices are embodied, imagined and lived by Westerners in everyday life in their home countries (Rocha 2013; Groisman 2013). Theorizing about religious tourism is important because Santo Daime's diffusion outside Amazonian geographies originated from the circulation of a singular type of traveler, namely visiting hippies from Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.

Spiritual tourism also adds to the construction of a "transnational imaginary" by foreign visitors, particularly when such tourists hold essentialized beliefs about traditional pre-modern culture and religion. Such a disjuncture between image and reality derives from what Edward Said (1978) referred to as the discourse of "Romantic Orientalism," that is, a nostalgic yearning for a pure and pristine past. Although

Orientalism usually refers to representations of the geography and culture rooted in large parts of Asia and North Africa, following Aparicio and Chavez-Silverman's reinterpretation in the form of "tropicalization" (1997), the concept has certainly expanded to include Latin America. Referring to what Mario Vargas Llosa calls *sed de exotismo* (thirst for the exotic), certain scholars claim this desire has created an Anglo-European market for Latin American cultural artifacts. Along the same lines, Graham Huggan argued that "while in the nineteenth century exoticism worked as a control mechanism to conceal imperial authority, in the late twentieth century exoticisms are the product less of the expansion of the nation than of the worldwide market" (2001, 15). Thus, cultural differences are now commodities for global consumption through tourism, shopping, and mediascapes.<sup>10</sup> The exotic cannot ever be fully part of the center, cannot be fully assimilated, since, once it does, it loses its "symbolic capital." Its appeal depends on its difference from the norm. Yet, some degree of cultural translation is necessary so that the exotic "other" can become somewhat familiar and thus consumed.

According to Lourdes de Assis and Labate (2014), two of CEFLURIS' structural features enabled the groundwork for Santo Daime's overseas expansion, *micibildade* (miscibility) and *psicoactividade* (psychoactivity). The idea of "miscibility" was originally proposed by Gilberto Freyre to explain the success of the Portuguese colonial expansion in Brazil (1964). This term essentially refers to the ease by which the Portuguese people mingle with other peoples and cultures. The term psychoactivity, on the other hand, refers to the central importance of the psychoactive beverage, which in

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<sup>10</sup> According to Arjun Appadurai, mediascapes refers to the world as presented through, or perceived by, the mass media.

the case of Santo Daime, has attained the status of sacrament. Miscibility makes the movement theologically porous and capable of adapting to different cultures, localities, and religious concepts, permitting various arrangements and bricolage of beliefs, while psychoactivity gives Santo Daime an enchanted, exotic, and mysterious aura (Lourdes de Assis and Labate 2014). It also situates Santo Daime as a choice within the realm of psychedelic or shamanic tourism, responding to people's search for altered states of consciousness (ASC), alternative therapies, exotic peoples, and voyages into nature (Lavate and Cavnar 2014). Reinforcing the assertion made by Victor and Edith Turner, the initial contact with hippies and backpackers is seen by various researchers as foundational in the internationalization of Santo Daime (Dawson 2013; Lourdes de Assis and Labate 2014).

The literature on religious transnationalism discusses religious tourism as a multivalent act intended to accomplish several goals: worship; search for meaning; experience the transcendental; achieve social and spiritual salvation; commemorate and celebrate certain religious events; and ensure authenticity. On the other hand, viewed as pilgrimage the discussion shifts to issues related to leisure, consumption, and sightseeing (Turner 1978; Cohen 1992; Coleman and Eade 2004; Preston 1992). However, religious tourism may also be initiated as a project subordinated to distinct secular interests. Such is the case, for example, when two different faiths, churches, or spiritual communities, engage in transnational religious pilgrimage in the context of secular alliances and attendant interests. This form of religious tourism merits our attention since it is currently under practice by CDNE. When this occurs, religious pilgrimage may continue to offer the same benefits to its participants except that it ceases

to be a spontaneous, strictly sacred, event. Instead, because of the alliance factor, religious tourism runs the risk of being perceived as an orchestrated worldly event principally moved by secular, self-serving institutional relationship objectives. Practiced as such, the church sponsoring religious tourism runs the risk of losing religious capital.

Specific factors associated with globalization, however, have drastically transformed the dynamics underpinning personal and institutional relations worldwide. As David Harvey has theorized, due to the ease of international travel and proliferation of telecommunication technologies, a marked acceleration in a secular trend of time-space compression in capitalist political economy has become a central aspect of modern human connectivity (Harvey 1989). Thus the “distance” between the Amazon rainforest and the constellation of Santo Daime international centers has narrowed to such a degree that now Amazonian culture and its symbolic productions can be swiftly visited and appropriated.

### *2.2.1 Idiosyncratic differences and adaptation*

Andrew Dawson’s *Santo Daime: A New World religion* (2013) is generally descriptive of the cross-border journey undertaken by Santo Daime. Beyond this book, contemporary articles and dissertations on the internationalization of Santo Daime have been produced by Balzer (2005), Groisman (2003), Lowell (2013), Lourdes de Assis and Labate (2017), Matas (2014), and MacRae (2004).

Both Lowell (2013) and Matas (2014) converge in the claim that the expansion has attained limited success. Paradoxically though, these authors believe, the founding community of *Céu do Mapiá* is now thoroughly dependent upon the results of the limited expansion for its survival. In a more recent piece, Lourdes de Assis and Labate (2017)

presented a more comprehensive view of the internationalization of Santo Daime, covering the contradictions inherent in the process of expansion. In their work, the authors emphasize an element which “favors growth and promotes differentiation and conflict” (ibid, 68) and an opposing one “which contributes towards religious self-reflection and produces integration and shared identity” (68). The former assertion refers to the “way various Daime churches develop idiosyncratic differences” (68) such as the Nordic and Celtic mythology by the North European churches and the effect of illegality on the internal organization of religious groups. From a slightly different perspective, this argument has been made anew in this work.

Lourdes de Assis and Labate (2017) also link the spread of Santo Daime overseas to the advent of New Age religiosity. The argument they posit is that a new decentering of religion and consciousness is taking place on a global scale. Referring to this religious expansion, Huggan and MacRae point to the tensions produced by the process of cultural translation, reaching two different conclusions. Huggan (2001) argues that the asymmetric characteristic of this expansion is skewing the process against the global South due to the superior power wielded by the global North. MacRae, on the other hand, highlights *brasilidade*<sup>11</sup> as a powerful element for the consolidation of the church overseas. For example, he claims language plays an important role in the process of hybridization and the spread of *brasilidade* across regions (ibid, 37). These issues are contemplated by this study’s first research question, which is intended to flesh out and

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<sup>11</sup> Brazilianness, the quality of being Brazilian.



give substance to those micro-global social processes that work to confer Santo Daime appeal.

From a slightly different perspective, Max Weber theorized the vicissitudes spanning beyond the birth and subsequent growth of religious organizations. He formalized his perspective using two key authority/leadership concepts: charisma and bureaucracy (Weber 1946). As previously noted, Weber pointed out that unless the death of a charismatic leader is followed by the implementation of a more rational, i.e., bureaucratic type of authority/leadership the viability of the church in question could be compromised.

These two leadership styles are best appreciated when compared based on authority's salient characteristics: loyalty, leadership style, governance, and cohesion (Oakes 1997). Thus, under the charismatic model, loyalty, for example, relies on the interpersonal and personal allegiance and devotion by devotees. In contrast, the traditional/bureaucratic order requires that loyalty be informed and guided by instituted rules (Oakes 1997; Kunin 2003). Concerning leadership style, the charismatic model presents a clear "ruler and followers" dichotomy. In contrast, the traditional/bureaucratic leadership style requires that forms of social conduct and/or rules be created (Oakes 1997). Additionally, while the charismatic leader governs by conjuring extraordinary qualities and exceptional powers, the traditional/bureaucratic leader governs on the basis of acquired or inherited (hereditary) qualities and/or by virtue of rationally established norms, decrees, and other rules and regulations (Oakes 1997; Weber 1947). Finally, if cohesion tends to be emotionally unstable and volatile under the charismatic model, the

traditional/bureaucratic model guarantees cohesion through the feeling of common purpose and rule abiding (Oakes 1997).

### 2.3 *Identity considered*

This study proposes that certain types of group-based ritual practices might act to partially mitigate and, in some cases, directly undo the braking of traditions associated with the process of globalization. I argue that the rituals under consideration may, depending upon certain group dynamics, disrupt the renovating effect of the “secular” aspect of oneself, while simultaneously promoting the “spiritual” aspect of self-reinvention.<sup>12</sup> These rituals inform participants, on one hand, how to preserve or slightly modify existing secular or social identities and, on the other, how to actively transform spiritual or personal identities. Although this opposition may not be consciously apprehended, these two identities coexist together and serve to inform and guide ritual practitioners, albeit often in confusing ways. However, this should not be surprising particularly since the ritual space is a contested terrain as well as a site of disjuncture, rupture, and contradictions. In what follows, I first offer a brief comparison between modern and postmodern identities, followed by an analysis of social identity theory. I conclude with an examination of how rituals habitually mediate postmodern identities paying special attention to the Santo Daime ritual.

#### 2.3.1 *From modern to postmodern identities*

The modern identity had two key elements: 1) to be like the other people within a group and 2) to categorize outward phenomena, such as race or even the clothes worn. In

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<sup>12</sup> These two aspects of an individual’s identity may be thought of as a “social” identity (“we”) and as a “personal identify” (“I”), respectively.

other words, the modern individual was imbued with a fixed identity, i.e., he or she had a feeling of being part of a wider group and several broader associations, yet at the same time, feeling unique. This person was an agent, a unique individual with an identity (Best 2003). According to Zygmunt Bauman (1997), in the postmodern world, identity is becoming reconstructed and redefined, beyond these two key elements.

In the modern world, the problem was how to construct and maintain an identity to secure a place in the world. Such was the case because in the modern world the avoidance of uncertainty was an individual problem (Bauman 1997). Thus, by creating a fixed and secure identity the modern person attempted to make the world more ordered and more predictable (Bauman 1997, 2009). In contrast to this, the problem of identity in the postmodern world is one of avoiding a fixed identity. The postmodern individual keeps his or her options open, avoids long-term commitments, and commits to no one. In place of a life project which modern people loyally adhered to, the postmodern individual chooses to have a series of disjointed, brief, life projects (ibid).

In terms of identity, postmodernity encourages the deconstruction and reconstruction of the self as “fluid, fragmented, discontinuous, decentered, dispersed, culturally eclectic and hybrid-like” (Elliot and du Gay 2009, xii). Furthermore, identity, in the post-traditional world of the postmodern, becomes principally performative, depthless, playful, and ironic (Elliot 2004). Likewise, traditional practices, the anchor of pre-modern societies as well as all early phases of modernization, take on a radically different condition, what Beck and Beck-Gernshim call “reflexive modernization” (2009). For these authors, this means that traditions become less secure or taken for granted because, as he puts it, the production of identity is something that becomes more

and more open to choice, scrutiny, debate, and revision. This is an identity process these authors call “individualization” (ibid). Similarly, for Giddens, identity today has become increasingly reflexive. In other words, self-identity takes the form of a process that depends upon the monitoring of, and reflection upon, possible life paths (Giddens 1991). According to him, any information collected about the self and the world is not simply incidental to experience and everyday life but is rather constitutive of what people do, who they think they are, and how they “live” their identities (ibid). The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social habits are constantly being examined and reconstructed in light of incoming information about those behaviors, ultimately altering their character (ibid).

On this subject, Elliot and Lemert contend that there is an expanding “new individualism” globally, one which requires incessant self-building and self-design (2006). Today, this is nowhere more evident than in the pressure wielded by consumerism to “transform” and “improve” every aspect of the self (ibid). What are the broader social forces that sustain this new individualism? Elliot and Lemert suggest three key institutional features impinging upon people’s emotional experiences of globalization: consumerism, neo-liberalism, and privatization (ibid). Therefore, the new individualism is first and foremost a consequence of the very insidious effect of a progressively encroaching globalization. In smashing apart traditional national boundaries, globalization ironically offers people the kind of “absolute freedom” to do whatever they like. The irony is that the “everything goes” dictum lacks a moral compass and therefore feels like an unsettling force upon the individual. Instead of finding ourselves, we lose ourselves (ibid).

### 2.3.2 *Social identity theory*

Social identity is the portion of an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group (Turner and Oaks 1986). As originally formulated by social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and the 1980s, social identity theory introduced the concept of a social identity to explain intergroup behavior (1979). Social identity theory suggests that an organization can change individual behaviors if it can modify the individual self-identity or part of the self-concept that derives from the emotional attachment to the group (ibid).

In the first place, this theory argues that human interaction ranges on a spectrum from being purely interpersonal on one extreme to purely intergroup on the opposite end. A purely interpersonal interaction involves people relating entirely as individuals, with no awareness of social categories. On the other hand, a purely intergroup interaction is one in which people relate entirely as representatives of their groups. It is argued that moving from the interpersonal to the intergroup end of the spectrum results in shifts in how people see themselves and each other (Tajfel and Turner 1979). At the interpersonal end of the spectrum, people's self-concept mostly comprises of attitudes, memories, behaviors, and emotions that define them as idiosyncratic individuals, distinct from other individuals. This is referred to as a "personal identity." At the intergroup end of the spectrum, self-concept mostly comprises one's "social identity," defined as those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he or she belongs (Tajfel and Wilkes 1963). In other words, one's personal identity or self-concept is driven by idiosyncrasies and attitudes detached from group influence, while a social identity only exists in reference to the in-group. Given this understanding, it may be

assumed that idiosyncratic, spiritual identities are formed at the interpersonal end of the spectrum while social identities are formed at the opposite end through subjective apprehensions concerning the in-group. For example, an individual may be led to perceive his group as conservative, traditional, and informed by modern values or, alternatively, as progressive and influenced by postmodern ones. Thus, one single group experience such as a group spiritual ritual creates two distinct yet interrelated types of identity.

Working from the social identity perspective, Reicher, Spears, and Postmes argued that anonymity—such as the indistinctiveness experienced by the military dressed in uniforms—weakens the relative contribution of one’s personal identity to self-concept and increases the relevance of one’s social identities (1995). This, so called, “deindividuation” was interpreted not as a loss of identity, but rather as a shift in identity from the personal to the social level. The consequence of this is that people became more sensitive and responsive to contextual norms, which may be anti-social or pro-social (Postmes and Spears 1998). This point reinforces the above affirmation concerning the influence and effectiveness highly structured rituals may have upon the construction of social identities.

### *2.3.3 Body identity and ritual purity*

From a different and more concrete perspective, anthropologists have identified three, symbolically coded, personal domains relevant to the formation of identities: the body, social boundaries, and ritual purity (Bowie 2000). In this context, Talal Asad claims that we experience our bodies first on an individual level, as an intricate part of ourselves, defining who we are; second, as a social construction, used symbolically and

made subject to cultural modification and; thirdly as the body politic by which bodies are controlled both at the individual and collective levels (Asad 1998). Likewise, Mary Douglas (1973) has shown how the physical body can act as a symbol of group identity, implying that human body boundaries are a metaphor for the boundaries of the group. Thus, the body becomes a mediator between personal experience and the social material world. On this issue Giddens is not silent: “the reflexivity of the self extends to the body, where the body is part of an action system rather than merely a passive object” (Giddens 1991, 77). Deducing from social identity theory concepts, the body therefore reflects both a personal identity as well as a social identity. In this manner, the body becomes instrumental in maintaining, contesting, and negotiating private, religious as well as social, secular identities.

In one example of body identity negotiation, Jean Comaroff argues that for the Tshidi Barolong of South Africa, Zionist Christianity, a form of religion, the body constitutes a powerful vehicle of resistance (1985). In this regard, Comaroff maintains that the body is viewed as a mediator between personal experience and the social material world. Furthermore, Comaroff claims the way in which ritual adherents choose to dress is another way of expressing identity. According to her, outer clothes are visible and therefore carry public messages and constitute significant points of reference (ibid). Put differently, discourses surrounding clothing provide an arena for the negotiation of who and what we are (Douglas 1966; Bowie 2000).

Ritual purity, a condition necessary for participation in certain religious rituals, is another identity marker closely related to the body. According to Douglas (1966), if a group or society tries to control the physical body it is almost certainly attempting to

control and define purity and identity. Accordingly, the body, social boundaries, and ritual purity provide a space for the negotiation of who and what we are. But this is not all, as this study will attempt to show. Identity markers in ritual spaces such as music, locality, sacred objects as well as culturally appropriated foreign ideas, may also contribute to sustaining a differentiated personal identity. For example, Santo Daime sustains intense forms of spirituality through the inducement of altered states of consciousness while simultaneously relying on conventional symbols displayed at the ritual space. This may very well craft a differentiated influence upon ritual adherents. Should said ritual, for example, rely on extensive body control through culturally conventional dressing, the sustenance of gender differences driven by patriarchal beliefs, and an authoritarian style such as military formation and so on, it may indeed develop a corresponding conservative secular attitude at the social level with certain participants, but not necessarily at the spiritual level. In this way, identities and ritual action meet dialectically either affirming or transforming individual selves in more than one direction. It would remain up to the individual ritual participant and not to the ritual itself in this case how to properly integrate those contrasting secular and spiritual influences. Within the context of religious transnationalism, we now move from the domain of individual identities to an examination of broader social identity categories.

#### *2.3.4 Deterritorialization and malleability of postmodern identities*

The allure of *brasilidade* by Brazilian alternative spiritualities and practices is apparent by the fact that in many cases most overseas participants are local; not tied to a particular diaspora as it is generally the case (Groisman 2013; Sarevia 2013; Rocha 2013). Yet, in most cases involving Brazilian alternative spiritualities, the leaders are



Brazilians—a fact that ostensibly produces a sense of balance to an otherwise asymmetrical transnational relationship.<sup>13</sup> This tendency however, does not seem to apply to the Santo Daime churches since local U.S. (including Miami) leadership is markedly non-Brazilian. However, after *Céu da Lua Cheia* moved to Fort Lauderdale, it has been receiving more Brazilians. This can be attributed in part to the new location's proximity to the large Brazilian diaspora in Deerfield Beach (see chapters 5 and 6 for more details).

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the global circulation of religions not tied to a diaspora or to immigration has been theorized as “transnationalization from below” (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). Transnationalism from below has been conceptualized in two main ways, either as a circulation or flow of people and/or goods across national borders or as the formation of a social field composed of multi-directional networks that transcend national boundaries (Frigerio 2003). In the study of transnationalism and religions, research focusing on the “circulation” model is usually concerned with the disembedding of religious beliefs and practices from the local settings in which they originate and their repositioning or reappearing in another national context (Argyriadis and de la Torre 2008). This can happen because of the migration of their adherents or because interested parties from cross border locations travel to the birthplace of the religion to learn from them, or a combination of both (Oro 1999; Juarez Huet 2004). Occasionally the ideas of deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Capone 2004; Dianteill 2002) or delocalization and relocalization (Vasquez and Marquard 2003; de la Torre 2009) are used to bridge or describe these processes. Also, to explain the relative

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<sup>13</sup> For example, both the Umbanda *terreiro* in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and the *Uniao de Vegetal Church* (UDV) in Boca Raton, Florida are led by Brazilians.

success in the transnationalization of one religion over another, analysts pinpoint the characteristics that help them “travel well” (Csordas 2007; Matas 2014).

Studies that focus on the second perspective above emphasize the establishing of “social fields” and “social spaces” across national borders. Expanding Mahler’s concept of transnational social fields, Levitt has made the claim that movement is not a precondition for “transnational activism.” In its more far-reaching form, individuals within this group do not move yet they still live within a context that has become transnationalized (Levitt 2001). According to Levitt, such individuals ultimately retain a sense of belonging to a diasporic group. Borrowing from Ulrich Beck’s concept of transnational social spaces (2000), Victor Roudometof (2005) claims that such spaces are considerably broader than Mahler’s transnational social fields. Describing such social spaces as being constituted by routines such as calls, faxes, emails, satellite TV broadcasting, simultaneous media access through Internet, and international tourism, Roudometof claims that transnational social spaces do not require international migration (ibid). Complementing the insights furnished by transnational social space theory, a comprehensive understanding of the Santo Daime church’s arrival to Miami demands a familiarization with the social dynamics taking place in that city. This is examined in section 2.4 below, and specifically in section 2.4.2.

Before leaving this section, a few words about the work of Arjun Appadurai (1996) concerning “imagined communities,” a concept developed by Benedict Anderson (2016), is in order. In *Modernity at Large*, Appadurai argues that the work of the imagination is a central feature of modern conceptualizations of identity (1996). Implicit in his work is a theory of relation that takes media and migration as its two major and

interconnected features and explores their joint effect on the work of the imagination as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity. This relationship is of paramount importance for the understanding of the forces that presently shape globalized geographies such as Miami. Mirroring Durkheim in his compelling vision, Appadurai claims imagination to be a collective “social fact.” In his own words, “The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact and is the key component of the new global order” (Appadurai 1996, 31). Appadurai’s vision is not only persuasive but also very applicable to the understanding of the plight of people who find themselves unconnected with particular places but are still faced with burning questions about who they are.

In the following pages I argue that in the context of advanced globalization, social relations in Miami are, by and large, constituted by transient and de-localized identities in search for solutions to their uprooted conditions. Admittedly, the arguments presented in this section criss-cross through this study’s three research questions. Starting from the impact produced by larger social processes (RQ1), passing through institutional transformation (RQ2), and finishing with the effect on the identity of ritual participants (RQ3), Santo Daime is uniquely affected by the multidirectional flows brought about by globalization.

#### *2.4 Imprints of modernity: secularization and pluralization*

A grand debate in the field of religious and socio-cultural studies concerns the relation between religion and the secular condition of modernity. The ideas of Max Weber (1905; 1922; 1946) and Emile Durkheim (1912) have dominated contemporary debates over secularization. Driven by the age of Enlightenment’s belief that there was an underlying order to the world that could be understood through the use of the rational

faculties of men, many researchers during the 1950s and 1960s believed that the world was becoming increasingly secular. As noted earlier, Max Weber assumed that the foremost trend in Western society was towards increasing rationalization. He felt that social progress involved a move away from traditional, localized, and sentimental ways of life towards an ordered, bureaucratic, and rational state characterized by centralized control. Rationalization, he predicted, would lead to a progressive “disenchantment” and, ultimately, to a world in which religion would no longer play a role in public life. Given his more expectant assessment of religion, Emile Durkheim had a view that was far more optimistic for the survival of religion as a social force. Religion, he argued, enhances feelings of social solidarity, and therefore would never lose its social significance. Instead he maintained, “there is something eternal in religion that is destined to outlive the succession of particular symbols in which religious thought had cloaked itself” (Durkheim 1912, 322). These perspectives are very relevant to the present study because they set the religious, sociocultural stage for Santo Daime’s internationalization and later for the launching and subsequent transformation of the two Miami churches. As such, they directly speak to the macro-social processes mentioned by RQ1.

Scholars have attempted to deal with the complexities of secularization mainly by explaining the reasons behind it. These explanations include: 1) the development of authority guided by secular reason; 2) sociocultural differentiation in which religion is thought to be driven from various institutional domains such as the economic and the political; 3) pluralization or the loss of faith in the face of multiplicity; and 4) the existence of a religious economy or religious marketplace. With this in mind, the ideas of Weber and Durkheim continue to dominate the recent literature on secularization.

Bryan Wilson (1966) and Roy Wallis (1998) for example, are explicitly Weberian in orientation while Rodney Stark, Grace Davie, and Charles Taylor, exhibit elements of Durkeimian thought. In 1966 Brian Wilson defined secularization as “the process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance” (1966, 14). In other words, authority shifts from religion to the domain of institutions grounded in rational principles, particularly the legal, economic and the political.

Today, only a minority supports the view that gradual secularization is taking place (Demerath 2007; Tschannen 1992; Chaves 2017). However, Wilson’s interpretation leaves the possibility open that people nevertheless remain interested in religion for personal reasons, that religion continues to exist in a privatized fashion. Also, using a Weberian logic, Roy Wallis rejected the conclusion that the increase in cult movements in Europe signaled an increase in religiosity (1998, 497). Challenging “rational choice theory” he said that religious affiliation could not be the product of rational choice because religion has always been associated with irrationality in Europe (ibid).

Unlike Wilson (1966) and Wallis (1998), Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge (1985) followed a far more Durkheimian theoretical approach. They assumed that religion had an enduring function and that it would always be needed. These analysts saw religion as a social universal that is more or less constant and rejected the notion that it would be inexorably removed from the public sphere over time. Like Durkheim, these authors believe that religious innovation and renewal was inevitable. For Stark and Bainbridge, for example, religion is an enduring phenomenon because of individual need for “compensators” (1985). Religion, they said, offers reward in the form of compensators which are rewards that are accepted as a matter of faith. They suggested

that religion arises through basic social exchanges which are economical in nature and suggested a sort of religious dialectic akin to the behavior of actors in the economic marketplaces whereby people attempt to gain rewards and avoid costs. Furthermore, they believe that science alone does not offer satisfying rewards to individuals.

Rather than insisting on the secularization debate—decline or persistence—a third group of scholars focused on the increasing diversity of the religious landscape. Peter Berger (1967; 1999) and Grace David (1999), two major scholars within this group, have identified pluralism, diversity, and fragmentation as a more fluid way of thinking about religion today. Likewise, using his Weberian logic, Wilson used the contemporary proliferation of NRMs to argue that religion is becoming increasingly private, and often a less authentic affair. On the other hand, and taking a Durkhemian perspective, Stark and his associates invoked NRMs to argue for the persistence of religious innovation. In contrast to Berger, Stark (1997) argued that pluralization encourages growth. Drawing from his religious economic theory he claimed that catering for the special needs of the pluralistic society, religions “create demand” by virtue of being in a competitive market environment. As explained earlier, tying this argument to Beck’s thesis of reflexive individualization, Elliot and Lemert (2006) contend that consumerism, neo-liberalism, and privatization are key institutional features underpinning globalization. In conditions of advanced globalization, they argue, peoples’ language for expressing individualism is more and more fixed into the syntax of possession, ownership, control, and market value. There exists, they suggest, a pathological, fixation on instant change (ibid).

Secularization, pluralization and particularly the diversity and fragmentation which characterizes the latter can be thought of as the micro-social processes mentioned

by RQ1. They are partially responsible for the rise of NRMs and for the ascendancy of New Age spiritualities, Santo Daime's natural religious backdrop. This study argues that, depending upon the focus of analysis, the Santo Daime Miami churches are examples of both Max Weber's and Emile Durkheim's theses as well as Peter Berger's perspective on late modern institutional diversity.

#### *2.4.1 The religious marketplace*

The onset of secularism and socio-cultural pluralism brought about by modernity engendered the permanent presence of competition across the religious landscape (Berger 1967). According to this trend, religious ex-monopolies can no longer take for granted the allegiance of their client population. Allegiance is voluntary and thus, by definition, less certain. Laurence Iannacone portrays "religious markets" as being shaped largely by consumer demand; markets in which local churches compete with one another and the consumers act rationally in the religious market "so as to maximize their net benefit" (1992, 124). However, scholars such as Steven Bruce (1990; 1993) and Robertson (1992) challenged the assumption that economic rationality provides a useful model for understanding religious beliefs and behaviors. Bruce for example asserted, "by ignoring culture, the economic approach produces such a distorted view of religious behavior that the only context in which it could be viable is a thoroughly secular society" (1993, 194). Robertson (1992), on the other hand, questioned the neoclassical-economic assumption of rationality itself. Relying on Bourdieu's vision of society as being constituted by various "fields," he asserts that behavior is rather the product of an encounter between a habitus and a field (ibid). Or, as Rey and Stepick put it, choosing a church is "dictated at least as much by 'practical sense' and inclined as much by habitus and collusion as by rational

calculation” (2013, 16). Drawing on Bourdieu again, I claim that, to the extent that postmodern life has been thoroughly commodified, and, given the ease with which pick and choose attitudes have been generally adopted by new agers, market-like behavior has become nonreflexive and normative. This is supported by Giddens’ claim that, “because of the openness of social life today...commodification has rendered lifestyle choices increasingly important in the constitutions of self identity and daily activity” (1991, 5). Put differently, by virtue of the fact that New Age or “spiritualities of life,” as the various traditions within the movement are sometimes referred to, emphasize experience, they are seen as providing a “product,” namely, experiences for consumers (Bruce 1990).

Accordingly, the idea of a religious marketplace cannot be discounted at face value, and due attention must be paid at least to the metaphors spun by this concept. This is particularly the case now, given the increased commodification of ayahuasca in the last few years (Pollan 2018). This issue, incidentally, points to the heart of RQ1: What micro and macro global, social processes, led to the establishment of a Santo Daime church in Miami? As ayahuasca incorporates commodity like codes and values, the Santo Daime church may be pressured to differentiate itself from other competing sources, just as other secular institutions do when participating in a competitive marketplace. Should this idea propagate, Santo Daime may be swiftly drawn into contemporary popular culture practices and be forced to fashion itself in more simple and accessible ways through marketing gimmicks such as personal branding.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>The increase in use of the social media platform Instagram by leaders of the Miami churches is perplexing. While Instagram's stated purpose is to enable users to share images or videos with their audience, the platform is mostly used as a tool for personal advertising and self-promotion. This need for self-marketing seems to be at odds with Santo Daime values including the idea of harmony with our natural surroundings.



#### 2.4.2 *Miami: disenchantment within a global city*

Miami provides an ideal site to inquire about the production of religious identities given the complexities of late modern secularization and pluralization. As some scholars have posited, Miami exemplifies the crisis and complexity of late modernity (Croucher 1997; Nijman 2011; Stepick et al. 2009). Drawing principally from these scholars this study illustrates how Miami's unique cultural characteristics have transformed the institution of Santo Daime itself as well as its disciples. This argument, which rests on the ideas of secularization and pluralization, is central to RQ2 and RQ3, respectively.

Under postmodernity, mainstream institutions, not least those of traditional religion, have failed to provide meaning and values of existential import (Giddens 1991). Those afflicted are forced to treat themselves and their own experiences as the primary source of significance thereby fashioning nothing less than a new identity for themselves—away from externally based authority claims—in the process. Certain scholars like Peter Berger have defined this existential state as a “hard to bear...homelessness” (1974, 73-5). Earlier, others like Max Weber depicted this phenomenon as an “iron cage” leading to the “disenchantment of the world” (2004).

This lack of identification with their urban surroundings by significant sectors of the population as an aspect constitutive of late immigration patterns is a central argument of *Religions Crossing Boundaries* (Adogame and Spickhart 2010). In this work, the authors claim that the shedding of old identities necessary to become American practiced by migrants under the “Ellis Island Model” no longer applies. Under this outdated model which views acculturation dynamics similarly to the “melting pot” model, people move permanently to their host countries. Unlike past immigration dynamics however, these

researchers claim most contemporary migration is best conceived as the creation of delocalized peoples, who must craft new identities that correspond to their delocalized situation (Adogame and Spickhart 2010). While the ensuing geographies of segregation and rupture seem to counter the homogenizing tendencies of globalization, there is much empirical evidence to support the production of counter cultural heterogeneity (Meyer and Geschiere 1999; Appadurai 1996). The plight of Muslims living in the West provides a useful example of this predicament. In this regard, Oliver Roy introduced the term “new sectarian communitarian discourse” by which he means a cultural attitude which advocates multiculturalism as a means of rejecting integration into Western society (Roy 2004, 2).

Miami has been featured as a case in point of a city that mirrors this post-modern predicament. This city has been described as a place where identities are no longer attached to place. Croucher, for example, refers to Miami as a city inflicted by an identity crisis in the face of rapid social, political, and economic change (1997). According to this author, this is due in part to the city’s intractable problems associated with ethnicity, race, and cultural conflicts (ibid). Nijiman, on the other hand, stresses Miami’s “transience” quality while also emphasizing its important status as a hub between North and South America (2011). In his view, Miami is a world city—meaning a city product of globalization—and as such, it tends to be the destination of many domestic and international migrants. He warns, however, that while transience depends on the transnational and national circulation of people, it is not the same as immigration. According to the author “very few people here seem to plan a permanent stay. For most, the city is merely an interlude in their unfolding lives” (ibid, 118). This is consistent with

the metaphor of Miami as a hotel: people check in, have a good time, and when finished, proceed to check out. Miami's population is also well known for its liberal ethos, which may be a determining factor for the cultivation of Santo Daime's novel/exotic practices and underlying ideologies (Nijiman 2007).

The existential dilemma facing Miami certainly requires a solution because people need a sense of belonging and need to know who they are. According to Adogame and Spickhart (2010), religion can provide this sense of belonging precisely because the identity it confers is not based on place but on religious affiliation. Borrowing from Benedict Anderson's classic study on the origins of nationalism, *Imagined Communities* (1983), Adogame and Spickhart argue that many delocalized immigrants inhabit "transnational imagined communities" (2010). According to these authors, "transnational imagined communities—involves the transnational migration, but not just the migration from one physical place to another. It involves a community of deterritorialized migrants, united by their religious identities" (ibid, 17). Furthermore, in terms of Lévi-Strauss's theory, these de-localized individuals could be thought of as *bricoleurs*.

As this research has found, this set of global cultural and place-specific characteristics act as a magnet of attraction for religions that promote the sacredness of the self and furthermore, differentiate themselves by their bricolage of beliefs (Altglass 2014; Heelas 1996; Labate et al. 2016). Santo Daime belongs to this group (Labate 2014; Dawson 2007; 2013), and it is on this basis that this study will argue that Santo Daime is in a unique position to assist this process through its symbolic healing practices. Having said this, Santo Daime is not exempt from conflict. It is not surprising therefore, to witness internal division within this church in a way that mirrors Miami's cultural

conflicts and economic inequalities. In addition to this, within Santo Daime a culture of competition is visible, particularly in the symbolic realm. The strategic importance and prestige conferred by the *feitio*, the ritual where the sacred *daime* is produced, is an example of this competitiveness (see chapters Four and Six).

#### 2.4.3 *The “turn to self”: New Age spiritualities*

Facilitating the international expansion of the Santo Daime tradition and concomitant transformations taking place in Miami, this study suggests, resides in the influence of the New Age movement—an umbrella designation with origins in the occult traditions of the nineteenth century (Hanegraaff 1998; Heelas 2008; Patridge 2009). As explained in the preceding sections, the New Age movement acts as another referent providing clarity to the three dimensions examined by this study: the macro-global social processes which made possible Santo Daime’s arrival to Miami (RQ1), the changes in the organization’s traditional structure (RQ2) and the impact upon church adherents (RQ3).

A very animated debate among religious studies scholars and philosophers concerning the appraisal of New Age as a bona fide religion has been underway for some time. This debate is significant for the current research, not the least because it addresses the important question about the role New Age plays in the maintenance and development of immanentist spiritualities such as Santo Daime, but also because it critically questions the future development of all religious forms. Paradoxically, both sides of the debate seem to be making their claims on the same set of assumptions about modernity. Hanegraaff (1998) for example, has put this debate into stark relief by insinuating that New Age is a form of critique of Western culture. He claims New Age is

a synthesis of dualism and scientific discourses in the West, exemplified by dogmatic Christianity and scientific rationalism, respectively.

The foundations of New Age, also known as spiritualities of life, are generally thought to include the following tenets: experience becomes the sole authority; the human is identified with the divine; loyalty to a tradition is wholly abandoned and; belief in the unity of humanity is replaced with belief in the unity of all life. New Age locates the sacred within the self and nature, rejecting the idea that the spiritual is essentially different from what lies within the very order of things. Paul Heelas, who belongs to the group that validates New Age as an authentic religious expression, for example, conceptualizes the movement as the “celebration of the self” and the “sacralization of modernity” (1996, 28-29). As noted earlier, the preeminence of the self, or the “turn to self,” is not only a core New Age subject but also happens to be a defining characteristic of the modern identity (explained in Section 2.3. Identity considered). In a similar argument, after making the case that modern identity is “particularly differentiated and individuated,” Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner (1974, 73-75) go on to connect plurality, another marker of modernity, with the “turn to self.” Following these authors, Thomas Luckmann explained the same principle in the following way: “The span of transcendences is shrinking. Modern religious themes such as self-realization, personal autonomy, and self-expression have become dominant” (1990, 138). Adopting a contrarian view, Steve Bruce (1996) argues that interest in “alternative religions” remains “minute” and insignificant. To make matters even more complicated, the New Age movement has unearthed the old idea of two types of selves: the ego-self and the “higher

self,”<sup>15</sup> the latter being the one associated with the “divinity within,” which is sometimes called the “true self,” the “observing self,” or the “witness.”

Several authors have placed the Santo Daime religion under the New Age rubric (Dawson 2007; 2013; Lavate 2014). They have pointed out that many of those joining Santo Daime have experienced some form of committed involvement with the alternative religious scene. In Dawson’s opinion, this New Age belief is complemented by certain “orchestrating principles” reflective of the experience and beliefs of the urban-professional constituency dominant across the church. Agreeing with the idea of a supreme self, Dawson claims the most significant orchestrating principle is the subjective valorization of the individual as the ultimate arbiter of religious authority. These considerations have led Dawson to suggest that the landscape of late-modern urban-industrial society has more weight than the Amazonian context in which the *daimista* repertoire was first constructed (2013, 40-41). While Dawson correctly accentuates the significance of the modern “turn to self” as constituting the spiritual locus of Santo Daime devotees, I would propose some additional reasons. Namely, by virtue of the fact that the religious architecture of the Santo Daime doctrine incorporates a bricolage of conflicting spiritual traditions, their particular canon has necessarily become universalized. That is, the religious symbols associated with the various faiths, the sum of which constitutes Santo Daime, have become open to interpretation. Thus, the question

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<sup>15</sup> The higher self has been described by various names: non-dual awareness, the unmanifested, absolute subjectivity, emptiness, presence, or witness. This “nonexperience” however, is what actually gives rise to the sensory world wherein the “lower self” exists. The sensory world or the realm of time and space only stands as a psychological and social construct. It is what Hindus call “maya” or illusion. This is so because the apparent subjectivity of the self exists only in the plane of relativity but vanishes in the absolute.

whether these traditions are conversant with one another is no longer relevant. As explained before, a singularly important postmodern feature is a “willingness to combine symbols from disparate codes or frameworks of meaning, even at the cost of disjunction and eclecticism” (Heelas 1998, 1-18). This internal theological rupture is an example of the effect of the postmodern condition upon the Santo Daime church.

To summarize, among the perspectives circulated by New Age is the centrality of the self. This perspective constitutes an important ontological, modern, shift, leading to the sanctification and to the empowering of the individual within his existential space (Heelas 2008; Hunter 1996). Equally significant in this work is the pick and choose attitude from assorted yet mutually disconnected religious traditions with which new agers construct their own private, customized, subjective religious worlds. According to some scholars, this improvised and free-floating new epistemology is also maintained by continual bricolage (Altglass 2014; Cupitt 1998; Heelas 1996; Jenks 1992).

### 2.5 *Bricolage: theorizing cultural fusion*

Santo Daime’s answer to the postmodern identity crisis rooted in Miami is to present Miami new agers with a spiritual architecture tradition based on fluidity and mixing. While several authors have referred to the doctrine of Santo Daime as being syncretic (Dias 1972; MacRae 1992; Guimarães 1992; Soibelman 1995; Dawson 2013), a few have used bricolage only superficially. As I explain below, syncretism, and its cognate expression creolization, present certain limitations as explanatory models for Santo Daime’s religious architecture.

Syncretism is an elastic term that describes a wide range of practices characterized by the mixing or overlapping of traditions. It has become a debated and

controversial category in the study of religion because it has as a prerequisite the idea of natural difference. Syncretism assumes a special “essence” shared by people with a common genealogy (Leopold and Jensen 2004). This implies that foreign ethnic religions are impure, having become a crossbreed of several religions and practices. Various theorists have revisited the past and re-appropriated the term through a positive reevaluation of the political significance of mixture (Stewart 2007). Roger Bastide, for example, differentiated between various categories of religious syncretism in the Caribbean, among them: 1) mosaic syncretism based on the opposition and cohabitation of African and Catholic derived elements; 2) institutional syncretism, which attempts to reconcile Christian and African religious observances; and 3) syncretism by correspondence, whereby a symbiosis between an African deity and a Catholic saint takes place (1971). This latter usage is perhaps the most popular and it is used, for example, to describe *La Regla de Ocha*'s (popularly known as Santería), juxtaposition of Christian and African Yoruba traditions. Syncretism therefore reflects the static effect of dual systems (Stewart 2014) while encompassing a unifying religious paradigm (Leopold and Jensen 2004). As a result, the term syncretism does not necessarily reflect Santo Daime's eclecticism.

While the closely related term creolization stands as a better fit, the term presents problems of a different order. Creolization was first used in the Americas to refer to native-born persons of European ancestry and evolved to distinguish those African slaves who were born in the Americas or *criollos* to those African-born contemporaries (Stewart 2007). However, Melville Herskovits (1941) challenged prevailing assumptions regarding the survival of African influences by claiming that African culture had survived



and indeed thrived. Further to this development, Édouard Glissant (2005) invested the term with cultural fluidity by expanding the multiple metaphors of creolization. He presented a new creole identity, highly flexible and adaptable, elevating the term from an ontological model of being to a historically and geographically situated concept (ibid). Likewise, with globalization, Rahier admits that creolization has undergone a remapping of interpretations: “Creole, creolized and creolization have been used numerous times in different places and by different people, to refer to very diverse populations and cultural institutions” (2014, 10). Stephan Palmié (2006), however, questioned the proliferation of these metaphors beyond linguistic applications to other discourses on culture. He does not agree with the newly found flexibility of the term to depict a transglobal identity where everyone is creolized (ibid). Finally, as characterized by Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, “creolization as a concept can never be neutral; its very semantic origins force us to confront issues of power, race, and history” (2011, 8).

The term *bricolage*, associated with Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966), describes the characteristic patterns of mythological thought. As he put it, it is a “science of the concrete” which attempts to “fit together,” to grasp the world as a network of relations and correspondences. In simple terms, *bricolage* is a metaphor which depicts the eclectic combination of disparate elements needed to form something new (Edgar and Sedwick 2008; Johnson 2012; Lévi-Strauss 1966). While Lévi-Strauss’s use of the *bricolage* metaphor was part of a structuralist project, his articulation of it has been influential beyond structuralist circles.

It should be noted that the procedure used to introduce new spiritual traditions into the Santo Daime repertoire is far removed from other well-known paradigms of

cultural mixing and therefore resembles bricolage. Contrary to hybridity or syncretism, the incorporation of each new spiritual practice into the Santo Daime repertoire is neither planned nor culturally negotiated. They appear as total improvisations based on the personal preferences of *padrinhos* (church leaders). For example, in 1974 when he joined the Santo Daime church, Padrinho Sebastião added to the existing spiritual collection the practice of mediumship—derived from his experience with the renowned Umbanda medium, Baixinha. Likewise, in the last few years, Padrinho Alex Polari has inserted into the mix Buddhist elements simply because they happen to resonate with him. In short, this study claims, the construction of the Santo Daime’s institutional religious repertoire is the product of deliberate individual picking and mixing and, as such, reveals a lack of any overarching doctrinal strategy.

As noted earlier, the bricolage metaphor moved beyond structuralism when post-structuralist researchers and scholars adopted it. According to Rogers, in this new context, bricolage became “an approach to meaning-making that challenges the basis of structural rationality. Specifically, it challenges the epistemological and ontological assumptions that the world has universal structures that exist independently of human rationalities” (2012, 3). This new interpretation of the use of this term has been credited to Jacques Derrida and specifically to a lecture he delivered at John Hopkins University in 1966 entitled “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (1993). Derrida admired the reflexivity and abstract analyses of structuralism but argued that these discourses had not gone far enough in treating structures as free-floating (or “playing”) sets of relationships. In particular, he accused structuralist discourses of holding on to a "center": a privileged term that anchors the structure and does not “play.”

Whether this center is "God," "being," "presence," or "man," Derrida said, its function is the same—the history of structures is a history of substitutions, one center after another, for this constant position. Derrida suggested that this model of structure would end and that a newer and freer (though still unknown) thinking about structures would emerge (ibid). In this manner, Derrida opened the door for the conceptualization of bricolage as “free-floating.” That is, devoid of a fixed center and like the way the multiplicity of distinct religious traditions converges to form Santo Daime’s religious architecture.

As already outlined, a major postmodern theme is a disposition to mix symbols from dissimilar structures and contexts producing in the process alternative meanings. This study has also conceptualized this cultural mixing as bricolage. Starting from a macro perspective—including globalization, postmodernism, and New Age spiritualities—and continuing with a micro perspective that includes Santo Daime and Miami city dwellers, bricolage cuts through these conceptual and physical planes providing a unifying principle in my work.

In the first place, individuals in contemporary society increasingly craft their religious life and identity by picking and choosing from a variety of religious traditions. This tendency has been called bricolage (Altglass 2014). Furthermore, Chandler, reinforced this impression by claiming that, “the practice of bricolage can be seen as operating through several key transformations: addition, deletion, substitution and transposition” (2007, 206). Significantly, this footloose attitude is also a key theoretical postmodern concept. In a succinct characterization of postmodernity that deserves full citation, Heelas notes the following postmodern features:

1. A refusal to regard positivistic, rationalistic, instrumental criteria as the sole or exclusive standard of worthwhile knowledge.
2. A willingness to combine symbols from disparate codes or frameworks of meaning, even at the cost of disjunction and eclecticism.
3. A celebration of spontaneity, fragmentation, superficiality, irony, and playfulness.
4. A willingness to abandon the search for over-arching or triumphalist myths, narratives, or frameworks of knowledge (1998, 1-18).

In accordance with the above, and observing what happened to religion after the certainties of modernity vanished, Don Cuppitt asserted, “metaphysical realism has come to an end, and our whole worldview has become much more pluralized, pragmatic, free-floating, and maintained by continual bricolage, or improvisations” (1998, 8). Jencks (1992) completed this description by suggesting that postmodernity represents the end of a single worldview, the celebration of the local and the heterogeneous, the plurality of voices and meaning, the patchwork, pick and mix, and the pastiche. The structure of Santo Daime closely mirrors this postmodern logic. Specifically, Santo Daime’s religious architecture is similarly formed by a vast amount of esoteric and religious traditions non-conversant with each other.

This study also theorizes the existence of a potential Santo Daime *collusio*. The idea of *collusio* was developed by Pierre Bourdieu to refer to a collective *habitus* (Rey 2007). It is a term used to define a group’s ideological common ground despite their individual differences. Rey and Stepick (2013) for example used *collusio* to describe the cohesion existing behind the various religious traditions practiced by Haitians in Miami. According to these authors, “we have come to believe that even though the forms of

worship in which Haitians and Haitian Americans engage are diverse and sometimes theologically and socially at odds with one another, there is a generally shared substratum of features that runs beneath this diversity and animosity” (ibid, 8). The reason why free interpretation and *collusio* can coexist with one another is because the former is consciously apprehended whereas the latter is the result of unconscious processes of integration of external social structures. Both, however, work in tandem to diffuse conflict and to establish harmony.

## 2.6 *Symbolic healing and ethnomedicine*

As previously indicated in this chapter, the receptivity of Santo Daime has been supported by the intensification and global circulation of “exotic” religious resources to the global North (Altglass 2014). In this regard and, borrowing from Bourdieu, Cristina Rocha argues that Western New Age and alternative medicine concepts of healing produce a disposition towards “traditional” healings from exotic lands (Rocha 2009). Essentially, traditional Western medicine is lodged in the concepts of disease/illness and curing/healing. These concepts reflect the classic Cartesian body/mind dualism (Erickson 2008). Thus, disease in the West is the medically defined pathology affecting the patient. Sickness is understood as the body’s physical reaction to disease and nothing else. This explains why biomedicine is exclusively focused on the physical bodily problems of its patients and the disregard for their subjective perspectives. On the other hand, ethnomedicine’s focus is precisely on the patient’s subjective component. According to Erickson, “many indigenous, traditional, and complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies are theoretically attuned to the broader notion of health implied in the term healing” (2008, 10). Under ethnomedicine’s practices the restoration of health draws

from philosophical or cosmological sources which view illness and healing beyond the physical body, incorporating the patient's spiritual side.

At the heart of any healing practice are metaphorical transformations of the quality of experience, from feeling ill to wellness, and the identity of the person, from afflicted to healed. The metaphoric logic of specific modalities of healing often follows from the associated model of affliction. When illness is understood as the result of mechanical or physical injury, as happens to be the case with biomedicine regimes, specific physical measures are usually taken. However, when illness is attributed to spirit attack, shamanistic practices are employed involving communication with, or journeying to, the spirit world to enlist the aid of spirit helpers. When a spirit comes to dwell within or possess the afflicted person, exorcism is carried out; where spirits or ancestors are offended, proper propitiation through sacrifices and offerings takes place; and when illness reflects an imbalance, which may be physiological, efforts are made to restore balance.

Western ideas of health and health therapies are presently suffering a dramatic transformation. To be sure, in this postmodern world the authority of biomedicine is coming to an end. Concurrently, ethnomedicine or CAM is quickly becoming a respected healthcare alternative (Erickson 2008). In addition to the soaring cost of biomedical health care, the erosion of faith in scientific medicine and increasing interest in other healing traditions and consumers' desire to have more control over their medical decisions is driving this trend (Erickson 2008; Sivén and Mishtal 2012). According to Arthur Kleinman, CAM traditions understand that illness is culturally constructed, implying that illness is a socially adaptive response to disease (1980). It not only

considers the psychosocial experience and meaning of a perceived disease, but also includes “communicating and interpersonal interaction, particularly within the context of the family and social network” (ibid, 72). These ideas are quickly gaining social acceptance in the West, principally among new agers.

Considering the preceding, it is not surprising to witness the global spread of ayahuasca healing, including Santo Daime ritual practices (Labate and Loures de Assis 2016). According to Foitiou, “what makes ayahuasca such an encompassing healing tool is the holistic approach of ayahuasca shamanism, its attempt to treat the whole person” (2012, 8). When augmented by the effect of altered states of consciousness (ASC), a transpersonal healing experience and sense of self broadens to wider dimensions of the psyche, including the cosmos (Sidky 2009). Noted Colombian scholar Luis Eduardo Luna, who, in one way or another, has been linked to ayahuasca research and empirical experience for over forty-five years, lays it all out in his paper entitled “Some Reflections on the Global Expansion of Ayahuasca” (2011). He notes, “ayahuasca in the contemporary world is a complex phenomenon and it’s here to stay. The genie is out of the lamp. He will not go back inside. The plants and even the brew can be acquired on the Internet with apparent ease and efficiency. *Ayahuasqueros* of all kinds are emerging as more people are exposed to the various traditions” (ibid, 125).

Not long ago, ayahuasca stood at the epicenter of an array of discursive platforms, ranging from environmentalists to neo-shamanism to the global debate raging around the politics of the illicit drug trade. Of course, ayahuasca is the sacred sacrament of the Santo Daime church, hence producing unforeseen ripples. Yet if ayahuasca was a substance deeply demonized twenty-five years ago, that is not the case today. In the last few years,

the world has witnessed a drastic reversal on the “war on drugs” instituted because of the moral panic surrounding psychedelics in the late 1960s. Today, after several decades of suppression and neglect, psychedelics are having a renaissance (Pollan 2018). New generations of scientists, many of them inspired by their own personal experience of the compounds, are testing their potential to heal mental illness such as depression, anxiety, trauma, and addiction (ibid). As a result, the Santo Daime community now finds itself essentially liberated from the controversial debate the sacrament had triggered during the early stages of its U.S. expansion. This reversal, which represents a micro-social process, has tended to facilitate and to further develop Santo Daime’s constellation of global relations. Closely tied to this is a growing discontent with, and cynicism toward, the healthcare industry regimented by “Big Pharma,” be it its products or services. This situation has pushed consumers to seek alternative healing treatments, including the exploration of the shamanic plant medicine universe. Furthermore, this new assortment of natural medicine is also sought for its psychedelic properties and attendant consciousness-expanding powers. CAM is therefore, revolutionizing the world, and should be considered another important macro-social process in the global spread of Santo Daime.

Various motives come to mind when assessing the purview and reach of ethnomedical systems either imbedded within or sanctioned by New Age traditions. Chiefly among these is the integrity of the self, defined as “neither substance nor entity, but an immediate capacity to engage or become oriented in the world, characterized by effort and reflexivity” (Csordas 1994, 5). In this sense, scholars have recognized that suffering has the potential to undermine the coherence of lived selves and create the



experience of internal conflict, disjuncture, or fragmentation (Seligman 2010; Gearin 2015).

Intimately related to the self resides the concept of embodiment. In the context of ethnomedical practices, Meintel and Mossière (2011) for example, have proposed the idea of the body as a locus of resistance to biomedical regimes. On the other hand, La Rocque Couto (1989), referring to the structure and self-control emphasized during Santo Daime rituals, led him to consider them “rituals of order,” promoting a search for harmony both within and without. To McGuire (1996), on the other hand, healing brings together and engages the body, mind, self, and society.

A third realm related to CAM forms of healing is tied to the symbolism built in religious ritual practices. Lévi-Strauss (1967) for example, argued that the transformation of healing involves a symbolic mapping of bodily experience onto a metaphoric space represented in myth and ritual. Building on Lévi-Strauss, James Dow (1986) has suggested that symbolic healing involves the mapping of personal problems onto a collective mythic world through emotionally charged symbols. The emotion evoked by the symbols then ensures that their manipulation generates corresponding transformations of patients’ illness experience. Finally, CAM systems researchers have highlighted the crucial significance created by social and group energy typically found in the context of shamanic rituals and the like (Dow 1986; MacRae 1992; Sidky 2009; Wiedman 1990). Ethnomedicine practices help people modify their activities in the world according to symptoms, and it is this reorientation of their lives that constitutes healing. As a symbolic healing system, Santo Daime mirrors these concepts.

### 2.6.1 Amazonian healing: the Santo Daime “work”

The literature on the Santo Daime ritual, or *trabalho*<sup>16</sup>(work), as it is typically referred to, has been approached from various perspectives. Mariana Pantoja, an anthropologist, and Osmildo Silva da Conceição (1996), an Amazonian rubber tapper, offer a historical perspective on the use of ayahuasca among laborers engaged in the extraction of rubber from the *hevea brasiliensis* (the Pará rubber tree) in the valley of the Upper Juruá River, in western Acre, Brazil. This location, as well as the extracting activity, are significant because it was here that the rubber tapper Irineu Serra was introduced to ayahuasca. These authors’ perspective expresses not only a religious ethos, but also the rubber tappers’ political struggles, pointing to the intersection between politics and religion.

Moving away from this stand-alone work, a series of scholars have conducted ethnographic work on the Santo Daime ritual. On the Brazilian side, La Rocque Couto (1989), Arneide Cemin (2010), Beatriz Labate, Sandra Goulart (2010), Edward MacRae (1992) and Monteiro da Silva (1983) stand out as the most prolific researchers in the field concerning this literature. On the non-Brazilian side, the work produced by Andrew Dawson (2013), and the Master thesis by Jonathan Lowell (2013) and Alfonso Matas (2014) stand as contemporary, examples of the deconstruction of the Santo Daime ritual. As a group, these researchers agree about the uncharacteristically regimented quality permeating the Santo Daime work. Thus, for Monteiro da Silva (1983) the ritual is a search for order in the physical plane while for Couto (1989), in contrast, a cosmological

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<sup>16</sup> Job; work. The name given to the Santo Daime ritual in which the daime is offered as Eucharist. A synonym for ritual.

order is stressed. Like da Silva's (1983) position, he maintains the Santo Daime ritual is different to inversion rituals, notwithstanding its "performativity" aspects. By stressing orthodoxy, Lowell (2013) also adheres to the regimented characteristic of Santo Daime. Leaving the military-like comparisons aside, Cemin (2010) and Dawson (2013) also discuss the many forms taken by the Santo Daime ritual, including the *feitio*. Beyond this, these scholars evidence different research orientations and theoretical inclinations regarding the Santo Dame ritual.

Cemin (2010) for example, explains the original Santo Daime ritual as developed by *Mestre*<sup>17</sup> Irineu, which adheres to Marcel Mauss's concept of body techniques whereby the symbolic life of the spirit is produced at the intersection of the physical, the psychological, and the sociological. On a different note, Monteiro da Silva (1985) considers that the rituals are of great importance for the permanent creation and legitimatization of the doctrine of this religious group. In his opinion, the Santo Daime ritual is a great ritual of transcendence and cleansing; and the "plausibility structures" of the religion, understood as "expedients through which human groups try to render empirical reality acceptable" (ibid). From a different perspective Couto (1989) argues that the Santo Daime ceremony is different from inversion rituals (carnival, for instance) because *daimista* rituals push the system towards structure. By hypothesizing the importance of orthodoxy concerning the Santo Daime ritual, Edward MacRae (1992) situates the Santo Daime ritual in a broader context. He notes how certain, apparently unimportant, details often cause an irritation among newcomers who frequently suggest

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<sup>17</sup> Master.

altering the ritual. Finally, Edward Dawson views the ritual space as a dynamic arena characterized as much by “fluidity and contestation as by fixity and hierarchy” (2014, 3). From Foucault’s insights, he characterizes ritual participants as being regimented and disciplined.

To conclude, ritual sensitivities not only channel the followers’ experience in important ways, but they play a key role in defining individual and collective identities. When amplified through the use of entheogens, they reinforce the social, spatial, and temporal distinctiveness of participants’ individual and shared experiences while providing, ideology, order, social control and meaning to their existences.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE LOCALIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION OF SANTO DAIME

### 3.1 *History of the early church*

Santo Daime followers consider 1930 the year their doctrine was founded. That was when Raimundo Irineu Serra, a corporal in the Territorial Guard, opened his ayahuasca *trabalho* (work) to the public in Rio Branco, capital of the state of Acre in northwestern Brazil. According to MacRae (1992), Serra had previously undergone a long initiation period involving many years of learning alongside indigenous users of ayahuasca in the frontier region between Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia. Described as a very tall black man, he was born December 15, 1892 in São Vicente do Ferré, Maranhão, Brazil. His parents, Sanches Serra and Joana Assunção Serra, were of humble origins, descendants of slaves who lived from the cultivation of the land. At the age of 19, he and others were lured by the dream of amassing an easy fortune as rubber tappers, and Irineu Serra migrated to the Western Amazon in 1912.<sup>18</sup> He settled down at first in Xapuri for two years and then moved on to Brasiléa where he worked for three years on rubber plantations. He then proceeded to Sena Madureira where he lived for another three years. During this period, he also worked as a civil servant for the Border Commission, a federal government agency tasked with mapping out the Acre frontier with Bolivia and Peru (MacRae 1992). During those years in the Amazon forest, he acquired a deep

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<sup>18</sup> Estimates on the exact numbers of interregional migration in the rubber boom vary, but the scope is clear: according to the sources discussed in Santos, between 300,000 and 500,000 migrant Brazilian nordestinos tried their luck in the Amazon between 1872 and 1910. Many of them headed for the *seringais* of Acre. In the Purus valley, the non-indigenous population increased from about 8,000 in 1877, the great drought year, to some 60,000 at the turn of the century (Meyer 2014).

understanding of the local *caboclo*<sup>19</sup> population and its culture. At one point in time, he befriended the brothers Antonio and André Costa—two black men who also came from his hometown. One of several narratives regarding Irineu Serra’s first encounter with the ayahuasca brew—another being alongside the Tukano Indians—depicts how he learned about this drink through his interaction with these two brothers.

Although there is little reliable information on the subject, there are indications that the Costa brothers founded *Circulo de Regeneração e Fe* (Center for Regeneration and Faith - CRF) in the town of Brasiléia, Acre some time during the 1920s. Raimundo Irineu Serra also belonged to this group. The organization of CRF—considered today by scholars to have been a forerunner to Santo Daime—obeyed a hierarchy design following military ranks ranging from "soldier" to "marshall" (MacRae 1992). Historically, however, the Northeastern Brazilian “military ethos” I associate with Santo Daime holds its roots in the efforts by the Brazilian government to deal with the socio-economic effects engendered by the “rubber boom” and its later collapse in 1912. It developed principally as the Brazilian government sought to incorporate into its own politico-economic system a forgotten geography undergoing rapid and violent changes, the origin of which was the international capitalist penetration the rubber boom was attracting (Stanfield 1998). As Cemin asserts, “the military base, the military model, ultimately, everything that was constitutive of territoriality and thus identity of the Brazilians in Acre” (1998, 95) had a broad cultural impact in the region. Also, per Labate and Pacheco,

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<sup>19</sup> The term *caboclo* has come to refer to a person of mixed Brazilian Indian and African or European ancestry, which is the dominant racial mix of most of the contemporary mestizo populations living along the waterways in the Brazilian Amazon basin. And, additionally, in some religious traditions *caboclos* refer to spiritual entities from the forest.  
[http://afamiliajuramidam.org/english/personal\\_accounts/jairo\\_carioca.htm](http://afamiliajuramidam.org/english/personal_accounts/jairo_carioca.htm)

“Santo Daime at its origins also valued the ‘civilizing’ role of the military. Thus, the *fundamento* (wearing uniforms), hierarchy, discipline, as well as other Santo Daime principles are associated with the territorial conquest and militarization of social relations in Acre” (2011, 79).

Santo Daime emerged in response to this social turmoil as tens of thousands of unemployed rubber tappers abandoned the idle rubber tapping concessions in the forest to seek employment in Amazonian towns. In this context, early daimista communities can best be described as alternative social formations to the chaotic city environment overrun by landless and unemployed rubber tappers; a kind of halfway house between the *seringais* (a grove of trees yielding rubber) and the new urban life style (Labate and Pacheco 2011). Nestled in this interpretation, Santo Daime is seen as an adaptive cultural system, or rite of passage, for rubber tappers expelled from the Amazonian rain forest. In Labate and Pacheco’s view, this assistance was somewhat broader, “the resulting syncretic religion is thus characterized as an ‘individual and collective shamanic trance’ that mediates between Amerindians and Afro-Brazilian culture, and between rural (forest) and urban life” (ibid, 73).

These early historical narratives disclose a central cultural propensity in the Church: the mixing of pre-modern/modern elements which, as I noted, was rooted in the cultural milieu existing at the time Santo Daime came into existence. In other words, Santo Daime’s proclivity to cultural mixing became an adaptive response to the existing social conditions. More significantly, the blending of elements from different epochs and cultures would later prove to be useful in advancing the Church strategies in an ever-increasing multicultural milieu. For example, the mingling of the constitutive Santo

Daimê spiritual parts played a decisive role in shaping the Church's future evolution, including its turn towards globalization. As this dissertation posits, the intersection of the traditional with the modern, the ancient with the contemporary, and the primal with the new, were associations deeply assimilated by this religion. In a way, they became permanent structural features permeating, in various degrees, the Church's future development as well as its identity.

Probably the most emblematic and powerful historical event informing the history and development of the Santo Daimê church was the apparition of the Virgin Mary instructing Raimundo Irineu Serra to form a church. According to CEFLURIS' Norms of Rituals, "Senhor Raimundo Irineu Serra had the vision of a Lady who appeared to him in a great light, in the form of a moon, inside the forest. In this vision, she identified herself as the Virgin of Immaculate Conception, the Queen of the Forest, and the Mistress of the teaching of this spiritual lineage" (de Melo 1997, 3). The instructions received by Irineu Serra required his unwavering participation in the production of a series of *hinários* (hymns). Given that Irineu Serra was an illiterate Afro-Brazilian, the symbolism of this event is extremely profound. It indicates that, in typical New Age parlance, that Serra's poetry was "channeled."

### 3.1.1 *O Cruzeiro*

Between 1935 and 1971, the year of his death, and while living in Rio Branco, Irineu Serra composed *O Cruzeiro* (The Cross), a compendium of 128 single hymns in one single *hinário* (hymn-book),<sup>20</sup> becoming the sacred testament of his mission. Master

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<sup>20</sup> The first part of Mestre Irineu's *hinário*, *O Cruzeiro*, contains hymns up to number 116. After an interval of 11 years he channeled hymns 117 through 128, which are known as *Cruzeirinho*.



Serra connected the Virgin Mary with the moon and Jesus Christ with the sun. He also conceived the Virgin of Conception as the spirit of Mother Earth, “*a Mae Criadora*” (the creator mother). He Christianized the uses of ayahuasca without negating the deep reverence that the local Amazonian indigenous had for the spirits of nature. As noted earlier, from the very outset, Santo Daime emerged as a religion willing to negotiate a series of disparate traditions deeply rooted in Brazilian culture. With the passage of time, this study will show, Santo Daime progressively became more inclusive of other traditions, thus creating an ever-expanding mystical quilt or a bricolage of religions and esoteric beliefs. Furthermore, as Chapter Two suggests, these early characteristics, including the trend to assemble or bring together distinct traditions under one canopy, placed Santo Daime squarely in postmodern territory.

Given the conditions that led to the foundation of Santo Daime, it is not surprising that *O Cruzeiro* works as an exaltation of the female symbol. In this text, the Divine Mother is treated with much reverence, respect, and devotion. She is looked upon to confer forgiveness and consolation, as one of the stanzas in the first hymn “received” or channeled by Irineu Serra titled *Lua Branca* (White Moon) clearly reveals:

<i>Oh! Mae Divina do curacao</i>	<i>Oh! Divine Mother of the heart</i>
<i>La nas Alturas onde estas</i>	<i>There in the heights where You are</i>
<i>Miha Mae la no Ceu</i>	<i>My mother, there in heaven</i>
<i>Daime o perdao</i>	<i>Give forgiveness</i>

(Raimundo Irineu Serra, *O Cruzeiro*)

The devotional worship of the Virgin Mary, including the various female forms she adopts, is an integral part of the Santo Daime doctrine. By having her transmute into different female deities, the manipulation of her image satisfies the need to have a female

archetype represented in Santo Daime’s principal religious axis, i.e., the indigenous, the Afro-Brazilian and the Catholic strands. Thus, references to female deities are encrypted in many of the hundreds of hymns used ritualistically. The Virgin Mary is strongly associated with *philia*. In *A Rainha me Mandou* (The Queen Told me), his 8<sup>th</sup> hymn, Master Irineu Serra sings:

<i>A Rainha me mandou</i>	<i>The Queen told me</i>
<i>Eu rezar para os meus irmaos</i>	<i>To pray for my brothers</i>
<i>Para Ela la no Ceu</i>	<i>So that She, there in heaven</i>
<i>A limpar meu curacao</i>	<i>Can cleanse my heart</i>

(Raimundo Irineu Serra, *O Cruzeiro*)

### 3.1.2 Dominant groups

Santo Daime encompasses several largely independent religious groups but only two of them stand out as the most significant ones. The first and oldest one is “*Alto Santo*” which is geographically restricted to the State of Acre; the second one is CEFLURIS.<sup>21</sup> Alto Santo was among the first daimista centers in the region. It is located in a rural neighborhood on the periphery of Rio Branco, capital of Acre state, which borders Peru and Bolivia in the westernmost portion of Amazonian Brazil. After the passing of Irineu Serra in 1971, Madrinha Peregrina Gomes Serra, Irineu’s widow, founded one of several Alto Santo factions (the “Alto Santo lineage”). Another group was founded by Padrinho Luis Mendes (deceased in 2019) who together with his son

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<sup>21</sup> CEFLURIS was founded in 1974 in *Colonia Cinco Mil* (Colony 5,000). However, in 1988 this organization was “re-founded” when Céu do Mapiá became the national headquarter of the Church led by Padrinho Sebastião. The greater purpose behind this move was the consolidation of all the Santo Daime groups belonging to this lineage, including newly formed overseas groups (CEFLURIS-AN, Working Draft Copy, October 2003). To separate the religious from environmental responsibilities CEFLURIS further reorganized into ICEFLU (Church of the Eclectic Cult of the Universal Flowing Light, in English) and IDA (Institute of Environmental Development, in English). For practical purposes, this dissertation will use interchangeably the term CEFLURIS and Santo Daime to refer to Padrinho Sebastião’s lineage.

Padrinho Saturnino became very active within the network of comitiva trips to the global North.<sup>22</sup> Although the Alto Santo faction does not reflect the “original” Santo Daime religion as founded by Master Irinu, it should be noted that all Alto Santo factions claim to maintain an orthodoxy in the tradition of Mestre Irinu (Lavate and Pacheco 2011, 80). What Alto Santo has done throughout its enduring institutional life is to have preserved a certain purity not found in other groups formed after the death of Irineu Serra. According to Meyer, for example, daimistas at Alto Santo regard the adoption of Santo Daime by countercultural, middleclass, southern Brazilians as a cultural usurpation since it upset the web of local negotiations sustained by the Church through the death of Irineu Serra in 1971.<sup>23</sup> Given *daimistas*’ emphasis on moral reform and civic participation, a special concern for Alto Santo has been the danger of ayahuasca being profaned by association with countercultural drugs (Meyer 2014). In his comment Meyer specifically refers to the use of cannabis, a substance that would be adopted into ritual use in later years by CEFLURIS. Another matter of contention within the early Church was the practice of ecstatic trance. According to Labate and Pacheco, the Alto Santo tradition “vehemently

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<sup>22</sup> Today, this Santo Daime center is known as Centro Eclético Flor do Lótus Iluminado (Eclectic Center of the Illuminated Lotus) - CEFLI, whose founding patron was Mestre Conselheiro, Mr. Luiz Mendes do Nascimento, with headquarters in Capixaba - Acre, Fortaleza Community, and branches in Brazil and abroad.

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted, Alto Santo is only one of several dissident groups founded after the death of Mestre Irineu in 1971 which, contrary to CEFLURIS, remained firm to the original tradition. With the exception of CEFLI, the following groups never expanded beyond the state of Acre: Centro Luz do Firmamento Raimundo Ferreira (CLFRF-Centre Light of the Firmament Raimundo Ferreira), lead by Mr. Loredó, who is the first dissident in 1972; Mr. Francisco Fernando (Tetéó), who left the CICLU in 1981; Centro Rainha da Floresta (CRF- Centre Queen of the Forest), João Araújo Facundes, Presidente; Centro de Iluminação Cristã Luz Universal Juramidan (CICLUJUR- Centre Lighting Christian Lighting Center Juramidan Universal), Ladislau Nogueira, Presidente and, Centro Eclético Flor de Lótus Iluminado Maria Marques Vieira (CEFLIMMAV- Centre Lighting Lotus Flower Eclectic Center Maria Marques Vieira), José Silva e Souza, Presidente. Reference: Rio Branco. Secretaria Municipal de Meio Ambiente. Plano de Gestão da Área de Proteção Ambiental Raimundo Irineu Serra. Rio Branco: SEMEIA, 2013, p. 211).

criticized the practice of incorporation as a perversion of the teachings of Mestre Irineu (2011, 83). From my own experience, I can attest that Alto Santo considers heretical the trance and spirit incorporation practices that have permeated modern Santo Daime rituals since the death of Irineu Serra. During a trabalho I participated in 1993 at *Céu do Coração do Texas*—the Austin-based Santo Daime church—Padrinho Luiz Mendes personally warned me about the dangers associated with spirit incorporation.<sup>24</sup>

As already noted, the most important Santo Daime faction, however, is CEFLURIS *Centro Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal Reimundo Irineu Serra* (The Reimundo Irineu Serra Eclectic Center of the Flowing Universal Light). As I will discuss in the following pages, CEFLURIS' distinction stems from the fact that it singlehandedly spearheaded the internationalization of Santo Daime. At this point, however, I would like to draw the reader's attention to the term "eclectic" found in the Church's given name.

### 3.1.3 *Santo Daime's spiritual bricolage*

This qualifying term renders normative and boosts CEFLURIS' inclination to continue to introduce new religious traditions into Santo Daime's original repertoire. The theoretical framework laid out in Chapter Two, discusses at length the significance of this heterogeneous spiritual "minimalism," which today appears as a permanent fixture of the identity of Santo Daime. Bricolage also works as a cultural marker. As argued in Chapter Two 2.5, Santo Daime's tendency to adopt disparate ideas at the risk of internal incoherence is actually one of the hallmarks of postmodernity: the fragmentation of authority and the disappearance of any grand narrative, including religious ones.

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<sup>24</sup> This doctrinal dispute has been explained in the context of accusation among various groups concerning the practice of *feiticiaria* (sorcery) and *macumba* (black magic) (Goulart 2005).

CEFLURIS' predisposition to combine new religious traditions began in earnest as the Church first expanded to Brazilian urban centers and eventually, overseas. The man at the center stage of this was Sebastião Mota de Melo, a former disciple of Irineu Serra. As a consequence of Mestre Irineu's passing, and on account of the succession problems that ensued, Padrinho Sebastião formed the splinter group CEFLURIS.<sup>25</sup> As time passed, Padrinho Sebastião infused Alto Santo's traditional spiritual matrix with his own assortment of religious productions, which, among other things, included the incorporation of mediumship. Two interrelated narratives account for this event. The first version relates to Padrinho Sebastião's alliance with the Afro-Brazilian entity Tranca Rua (Labate and Pacheco 2011, 83); the second, to his endearing with Baixinha, a well-known, local medium practitioner.<sup>26</sup> The literature also mentions that prior to becoming a member of Santo Daime, Mota de Melo was well known as a shaman in his own right. We are told that he had also received guidance from another shaman by the name of Mestre Oswaldo, a practitioner of Kardecist spiritism (ibid). As reported, Mota de Melo "employed the *mesa* (table) works of spiritual incorporation of the spiritist tradition, where he 'manifested' popular spirits such as Jose Berreza Menezes and Professor Antonio Jorge" (ibid, 75). Furthermore, during the *Trabalhos de Estrela* (Star Works), another spiritist-related discourse, he frequently spoke in tongues (ibid)—a salient feature

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<sup>25</sup> Padrinho Sebastião died in the 1990s and was succeeded by his son Alfredo Gregorio de Melo or Padrinho Alfredo. Padrinho Sebastião's widow, Rita Gregorio de Melo or Madrinha Rita, also remains active within CEFLURIS (Labate and Pacheco 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Baixinha was born in 1936 in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She was a leader within the Umbanda lineage, and eventually received a blessing from Padrinho Sebastião to introduce Santo Daime into the Umbanda Giras that she held. She was the Mother of Céu da Montanha near Lumiar, Brazil.

of the Pentecostal brand of Evangelism.<sup>27</sup> Notions of reincarnation, spiritual evolution and ridding oneself of karma to achieve salvation found nowadays within Santo Daime cosmology also hark back to Padrinho Sebastião's early endeavors with spiritism (Groisman 1991).

It should also be recognized that the evolution of bricolage as a method of developing the church was not exclusively the work of Padrinho Sebastião. Indeed, on his active path to gaining spiritual knowledge, Mestre Irineu also became influenced by spiritualist traditions. At one point during his trajectory he joined the *Circulo Esoterico de Comunhão do Pensamento* (the Esoteric Circle of the Communion of Thought), a Brazilian spiritualist society dedicated to developing humanity's latent mental and psychic powers, as well as the Rosicrucian order, a worldwide humanistic and spiritual society originating in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Labate and Pacheco 2011). Therefore, from its inception in 1930, and later driven by Padrinho Sebastião's influence, Santo Daime incorporated a broad repertoire of religious traditions. Additionally, as the tradition evolved over the next 40 years it became progressively influenced by New Age spiritualities, also a movement comprised of countless theologies. Starting with those traditions closer to Mestre Irineu's heart, below I will examine the various traditions encompassed by Santo Daime.

The Afro-Brazilian spiritual practices that inform Santo Daime, namely Candomblé and Umbanda, paved their way into the tradition with Mestre Irineu himself.

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<sup>27</sup> Speaking in tongues, or glossolalia, was quite a common practice in the early Christian Church. According to Acts 2 in the New Testament, glossolalia first occurred among the followers of Jesus at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and other followers. As described in the New Testament, those in the presence of the Holy Spirit engaged in trance-like behavior causing them to speak in tongues.

It is probable that, as a descendant of African slaves originating from Northeast Brazil, he and the rest of his fellow Afro-Brazilian rubber tappers belonged or were exposed to the cults that had spread in that region. According to Labate and Pacheco (2011) the Vodun cults of Maranhã and specifically Tambor de Mina, the name given in Maranhã to the African-origin possession Candomblé cult, figures prominently on the list. In fact, the words Titango, Tintuma, Agarrube, invoked as the three wise men in Mestre Irineu's hymnal *O Cruzeiro*, are associated with royalty in Benin the birthplace of these cults. Likewise, the words Daime and Juramidan, the most important Santo Daime spiritual entities, are associated, and supposedly possess, a secret meaning with the cult of Da, the secret serpent of the Fon (ibid).

Umbanda and Candomblé intersect in a very fundamental way by sharing a similar cosmology, namely a pantheon of gods. However, unlike Candomblé, Umbanda is more Brazilian-centric. That is to say, the Umbanda pantheon is disproportionately weighted towards Brazilian spiritual agencies. Indeed, Umbanda's pantheon of gods includes *pretos velhos* (the spirit of old black slaves), *crianças* (the spirit of small children) and *caboclos* (spiritual entities from the Amazonian rainforest), as well as an oriental line which contains gypsies and other spiritual agencies. Umbanda's most significant contribution to Santo Daime takes the form of mediumship, defined as the mediation between spirits of the dead and living human beings. Prominent Umbanda spirits visible in the Santo Daime doctrine are *Tranca Rua* (Lock Street), a redeemed tortured soul, the Indian caboclo *Sete Flechas* (Seven Arrows), the lustful *Pomba-giras* (Cute Dove) and Queen of the Ocean *Yemanjá* and her servant *Jurema*.

As narrated by Padrinho Alex Polari, Santo Daime chronicles describe a dramatic cosmic war that took place between Padrinho Sebastião and the Umbanda entity Tranca-Rua (1999). According to the narrative, Padrinho Sebastião emerged victorious after a long and protracted struggle with this entity that was attempting to engulf the Santo Daime church. Tranca-Rua, it is said, was eventually subdued and converted from an evil entity to an entity subservient to Santo Daime's higher good. As a result of this experience, Sebastião authorized exchanges with the Umbanda religion without, however, encouraging dilution or allowing the doctrine to lose its identity on the coattails of said alliance. Umbanda's influence on Santo Daime eventually reached such proportions that a new spiritual current called *Umbandaime* emerged out of these two traditions. Presently, it is not unusual to see Umbanda practitioners attending Santo Daime rituals and vice versa.

*Candomblé* means "dance in honor of the gods," and as the name indicates, rituals in this religion are feasts of music and dance rooted largely in African traditional religious beliefs and practices (Omari-Tunkara 2005). Music and dance are important parts of Candomblé ceremonies since dancing is the conduit for worshippers to become directly possessed by *orixas* (Candomblé deities). Candomblé devotees believe that every worshipper of this tradition holds his or her own individual orixa controlling his or her destiny and acting as a protector. Omari-Tunkara (2005) points out that possession, the hallmark of this religion represents the descent of the orixas to the material plane to impart their brand of healing. Unlike Umbanda, animal sacrifice is prevalent in this tradition since it is believed that blood is one of the principal repositories of *axe*, or life energy, necessary to sustain the gods. As for syncretism with popular Catholicism, it



developed as an adaptive and defensive response to slavery (ibid). Nonetheless, Candomblé brings a rich and popular Catholic–pan-African syncretic spiritual tradition to the Santo Daime’s collection of influences. They include the centrality of music in the ritual space and a pantheon of orixas where the aggressive *Ogum* and the sensual *Yemanjá* (also *Yemoja*, *Iemanjá*)—who has been syncretized with the Virgin Mary (*Nossa Senhora de Conceição*)—figure prominently.

Having established the influence from the two main Afro-Brazilian religious traditions on Santo Daime, the church’s foundational narrative shows an overwhelming significance of Christianity as well. To be more precise, however, we should use the term popular Catholicism—the name used to refer to the particular interpretation given to the Catholic doctrine by local caboclo dwellers at the time. Santo Daime has been viewed as the Christianization of indigenous shamanism or as the indigenization of Christianity. From a worshipping perspective, for example, the Jesus, Mary, and Joseph trinity holds a special spiritual place in the heart of daimistas.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, a predominant influence of Amerindian caboclos spirituality is present. Indigenous elements include the use of ritual rattles, divination of natural elements and the presence of a guardian spirit in the ayahuasca beverage, invoked for healing purposes. There seems to be a general consensus that the three aforementioned major cultural matrices appeared prominently since the early formation of Santo Daime: the indigenous or Amazonian, through the ingestion of the brew and its mode of preparation and consumption along with some

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<sup>28</sup> Notice the qualitative difference between the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity formed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Also, the Christian Santo Daime core is combined with other elements, such as an emphasis on personal gnosis and responsibility, an animist appreciation of nature, such as the sun, moon and stars, as well as the totemic symbol of the *beija-flor* (hummingbird).

aspects of the ritual; the European, via the modality of popular Catholicism and the Afro-Brazilian animism though the presence of African entities in the daimista cosmology. In addition to these main traditions, the Santo Daime repertoire embodies European esoterism,<sup>29</sup> Kardecist spiritism,<sup>30</sup> and New Age spirituality.<sup>31</sup> Most recently, *hinarios* “received” by Padrinho Alex Polari have introduced Buddhist ideology into the already vast Santo Daime repertoire. This new religious introduction supports and brings up-to-date Santo Daime’s bricolage ethos described as the appetite to keep adding into the mix of religious traditions new spiritual ideas. The last four stanzas from his hymn *O Daime é o Dharma* (The Daime is the Dharma) clearly point to this new Buddhist contribution:

<i>Sufrimento da vida</i>	<i>Suffering of life</i>
<i>E uma grande aflição</i>	<i>It is a great affliction</i>
<i>Na Nobre Verdade</i>	<i>In the Noble Truth</i>
<i>Está a sua extinção</i>	<i>Is your extinction</i>
<i>Medito no fundo</i>	<i>I meditate in the depth</i>
<i>Do meu curacao</i>	<i>Of my heart</i>
<i>Por todos os seres</i>	<i>For all beings</i>
<i>Sinto compaixão</i>	<i>I feel compassion</i>
<i>Aquilo que resta</i>	<i>All that remains</i>
<i>E um grande vazio</i>	<i>Is a great emptiness</i>
<i>Na luz deste nada</i>	<i>In the light of this nothing</i>
<i>E que está o camino</i>	<i>Is where the path is</i>

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<sup>29</sup> Western esoteric traditions include Hermetism, Gnosticism, and Neoplatonism which emerged in the Eastern Mediterranean during Late Antiquity as well as Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and a new 19<sup>th</sup> century movement which developed new trends in esoteric thought and included the Theosophical Society and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

<sup>30</sup> Kardecism is the name used to refer to the spirit knowledge and teachings of French-born, Allec Kardec, as per his book *The Spirit Book* made popular by Brazilian upper classes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Santo Daime inherited from Kardecism notions of karma, reincarnation, spiritual evolution, “soul indoctrination,” charity for suffering souls and the “Prayer of Caritas.”

<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that esoteric ideas permeated the counterculture of the 1960s and later cultural tendencies, from which emerged the New Age movement in the 1970s. The Santo Daime repertoire now promotes the nurturing of the “higher self,” a marker of New Age spirituality, which daimistas allegedly accomplish through the harnessing of impersonal cosmic energies.

*Meu Deus me dê força  
Prá passar neste teste  
Busco refúgio no Buda  
No Daime e no Mestre*

*My God gives me strength  
To pass this test  
I take refuge in Buddha  
In Daime and in Mestre*

(Alex Polari de Alverga, *Nova Anunciação*, 2010)

When Mota de Mello joined the Alto Santo community in the 1950s, he decided to live on family land and acquired, upon arriving in Acre, a track of land he baptized as *Colônia Cinco Mil*. The family holding gradually became the focal point of communal Santo Daime activity. In 1981, however, the space was eventually abandoned as the police uncovered the widespread cultivation of cannabis and decided to raid the community. This shocking experience convinced Padrinho Sebastião to remove himself from mundane preoccupations and the proximity to potential danger the authorities represented (Dawson 2013). After three years at Rio do Oro, he finally settled on a piece of land 150 kilometers away, at a place that eventually became the village of Mapiá or *Céu do Mapiá*. Established in 1983, the community today numbers approximately 800 permanent residents. Its present organization highlights a separation of religious and doctrinal responsibilities from the ecological and civic organization of the community. The first set of responsibilities now legally answers to *Igreja do Culto Eclectico da Fluente Luz Universal* (ICEFLU) (Church of the Eclectic Cult of the Universal Flowing Light) while the second answers to the organization the *Instituto de Desenvolvimento Ambiental* (IDA)(Institute of Environmental Development). Padrinho Alfredo presently governs *Céu do Mapiá*.

The “ecstatic” characteristic of the daime played an important role in Santo Daime’s expansion to urban centers such as Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. According to

one explanation, the incorporation of Western religious repertoires into the Santo Daime cauldron of religious traditions—made possible by ayahuasca’s psychotropic effects—greatly facilitated the transition to urban centers. Furthermore, it has been asserted that urban populations used ayahuasca since the beginning of the urbanization process (Labate and Pacheco 2011, 76). From an institutional point of view, CEFLURIS in the mid 1980s brought about a growing middle-class urban membership. This population in particular identified with the alternative New Age sub-culture (ibid, 77).

### *3.2 The internationalization of Santo Daime: macro global social processes*

Chapter Two introduced a series of theories concerning the contemporary interface between religion and late-modern society. Among the many issues this essentially theoretical chapter explored we find: postmodernism, individualization and religious subjectivism; pluralization and religious hybridism; transformation and detraditionalization; globalization and religious identity; commoditization and religious consumption including the advent of New Age or spiritualities of life; and the political shift towards greater acceptance of hallucinogenic substances. These themes elucidate the exogenous and social phenomena behind Santo Daime’s internationalization efforts. Collectively, they lay down the architecture by which the Church’s passage to the global North took place. This section takes these topics as a point of departure and proceeds to examine the various ways these global forces accommodated said internationalization. By doing so, it directly engages the core of RQ1, namely, the social processes that turn Santo Daime’s transnational migration into a reality.

### 3.2.1 *Uncertainty and capitalism: utilitarian vs. expressive individualism*

Postmodernism or late modernity is a very broad category and I shall only consider aspects relevant to the discussion at hand. Chapter Two provided a comprehensive overview of the observed parallel between some postmodern principles and Santo Daime characteristics. Generally, I argue that postmodernism and Santo Daime mirror one another in significant ways. I also claim Santo Daime freely juxtaposes pre-modern ideas with modern ones. I trace this cultural propensity, notably displayed in the ritual setting, to the unstable socio-economic conditions in Acre during the 1930s and that are also present today. Indeed, during these demanding *trabalhos* many Santo Daime traditions, beliefs and practices are reproduced, thus legitimizing their existence.

*Trabalhos*, therefore, function as platforms where the mixing of dissimilar codes takes place or, alternatively, where disparate elements struggle for dominance. An example of an uneasy association would be the devotion to the Christian God while simultaneously adhering to the ideas of a higher self residing within the individual practitioner. Equally incoherent is the mixing of animism with the same higher self, etc. On the other hand, these seeming incoherencies might be understood as an example of postmodern pluralization, or as the fragmentation of culture.

From a slightly different perspective, Santo Daime faces the dual effect of two historically contingent modern forces. One is the secularization of the religious field and the other is the self-sacralization of the individual. Simultaneously, the overreaching grip of capitalism has caused, in one form or another, the subordination of religion to the logic of the market. Under this model, religious institutions become de facto providers of religious goods and services to spiritual consumers determined to exercise personal

choice. The immediate effect these two forces exert is the creation of two modern subjects: those who reluctantly continue to subscribe to the market logic and those who reject it. Considering how the culture of individualism and secularization demands the planning of one's own destiny, this division in personal identities is not surprising. Stated differently, the modern logic molds daimistas' subjectivities in two opposing directions, namely pro-system and anti-system (see Chapter Two, section 2.3. Identity considered). As Paul Heelas (1996) articulated in the context of New Age, people who believe their lives are not fulfilling and have lost faith in conventional remedies fall into two camps. The first group is made up of people who have lost faith in the certainties of the capitalistic mainstream while the second is made up of people who continue to believe, albeit with some reservation, in the utopian vision provided by the capitalistic system itself. The New Age appeal to the first group is predicated upon the soundness of New Age's metaphysics as an alternative to the uncertainties of modernity while the New Age allure to the second group—no longer content with conventional means of obtaining prosperity—rests on the possibility of manipulating New Age magic for material gain (ibid). Sometimes these two identities become manifest by either favoring structure or by rejecting it. Cynthia, one of my informants, put it in the following way:

*I always had a weird feeling about how so many people who, in essence, are very conservative or normal, but then they are at Santo Daime, which is not typical. I realized that there are many people that I would not really hang out with outside of church, but inside of church it makes sense. I think it kind of expands your willingness to be open to different social types. The more hippie types normally come to Santo Daime but find it too regulated and only come irregularly until they find a neoshamanic group or another way to access medicine.<sup>32</sup>*

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Cynthia, a 40-year-old academic, in Miami on May 29, 2018.

The origins of this ontological transformation can be historically traced to the Age of Enlightenment when a detraditionalized self superseded reliance on external loci of authority, control and destiny embodied by a traditional, collectivistic self. This individual self adopted cultural values and assumptions that enabled it to operate unaided, as an individual, in the world (Heelas 1996). For the traditional self, living the good life was a matter of observing social, cultural, or religious duties and obligations. This public individual had little incentive to assert his or her own authority or freedom of expression. The person was primarily other-informed or sociocentric. As years pass, and as noted earlier, the social processes of secularization and pluralization weaken the hold of the cultural domain to an external order of authority. The emerging detraditionalized selves act as self-directing social subjects relying on their own inner sources of authority, control, and responsibility (ibid). A shift in cultural values away from instrumental rationality towards subjectivity, emotion, and the aestheticization of experience was thus registered during this period. From a religious perspective, authority shifted from a theistic location to that which lies within the self. The locus of authority moved from the exterior into the realm of the inner.

According to Steven Tipton (1982) the shift to the self took two forms, namely, utilitarian individualism and expressive individualism.<sup>33</sup> The former represents persons interested only in seeking to satisfy and maximize their needs and wants and captures the current predicament of American consumer culture.<sup>34</sup> The latter understands that there is

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<sup>33</sup> Notice the similarity between Tipton's expressive orientations and those put forth by Paul Heelas.

<sup>34</sup> The automaticity to unquestioningly commodify anything of value in the Western neoliberal world is called "commodity fetishism," to borrow a Marxist term. When a society is based almost entirely on the

much more to being a person than simply satisfying wants and needs. Utilitarian pursuits, therefore, are minimized on the grounds that they encourage greed, selfishness, envy, and superficiality. As described by Heelas, “expressivists tend to reject the calculating, rational ethicality of the utilitarian in favor of an ethic based on the assumption that good acts are those which best manifest one’s authentic nature” (1996, 156).

### 3.2.2 *Globalization and religious transnationalism*

Chapter Two describes at some length religious tourism’s effect upon the spread of Santo Daime overseas. Continuing with the tourist framework, this segment will review the Church’s global expansion strategies as well as those cultural subjectivities that contributed to its success. The first spiritual tourist wave to reach the Amazonian-based Santo Daime Church consisted of Brazilian hippies and backpackers attracted by the possibility of experiencing psychedelic encounters. Later, American, and European “flower children” descended into the sacred geographies of Colonia Cinco Mil in Rio Branco in search for the same experience. When these individuals eventually returned to their home countries, they helped diffuse the doctrine beyond Brazil. This was the genesis of Santo Daime’s expansion overseas. Santo Daime’s official website provides additional interesting details to this narrative:

Since the early 80s we had a very large influx of foreign visitors, mostly spiritual seekers attracted by the Amazon and who roamed its western borders in search of indigenous shamanism and Peruvian ayahuasca. Contact with Padrinho Sebastião and his community on the outskirts of Rio Branco, cause many of them to seek temporary or permanent residence in the community. Those who returned to their

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“production of commodities by means of commodity,” we then have a situation whereby market relations influence almost everything that people do, something that was not the case in pre-capitalist societies where commerce was much more restricted.



country of origin, returned later with relatives and friends. Over time, these ties strengthened (www.santodaime.org, author's translation).

These ad hoc transnational connections eventually evolved into more organized forms of expansion and dissemination of the Santo Daime doctrine. Again, according to Santo Daime's official website:

Since not everyone who knew the Holy Daime abroad could undertake regular trips to our country, as these groups grew and organized, invitations to visit them overseas started to arrive. Given the interest, the board of our church began to organize instructional delegations, including groups of musicians and singers for hymn rehearsals, instructions on rituals, lectures, conferences, retreats, etc. Over time, these groups became international subsidiaries, subject to the same regulations and principles assumed by our Brazilian matrix... Within this context of development and expansion, it should be noted that no missionary efforts or efforts to round up or convert believers took place (www.santodaime.org, author's translation).

Today it is common to receive periodic Santo Daime itinerant comitivas (entourages) formed by one church elder (padrinho) and associates. These groups number at least four people and may include musicians, the padrinho's wife, a right-hand man and the padrinho himself. These touring comitivas have busy itineraries and in one trip typically cover extensive overseas territories where important Santo Daime churches are located. Once they reach a destination, the comitiva devotes two or three days to special padrinho-led trabalhos. Again, Santo Daime's official website describes the origins and the purpose of these road shows as follows:

The entourages started in a very informal and familiar way. Padrinho Alfredo began to receive invitations and with family members and collaborators, began to travel through the churches of Brazil. Beginning in the 1990s, visits to groups in some European countries, such as Spain and the Netherlands, began to be organized. As the expansion grew and branches were formed on different continents, the work became larger and more complex, involving the participation of other leaders and their support groups. These comitivas played a key role in the formation of both domestic and foreign churches. (santodaime.org, author's translation).

Against this background, the preponderant role played by Padrinho Paulo Roberto with respect to the diffusion of the Santo Daime doctrine in America occupies a special place. In March 2014 I was able to talk to Padrinho Paulo Roberto about his role as a Santo Daime ambassador. At the time, Padrinho Paulo Roberto and his comitiva were conducting a two-day “illumination work” in Miami. Miami was the comitiva’s last destination of a U.S. tour, which had covered various American cities. On this occasion, Ceu da Lua Cheia hosted some fifty fardados, including guests from various states including Maryland, Vermont, New York, and Texas. During our meeting, I told Paulo Roberto that some fardados had likened him to St. Paul, the Christian apostle responsible for the expansion of Christianity in the Greco-Roman world. I then proceeded to ask him about his role in Santo Daime’s U.S. expansion efforts. The padrinho answered my question in the following manner:

*During a trip I made to the U.S. a very powerful female psychic approached me. She caused quite an impression on me. I had heard already of an impressive woman who had attended a Cambridge meeting I organized in 1987. This woman told me she envisioned me opening several Santo Daime points of light throughout the U.S. territory<sup>35</sup>. She also told me about a premonition dream whereby she saw the world connected by points of light representing Santo Daime churches. This woman seemed to be very well connected. She travelled with me on this mission to establish churches.<sup>36</sup>*

I then followed up with the question: What is the policy of the Church regarding its international expansion? I already knew that in 2006, according to Santo Daime records, there were thirty fully-fledged churches, points of light and prayer groups

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<sup>35</sup> Ceu da Lua Cheia, a church with less than 30 fardados, is referred to as a Point of Light.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Santo Daime Padrinho Paulo Roberto in Miami on March 8, 2014.

totaling some 350 fardados/as (including Canada and Mexico). To that figure, I estimated that an additional 150 were regular guests or aspiring fardados. Based on these calculations, some 500 people were actively participating in Santo Daime rituals at least twice a month. Hence, I was not surprised by the padrinho's answer:

*We don't have an international expansion policy of any kind. We are not interested in cross-border ventures or looking to expand. We only entertain inquiries, but we as a church do not proselytize. When someone approaches us and shows an interest in opening up a point, we listen and take it under advice. Back in 1987, individuals wanting to set up churches in the United States approached me. I consulted Padrinho Alfredo and he answered that it was okay, provided that we are invited. We therefore do not initiate these efforts. Today, we continue applying this policy.<sup>37</sup>*

I learned more about the church's international activities during a subsequent interview with Padrinho Paulo Roberto in 2017, during my third trip to Brazil. During this interview, he enumerated and named the various churches he had inaugurated in U.S. territory. The list was very impressive and included the opening of CDLC and CDNE in Miami. Also important in this conversation was his idea concerning the type of organization he sought to create overseas. When asked about the size he envisioned for the U.S. churches he did not hesitate to answer that he preferred small churches. Specifically, he said he preferred many small churches as opposed to fewer larger churches. He justified his position on the basis that smaller institutions are spared the bureaucratic burden associated with larger institutions. Paulo Roberto's comment is significant not only because it gives us a glimpse of the type of institutional arrangement pursued by the mother church in Brazil, but also because it discloses and confirms, at

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Santo Daime Padrinho Paulo Roberto in Miami on March 8, 2014.

least at the institutional level, that the Church seeks to promote a charismatic leadership design.

Nevertheless, as I explore in Chapter Five, the pilgrimage tradition has not subsided. On the contrary, it has intensified and now involves new networks and flows. To cite two examples, the comitiva activity is now more frequent and, in the last few years, additional church elders have joined these international road shows. Such is the case with Padrinho Valdete Mota de Melo, brother of Padrinho Alfredo, who transitioned from total international inactivity a few years ago, to embracing a regime of active comitiva global excursions.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, we have also seen an uptick in the incidence of reciprocity in the form of organized trips to sacred Céu do Mapiá by American and European daimistas. In addition, multidirectional networks involving trips and encounters with other Brazilian indigenous tribes are being entertained by CDNE. To different degrees, the controversial appropriation of indigenous knowledge by this church is also presently occurring under the pretext of economic assistance. Likewise, it is noteworthy contemplating CDNE's engagement in activities that may be classified under the rubric of "indigenous reciprocity" such as marriage alliances and economic partnerships between CDNE members and Brazilian elders and their families. These transactional undertakings as well as the cross-border flows discussed above represent a significant development that will be explored and contextualized in Chapter Six.

Underlying the religious tourism and transnational flows, religious studies scholars as well as other observers have claimed that a desire for the consumption of the

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<sup>38</sup> Based on my own calculations, the U.S. is visited some 11-13 times by a total of five different padrinho comitivas annually. My calculation assumes two to three U.S. comitiva excursions annually.

exotic produced by essentialized beliefs about pre-modern cultures is emerging in the postmodern world. Given its racial mixture and attendant religiosity, this form of romanticism is particularly robust in Brazil. A profound and unusual diversity of the religious field in Brazil lends itself to this brand of consumption. Some of this diversity was already presented in Chapter One, but the list can certainly be expanded. Consider for example the spiritualist Christian order *Vale do Amanhecer* (Valley of the Dawn)<sup>39</sup> or the unusual healing by *João de Deus* (John of God).<sup>40</sup> As discussed in Chapter Two, the desire for the exotic has been theorized as a way to interpret postmodern religions. According to several scholars, the exotic created a market, in this case, for Brazilian cultural artifacts, including religions (Aparicio and Chavez-Silverman 1997; Castillo 1997; Huggan 2001). The glamor produced by the exotic came up during several interviews and testimonies. For example, when asked about the consumption of the exotic, a CDNE fardada answered:

*In today's culture, there's a lot of desire to consume things that are exceptional. And I think Brazil has those characteristics. There are some people that come to the daime and have those thoughts.*<sup>41</sup>

The following comment by a female daimista is representative of the views of many:

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<sup>39</sup> The Spiritualist Christian Order *Vale do Amanhecer* emerged in 1959 through Neiva Chaves Zelaya (1925-1985), a former truck driver who, after spontaneously manifesting mediumistic phenomena, became known in Brazil as the clairvoyant "*Tia Neiva*" (Aunt Neiva), attracting visitors and patients seeking her advice and spiritual healing. Since its foundation, the Order has opened more than 600 temples, not just in Brazil but also in North and South America, in Europe, and in Japan. *The Vale do Amanhecer* of Brasília is the main temple, known as *Templo Mãe* (Mother Temple) (Pierini 2016).

<sup>40</sup> *João de Deus* is a Brazilian faith healer and "psychic surgeon" who has become increasingly well-known outside Brazil. In 2006 alone he was invited to conduct healing events in Germany, the United States, and New Zealand. He is based in Abadiânia, Brazil, where he runs the *Casa de Dom Inácio de Loyola*, a "spiritual healing center."

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Estella, a 42-year-old Santo Daime fardada, in Miami on September 25th, 2018.

*Our doctrine is authentic and this may be explained because it grew in the Amazonian rainforest in Brazil. I believe the energy that permeates our doctrine has much to do with Brazilian culture. It has to do with its caboclos, the sensuality of Candomblé and the human joy you find on the streets.<sup>42</sup>*

Likewise, the following testimony reflects a person's fascination with Brazilian culture, Santo Daime hinarios, and how that interest influenced his decision to join Santo Daime:

*I like to listen to various Brazilian music from time to time...I never really thought about visiting Brazil or anything. But of course, that changed when I started hearing those hymns. That was last year, and I was like, this is the most fascinating thing. It got me interested not really in the rest of Brazil so much, but specifically in the environment that created Santo Daime... this is frontier environment in the Amazon.<sup>43</sup>*

The consumption of exoticism is intrinsically tied to macro-social processes such as globalization and transnationalism and therefore, should be considered with attention to the issues explored by RQ1. As Chapter Two notes, the sway upon religious institutions by late modern tendencies has contributed to a renewed interest in the outlandish and strange (Appadurai 1996; Turner 1978; Said 1978). In the same fashion, the product of pluralization and New Age facilitated the traffic of exotic subaltern spiritualities to the global North (Hanegraaff 1998; Heelas 2008). As indicated earlier, this process was at first assisted by religious tourism, a hallmark of transnationalism (Appadurai 1996; Turner 1978). Once on U.S. shores, these exotic practices were reconfigured and adopted by non-Brazilian new agers. As the ensuing chapters will make clear, many individual new agers felt a strong sense of identification with pre-modern spirituality and wisdom often associated with exotic religious practices. One aspect that

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Barbara, a 35-year-old social worker, in Miami on October 22nd, 2018.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Abaid, a 35-year-old Santo Daime guest and history student, in Miami on August 8th, 2018.

greatly influenced their new fondness for the exotic was the ease with which it could be appropriated. It was assisted through the practice of bricolage or the free choosing from a wide range of religio-cultural options. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Two, a religious, symbolic marketplace brought about by the globalization of neo-liberalism precipitated this trend (Iannacone 1992; Heelas 2008).

According to CEFLURIS' website, the global Santo Daime (CEFLURIS) membership, including Brazil, stands at 6,000 devotees, dispersed among fifty churches in Brazil and sixty abroad ([www.santodaime.org](http://www.santodaime.org)).<sup>44</sup> Santo Daime has gone transnational in the age of globalization while operating with a rather small staff. This is a significant accomplishment if we considered that, due to geographic and communication restrictions, this would have been nearly impossible in earlier times. Having traced the contours of the ways that Santo Daime has carved itself a place within the U.S. cultural context and how the external global system in turn supported its internationalization, I shall now turn to the exceptional influence of New Age spiritualities upon Santo Daime's international expansion.

### *3.2.3 New Age: nova era e nova dimensão*

Unlike New Age, Santo Daime incorporates, and folds into a single worldview, elements of several traditions in a more stable manner. In other words, the Santo Daime repertoire does not offer a choice, albeit a direct one. Rather, with limited exceptions, its spiritual tradition bricolage is presented to Santo Daime followers as a take all or nothing

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<sup>44</sup> According to figures produced more than ten years ago, estimates for the number of worldwide Santo Daime adepts associated to Padrinho Sebastiao and Ceu do Mapiá hovered around 4,000. Meanwhile, followers of so-called Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions numbered approximately 20,000 (Labate et al. 2009).

proposition. On the other hand, New Age encompasses a cultic smorgasbord only insofar as sympathizers pick and choose from what is on offer. This market-type approach allows new agers to choose from a diverse repertoire of religious traditions and to construct their private, unique, spiritual platforms. The New Age model also permits its practitioners the flexibility to discard traditions that lose their appeal for new ones. Therefore, New Age and Santo Daime are remarkably similar in terms of their religious eclectic architecture. On this basis, the term bricolage can therefore be extended to define New Age as well. Santo Daime practitioners however do not universally accept the New Age label. Indeed, while every single one of the testimonies received confirmed daimistas freely incorporate into their practices emblematic symbols and ideas from New Age, when asked whether Santo Daime was a New Age religion they responded with ambivalence. For example, during an interview with the leadership of CDLC and CDNE I received the following testimonies:

*It seems that it may be part of that, you know, but, in reality, it is not a New Age movement. Maybe the first time a couple of people experienced it out of curiosity, and maybe they did it a lot of times...because if others experience it, you have to experience it.<sup>45</sup>*

*No, the basis of the origin of Santo Daime is very traditional, is very Christian-based.<sup>46</sup>*

*The Daime teaches you the divine, the truth...and the perspective of truth is always the same: be nice and be humble to people. My personal beliefs is that there was a guy name Jesus Christ that was a spiritual master that lived 2000 years ago and who probably spent years and years and years developing himself spiritually to meditation in the desert and had a lot of wisdom and connection with the divine. I believe that people are spirits like I'm a spirit.<sup>47</sup>*

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Alberto, the protector of CDLC in Miami on September 8, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Alejandra in Miami on September 19, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with David, protector of CDNE in Miami on September 7, 2018.



These testimonies indicate the different views held by the Miami Santo Daime leadership concerning the fit between the Church and New Age. The first two answers reveal an overall traditional and rigid doctrinal posture by CDLC. On the other hand, David casts a much wider net allowing him to universalize Santo Daime thus, making an implicit connection to New Age. David's response is actually a restatement of the "sacralization of the self" maxim circulated by New Age. As we have seen throughout this study, the traditional vs. postmodern views expressed above constitute a contentious issue and one that speaks loudly about the changes taking place in the Santo Daime church at the organizational and congregational levels (See chapters Five and Six). Since the early days of expansion from the rainforest, daimistas have accepted the notion that the individual is the ultimate arbiter of religious authority and the primary achiever of spiritual self-transformation. Their strong experiential preoccupation is grounded in a strong individuality, self-exploration and personal agency. According to one of my interviewees:

*I believe I possess all the necessary tools to heal myself. First of all, the daime can teach you because a deity lives in the plant. But while I always open myself to the teachings of the daime, ultimately, I am the one who is in control. This is a very personal path and I'm constantly judging what is the best for my own spiritual development and me.<sup>48</sup>*

### 3.2.4 *Late modernity, New Age and Santo Daime reconsidered*

Without intending to do so, Santo Daime's hybrid religious composition accommodated the articulation of both utilitarian individualists and expressive individualists under one single canopy. Whether Santo Daime ritual participants adopt a

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with Erika, a 31-year-old Santo Daime fardada and financial services executive, in Miami on August 31st, 2018.

posture of accommodation with consumer capitalism or an attitude of contestation, based on the evidence presented in Chapter Five, the Santo Daime doctrine sanctions both approaches. What seems to permit the co-existence between these conflicting positions is Santo Daime's theologically porous quality because it virtually guarantees a variety of cultural influences allowing for various arrangements and a bricolage of beliefs (Labate 2016). More precisely these beliefs cover a wide ideological spectrum ranging from very conservative or pro-system to very liberal or anti-system strands. As a result, ritual participants can easily invoke them in order to fit either one of these views. For example, the harsh Catholic language found in some Santo Daime hymnals calling for various forms of chastisements may be more suitable to the pro-system wing since such views convey the type of neoliberal logic formally associated with the postmodern sovereign state power and attendant late consumer culture. In this sense, spiritual bricolage performs a harmonizing force among Santo Daime ritual participants.

Not surprisingly however, the same diversity of spiritualities may also function in acrimonious ways. This occurs when Santo Daime strikes some as being too Catholic and when presented with its militaristic ethos, certainly too authoritarian. At CDLC I have seen people, including fardados/as, asked to leave the church for not submitting to the stern Santo Daime ritual rules. More importantly, I have seen many people who, after experiencing their first Santo Daime ceremony, do not return due to their strong rejection of the Catholic discourse they encountered. Commentaries I typically heard in my post-ritual participant observations ranged from: "I was totally turned off by the Catholic prayers" to "I had a great, revealing experience, but I felt uncomfortable with the Catholic aspect of the ritual." *Meu Divino Pai do Céu* (My divine Father in Heaven),

Mestre Irineu hymn No. 17 from his *Santo Cruzeiro* (Holy Cross) hinário is an example of the type of Catholic piety that drives away potential Santo Daime members:

*Meu Divino Pai do Céu  
Soberano Criador  
Eu sou um filho seu  
Neste mundo pecador*

*My Divine Father in Heaven  
Sovereign Creator  
I am His son  
In this sinful world*

*Meu Divino Pai do Céu  
Meu Soberano Senhor  
Perdoai a minhas culpas  
Pelo Vosso Santo Amor*

*My Divine Father in Heaven  
My Sovereign Lord  
Forgive my faults  
By Thy Holy love*

*Meu Divino Pai do Céu  
Soberano Onipotente  
Perdonai as minhas culpas  
E Vós perdoa os inocentes*

*My Divine Father in Heaven  
Sovereign Omnipotent  
Forgive my faults  
And may Thou forgive the innocents*

*Eu confesso os meus pecados  
E reconheço os crimes meus  
Eu a Vós peço perdão  
Ao Meu Divino Senhor Deus*

*I confess my sins  
And I recognized my crimes  
I ask Thee for forgiveness  
To my Divine Lord God*

(Raimundo Irineu Serra, *Santo Cruzeiro*)

Considering New Age's principal spiritual dictum: the sacralization of the self, such utterances are anathema and therefore unacceptable to many sympathizers. In a similar vein, the enforcement of regimented attitudes in the ritual space—representing entrenched class, gender, and race inequalities, themselves a reflection of colonialism in Brazil—cause significant consternation. However, out of a sense of duty and deference for ritual integrity daimistas rarely complain about them. This attitude, which resonates with the modern state practice of racism, gender, and class discrimination, is another example of behavior that validates postmodern neo-liberal ethics. These two examples reflect a pro-system view as well as the view of those who wish to manifest the so called “prosperity gospel” or the manifestation of material gain.

On the other hand, the ideological contributions by the Afro-Brazilian churches, namely Umbanda and Candomblé, have the effect of shifting Santo Daime to the left or liberal end of the ideological spectrum. This is based on the commonly held view that African-based possession cults essentially represent a form of resistance to dominant colonial or imperialist aggression (Omari-Tunkara 2009). Under neocolonialism and with a politico-cultural elite represented by predominantly white and racist Euro-Brazilians, Afro-Brazilians have felt continually abandoned and humiliated. As a result, Afro-Brazilians have had to reconstruct their identity outside the boundaries of civil society, calling on their sense of shared culture (Hale 2009 and Omari-Tunkara 2005). In a show of bravado, Mensageiro do Anjo Azul (Messenger of the Blue Angel) a two-stance hinário by Maria Alice, summons Ogum and Lemanjá, two Candomblé orishas, to mediate and deliver spiritual salvation to marginalized Afro-Brazilians:

<i>Sou mensageiro do Anjo Azul</i>	<i>I am the messenger of the Blue Angel</i>
<i>Foi São Miguel quem me mandou</i>	<i>Saint Michael is who commands me</i>
<i>Eu vim aqui para domar</i>	<i>I come here to tame</i>
<i>A cabeça do dragão</i>	<i>The head of the dragon</i>
<i>Aqui naterra</i>	<i>Here on Earth</i>
<i>Venho fazer a ligação</i>	<i>I come to make a connection</i>
<i>Mamãe lemanjá</i>	<i>Mama lemanjá</i>
<i>Ogum da Beira-Mar</i>	<i>Ogum of the Sea-Shore</i>

(Maria Alice Campos Freire, Trabalho de São Miguel)

A similar reflection could be made about some of the more esoteric, occult, and mystic traditions incorporated into Santo Daime's religious bricolage. Thus, traditions like Buddhism, Theosophy, and Rosicrucian serve to validate the anti-modernity stance by those Santo Daime members who are disenchanted with mainstream capitalism.

New Age and Santo Daime have many things in common. Together, they mirror the speed by which social changes are happening in the modern world. One singular effect of this contemporary fast pace is the erasure of historical memory (Giddens 1991). It produces new narratives seeking to restore, reform, or revive true spirituality. Another similarity is that New Age spirituality is millenarian. This perspective is tied to the end of the millennium and to the collective anxiety generated by the way economic activity is organized to confront an uncertain future. On the coattails of postmodern society, Santo Daime connects the crashing down of present cultural structures with the belief in the ushering in of a New Age. Three books of hinarios stand out as examples of Santo Daime's enthrallment with millenarianism: Padrinho Sebastião's Nova Jerusalem (The New Jerusalem), and Padrinho Alfredo's Nova Era (The New Age) and Nova Dimensão (New Dimension). The last two stanzas of Ciranda do Santo Daime (Ciranda of the Santo Daime) evoke New Age's millenarian idea for a new and better world:

*O que Papai ne deu  
Mamãe consagrou  
Gira, gira, criancinha, gira!  
Na ciranda do amor  
Gira, gira, criancinha, gira!  
Que a Virgen Mãe mandou*

*That which Papai gave me  
Mamãe consecrated  
Go 'round, go 'round, little child, go 'round!  
In the ciranda<sup>49</sup> of love  
Go 'round, go 'round, little child, go 'round!  
The Virgin Mother ordered*

*O que Mamãe me disse  
Papai confirmou  
Gira, gira, caboclinha, gira!  
Gira na gira do amor  
Gira, gira, caboclinha, gira!  
Na gira que Deus mandou*

*That which Mamãe told me  
Papai confirmed it  
Go 'round, go 'round, caboclinha, go 'round!  
'Round in the gira<sup>50</sup> of love  
Go 'round, go 'round, caboclinha, go 'round!  
In the gira God ordered*

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<sup>49</sup> The word *ciranda* refers to a Brazilian folk dance as well as to a children's dance. Participants hold hands in a circle and dance while going around in a circle.

<sup>50</sup> *Gira*, here, refers to the circle in which people are dancing.

<i>Ovelho tempo passa</i>	<i>The old time passes away</i>
<i>Novo tempo chegou</i>	<i>The new time has arrived</i>
<i>Novo mundo, novo povo, nova era,</i>	<i>A new world, a new people, a new era,</i>
<i>E um novo professor</i>	<i>And a new teacher</i>
<i>Novo mundo, novo povo, nova era,</i>	<i>A new world, a new people, a new era,</i>
<i>E um novo professor</i>	<i>And a new teacher</i>

(Alfredo Gregório de Melo, Nova Dimensão, 2011)

As indicated earlier, New Age sacred texts are “channeled” works. A Course in Miracles (ACIM) is a great example of this phenomenon.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, all Santo Daime hinarios are allegedly “received” from the “astral” world. As pointed out earlier, the daimista idea about finding one’s own true self—while simultaneously liberating one-self from corrupted and socialized identities—also finds resonance in New Age’s unmistakable emphasis on the self. In this sense, the focus of both Santo Daime and New Age traditions is to empower the individual within constituted ideas of a spiritual higher self.

In their unlimited curiosity and thirst for new understanding, I have witnessed many new agers parade through the Miami Santo Daime Church in search of “the next experience.” Some of them are already familiar with “plant medicines” as well as other types of psychedelic substances also lavishly consumed by daimistas. The variety of natural substances used by new agers passing through the church includes cannabis, San Pedro cacti, kambo (poison frog secretion), psychedelic mushrooms, and mapacho, an unprocessed Amazonian tobacco taken as snuff. Many of the new agers I have spoken to indicate they are recurring participants in Native American Church peyote ceremonies as

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<sup>51</sup> Helen Schucman, a professor of medical psychology at Columbia University, channeled this book in the decade of the 1970s.

well as sweat lodges. Others have tried holotropic breath works, a breathing technique developed by Stanislav Grof producing “outer-worldly” non-ordinary states of consciousness (Grof 1990).

Clearly, these types of new agers are attracted to the psychedelic and spiritual awakening the ayahuasca brew promises. However, there is also another genre of seekers I would loosely connect with a non-traditional brand of Eastern spirituality and mysticism. Many of these individuals follow gurus or claim to harness guru powers and, in typical fashion, adorn their bodies with assorted amulets and symbolic objects. From my interviews I was able to confirm that the great majority of Santo Daime devotees in both churches use New Age paraphernalia and, unlike the church leadership, view New Age traditions as complementary to Santo Daime. When asked to explain the reason behind the popularity of crystals and whether dependency on them conflicted with Santo Daime I received the following answer:

*I use crystals for healing purposes. Holding crystals or putting them on your body promotes physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. They can also be helpful mentally to feel mindful and resilient. If you believe in them, they will help you, so I toss them into my pocket and carry them with me all the time. As far as the conflict with Santo Daime, I don't see an issue. Anything that helps me in my spiritual path is okay; I don't see inconsistencies. Santo Daime is very eclectic and to be frank, no matter what Santo Daime church I'm visiting I always see at least one or two crystals on top of the center table.<sup>52</sup>*

This also indicates that devotion to Santo Daime does not require exclusive loyalty to the doctrine's fixed repertoire. Once again, this demonstrates the fluidity Santo Daime and New Age partake.

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Arian, a 30-year-old Santo Daime fardada, in Miami on August 22nd, 2018.

To recapitulate, first and foremost, Santo Daime is a doctrine emerging from a multiplicity of discrete and disconnected religious traditions, many of which either mirror or directly emulate the New Age movement's repertoire. Secondly, and consistent with New Age beliefs, the Santo Daime worldview is decidedly millenarian in nature yet at the same time remains profoundly optimistic and life-affirming. Thirdly, Santo Daime shares with New Age the alleged idea of resistance to materialism while concurrently promising the delivery of true spirituality. Finally, and in true New Age style, the theatrical Santo Daime singing ritual promises a new age of love and light and offers as well, a foretaste of the coming era through personal transformation and healing. The close parallels between New Age spiritualities and Santo Daime beliefs and practices are naturally working together to facilitate the expansion of the latter onto the world stage. As a result, and from a practical point of view, the New Age movement could be likened to a landing platform from which the Santo Daime church was launched into international orbit.

### *3.3 Conclusion*

This chapter claims that by the time Santo Daime's globalization occurred, the Church had already integrated practices resembling those which would be identified with postmodernism only a few decades later. The Church's postmodern traits facilitated its entry onto the global stage in the 1990s. By the time Santo Daime implemented its international expansion program, postmodernism had already consolidated itself as the dominant global ideology thus permitting the easy accommodation of similar ideas regardless of their origin.

Santo Daime's early experience in Acre produced a set of foundational attitudes and beliefs that permitted its eventual internationalization. In this sense, a central cultural



propensity to mix various disparate elements figure prominently. By establishing a religious matrix composed of modern European religions, indigenous traditions and Afro-Brazilian cults, Santo Daime mixed modern with pre-modern elements from its inception. This timely attitude permitted the church to progressively add to its original matrix new traditions, eventually producing a bricolage of disparate beliefs. Additionally, influenced by the drastic socioeconomic conditions existing in the state of Acre during the Church's founding years in the 1930s, Santo Daime adopted a millenarian outlook, which would also mirror the attitudes displayed by emerging postmodern religious practices, thus further consolidating its expansion.

A host of additional modern features also contributed to Santo Daime's cross-border venture. Chiefly among them are the pluralization and secularization of culture at the societal level and the turn to self at the individual level. Since secularization guaranteed that religion no longer occupied a privileged public place, spirituality turned inward and private. As this chapter claims, together with the global spread of capitalism, these forces conjured up a religious economy where religion is akin to a marketplace. Supporting the market thesis, this chapter suggested that a new desire to consume the exotic contributed to paving the way for Santo Daime's acceptance into other postmodern global geographies. Seekers' allure for Brazilian culture is an example of this attraction. While Santo Daime's bricolage accommodates the worldview of both utilitarian and expressive individualists, certain religious influences, such as Catholicism, are not always welcomed by those entering the Church and rather dissuades some to continue.

Under New Age, the maximum expression of postmodern spirituality, all postmodern forces mentioned above converge into one single expression. Thus, by

sharing similar cultural markers with Santo Daime, New Age spiritualities furnished the Brazilian Church with much recognition and legitimacy thereby constituting de facto a springboard for Santo Daime in the West. Equally important, New Age also furnished Santo Daime with a pool of willing and able potential devotees.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FEITIO POLITICS: THE CONVERGENCE OF PRE-MODERN AND POSTMODERN CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

### 4.1 *The feitio as nature discourse*

This chapter examines Santo Daime's appropriation of nature discourses to support its self-professed epithet as an authentic *religião da floresta* (religion of the forest), while simultaneously weaving a "veiled" conversation about power. By focusing on the *feitio*, the name used by the Santo Daime church to refer to the various activities involved in the production of *daime* (ayahuasca), I expect to address the above argument and, simultaneously, examine the intricacies of this most important ritual.<sup>53</sup> The arguments that follow, however, will not simply deconstruct the ancient tradition of ayahuasca by using structuralism as a theoretical framework. The role of this ritual in mediating the encounter between indigenous traditions and late-modernity is also considered. Indeed, the following pages will go beyond this myth of origins and connect with themes of late-modernity, such as the representation of ayahuasca globalization as a solution to the modern disenchantment, the re-articulation of post-colonial attitudes with respect to the indigenous ways of life in the global South and, as stated initially, the emergence of power structures imbedded within individual and institutional domains, to name a few. By examining the *feitio* from such a broad perspective, this chapter engages all three research questions simultaneously.

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<sup>53</sup> According to the church of Santo Daime, the *feitio* is indisputably the religion's most important ritual because it is designed to produce *daime* the Church's sacrament.

In these debates, the pre-modern and the post-modern intersect in ways that forces us to ask, why is the search for transcendental authenticity, as represented by nature, so precious in the first place? Said differently, why does the Santo Daime church insist on trying to find an essence<sup>54</sup> in pre-modern customs, given that indigenous people do not pursue a pure, untainted, and unchanging cultural identity? Reflecting on this question, Cavalia Saéz concludes that the ayahuasca religions are acutely implicated in this act of representation: “it is not the Indians, but rather the recent ayahuasca churches, that like to spread the idea that their practices are descended from the Inca or from the beginnings of time (2014, xxi).<sup>55</sup>

Santo Daime devotees generally offer the *feitio* as unquestionable proof of this nature-based claim.<sup>56</sup> As one of my informants succinctly put it, when asked if Santo Daime is a nature religion, “I go to the forest to make the daime; there can’t be any bigger connection than that.”<sup>57</sup> As already outlined in this study, from a daimista perspective, this identification with nature is deeply connected to Santo Daime’s

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<sup>54</sup> Non-Indigenous conceptions of Indigeneity have historically focused on controlling the socialization, mobility and reproduction of Indigenous people. This so called, essentialism, results in every Indigenous being interpellated, without regard to their individuality, through stereotyped images that exist in the popular imagination. The essentialized Indigeneity thus formed coalesces around specific fantasies of exclusivity, cultural alterity, marginality, physicality and morality, which leave an increasing number of Indigenous people vulnerable to accusations of inauthenticity.

<sup>55</sup> As explained in the introductory chapter, Brazil is populated by three, so called “ayahuasca churches.” They are, Santo Daime, União do Vegetal and Barquinha.

<sup>56</sup> A nature religion is a religious movement that believes nature and the natural world are an embodiment of divinity, sacredness, or spiritual power. Nature religions include indigenous practices in various parts of the world by cultures who consider the environment to be imbued with spirits and other sacred entities. Writing on the subject, the Canadian religious studies scholar Peter Beyer described “nature religion” as a “useful analytical abstraction” to refer to “any religious belief or practice in which devotees consider nature to be the embodiment of divinity, sacredness, transcendence, spiritual power, or whatever cognate term one wishes to use” (Beyer 1998, 11-21).

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Doreen, a 34-year-old office manager, in Miami on September 12, 2018.

historical evolution at the heart of the Amazonian rainforest. In the case of the local Miami churches, the alienating conditions experienced in the highly decentered Miami culture, examined previously, tend to heighten an already present existential need to establish a connection with something stable and permanent; the kind of steadiness and equilibrium only nature can offer.

Because Santo Daime is caught up in representation (explored in Chapter Six) as well as other similar acts, the feitio ritual is intimately linked to questions of power. Not only is the feitio Santo Daime's "most important ritual," but, since Santo Daime churches depend on the feitio-hosting church's production technologies for accessibility to the sacrament, the feitio also confers a valuable strategic importance. However, this is not only an issue of control and dependency. According to Dawson, "in addition to bestowing a certain status upon those communities with sufficient resources to stage it, the feitio plays an important part in the establishment of alliances, along with their inherent hierarchies and dependencies" (2013, 237).<sup>58</sup> For example, the Hawaiian church's leadership role among the CEFLURIS-AN churches rests on its ability to produce and deliver *daime* to the continental churches (Matas 2014, 121-22).

Feitio participation constitutes great recognition and status enhancement within the Santo Daime organization. This occurs not only because those who choose to participate in them must make a significant commitment in terms of time and financial

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<sup>58</sup> According to Dawson, "when the Cefluris movement first spread beyond its traditional home of the Amazon region, for example, the reliance of newly established groups on Amazonian supplies of *daime* played a key role in underwriting the spiritual and organizational authority of the mother community in Mapiá. Over time, however, the transplanting of vine and leaf to other parts of Brazil has undermined traditional dependencies, which in turn is eroding established hierarchies, along with their implications for organizational identity and cohesion" (2013, 237).

resources,<sup>59</sup> but also because such participation is a test of endurance requiring the same quality of *firmeza* (firmness) demanded by other forms of Santo Daime rituals (see Chapter Five, 5.3.). Firmness is what differentiates the neophyte from the seasoned *fardado*, and it is deemed an element of spiritual maturity imbued with symbolic and actual prestige within the church. Mestre Irineu’s hymn No. 80 from *O Cruzeiro* “*Chamo a Forca*” (I Summon the Force) succinctly instructs *fardados* to be firm:

<i>Chamo a forca, eu chamo a forca</i>	<i>I call the force, I call the force</i>
<i>A forca vem nos amostrar</i>	<i>The force comes to show us</i>
<i>Treme a terra e balanceia</i>	<i>The earth shakes and quakes</i>
<i>E Vos nao sai do seu lugar</i>	<i>But you don't leave your place<sup>60</sup></i>

(Raimundo Irineu Serra, *O Cruzeiro*)

As a result, the *feitio* is considered a rite of passage and source of prestige for *daimistas* who successfully complete this long and arduous ritual. As such, the *feitio* contributes to the establishment of individual and institutional hierarchical power structures within the Santo Daime organization. A central question to the *feitio* practice is: What is nature? Engaging this question is important because in addition to understanding nature’s ontological character, it forces us to examine the extent to which Santo Daime is implicated in religio-symbolic productions.

#### 4.2 *The demystification of nature*

Habitually humans consider nature to be somewhere else. As Noel Castree tells us in the opening pages of his book *Making Sense of Nature*, most people feel “nature is

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<sup>59</sup> In the U.S., *feitios* only take place in Hawaii; the next alternative is Céu do Mapiá in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest or perhaps at another distant location in the Brazilian Atlantic jungle.

<sup>60</sup> Song from Santo Daime *O Cruzeiro* hinario by Mestre Irineu.

something we travel to, visit or dwell in prior to returning to our ‘unnatural’ towns and cities” (2014, 11). Yet to Donna Haraway, “nature is not a place to which one can go, nor a treasure to fence in or bank, nor as essence to be saved or violated” (1992, 296).

Haraway reminds us of another competing interpretation of nature, i.e., nature is not really “over there,” we just think it is. In this chapter, I posit that daimistas are primarily invested in the first discourse. They do so by equating nature with their church and particularly with the production of their sacred tea, ayahuasca.

Historically, “nature” has been imbued with several meanings.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps the oldest meaning is that nature is the universe together with the living world of plants and animals which populate it (Williams 1976, 219). The most recent concept of nature is to refer to that which is opposed to, prior to, or simply outside human society and culture. Under this view, human invention and industry, human culture and society are deemed to be artificial. In other words, nature is seen as the material that is subject to processes or transformation, but it is not properly part of human society, until it has been transformed.

If nature is opposed to human society then nature must be considered either superior or inferior to it. After a series of historical debates concerning the ostensible superiority/inferiority of nature,<sup>62</sup> the question was finally settled with the ushering in of romanticism in the nineteenth century. During this age, nature’s privileged position shifted to a less overreaching place by becoming associated with the diversity and

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<sup>61</sup> Humans not only have the propensity to spacialize nature but also to temporalize it. Books like Bill McKibben’s *The End of Nature* (1899) and Francis Fukuyama’s *Our Post-human Future* (2002) seem to say that nature is exceedingly a thing of the past.

<sup>62</sup> The Enlightenment philosophers believe nature, as a source of order and reason, was superior to culture.

fecundity of the organic. In this manner, nature came to be a source of spiritual values and emotions. It stood for good and innocence, as well as the world of the “noble savage.” This final twist about the meaning of nature is the one most central to this study, for it reveals much about the workings of ideology.<sup>63</sup> If social and cultural relations and events are perceived to be natural, they will not be challenged. Indeed, “they will not appear to be the product of human agency and the exercise of political power, and to challenge them will appear no more rational or sensible than challenging the law of gravity or the fact that it is raining” (Edgar and Sedgwick 2008, 223). CDLC and CDNE, the two Miami Santo Daime churches, are deeply identified with and invested in this late, romantic nature discourse.<sup>64</sup>

#### *4.2.1 Late modern neocolonial articulations: prioritizing nature over culture*

As indicated in earlier chapters, from its very inception, Santo Daime incorporated a broad repertoire of Amazonian-based spiritual traditions. However, since Santo Daime is not an indigenous tradition per se, it never internalized wholeheartedly the blurring of the culture/nature binary characteristic of indigenous cosmologies. It rather adopted the prevailing modern view that treats these two temporal categories as distinct and separate from each other. This idea acquired greater currency as the Church’s membership transitioned from a local caboclo, impoverished, mixed-race peasant base, to the Santo Daime of today which is a globally diffused religion, largely practiced by a

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<sup>63</sup> Ideology may be understood as a set of ideas and concepts that shape our understanding of the world, and crucially distort that understanding so that we do not challenge or question existing power relations.

<sup>64</sup> However, due to the tremendous resources at its disposal and its willingness to use them for expansive, ideological purposes, Céu da Nova Era has a greater stake in establishing the superiority of nature over culture.



predominantly educated, white, urban, middle class. Harboring a clear distinction between native and modern ontologies, Santo Daime devotees have developed over the years essentialist views of the Amazon rainforest—the repository of the ayahuasca plants—as unspoiled and immaculate. Resting on a reinterpretation of its indigenous strand, Santo Daime’s ritual ceremonies are fiercely evocative of nature images.

Santo Daime followers are heavily invested in presenting their religion as a rainforest religion. They have done this by adopting a narrative which depicts the Amazonian rainforest as pristine, pure, uncontaminated nature. As this chapter will discuss, this posture is deeply imbedded in their own cultural matrix. It serves to legitimate the forest as a place imbued with plants capable of producing the type of healing miracles Santo Daime purports to deliver. This attitude also serves to subvert modern, neo-colonial ideas of superiority that typically emerge in the relationship between “modern” and “pre-modern” cultures. However, as a cultural product of late capitalism, daimistas are not exempt from having the same neocolonial attitudes they so adamantly try to cast aside. Unable to adopt an epistemology that sees everything as a cultural production or as something liminal, unconsciously they pay lip service to the existence of nature's determinism.

A series of daimista narratives and beliefs support supernatural claims that seem to validate the pre-eminence of nature over culture. The magico-religious prowess vested in a Catholic priest celebrating the Eucharistic sacrament comes to mind in this regard. It is during the Holy Communion ritual that the transformation of the bread and water is

magically converted into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Santo Daime's disciples routinely affirm that by drinking the hallucinogenic brew, they are in fact consuming the plant spirit residing within it. In both cases, the faithful claim to put in their bodies a living divinity brought about by the ritual's sacred transformation of matter.<sup>66</sup>

Three related discourses, in fact, drive Santo Daime's close association or identification with nature as a discrete classification. The first is that the ayahuasca brew stems from plant life. Indeed, the connection between ayahuasca and nature has been the topic of many narratives describing natives' lifeway and adaptation to the conditions in the Amazonian rainforest. Drawing from Tukanoan cosmology, a native tribe situated in the Northwest of the Amazonian rainforest, the first man and woman reached earth from the Milky Way in a canoe drawn by a sacred anaconda. On this canoe they carried their most valuable possessions: "they carried the three plants necessary for life in the rain forest" among them, "yage, a hallucinogenic vine that allow them to communicate with the spirit world" (Plotkin 1993, 107). Nature, in the form of plant and animal life, is consequently foundational in the discourse of Amerindian ontologies. Given its reliance on ayahuasca, Santo Daime devotees take strength in this type of sacred narrative in order to claim that their faith is an authentic nature religion, an idea captured by their often

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<sup>65</sup> According to Catholic doctrine, this magical conversion is referred to as the miracle of the transubstantiation.

<sup>66</sup> In a world where DMT has been categorized as a dangerous drug, the belief in ayahuasca's divine alchemy serves as a powerful counter argument against the modern state's logic categorizing this substance as a Schedule One by the the DFA classification system.

used epithet: *a doutrina da floresta* (the doctrine of the forest). Daniella, a CDNE fardada, explains it in the following manner:

*The plant kingdom did well to colonize and assimilate into the fabric and function of doctrinal tenets of truth, love, justice, and harmony (Santo Daime precepts). My work and understanding of the Daime is about deepening my communications with other sentient beings. So, I have much to learn from the plant kingdom and nature intelligence.<sup>67</sup>*

Santo Daime's intimate connection to modern readings of the Amazonian rainforest is the second discourse tracing this religion to differentiated notions of nature. The Amazon rainforest covers more than five million square kilometers, spanning the territories of nine different nations in South America and representing half of the planet's remaining rain forest. The sheer immensity of this vast territory has for centuries evoked romantic ideas of exotic, unspoiled, lands, and untold mysteries (Aparicio and Chavez-Silverman 1997; Labate and Lourdes de Asis 2016). To contemporary, postmodern individuals, the Amazon rainforest represents a pure state of nature not found in any other planetary geography. To others, the Amazon suggests the other-than-human world and the relationships such landscape renders possible. In *Cultural Forests of the Amazon*, William Balee writes, "a scheme that pigeonholes Amazonian forests as being somehow pristine—the 'wilderness' or *selvas*—has dominated Western scientific as well as popular imagination since the nineteenth century" (2013, 53). Another source describes the Amazon jungle as "a land of superlatives, a forest without equal, the Amazon teems with more variety of plants and animals than any other place on earth... a single Amazonian river may harbor more types of fish than are found in all the rivers of Europe combined."

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with Daniella, a 60-year-old real estate executive, in Miami on August 9, 2018.

(Plotkin 1993, 5). These accounts provide a small synopsis of the allure and evocative power the Amazon rainforest holds for many. As one of my Miami Santo Daime informants put it:

*Santo Daime is a nature religion. I associate it with the forest, Mestre Irineu... in the forest, the hummingbird; the vine running through the forest and God the creator of everything that is nature.*<sup>68</sup>

Santo Daime's claim to be a steward of nature is also rooted in this movement's clearly stated ecological agenda. In what amounts to the third nature discourse, the Church's current organization highlights a separation of religious and doctrinal responsibilities from the ecological and civic organization of the community. Today, the Institute of Environmental Development's (*Instituto Desenvolvimento Ambiental, IDA*) principal concern is the promotion of local environmental preservation, which includes the achievement of ecological sustainability in and around the village of *Céu do Mapiá* (see Chapter 3, 3.1.3).<sup>69</sup>

In a similar vein, Santo Daime has earned international recognition and media attention because of its involvement with indigenous groups advocating for world peace and for the restoration of Mother Nature. Specifically, two of its members, *madrinhas* Maria Alice Campos Freire and Clara Shibu Iura, have joined the ranks of the

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with Mario, a 36-year-old health care practitioner, in Miami on June 16, 2018.

<sup>69</sup>IDA's mission statement reads as follows: "Work in conservation and environmental education in all ecosystems, especially in the Amazon, through the diffusion of technical knowhow; propose, support and develop projects aimed at the self-sufficiency of the communities inserted in the Amazon ecosystems, through conservation, preservation and reforestation techniques, especially in degraded areas; propose, support and develop community activities and cooperatives as well as perform economic, charitable, scientific and cultural projects; support, encourage and develop child care and adolescents assistance, especially in the areas of education, health and vocational training; promote, support and disseminate, in all its manifestations, cultural values, folklore and knowledge of traditional populations of the Amazon; promote the value of the women and men who form the traditional populations of the Amazon rainforest." ([www.santodaime.org/site/institucional/nossas-instituicoes/instituto-cefluris](http://www.santodaime.org/site/institucional/nossas-instituicoes/instituto-cefluris)).

“International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers,” a group of spiritual leaders including shamans, medicine women and channelers of sacred energy. Among several topics outlined by a seminal joint declaration by the Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers at the time the group first convened, the following stands out:

We are deeply concerned with the unprecedented destruction of our Mother Earth: the contamination of our air, waters, and soil; the atrocities of war; the global scourge of poverty; the threat of nuclear weapons and waste; the prevailing culture of materialism; the epidemics that threaten the health of the Earth’s people; the exploitation of indigenous medicines; and the destruction of indigenous ways of life. (Schaefer 2006, 1)

Given the ritual use of ayahuasca as a sacrament and owing to the fact that its communal existence resides deep within the Amazonian rainforest, the Santo Daime church as a *doutrina da floresta* promotes itself as the natural overseer of the surrounding flora and fauna. And, since this religion’s identity is not purely indigenous, it has reaffirmed the adoption of a differentiated nature–culture worldview. As the church migrated to Brazilian urban centers and eventually to the global North, this discourse was strengthened by foreign daimistas eager to brand Santo Daime as the genuine “religion of the forest.”

#### 4.2.2 *Magic in the forest: ritual singing*

Céu de Mapiá, Santo Daime’s mother church, located in a recondite place of the Amazon Basin has, not surprisingly, appropriated many of these Amazonian narratives. The forest, i.e., the Amazon forest, is one of the most common themes found in many of the hymns produced by padrinhos for ritual singing. For example, *Eu sou Brilho do Sol* (I am the Sunshine), a short song usually sung before closing a “work,” situates the forest together with many other nature symbols:

<i>Eu sou brilho do sol</i>	<i>I am the sunshine</i>
<i>Sou brilho da lua</i>	<i>I am the moonshine</i>
<i>Dou brilho as estrelas</i>	<i>I give shine to the stars</i>
<i>Porque todas me acompanham</i>	<i>Because they all accompany me</i>
<i>Eu sou brilho do mar</i>	<i>I am the seashine</i>
<i>Eu vivo no vento</i>	<i>I live in the wind</i>
<i>Eu brilho na floresta</i>	<i>I shine in the forest</i>
<i>Porque ela me pertence</i>	<i>Because she belongs to me</i>

(Sebastião Mota de Melo, *Eu Sou Brilho do Sol*, 2011, 209)

In another example, the first three stanzas of *Eu Vivo na Floresta* hymnal (I live in the Forest), a connection between the daime's healing power and the forest is evidently made:

<i>Eu vivo na floresta</i>	<i>I live in the forest</i>
<i>Aprendo a me curar</i>	<i>Learning to heal myself</i>
<i>Eu convido a meus irmaos</i>	<i>I invite my brothers and sisters</i>
<i>Vamos todos se cuidar</i>	<i>Let's take care of ourselves</i>
<i>Eu sou um Ser Divino</i>	<i>I am a Divine Being</i>
<i>Eu venho aqui par ate ensinar</i>	<i>I come here to teach myself</i>
<i>Quanto mais puxar por mim</i>	<i>The more you ask of me</i>
<i>Mais eu tenho que te dar</i>	<i>The more I have to give you</i>
<i>Muito ou tenho que te dar</i>	<i>Much I have to give you</i>
<i>E também tenho par ate dizer</i>	<i>And also to say to you</i>
<i>Quem tem dois olhos enxerga</i>	<i>Those who have two eyes see</i>
<i>Mas os cegos também vêem</i>	<i>But the blind also see</i>

(Rita Gregorio de Melo, *Lua Branca* 2011, 211)

Unencumbered forest and other nature images have been present since the inception of this doctrine. The songs or hymnals produced by Santo Daime padrinhos skillfully invoke the power of nature both in its symbolic and real dimensions. According to metaphorical representations made by these hymns, nature has also been equated with

women.<sup>70</sup> Two images of women dominate daimista culture. They are the Virgin Mary and *Yemanjá*, a female deity found in the Afro-Brazilian religious traditions. Strong devotion to the Virgin Mary, or “Queen of the Forest,” stands as a model of Santo Daime virtue. This multivalent image, however, the Virgin Mary is mostly used for her prowess to serve as an effective intermediary between God and humanity. The prayer *Salve Rainha* (Hail Holy Queen), which exalts these qualities is among the various prayers used to formally close Santo Daime rituals:

*God, hail Thee, oh Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope, hail Thee! To Thee, do we send up our sight, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, our Advocate, Thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this exile, show unto us Jesus. Blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, oh Clement, oh Merciful, oh Sweet, Ever Virgin Mary! Pray to God for us, most Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of attaining the promises of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.*

(Santo Daime Prayer Book, 2009, 32)

Likewise, the hymnal *Oh! Virgem* (Oh! Virgin) received by Alberto from CDLC pays tribute to the high spiritual status and prominence of the mother of God:

<i>Oh! Virgem é para todos bem louvar</i>	<i>Oh! Virgin, everyone should praise you well</i>
<i>Oh! Virgem é para todos bem louvar</i>	<i>Oh! Virgin, everyone should praise you well</i>
<i>Oh! Virgem é para todos bem louvar</i>	<i>Oh! Virgin, everyone should praise you well</i>
<i>Vamos todos louvar a Deus!</i>	<i>Let us all praise God!</i>
<i>Oh! Virgem veio ensinar a todos bem</i>	<i>Oh! Virgin, you came to teach everyone well</i>
<i>Oh! Virgem veio ensinar a todos bem</i>	<i>Oh! Virgin, you came to teach everyone well</i>
<i>Oh! Virgem da Conceição</i>	<i>Oh! Virgin, of the Conception</i>

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<sup>70</sup> In her essay, “Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?”, Sherry Ortner theorizes that it is through ritual that the natural, dangerous, and unacceptable are transformed into the cultural, acceptable, and safe. Women are assigned a mediating category between culture and nature (Ortner 1974, 68-7). Likewise, according to Greek classical mythology, Apollo and his twin sister, Artemis, played a pivotal role in the construction of Greek women’s status. While he is associated with reason and civilization, she is associated with wilderness and wild things. Ancient Greek society associated women with nature and men with culture (Vandiver 2000, 45).

*Eu peço a Deus do céu  
Para todos louvar a Deus*

*I ask God in heaven  
So that everyone praises God*

*Eu vejo na terra uma roda girando  
Eu venho a lembrar  
As lembranças do passado  
Acórdem, irmãos, acórdem wake up!*

*I see on the earth a wheel that is turning  
I come to call to mind  
The Memories of the past  
Awaken Brothers, wake up!<sup>71</sup>*

(Alberto [pseudonym], *Estudo fino*, 1997)

The reader should be reminded that this Holy Queen is the same “Queen of the Forest,” later identified as the Virgin of Conception, which, according to Santo Daime founding narratives, entrusted the Afro-Brazilian Raimundo Irineu Serra with the founding of the Santo Daime church. Indeed, the official Santo Daime website describes the divine intervention of this female deity in the following manner:

She presented herself as the Queen of the Forest, whom Master Irineu understood to be Our Lady of Conception herself, the Patroness of the Holy Daime Doctrine. Gradually she passed on to him the revelations and instructions that formed the basis of the Daime Doctrine that Master Irineu would systematize over the years.<sup>72</sup>

The worship of Yemanjá, on the other hand, exalts the sensual (read “natural”) power of women as something sacred and good. Yemanjá’s domain is the ocean and as such she represents the depths of the unconscious, i.e., its shadows, emotions, fertility, and life. To put it in Jungian verbiage, these two female images stand collectively as the archetype of the female. The following song, *Força do Sol* (Sun Power), pays tribute to Yemanjá, recognizing the deity’s upper hand on the natural world:

*Força do Sol  
Força da Lua*

*Force from the Sun  
Force from the Moon*

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<sup>71</sup> Santo Daime “Estudo Fino” hinário by Alberto, Miami 1997.

<sup>72</sup> Site do Centro de Documentação e Memória - ICEFLU - Patrono Sebastião Mota de Mel. Santodaime.org.



*Aqui na terra*                      *Here on Earth*  
*Chegam os caboclos*            *Arrive the caboclos*

*Força do Céu*                      *Force from Heaven*  
*Força do Mar*                      *Force from the Sea*  
*Aqui na terra*                      *Here on Earth*  
*Chega Yemanja*                   *Arrives Yemanja*<sup>73</sup>

(Stella Maris)

*Trabalho de Yemanja* (Yemanja work) is a collection of fifty-nine Yemanja songs selected from the myriad of hinários composed by Santo Daime elders. At the symbolic level, this work is possibly one of the most emblematic depictions of the relationship existing between the natural world and the female principle. It talks primarily about this deity's power over nature, including humanity. Its message is that of a superior deity offering motherly love, protection, and divine wisdom. One of the songs belonging to this compendium of hymns entitled *Chamada* (The call), highlights these qualities as well as her identification with nature:

*Eu vou chamar*                      *I'm going to call*  
*A Estrela Divinal*                  *The Divine Star*  
*Ela vem trazer*                      *She will bring*  
*O amor universal*                   *Universal love*

*Eu vou chamar*                      *I'm going to call*  
*Os ventos verdadeiros*            *The true winds*  
*Limpar, purificar*                   *To clean, to purify*  
*Pois é a Nova Era*                   *For this is a new age*

*Eu vou chamar*                      *I'm going to call*  
*As forças das águas*               *The forces of water*  
*Das montanhas e dos rios*       *From the mountains to the river*  
*E Mamãe Iemanjá*                  *And Mother Iemanjá*

*Eu vou chamar*                      *I'm going to call*  
*Curripipiraguá*                      *Curripipiraguá*

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<sup>73</sup> Santo Daime Yemanja collection of hymns.

*Caboclo Sete Flechas*  
*Vem me ajudar*

*Caboclo Sete Flechas*  
*Come to help me*

*Eu vou chamar*  
*A toda Natureza*  
*Con amor no curacao*  
*Esta fonte de beleza*

*I'm going to call*  
*All of Nature*  
*With love in the heart*  
*This fountain of beauty*<sup>74</sup>

(Luzia Krull, *Luz Brillante do Amor*)

The preponderance of Yemanja imagery in the Santo Daime ritual is particularly apparent at the two Miami churches that, separately, host works devoted entirely to Yemanja every year in early February—probably also a reflection of the local importance of the ocean's connectivity, and all that it symbolizes.

While the great majority of religions under the Santo Daime canopy possess well-defined myths of origin, Santo Daime is not supported by any single myth or fusion of myths. In the context of the nature/culture question, I posit the disparate bricolage of religious traditions present in the Santo Daime doctrine permits an easier identification with nature. Not being constrained by a myth and, without properly integrating the myth of its constituent religions, Santo Daime articulates and encourages a wide range of interpretative choices by its followers. Thus, while in the view of its leadership, Santo Daime is first and foremost a Christian religion, drawn and enticed by the allure of Amazonian discourses devotees can freely construct arguments to represent Christianity as a nature religion. Furthermore, the differing views between the Santo Daime leadership and the Church's disciples should not be taken as an unresolvable conflict

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<sup>74</sup> Santo Daime Yemanja collection of hymns.

because both representations are not mutually exclusive. An example of this plasticity was articulated by one of my informants in the following way:

*For me it is a connection with the Christianity side, like Jesus, Mary, and Joseph... Nature is their creation so, it is a way of connecting to that force... Santo Daime comes from the forest, though, and that's why there is a lot of Umbanda relationship with it.<sup>75</sup>*

Santo Daime's religious bricolage—be it the celebration of the Queen of the Ocean deity or the Umbanda and Candomblé ritual aspects—has continuously fed the confabulation of nature within its constitutive traditions. In another example, a connection between nature, the feitio and Yemanjá was synthesized by one of my Miami informants:

*There are many things that connect Santo Daime with nature. To me, the orishas, as a representation of nature, is important. For example, Yemanjá and Ogun. Secondly you have the elements: the earth, water, fire, and air; and also the feitio which produces the daime, including the spirit in it.<sup>76</sup>*

#### 4.2.3 *The raw and the cooked: ayahuasca's "natural" preparation vs. cultural production*

A clear symbolic expression of the paradigm of undifferentiated nature/culture can be observed during the traditional preparation of the ayahuasca brew by indigenous or *mestizo* (mixed blood) specialists in the Amazonian rainforest. To be sure, during this process, practicing *mestizo vegetalistas*<sup>77</sup> completely immerse themselves into the realm of plant life and associated elements (water, earth, wind, and fire), attaining in this manner an intimate connectedness to their environment. In tribal settings, whereby the

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<sup>75</sup> Interview with Theresa, a 35-year-old yoga instructor, in Miami on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Erika, a 33-year-old bank executive, in Miami on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018.

<sup>77</sup> Mestizo shaman who gain knowledge and power to cure from the plants in the region.

medicine man's work is limited to a single or a handful of people, the harvesting for the required plants is generally small in scope. Luna and Amaringo (1991) narrate the typical day of ayahuasca preparation by a local vegetalista in the Peruvian Amazon:

We see a certain riverside vegetalista who for many years has been dedicated to obtaining knowledge through Ayahuasca. He begins by cutting an ayahuasca liana that is climbing up a capirona tree [Calycophyllum spruceanum]... He gets up early in the morning and goes to take an ayahuasca rope or liana. He goes out with his cigarette, taking with him his tobacco. He puts at the foot of the ayahuasca plant an offering of tobacco, matches, and some dry leaves of the heart of the banana tree in the manner of paper to wrap the tobacco. Then he says to the grandfather (the ayahuasca spirit): Here I put your tobacco for you, your matches, your banana leaf for you to wrap your tobacco. I ask you grandfather, to permit me to take your plant for medicine, not to cause any harm to anybody, but to cure sick people...After obtaining the ayahuasca, the vegetalista cuts it into pieces, makes it into a roll and takes it to his house. There he cuts it into smaller pieces and starts to crush and boil them. After boiling for three or four hours, he pours the juice into other pots... In order for the purge to be effective, the pot must be made of clay, not aluminum or other material. The vegetalista adds a handful of tobacco to make the mixture boil, and any other ingredient he may usually add when he prepares the ayahuasca purge...He is in a solitary place where nobody will look at the pot, which must not be seen by anybody (Luna and Amaringo 1991, 47-8).

At first glance, the *feitio* remains in the imagination of daimistas as a carbon copy of how the previously examined local vegetalista prepares ayahuasca. However, as I will explain, these two procedures obey to different logics for negotiating the environment.

The *feitio* takes place in a special site called *casa de feitio* (house of preparation), essentially an open hangar equipped with a furnace and a structure that permits the simultaneous *cocimiento* (cooking) of some five large *panelas* (pots). A separate place dedicated to preparing the vine, itself a process called *bateção* (beating), also exists at the heart of the *feitio* house. According to Padrinho Alex Polari (1999), before such preparation can begin, it all starts with the gathering of the raw materials, itself a religious experience. Scout parties disappear for days into the jungle with the mission of

collecting enough raw plant material for production. These participants drink daime prior to the expedition to heighten their senses and facilitate finding the ingredients in the dense tangle of foliage.

In contrast to the sensible and labor-intensive procedure described by Polari, the vegetalista engages unaccompanied in a series of symbolic ritualistic practices involving conversations with plants and animal spirits unfamiliar to the scouts searching for the ayahuasca plants. After making the offering of tobacco and soliciting an ayahuasca rope to allow him to take the plant for medicine, the vegetalista looks for another clue before he is convinced that he can take the plant:

Then the vegetalista observes the chicua [*Piaya cayana*], a bird that is always flying about. If this bird says “chis, chis,” it is good to take the vine. But if the animal says “chicua,” then it must not be taken. The vegetalista just has to leave it for another day, because there can be danger, the enemy can attack him, he can be killed, or something else can happen. If the animal says “chis, chis, chicua,” it means that at first things will go well, but afterwards they will go wrong. Perhaps he will not be able to cure the sick person as desired. (Luna and Amaringo 1991, 47-8).

Thus, the vegetalista’s enterprise is not just restricted to activities backed by human intentionality. We observe that the goal to be accomplished, namely the collection of the ayahuasca plants, transcends any utilitarian pursuit. We watch an individual vegetalista deeply immersed in a ritualistic give-and-take with nature as represented by the creatures that inhabit the wilderness. This is a holy act requiring the heavens’ approval before proceeding with the collection of plants. The vegetalista has, in other words, stepped into sacred space, a setting where the wrong move could mean

annihilation.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, the offering of tobacco and food under the tree when cutting off the woody vine are mandatory practices. Vegetalistas, like shamans in many tribes of the Upper Amazon, consider tobacco a spirit-food essential to all shamanic practices (ibid, 47). Important differences between the vegetalista's and the feitio *cocimiento* practices can also be observed. Dawson describes the feitio cooking process at the feitio house as a very arduous enterprise:

Once the process of cooking has gone through its first cycle, different pans may require different amount of heat and differing length of time on the fire. At all times, then, feitiores must be aware of what stage of the cooking cycle they have reached and what kind of reduction they are working with. The intense and sustained concentration necessary to the successful management of this process is applied within and often bustling environment in which axes are wielded to chop wood, knives are used to clean the vine, red-hot pans are moved between different points of the oven, boiling liquid is decanted or transferred between pans, and steaming mash is prepared for reuse or disposed (2013, 238-39).

As I will explain below, the busy *cocimiento* process described by Dawson requires the coordination of several crews working in at least two or three daily shifts, as well as the manning of different workstations within the feitio house. This is not the case for the vegetalista. According to the narrative provided by Luna and Amaringo:

He is in a solitary place where nobody will look at the pot, which must not be seen by anybody. For this reason, the vegetalista must choose a small village or an isolated place where nobody will arrive and where nobody will speak to him. He doesn't have his wife, he doesn't have a helper, he doesn't have anybody with him. This is because this purge is unlucky when it is not prepared correctly. It does not give positive results, because the mothers of spirits of the vegetation do not come to help him in the preparation of this purge... Even though the vegetalista puts on his *arkanás* [defenses], he doesn't have enough sensitivity to

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<sup>78</sup> Rudolf Otto has conspicuously described the idea of the eminent danger in the presence of the Holy. In *The Idea of the Holy*, Otto claims that the nature of the numinous is experienced as a *mysterium tremendum*. Referring to the Wrath of Yahweh found in the Holy Scriptures, for example, Otto dismisses any moral qualities associated with this feature of the Godhead and instead validates its presence as a quite indispensable element. This force, he posits is, "like a hidden force in nature, like stored-up electricity, discharging itself upon anyone who comes too near" (Otto 1923, 18).

perceive the enemy from miles away. But the dog does, he can see so many things, so many spirits in different ways. The dog has something mystical, magical, and spiritual. For this reason, the vegetalista must always have a dog (1997, 48).

The above description makes it amply clear that the vegetalista's place of ayahuasca preparation is a dangerous, sacred space. To assure his safety, he secures the help of a dog, a creature that can spot danger from afar. This dimension of danger is certainly not present in the Santo Daime feitio in which a collaborative atmosphere of fellowship prevails.

In keeping with the masculine force as encapsulated by the *jaguve* (vine), only the men oversee the harvesting and cleaning of the vine's mossy outlines. The *jaguve* is believed to engender a potent staying power and an all-encompassing grounding effect for participants. In contrast to this, and in keeping with the feminine force, women exclusively harvest and clean the *miraçao* (vision)-producing *chacruna* leaves. In addition, and in keeping with Santo Daime's traditional gender separation, *chacruna* leaves are washed far away from the actual feitio house. Only men can enter and work at the feitio house. The singing of sacred songs by both women and men accompanies the careful picking and washing of the leaves and the cleaning and smashing of *jaguve*, respectively. By relying on a division of labor along gender lines, the Santo Daime feitio ritual seems to accentuate the nature/culture binary. In this sense the feitio reflects the profound gender asymmetry which permeates this forest tradition.

During the summer of 2015, I participated, as part of a larger program, in a one-week feitio event that took place in the Brazilian Atlantic forest at Ceú da Montanha, one of the oldest and principal Santo Daime churches, located in Vizconde de Mauá, in the

state of Rio de Janeiro. It was a very labor-intensive activity requiring the constant nurturing of a strong fire needed to heat five large *panelas* (pots). Except for the *cocimiento* (cooking), which is the domain of experts, I participated in most activities, including wood chopping, jaguve cutting and cleaning, multiple bateçao sessions and the cleaning and moping of the feitio house. I found the bateçao to be the more arduous feitio activity. This is when a group of twelve men engage in very intensive vine beating with large and heavy wooden mallets used to release the fibers needed for the cooking process. The bateçao can take several hours and is carried out with stoic precision at the tempo of the hymns sung during this process. This practice is only interrupted from time to time to drink more daime since it provides the force and harmony necessary to continue this arduous task.

Following up on a set of questions I asked the *feitior* (the person in charge of the *cocimiento*), I determined that each panela contained 50 kilos of jaguve and ten kilos of chacruna. In turn, each panela combining chacruna and jaguve, was filled and refilled with water ten times for a total of 600 liters. The fifteen panelas cooked during the feitio at Céu da Montanha amounted to a total of 9,000 liters of spring water, which produced 270 liters of daime or ayahuasca. The “labor force” involved in this production was approximately made up of some forty individuals. It included some ten local community members along with approximately thirty foreign visitors from various U.S. Santo Daime churches. In addition to this, another ten locals were in charge of preparing and serving food to the ritual participants. All together, some fifty people actively participated in this feitio.



When the feitio work concluded, at the end of five days and during a very cold night, a closing ceremony was held at the feitio house. Once the experienced padrinho decides the daime is ready, the tea is taken off the fire and poured into big barrels as part of yet another manufacturing-like process in which the preparation of daime occurs. At this stage, the women join the men inside the feitio house to harmoniously close the ritual with the singing of hymns and the drinking of daime at the *boca da fornalha* (mouth of the oven).

#### 4.2.4 *The feitio: nature or culture?*

As presented in the preceding pages, when we compare the vegetalista's preparation of ayahuasca with the feitio production of daime, one is immediately stricken by how similar yet different these two processes are. The vegetalista's routine seems to be spontaneous and couched in very simple symbolic procedures; not necessarily requiring the large-scale manipulation of nature required by the feitio ritual practice. Likewise, the Santo Daime system of preparing the entheogenic brew appears complex as well as controlled at every step of the preparation routine. Indeed, the Santo Daime production of daime seems almost industrial-like. Surely, the feitio takes place at the *casa de feitio*, a dedicated space equipped and designed for the processing of very large quantities of vine and leaves, namely jaguve and chacruna, together with industrial quantities of water. The equipment at the Céu da Montanha's feitio house, in fact, boasts a three-meter-long oven (continuously manned by an expert) along with a crane specially designed to move the heavy panelas from the oven surface to the pouring station. At least two workers were required to operate this moving crane once a panela full of daime was ready for transport. Likewise, though the job did not require steel tools, the bateçao

station resembled a factory production line. Throughout this process I observed a very structured, hierarchically-run standardized operation. There was no room for spontaneity at the feitio house since the formula used by Santo Daime maintains a standard script, no matter where it is produced.

In addition, while the vegetalista appears to just venture into the jungle to gather whatever jaguve and other suitable plants Mother Nature has placed in his path, the church of Santo Daime actively and sustainably cultivates many of its own plants. At Céu da Montanha, for example, sustained cultivation of the jaguve and chacruna has been underway for approximately thirty years. Another difference between these two traditions is in the side activities typically engaged in connection with the harvesting of the plants. I am referring to the type of songs sung by these two different parties. While going about the business of collecting plants, vegetalistas traditionally sing *icaros*.<sup>79</sup> At the Santo Daime church, however, the singing that takes place starkly contrasts with the mild and often whispering level of the *icaro*. In fact, Santo Daime hymnals are orchestrated and follow typical European rhythms such as Turkish marches, waltz, and mazurkas (Dawson 2014).

The transition from an ostensible simple mode of production to an engineering one, as observed in the Santo Daime feitio, is partially rooted in church policies of expansion to urban centers which resulted in an unexpectedly high demand for daime.

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<sup>79</sup> The word *icaro* derives from the Quechua verb *ikaray*, which means "to blow smoke in order to heal." Vegetalistas say that spirits, particularly plant spirits, teach them the *icaros*. They are used during the maceration process for protection such as to attract different plant spirits, the spirits of others or the deceased, or dispel dark spirits and dark energies, as well as to manage the ceremony. Experienced vegetalistas can recite hundreds of *icaros*.

The need to produce a very high volume of sacramental tea to satisfy a growing demand worldwide created the need for many able bodies as well as new technologies. What ensued was the metamorphosis from the traditional ayahuasca preparation by a *vegetalista* expert into the *feitio*, something akin to a quasi-industrial activity.

The gendered division of labor during the *feitio* can be seen as a symbolic representation of the nature/culture binary. The assertion that *woman is to nature as man is to culture* seems to be vividly played out throughout the *feitio* with rigorous precision. This arrangement however directly contradicts the idea espoused by Santo Daime practitioners that nature is somehow sovereign. To be sure, two important arguments come to mind in this regard. Firstly, the transformation of the ayahuasca plants into daime singularly takes place at the *feitio* house where only men, a symbol of culture, are allowed. Secondly, and symbolically speaking, the most transformative task—from a nature/culture perspective—taking place at the *feitio* house is the cooking of the vine and the chacruna leaves. The significance of fire is critical to the understanding of this point because, without it, the transformation of the natural plant matter into an effective entheogenic drink would not be possible. As demonstrated by countless folk tales, fire itself is a symbolic representation of culture. Perhaps the most illustrious of all accounts linking fire to culture is the ancient Greek myth of Prometheus.<sup>80</sup> According to Vandiver, “Prometheus’s story is obviously very important. . .notice that fire equals civilization, or

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<sup>80</sup> Prometheus tells the story of a Titan creature, and benefactor of mankind. In *Theogony*, as the myth narrates, Prometheus stole the fire from Hephaestus, the god of fire, and brought it to Earth and gave it to humans. Zeus, ruler of the Olympian gods, did not want to have men vested with any unusual power and therefore took great offense from Prometheus’ transgression. As a result, he decided to severely punish Prometheus by chaining him to a crag on Mount Caucasus and have his liver eaten daily by an eagle, Zeus’ sacred bird.

culture... what Prometheus brings to men is culture” (2000, 30). Similarly, unless the two ayahuasca plants are submitted to a human alchemical process, they could not suffer the necessary transformation required to produce their magic in the form of altered states of consciousness. Nature must necessarily be intervened!

Likewise, it is important to consider how native Amazonian cultures ingeniously discovered that the hallucinogenic properties of the leaves would be greatly enhanced by another plant additive. Hence the preparation of daime for a ceremony consists of brewing together “male” vines with “female” leaves, shrubs or chacruna. Although the male vine creates a “grounding” effect, it is the female leaf that confers the user with the potent psychedelic *miraços* or divine visions so famously associated with ayahuasca ritualistic ingestion.<sup>81</sup> Considering the million possible combinations and permutations of plant species found within the Amazonian rainforest, the final blend used for the preparation of ayahuasca could have occurred by way of supernatural instruction, transmitted by a spirit or deity or through a process of trial and error. In either case it is a cultural achievement of major proportions.

Despite the strong perceived differences between vegetalista ways and the Santo Daime feitio, there is really nothing natural per se about either process. In both cases, culture and nature blend to produce one single, undifferentiated, event. The difference is simply a matter of interpretation. Given the large scale and industrial quality of the feitio operation, a tangible feeling prevails that nature is being actively intervened and

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<sup>81</sup> Pharmacologically-speaking, the leaf contains the powerful hallucinogen N-N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT). When orally ingested, however, DMT alone will provide very little psychoactive effect, if any. Harmala alkaloids from the vine happen to be Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOs), a class of chemicals that bypass certain human gastric enzymes. When used in conjunction with MAO inhibitors, DMT thus is rendered orally active and potently so (Mizrach 2014).

manipulated. On the other hand, the vegetalista's rendezvous with plants feels more like an instance of culture-nature symbiosis. Castree made the following observation about how the perception of life is experienced in simple landscapes, "hunter-gatherers do not, as a rule, approach their environment as an external world of nature that has to be grasped conceptually...[unlike Westerners]...[t]hey do not see themselves as mindful subjects having to contend with a... world of physical objects; indeed, the separation of mind and nature has no place in their thought and practice" (2014, 20).

#### 4.3 *The Brazilian Amazon: the social construction of nature*

In colonial Brazil, the representation of indigenous culture as inferior to the dominant Portuguese culture firmly established a strong culture/nature binary. Under the rubric "culture," everything Western was aggregated into a single, all-inclusive concept, while "nature" acted as a classification method for the subaltern subject together with everything Brazilian. It provided a convenient binary to label as savage the entire Brazilian Amazon rainforest, including its inhabitants. At the time, however, the indigenous peoples already possessed very rich and textured cultures which, as already mentioned, the Portuguese colonizers expediently dismissed. Yet, multiple anthropological studies have revealed that indigenous societies and technologies might have permanently transfigured the Amazonian wilderness. According to Balee, "Amazonian peoples since prehistory have transformed landscapes by redistributing suites of species across the region, enriching the biota in local and regional contexts, and reordering the slope and contents of the surface of the land in diverse locales" (2013, 123). Representational discourses of nature are, nonetheless, so dominant that we seem to be destined to be ruled by them. Citing Louis Althusser, the French Marxist philosopher,

Robins (2012) stated that the dominant system of ideas prevailing in a society—otherwise described as its ideology—functions by appearing non-ideological, thus denying and repelling its own ideological character. The point is that, from a postcolonial gaze, the genesis of outside representation of Brazilian Amazonia, the “naturalness” of the Amazon rainforest obeys more to the need to exploit its territory and its people than to a desire to critically examine the ontological distinction underlying the culture/nature binary. Put differently, the politics of power and representation concerning discourses of culture/nature attained authoritative currency since April 1500 when the Portuguese landed on the Bahian shores at Rio Buranhém.

In his discussion of how the process whereby forest trees degrade wastelands, Robins argues the same point in the following way, “Forests, put simply, are not a natural phenomenon, object, or idea, it is a social one, forged by convention and context, and enforced by its very taken-for-grantedness” (ibid, 123). He goes on to assert, “such a realization, that an evident natural object, idea, or process is, at bottom, an expression of the human imagination, suffused with political and cultural influences, is one that is fundamental to much explanation in political ecology” (ibid, 123). Similarly, while studying the destruction of forests by man-made fire, Susanna Hech and Alexander Cockburn posited, “fire is integral to indigenous cosmology. Under the umbrella of Bororo shamanism of Central Brazil, the powerful *bope*—the mediators or disruption, of the periodic efflorescence of the land, of the cyclic waves of births among animals, of the menstrual cycle—are closely associated with fire” (1990, 39). In their opinion, “fire is essential to the management of humid tropical forest for human purposes” (ibid, 39). However, peeking out from under all this destruction is indeed the promise of renewed

life. The authors indeed point out that said *bope*, or the harbingers of fire, are behind both the disruption of the forest and its actual regeneration.

Indeed, indigenous peoples in Brazil have from time immemorial altered their local landscapes to suit their livelihoods. They accomplished this through slash and burn clearing practices needed to prepare the land for cultivation and then by abandoning those sites when their feeble soils were exhausted, by surrounding their villages with “managed forests” rich in desired plants or that attracted game or even edible grubs (Hemming 2008, 276 -77). They also diverted the course of tributaries to expedite transportation of goods and people, built water channels for irrigation purposes or to create space for new dwellings and communities. Notwithstanding these practices, and given their own ontological understanding, indigenous tribes in the Amazon are uniquely endowed to mediate between the culture/nature binary.

According to Hemming (2008), Anna Roosevelt, as well as other, modern, scholars of Amazonian culture, great chiefdoms along the banks of the main Amazon and its large tributaries evolved during the two millennia before the arrival of the Europeans. Although her theory has been somewhat contested, says Hemming, she concluded that Marajo Island, one of these sites, was inhabited by a hundred thousand indigenous people. Citing Roosevelt, Hemming writes, “such chiefdoms had ‘territories tens of thousands of square kilometers in size’ and societies stratified from deified chiefs down to vassal and captive slaves” (Hemming 2008, 282).<sup>82</sup> Despite the evidence I have

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<sup>82</sup>According to some scholars, recent archaeological research in Brazil now supports the view that the world’s largest tropical rain forest supported a population of as many as 10 million people before the epidemics and large-scale slaughter put into motion by European colonizers. Recent findings such as giant land carvings, remains of fortified settlements and even complex road networks are upending earlier views

presented, our reliance on binaries however does not permit us to perceive forests as cultural phenomena.

#### 4.4 *Conclusion: the politics of imagining nature*

To summarize, this chapter has posited that the nature/culture division made by Santo Daime is largely driven by the politics of power and representation concealed as a legitimate desire to connect with an imagined natural state. Concurrently, Santo Daime members hail the *feitio* as its most important ritual, motivated by the fact that Santo Daime's sacred tea hails directly from ancient Amazonian flora via the territorial location of Céu do Mapiá at the heart of the rainforest. Hence, daimistas could not envision their experiences as resulting from so-called cultural productions.

Standing at the core of this perception lies the powerful Santo Daime ritual that extols the sacredness of rainforest landscapes through its highly evocative hymns. By singing *hinários*, harvesting plants, and manipulating the elements (fire, air, water, and earth), daimistas share a rich imaginary of unspoiled nature separate from culture. Yet, as I have shown, this view is partly the reflection of postcolonial representations concerning the subaltern other, including the Amazonian rainforest. Anchored in colonial ideology, the indigenous population in Brazil was conveniently defined as irrational, savage, and quasi-inhuman. As opposed to the self-proclaimed superiority of the colonizer, everything local was disdainfully viewed as belonging to only nature. Deep-seated in asymmetrical power relations, this abstract representation took on a specific ideological

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that the Amazon had been relatively untouched except for small nomadic tribes (Calcoene Journal, "A 'Stonehenge,' and a Mystery, in the Amazon, New York Times 12/15/2016, p. A4 and A8).



shape as the marginalized subaltern eventually integrated the colonial worldview. This was accomplished quite against their own interests. However, even though Amazonian peoples did not differentiate themselves from the surrounding nature, this did not prevent the popular imagination from viewing them as separate from forest–nature. Despite arguments to the contrary, the daimista worldview is no different.

As I mentioned in the preceding pages, the colonial experience in the Brazilian Amazon created a discourse so powerful that it was eventually internalized even by those that agonized under it. All discourses, said Foucault, are conflictual and competitive, and as such embody particular interests (1972). Not only is reality socially constructed but also, whenever such constructions do occur, people and groups holding a specific agenda also subjectively construct them. In other words, privileging nature over culture is a social construction reflecting specific ideologies in the search for recognition, legitimacy and perhaps superiority and not the reflection of some undisputed ontological certainty.

Perceptions of the Santo Daime feitio as representing “nature” are therefore firmly rooted in these series of related subjectivities. In its current expansion phase, the Miami churches have tended to reproduce the continuing strategic importance of the feitio. Principally, and given the impressive outreach by CDNE (discussed in chapters Five and Six), Santo Daime Miami is on its way to becoming perhaps the most important U.S.-based, Santo Daime constituency. If CDNE’s drive to develop sustained cultivation of ayahuasca in South Florida is successful, it will consolidate Miami as a popular destination point for Santo Daime rituals, padrinhos and feitio works worldwide. Once developed, these events will constitute a further challenge to the hegemony of Céu do Mapiá. Specifically, they could translate into greater freedom regarding the level of

adherence to the sturdy Santo Daime ritual structure by perhaps developing a more “Americanized” ritual style—a change which, as I try to argue in Chapter Six, is already underway. In subtle ways, adherence to a nature narrative situates the Miami Santo Daime churches within a hierarchy of power relations in the context of a competition for global recognition.

Notwithstanding, the above observation, Santo Daime hinários and attendant ayahuasca and environmental discourses, coupled with a fertile imagination, continue to celebrate this culture/nature divide. In a way, the feitio functions to produce and reproduce the oppositional duality embodied by the *doutrina da floresta*. In Miami, the identification with nature also serves to legitimize and empower this religion with Western audiences who, as of lately, have shown a great disposition to prioritize nature over culture as an answer to their individual and collective disenchantment with modernity. As noted earlier in Chapter Three and, as further developed by Chapter Five, this is particularly the case with the city of Miami, a setting that is producing alienated identities in search of meaning and values of existential import. The findings associated with the feitio cover much terrain and, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, point to issues pertaining to this dissertation’s three research questions.

## CHAPTER FIVE: MIAMI: A CITY OF TWO CHURCHES

### 5.1 *The Santo Daime organization in the USA: CEFLURGEM-AN*

Before turning the spotlight onto the Miami Santo Daime Church Céu da Lua Cheia (CDLC) and Céu da Nova Era (CDNE) and, in order to properly contextualize the Miami churches, a brief review of the history and structure of Santo Daime in the U.S. is necessary. In Chapter Three I highlighted two important and revealing conversations with Padrinho Paulo Roberto and pointed out the centrality of his personal efforts regarding Santo Daime's U.S. expansion beginning in 1987. What follows is a brief summary of the events through 2013, including the creation that same year of *Centro Ectético de Fluente Luz Universal Rita Gregorio de Melo-America Nord* CEFLURGEM-AN (Eclectic Center of the Flowing Universal Light Rita Gregorio de Melo-North America), the 2006 umbrella organization created to represent the conglomerate of U.S. and Canadian Santo Daime churches. As is the case with CEFLURGEM-AN, most topics covered by this chapter deal with RQ2 (examining Santo Daime's traditional organizational structure) and RQ3 (exploring the changes within the congregational dynamics of the Church).

The year 1988 is important in the history of Santo Daime's internationalization because it marks the beginning of its activities on U.S. shores. According to informal CEFLURGEM-AN records available at a 2013 plenary meeting in Maryland, in 1988 Padrinho Paulo Roberto obtained permission from Padrinho Sebastião to start a church and bring the daime brew to Cambridge, Massachusetts. This event resulted in the first trabalho held in the U.S. as well as in the founding of the first U.S. Santo Daime church (*Céu da Beija-flor* - Heaven of the Hummingbird). During the same year efforts to launch

churches in Kauai, Hawaii got under way. Despite legal inquiries by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Customs Services concerning the importing of ayahuasca from Céu do Mapiá, in September 1988 the first shipment of daime landed in Hawaii and a piece of land was purchased to build a temple. Eight years later, in 1996, Padrinho Paulo Roberto and his wife Madrinha Nonata (Padrinho Sebastião's daughter), made several trips to the U.S. in an effort to establish churches on American soil. Later that year, churches opened in Colorado and Los Angeles. In 1997, Padrinho Alfredo inaugurated the "Church of the Virgin Mother" in Maryland while *Céu do Coração do Texas* (The Heavenly Heart of Texas) started to hold works in Austin, Texas. Similarly, in the same year Ashland, Oregon and Sedona, Arizona, held their first-ever works. The record shows that Padrinho Paulo Roberto was the quintessential lightning rod behind this flurry of new activity. The same applies to the 1998-2001 period whereby many new churches started operating in the U.S., including CDLC in Miami. The intensity with which Paulo Roberto canvassed the U.S. territory, opening Santo Daime points of light, places him in a unique position as not only co-creator of Santo Daime churches but as a man yielding considerable power as well. Due to his vision, management acumen, and efficacy, his contributions are far reaching in the context of this dissertation's RQ2. As this chapter and the next will demonstrate, his influence led to many institutional changes within the Miami churches.

In 2005, 21 North American churches met in Santa Cruz, California to discuss the creation of a national church. Twenty-four protectors (protectors from Canada, Holland and Japan also attended) signed in December 2005 in Hawaii a proclamation creating the North American organization. CEFLURGEM-AN and the Council of Elders (COE) were

in full support of such proclamation. The signatories included the Council of Elders, the Assembly of Protectors, the Synod of Protectors, the Plenary Body, and the Executive Governing Council along with various Committees (CEFLURGEM-AN 2013).

Organizationally, the conglomerate of U.S. churches is a loose, voluntary association. However, each individual church is established as a 501(C)3, or a tax-exempt nonprofit organization. Miami CDLC's protector Alberto told me he opted to join CEFLURGEM-AN to "formalize and get several things done." It would be difficult to envision U.S. churches operating with any degree of efficiency without belonging to such an organization. To begin with, CEFLURGEM-AN controls and distributes the sacrament in the United States. Secondly, it organizes the annual U.S. padrinho road shows originating in Brazil, events people highly anticipate. Thirdly, the organization offers legal protection and, via its plenary meetings, provides guidance and orientation to affiliated churches. Also, pursuant to CEFLURGEM-AN principles, churches become "official" when they sign a "compact." Miami's Céu da Lua Cheia signed its own compact in April 2007, thus becoming an official CEFLURGEM-AN church.

#### *5.1.1 Céu da Lua Cheia (CDLC): origins*

It was in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1994 that a young man with superb artistic talents as a heavy-metal drummer named Alberto was introduced to the Santo Daime doctrine. At the time, Alberto was leading an existence that, by his own account, led him to many alternative forms of spirituality, including the exploration of some very "dark spaces" (Matas 2014). Together with the rest of the Argentinean daime practitioners, they held works and followed the Santo Daime ritual calendar whenever possible. The ayahuasca brew was not locally available and had to be smuggled in from Brazil.

Essential to church activities, Alberto would travel with some frequency to Brazil in search of the brew. After participating in his first Santo Daime trabalho, Alberto knew his personal quest had finally ended. Having found internal peace, he became fairly active in the church and in 1995 “took the star,” becoming a fardado (ibid).

Alberto’s migration to Miami originated from his desire to make amends with his father who was residing in Miami and whom he barely knew. Thus, in 2000 he travelled to Miami to meet his father. Once in Miami, he attained his U.S. residency. Upon hearing the news about Alberto’s impending relocation overseas, Padrinho Guillermo, his Argentinean spiritual guide, entrusted him with the mission to “keep the candlewick lit.” In 2001, Padrinho Guillermo sent Alberto his first shipment of ayahuasca disguised in a shampoo bottle. By that time, Alberto had been contacted by a Brazilian fardado by the name of Sergio who also resided in Miami. Together they held a small trabalho with some other new agers at a place in South Beach. This led to further ayahuasca events and to the establishment of networks with like-minded people. These activities eventually put him in contact with a woman who had done works led by Padrinho Paulo Roberto (ibid). Between 2001 and 2006 and until he contacted Paulo Roberto, Alberto’s Santo Daime activity in Miami was sporadic and devoid of any rigorous organization and coherence. Information about Santo Daime in the U.S. was not readily available and as a result of some run-ins with the law, secrecy among the early daimista ranks was strictly observed. In 2007 however, Padrinho Paulo Roberto came to Miami to formally inaugurate Alberto’s new church: Céu da Lua Cheia (CDLC). The first trabalho was held at Bagua, an alternative and holistic center and shop still in existence in Miami. The daime brew for

that occasion was flown in from Hawaii, the sole U.S. facility producing ayahuasca (ibid).

Initially, the Miami church was very small, constituting what is known in the doctrine as a “point of light.” Ceremonies took place at an old house rental in North Miami. Before commencing each service, volunteers would prepare the ritual space with implements kept inside a closet within the house. Upon the conclusion of a trabalho, everything was returned to the closet pending the next ritual work. By the time I began attending trabalhos at CDLC, the membership was composed of a mix of some ten fardados, including men and women. Five additional guests also attended the Miami works with some regularity, bringing the total number of attendees to no more than fifteen people at any given ritual. As my interest in Santo Daime grew, and considering that at the time I was working towards a master’s degree in Religious Studies at Florida International University, I decided to make CDLC the subject of my thesis.

Alongside Alberto’s leadership at CDLC is Alejandra, a Rio de Janeiro native and Alberto’s partner who works as a claims settler for a multinational insurance company. They met in the early 2000s at a time when works were sporadic and held in private homes belonging to individuals with like interest. Alejandra had no experience with plant medicine and scant knowledge of ayahuasca. Although Alberto is the de facto protector of CDLC, Alejandra proved herself to be extremely competent and quickly gained an informal leadership position within CDLC. Together, they manage all CDLC administrative and ritual-related matters. Furthermore, Alejandra is CEFRUGEM-AN’s coordinator of the “road shows” featuring Brazilian padrinhos touring the U.S. Because of the complex logistics involved, this is a time-consuming task since at any given time,

at least four padrinhos along with their comitivas may be travelling to different Santo Daime churches around the world (Matas 2014). When padrinhos visit the U.S. they typically call on some five to six churches in various states once or twice a year. All of this must be carefully coordinated and, not to mention, paid for.

### 5.1.2 *Céu da Nova Era (CDNE): the first Miami Santo Daime schism*

Immediately after finishing a *Trabalho de Cura* (Healing Work) Padrinho Paulo Roberto with his comitiva convened with Alberto and Alejandra in Miami in October 2015, at CDLC's North Miami rental. They thought they were going to be congratulated on their efforts to organize and "hold the space" at such an important ritual. Yet, this did not occur. On the contrary, Padrinho Paulo Roberto reprimanded them for being insensitive and harsh to devotees, telling them in very strong terms that they ought to show more grace and flexibility with church adepts. Since I was able to meet with the individuals involved in this ordeal, I carefully followed the ensuing events which, as Chapter Six explains, turned out to be momentous for the future development of the Miami church.

Paulo Roberto's criticism was preceded by a series of conversations held with Estella and David, two seasoned CDLC members who eventually collaborated in the founding of Céu da Nova Era (CDNE).<sup>83</sup> By then, Estella's role as a fardada at CDLC had been suspended due to her alleged inability to stay in formation with the "female

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<sup>83</sup> Finding affordable places to accommodate Santo Daime padrinhos and their comitivas presented an ongoing challenge for CDLC. However, in the case of Paulo Roberto, this problem was solved when David offered to host Paulo Roberto in a separate lobby apartment in the same waterfront residential complex where he lives. David and Paulo Roberto eventually become good friends.



battalion.”<sup>84</sup> As a result CDLC’s leadership told her that she could only attend ritual ceremonies as a guest. This restriction required that she not wear her *farda* (uniform) to CDLC trabalhos but rather dress in all-white attire, just like any regular visitor would, and stand in the second line formation, a less privileged spot behind church fardados. Estella’s visits to CDLC naturally became less frequent. Notably, this administrative sanction was placed on a woman who had introduced many new agers to CDLC and who had been involved with the Miami church since its inception. However, since Estella had been organizing and leading her own brand of ayahuasca ceremonies for quite some time, she was only partially dependent upon the Santo Daime church to satisfy her spiritual needs.

From conversations held with David at his Wynwood office in December 2015, I also learned Paulo Roberto had asked him to comment on the reasons that kept CDLC from growing. To this, David answered, CDLC was renting a house that was also being offered to other groups seeking a similar space. This situation, he explained to Paulo Roberto, created a problem because it resulted in “booking” uncertainties which made planning ahead impossible for CDLC fardados. For the same reason, CDLC was restricted from staging the complete CEFLURIS calendar of official works.<sup>85</sup> David commented he also reported the overly strict attitude by CDLC with church congregates.

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<sup>84</sup> During a conversation held with Estella on September 25, 2019, she explained to me that whenever she drinks ayahuasca, she feels overran by an intense energy current that shakes and moves her body. She mentioned that not doing so would be intolerable for her wellbeing. This electric sensation did not allow her to stand-still, a situation that very frequently compelled her to step out the arranged formation at the ritual space. CDLC leadership did not favorably view this “lack of discipline.”

<sup>85</sup> To see CEFLURIS’ published Calendar of Official Works see [www.santodaime.org](http://www.santodaime.org).

This matter came to a head during a three-day CEFLURGEM-AN plenary meeting held at Céu de Hawaii on November 18, 2015. During this event, which was widely attended, it became clear that David and Estella had decided to part ways with CDLC and form a second Santo Daime church in Miami, with their new endeavor. This endeavor counted with Padrinho Paulo Roberto's full support and encouragement. A month later, with David as its single leader, Céu da Nova Era (CDNE) was officially formed.<sup>86</sup>

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the inaugural trabalho by CDNE took place at a very upscale South Beach waterfront apartment. Given that my dissertation required I become acquainted with the new church and, considering I also wanted to support David and Estella, I participated in the event. There were approximately 30 people in the room; interestingly, two of them were seasoned CDLC devotees and one a CDLC fardado. I also ran into people that I had seen on a very sporadic basis before. I immediately noticed among the attendees a much higher educational and professional level compared to CDLC. From my post-ritual conversations with participants, I identified four attorneys and, except for a sophisticated black Jamaican woman, all participants were white and, most likely, professional.

I met both David and Estella during my first trabalhos at CDLC. Compared to Estella, and for the reasons explained above, David had a much more consistent attendance record. An American by birth, David and I shared many trabalhos at CDLC. Because of our tall stature, we always formed next to each other at the ritual space. Although a lawyer by education, at the time I met him, David was working in the field of

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<sup>86</sup> With David as CDNE's sole protector, Estella was relegated to a subordinate position, a situation which would be a source of tension between them going forward.

aircraft financing. Both David and I shared the fate of having experienced a destructive divorce that for both of us became the catalyst to join the Santo Daime church. David was a respected *fardado* and occupied the important position of guardian at the ritual space.<sup>87</sup> He seemed to have a keen interest in Santo Daime history and was very knowledgeable about ritual practices. As far as Estella, a South American woman in her early forties and self-professed “priestess,” she had been organizing ayahuasca retreats at her South Beach apartment for quite sometime. Her credentials as a priestess derived from previous recurring visits and coaching with shamans and *vegetalista ayahuasqueros* in Peru. David had been Estella’s client and it was she who introduced him to CDLC.

Regarding the founding and future direction of CDNE in Miami, two other individuals, Sarah and Adarsh, spouses-to-be of David and Estella, respectively, figure prominently as well. The reason is not just the very sizable personal wealth of these individuals, but their willingness to use their fortune to collectively advance CDNE’s objectives. Furthermore, and pursuant to Brazilian Santo Daime church customs, the spouses of church leaders traditionally play very significant roles in the organization.<sup>88</sup> This tradition partly derives from Brazilian patriarchal, ancestral rules of association whereby lineage descent occupies a major place.<sup>89</sup> As I describe in the following pages, after Sarah and Adarsh were introduced to CDLC they became active participants and

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<sup>87</sup> Guardianship is a position of service to support the harmony and order of the work. The direct translation of the Portuguese word for guardian, *fiscal*, translates more directly as “administrator” or “supervisor.”

<sup>88</sup> Although Estella was not a church leader, her role in the birth of CDNE led her to occupy an important symbolic, yet ambivalent position in this church.

<sup>89</sup> For example, Padrinho Sebastião married Madrinha Rita, today considered to be CEFLURIS’s matriarch. Their offspring, Padrinho Alfredo, Padrinho Valdete and Madrinha Nonata are presently respected leaders in their own right. Following this tradition, Madrinha Nonata married to Padrinho Paulo Roberto and their son Jordão Souza, is presently being groomed to take on future church leadership responsibilities.

eventually consummated their marriages, putting their considerable resources to work for the nascent church. As a result of their financial support, within a few years CDNE developed a commanding presence within the global organization, including a reputation as an innovator of the Santo Daime ritual itself. As a result, an initial hostility by CDLC's leadership against the founding members of CDNE increased, all the while adopting a stricter and more controlling ritual style versus CDNE's lenient panache. The contrasting forms of governance adopted by these two churches are significant and is the subject of Chapter Six. Nevertheless, the establishment of a second Miami church doubled Miami's Santo Daime's membership overnight by some ten *fardados* and another ten *firmanos* (guests with a consistent attendance record). This significant statistic constitutes an important fact connected to this study's RQ3.

CDNE's new members came from various places. Some came from Estella's own ayahuasca practice, others arrived from Santo Daime churches located in other states and a few represented people who either defected from CDLC or, like me, took the initiative to participate in both churches. The *fardados* arriving from other states, principally New York and Texas, knew David well since he had consistently frequented those states' churches and had cultivated close relationships. This out-of-state migration of some six individuals presents an interesting case because most of them arrived not only as *daimistas* but also as hired hands for CDNE. Nevertheless, over time, a critical geographic expansion within Santo Daime Miami took place. Upon the sale of the North Miami rental used by CDLC, the church was forced to look for space elsewhere. This led CDLC to secure a conveniently located yoga studio in Fort Lauderdale. The move was a success because it brought the church geographically closer to the Broward County's

Brazilian diaspora in South Florida. Before long, CDLC was being visited by local Brazilians, many of whom were familiar with the Santo Daime church. Meanwhile, CDNE's own expansion efforts in Miami broadened considerably through real estate acquisitions in two locations. From the Redlands in the South to Fort Lauderdale in the North, Santo Daime's geographical boundaries extended considerably in a short period of time. Given Chapter Two's reflections on the relative importance of the Brazilian diaspora, it should be noted that it is only at this point in CDLC's evolution that such migration becomes relevant.

### 5.2 *Miami: the fashioning of new identities*

Miami's location, socio economic configuration and demographics render this city a unique urban geography; an ideal multicultural setting for the construction of varied lifestyles.<sup>90</sup> Yet, as noted in Chapter Two, while much of this is true, the formation of individual and collective identities in Miami today unfolds in progressively, politically contested multicultural spaces exacerbated by great social exclusion and segregation. As I will explain below, this set of characteristics acts as a magnet of attraction for spiritualities of life that promote the sacredness of the self and, furthermore, differentiate themselves by their particular eclectic doctrinal structures. As previously discussed, owing to their multiplicity of dissimilar and unrelated spiritual traditions inherent in these

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<sup>90</sup>According to the 2010 Census, the racial/ethnic breakdown of Miami is: White: 72.6% (non-Hispanic: 11.9%); Black or African American: 19.2%; Asian: 1.0%; Native American: 0.3%; Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian: 0%; Two or more races: 4.2%; Other race: 5.4%; Hispanic or Latino of any race: 70%. In 2000, the largest ethnic/national origin in Miami was Cuban (34.1% of the population), followed by Nicaraguan (5.6%), Haitian (5.5%), Honduran (3.3%), Dominican (1.7%), and Colombian (1.6%). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) also ranked Miami first in terms of its percentage of foreign-born residents at 59% ([www. worldpopulationreview.com](http://www.worldpopulationreview.com)).

practices, this study refers to such spiritual assemblies as bricolage. The New Age movement, including Santo Daime, conforms to this category.

This study has defined Miami as a city that exemplifies the crisis of modernity. In Chapter Two I described the city as postmodern, characterized by extreme pluralization, social exclusion as well as the existence of a transient population. In other words, inhabited by people who have not made and will not make Miami their permanent residence. The following testimony supports this reality:

*I just think that Miami seems to be run by developers that have little interest in the well-being of the majority of the workers in the population... So the big wealth disparity in Miami I find distasteful and the impending crisis with climate change I find to be a real threat. Concerning the moral ethics of this city, generally, I feel it is quite distasteful. For me, as a social worker, Miami is a place that has the highest immigration rate in the United States, so many of the folks here don't have roots and that influences the way people behave with each other and within the wider society.<sup>91</sup>*

To make sense of such social and economic fragmentation, Nijiman (2011) classified Miami city dwellers into three groups: locals, exiles, and mobiles. Granted, while this classification refers to pure, “ideal types” in the Weberian sense, it nonetheless is elucidating. According to Nijiman, locals, who consider Miami their hometown, account for 20 percent; exiles, which find themselves in Miami for political or economic necessity and whose ranks include Cubans, Nicaraguans, Haitians, Venezuelans and others, comprise about 50 percent of the population (ibid). For Nijiman, what is significant about this latter group, is that they do not consider Miami their hometown. This means that the prospect of returning home for exiles plays a major role in their

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with Barbara, a 35-year-old social worker, in Miami on October 22nd, 2018.

identities. Lastly, akin to exiles, mobiles do not identify with Miami as their hometown either. However, as opposed to the former, the latter came here voluntarily and may leave whenever they wish. While this group was traditionally made up of northerners (U.S. residents originally from the northern states), presently they represent an increasingly global mix. They are highly mobile, affluent, and represent about another third of the local population. According to Nijiman, “spatial mobility has become an essential marker of social stratification and has rearranged the social fabric of global cities like Miami” (ibid, 139).

As a direct result of these stubborn problems, those who experience feelings of alienation while living in Miami must therefore craft a new identity to feel whole. In this context religion provides a renewed sense of identification because the identity it confers is precisely not based on place (Adogame and Spickhart 2010). Additionally, the centrality of the “self,” a perspective circulated by the New Age movement, is central to the construction of these new identities. These assertions, supported by my fieldwork, denote the single most important micro-social process associated with RQ1.

### *5.2.1 Miami: spiritualities of life as religious bricolage*

Although statistics concerning the distribution of major religions in Miami are readily available, little is known about New Age spiritualities. This is explained by the difficulty in defining who should be considered a New Age follower and by the reluctance of the American legal-administrative system to register “marginal” religions. Nevertheless, as I will describe below, Miami has come a long way as a city catering to alternative spiritualities; today, institutionalized New Age activity is widespread. In their most rudimentary form, New Age events typically take place in private homes, New Age

stores, or rented spaces. Also, as it is generally the case with other global metropolises, Miami is periodically visited by shamans, roadmen, gurus, and enlightened religious practitioners representing numerous religious traditions within the New Age repertoire. These individuals typically stage all-night ritual ceremonies in more rural places such as Homestead and Redlands. Such is the case, for example, with “peyote ceremonies” organized by the Native American church. To cite other examples, Bodhi Three in Wynwood offers several healing therapies including sound bowl healing and cryotherapy, along with reiki workshops. Spas such as the Standard offering yoga and other integrative medicine treatments are quite numerous in Miami as well. The offerings by energy healers, nutritionists, integrative medicines practitioners who operate at their places of residence are, likewise, substantial. Likewise, commercial events that cater to larger audiences seeking to consume New Age spiritual products and services are equally strong. A cursory review of the yellow pages listings as well as other similar sources reveals a vibrant New Age scene in Miami. Eventbrite, a popular event website, for example, registers several New Age offerings. Unlike the less-coveted events, which are disseminated via email and social media, these, more prominent venues are professionally advertised and marketed to reach thousands.

Mirroring Miami’s character as a transient city inflicted with intractable ethnic, race and inequality problems, the city’s religious marketplace is likewise equally segregated. By this, I mean religious groups operate within ethnic niches and avoid stepping into each other’s turfs. In contrast to established world religions as well as religions which have made their arrival on the coattails of displaced immigrants—churches which primarily appeal to the so-called exiles—New Age spiritualities cater to



all groups (locals, mobiles and exiles) generating in the process a more intense form of competition. This distinction occurs principally due to the bricolage characteristic of New Age spiritualities and to the adage that new agers are not loyal costumers. From a Santo Daime perspective, New Age spiritualities constitute both a source for potential members as well as competition. However, the Church's most enduring competitors are the traditions that work with "plant medicine" or those that engage in other forms of techniques designed to bring about trance induced states such as Native American peyote ceremonies, Uniao de Vegetal (UDV) sessions, facilitators of holotropic breath works, assorted shamans and other medicine workers circulating spiritual global networks.

As most daimistas would declare about themselves, they are not a loyal lot. Although their main religious commitment may be to the Santo Daime doctrine, their dedication is not exclusive since several additional alternate New Age metaphysics are often incorporated into their bricolage of religious practices. Among other things, the time lapse between each Santo Daime ritual functions as an incentive for daimistas to remain attached to spiritual traditions they have chosen, yet do not form part of the Santo Daime canopy. The problem exists because no provisions for further integration beyond the liminal experience at the ritual work have been put in place. This situation produces an existential type of problem. Namely, having entered into ayahuasca-induced altered states of consciousness—a practice which leads to the temporary suspension of social structures—once the ritual concludes and participants return to their homes, daimistas are quickly engulfed and overwhelmed by the cultural symbols associated with global capitalism. This situation is compounded since Santo Daime forms of ecstatic healing are ultimately inscribed with forms of cultural critique against materialism, environmental

destruction and, consumer capitalism. The question then arises, how do practitioners sustain the revelatory insights or intuition about the self, others, nature, and the cosmos produced by the powerful Santo Daime ritual? To tease out answers concerning daimistas' post ritual activities at home, I asked informants to comment on their Santo Daime practices in their living spaces. The following testimony is representative of the views shared by the majority of daimistas:

*I don't struggle much when at home before the next work...I keep connected listening to hinarios... I also fall back on my other many practices... like, lately I have been learning about the angelic realm...for example, the energy angels like Michael and Gabriel may bring to you. So, many other things occupy my time like drumming circles, yoga...I do keep connected.<sup>92</sup>*

Concerning the Santo Daime liturgy, another issue central to understanding this church is the lack of doctrinal common ground among the various spiritual traditions that form the Santo Daime religious collection of practices. More to the point, how do Santo Daime followers reconcile a set of disparate metaphysics that do not talk to each other? The answer to this question is clearly expressed by the following testimony:

*That's a complicated question and to be frank I never thought about it...actually I don't think it matters...What I do in all works is to surrender to the force and let the music guide me. It doesn't matter if we are singing to Ochun or to Jesus and God, I let myself go and get behind that energy... and most of the time I find it resonates with me.<sup>93</sup>*

To that end, and in the context of daimistas' knack for spiritual admixing, adherents' communion with a bricolage set of beliefs helps because it enables daimistas to see their own eclecticism mirrored in the diversity of traditions offered under the Santo

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<sup>92</sup> Interview with Kelly, a 38-year-old yoga instructor, in Miami on September 6, 2018.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Juliet, a 48-year-old real estate broker, in Miami on August 15, 2018.

Daime rubric. The power and pleasure of agency involved in bricolage molds individual behaviors in ways that tend to reinforce these same attitudes. In different words, emancipated individual daimistas choose, consume, and combine religious resources of all kind in unique assortments, thereby elaborating personal, hence unique, religious identities and systems. Under this perspective, the question whether these traditions are conversant with one another is rendered irrelevant. As a result, one could make the bold claim that Santo Daime, and by extension New Age, have symbolically drained the meaning of mythologies within their own architecture. Indeed, if all traditions are assumed to be the same, then practitioners can freely pick and choose according to their own subjective needs and interests. By manipulating them to satisfy such needs, these traditions are being appropriated as techniques for self-realization. According to this logic, one could make the claim that the Christian Creed is more attractive if partially detached from Catholic Christian institutions, rituals, and culture, just as Kabbalah would be if it were appropriated as a non-Jewish teaching.

As reported in Chapter Two, another aspect of this cosmology teaches that when a bricolage of conflicting spiritual traditions are grouped together, their particular religious principles or doctrines necessarily become universalized. That is, the religious symbols associated with the various faiths, independent of origin, become de-contextualized and open to interpretation. My interviews consistently pointed to this perception. What follows is a representative answer to the question: What is your favorite religion?

*I don't believe any religion or practice is superior to any other because all religions tell the same truth. What Umbanda, Spiritism, Hinduism, Christianity have in common is how they share the same path...if you are walking the sacred*

*path you can't be so arrogant...after all, aren't we all on the same boat? Aren't we all spirits traveling the same path?*<sup>94</sup>

This type of reasoning clearly enhances the path for an easy and casual adoption of hybrid religious traditions. Yet, the value of seeking alternative New Age practices outside the Santo Daime purview is also driven by the need to satisfy the desire to create a much needed holistic epistemology and ontology of the “self” which stands opposite to the schizophrenic modern self-produced by late modern capitalism. This perspective constitutes an important ontological, modern, shift leading to the sanctification of the self and thus, the empowerment of the individual within his or her existential space (See section 2.3.3 in Chapter Two). Furthermore, the pick and choose attitude associated with this shift further facilitates the receptivity of assorted, mutually disconnected religious traditions with which new agers and daimistas construct their own private, customized, subjective religious worlds. The following testimony echoes this important principle:

*As you know, we are spiritual beings trapped in matter. I do believe we are divine beings inside a material body... You can awaken this divine energy through your own practices and by knowing what's best for you...I prefer not to be told what to do or which practice is the best. I can do it myself.*<sup>95</sup>

In view of the preceding testimonies, Santo Daime's bricolage of traditions is therefore appealing to the New Age Miami community. Daimistas and new agers alike share an appreciation of the view that sees religious traditions as universalized, as being devoid of dogma. Likewise, they share the belief in the value of the subjective interpretation of the spiritual world. These beliefs and others mentioned before,

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with Audrey, a 38-year-old financial services executive, in Miami on October 15, 2018.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Doreen, a 34-year-old office manager, in Miami on September 12, 2018.

strengthen and validate both groups' beliefs in individual agency and self-empowerment. Modern ideas of the sacredness of the self constitute a micro-social process underpinning Miami's positive receptiveness to Santo Daime. As noted in Chapter Two, displaced Miami new agers possess multidimensional, rootless identities which are constantly in flux. This characteristic turns them into natural Santo Daime candidates. To the extent that religious bricolage opens broader pathways for re-interpretation of religious experience at the collective level, this section also comes to terms with some of the concerns presented by RQ3—which explores the identity of the devotees. As I will discuss in the next section, when New Age bricolage traits are complemented by a “turn to self” ethos, the theory that likens religion to an economic marketplace becomes plausible. Said differently, the proclivity towards individual choice, bricolage and the “turn to self” strongly resonates with the modern idea that our culture has been thoroughly commoditized.

### 5.3 *The religious marketplace*

Although the religious marketplace is perceived by many as a metaphor, the commodification of culture's impact on non-economic institutions and individual actors should not be understated. As I will demonstrate in the following pages, Santo Daime is not impervious to the transformation of people and ideas into commodities or objects of trade. The ontological significance of this observation behooves quoting David Harvey at length:

*Capital is a process and not a thing. It is a process of reproduction of social life through commodity production, in which all of us in the advanced capitalist world are heavily implicated. Its internalized rules of operation are such as to ensure that it is a dynamic and revolutionary mode of social organization, restlessly and ceaselessly transforming the society within which it is embedded. The process*

*masks and fetishizes, achieves growth through creative destruction, creates new wants and needs, exploits the capacity for human labor and desire, transforms spaces, and speeds up the pace of life (1990, 343).*

As already outlined in Chapter Two, by adopting a Durkheimian theoretical approach in the sense of religion's ultimate permanency, Stark and Bainbridge (1996; 2003) claim religion offers rewards that are accepted as a matter of faith. To be sure, they claim religion arises through basic social exchanges, which are economical in nature and suggested a sort of religious dialectic akin to the behavior of actors in the economic marketplace. Furthermore, Elliot and Lemert (2006) suggest that globalization has altered the way people express their individualism by developing a worldview that values ownership and market value. A "prosperity gospel" and such market attitudes are not anathema to Santo Daime. The following three testimonies by Santo Daime informants clearly validate this point:

*Concerning the limited resources at CDLC, I see the humble Christian vows of poverty in CDLC vs. American prosperity gospel in CDNE.<sup>96</sup>*

*Actually, financial blessing and emotional healing kind of go together. You need to put your heart into it though... Much of the success depends on your ability to control your negative thoughts and to generate positive thoughts. Once you do this, you will have the ability to attract into your life whatever you are focusing on, including the material... Have you heard about the law of attraction? It uses the power of the mind and takes whatever is in your thoughts and materializes them... As a guide I feel one must choose a philosophy, a religion, a spiritual something that supports that vision.<sup>97</sup>*

*I'd like to prosper in my health, my relationship, my career, and my business... During my works I invoke my spiritual guides and ask to be led in that direction... to lead me through a path of prosperity in every way. Submission... I mean, at the same time I believe my personal power to do this depends on my total*

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with Cynthia, a 40-year-old academic, in Miami on May 29, 2018.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Constanza, a 43-year-old broker, in Miami on September 23, 2018.

*surrendering. We live in this world and I think despite the problems with capitalism a place for self realization exists in this system.*<sup>98</sup>

The above testimonies seem to confirm the presence of attitudes consistent with a religious marketplace. They reveal the existence of market-type organizational logics in which individuals typically choose from a range of belief options rather than commit to a central doctrine. As it could be observed by the first testimony, the marketplace economic metaphor emphasizes the freeing of religion from institutions and individuals' ability to elaborate religions from whatever is offered by this religious bazaar. The second testimony indicates a similar disposition and it is only different from the first one in terms of form. Notice that in the second case, religion is being manipulated to produce satisfactory material goods. Furthermore, this observed behavior agrees with the privatist concerns of personal authority and self-care observed in Chapter Three. This should not come as a surprise. Drawing on Bourdieu from Chapter Two, to the extent that postmodern life has been thoroughly commodified and given the ease that pick and choose attitudes have been generally adopted by new agers, market-like behavior has become normalized. Similarly, since New Age, or spiritualities of life, emphasize "experience," they are seen as providing a "product," namely, experiences for consumers. This point is succinctly made in the following two testimonies:

*I don't think I'm faithful in the traditional sense. Say, like a Catholic has faith. I joined Santo Daime because I was looking for a direct experience with the divine, with the cosmos, God or whatever you wanna call it. I don't think spiritual progress is possible unless you experience things...Experience is the real teacher and Santo Daime is the greatest of all teachers.*<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Interview with Cecilia, a 58-year-old office service sector worker, in Miami on September 5, 2018.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with João, a 57-year-old accountant, in Miami on August 29, 2018.

*Santo Daime puts me in direct contact with the divine... It's what I feel when I drink daime...there's nothing comparable to this experience. I connect faith with religions like Christianity and Islam not with anything New Age where faith seems to get diluted... So, more than faith I need a greater connection to the divine and, as far as I can tell, this is what this practice really delivers.<sup>100</sup>*

As Harvey has suggested, elements of commodification actively, yet covertly, permeate all cultural productions in advanced capitalism. Furthermore, as indicated in Chapter Two, the commodification of ayahuasca and other entheogens has experienced tremendous growth in the last few years. According to Pollan (2018), today we are undergoing a modern renaissance of psychedelic research that so far has yielded very promising results for the treatment of many psychological and emotional traumas such as depression, PTSD, and others. In addition, these changes are taking place within a legal environment that is moving in the direction of the decriminalization of drugs. For example, native medicines with similar molecular structures containing dimethyltryptamine (DMT), like the Amazonian plant ayahuasca's ability to heal has prompted voters in Oakland and Santa Cruz in the state of California to opt for decriminalizing a wide range of psychedelics—such as magic mushrooms, peyote and ayahuasca—making those items the lowest law enforcement priority (Carpenter 2020). Given these new trends, I would expect at least some “market logic” elements to spill over onto ayahuasca cultural productions, thereby becoming the norm and not the exception.

It is not surprising that the “turn to self,” discussed earlier, has taken two directions (Tipton 1982). These two paths involve the language of utilitarian

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<sup>100</sup> Interview with Erika, a 34-year-old bank executive, in Miami on August 3, 2018.



individualism and expressive individualism (see Chapter Three, section 3.2.1). Since these two goals are not necessarily mutually exclusive, I posit that Santo Daime is implicated in both types of pursuits. The next two testimonies respond to the following question: As a follower of the Santo Daime doctrine, what kind of needs are you trying to satisfy? Do you include material needs?

*Now that you put it that way, at CDNE one can see a great degree of affluence and how I feel about it depends on how that affluence is put to work. I have to confess, I do have some doubts about mixing material affluence with the spiritual life... Someone said we cannot serve two gods at the same time. So, my principal needs are spiritual.<sup>101</sup>*

*I don't think it is possible to explore the spiritual world unless your basic needs are first satisfied. That's the connection I make between the material and the spiritual. So, if my basic material necessities weren't satisfied, I would pray so that they are returned to me. So, in my spiritual quest I emphasize happiness, growth and self-fulfillment and I take a positive view towards economic prosperity when needed.<sup>102</sup>*

Likewise, Chapter Three insists that this division in personal identities is not unexpected considering America's strong culture of individualism and secularization. As noted in that chapter, the modern logic molds daimistas' subjectivities in two opposing directions, namely pro-system and anti-system. These two trends constitute important changes at the congregational level and thus directly engage RQ3. In the pages that follow I will entertain how these two trends become visible and reinforced by the Santo Daime ritual.

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with Daniella, a 60-year-old RE broker, in Miami on August 9, 2018.

<sup>102</sup> Interview Abe, a 49-year-old service sector worker, in Miami on September 1, 2018.

#### 5.4 *The Santo Daime ritual: battalions, firmness, and gender hierarchies*

This section is not intended to offer a comprehensive account of the Santo Daime ritual. The specialized literature already provides numerous, in depth analyses of the Santo Daime trabalho (La Rocque Couto 1989; Arneide Cemin 2010; Beatriz Labate, Sandra Goulart 2010; Edward MacRae 1992; Monteiro da Silva 1983, Andrew Dawson 2013; Jonathan Lowell 2013; and Alfonso Matas 2014). My intention is to provide enough information such that the reader may be better guided as I address this study's second and third research questions.

First and foremost, daimistas' use of the Portuguese word *trabalho* to refer to the Santo Daime ritual should be understood with reference to the difficulties this ritual presents. At the physical level, the Santo Daime ritual—lasting anywhere from five to twelve hours—may be described as nothing less than an ordeal. In the context of my personal experience attending hundreds of trabalhos, I have witnessed the effects the ayahuasca ingestion has on many ritual participants. I have images recorded in my mind of the struggle ritual participants typically experience. I have seen the pain vividly reflected upon their faces and in the way their bodies twisted. I have seen them collapse onto the floor, vomit and get utterly exhausted by the ritual's physical demands.<sup>103</sup> Not surprisingly, the physically grueling aspect of this intense, commanding ritual remains a major roadblock obstructing the path to membership growth in Miami. Data collected

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<sup>103</sup> CEFLURIS Practical Guidelines have the following to say about “getting well”: “During the Work, you may experience dizziness, nausea, or other physical upsets including vomiting and diarrhea. We sometimes refer to this as ‘getting well’ with the understanding this is part of the healing function of the Work. You may wish to bring additional tissues, although these are provided; you may also wish to bring hand towels and/or a change of clothes.” (CEFLURIS- Practical Guidelines, 2007).

clearly points to people very often being put off by the sheer physical endurance that is required, in addition to the austere military style. Yet, to the faithful, the ritual's uncomfortable aspects are easily explained away. For example, a young participant who usually struggles with the emotional and physical demands presented by Santo Daime works had the following to say:

*Actually, my best insights and miraços happen when I'm lying on the floor, resting in the healing room...as long as I can hear and follow the music, I feel I'm participating.*<sup>104</sup>

To contain or avoid possible transgressions within the ritual order leading to bad experiences, Irineu Serra grounded the Santo Daime ritual into internal discipline and external regulation. Dawson describes how these two factors “combined to constitute a ritual repertoire which... might fruitfully be understood as a disciplinary regime responsible for the maintenance of the physical and symbolic order” (2013, 44). Essentially, Mestre Irineu designed an extremely regimented and highly functional ritual.

Male participants occupy one half of the ritual space and female practitioners occupy the other half. Indicative of the militarism at the heart of the Santo Daime special arrangement, these groups are commonly referred to as the male and female battalions. From a symbolic and spiritual perspective and, congruent with Santo Daime's Mariology, the members of these battalions are viewed as “soldiers of the Queen of the Forest.” Further group subdivisions include formation according to ritual seniority and a person's height. Senior members are placed nearest to the commander who is adjacent to a center table, as the more junior members are placed farther away from the table.

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<sup>104</sup> Interview with Victor, a 53-year-old advertising executive, in Miami on October 20, 2018.

During the entire length of a Santo Daime ritual a premium is placed upon the attitude of so-called *firmeza* (firmness). Firmness is the necessary character trait required to remain in formation, or in the assigned line position, while under the mind-altering effect of the ayahuasca brew. This is something that at times, feels like an impossible task to accomplish. The efficacy of a Santo Daime ritual, however, depends on everyone remaining in his or her place in the *salão* (hall, ritual space). By remaining in formation, ritual participants symbolically generate a “current” that swirls around the ritual space, providing the energetic sustenance for the efficacy of the work.

Alberto, CDLC’s protector, taught me to approach the Santo Daime ritual through steadfast concentration upon the hymns. He explained the doctrine resided in the *hinários*’ lyrics and consequently it was imperative to pay close attention to them if one wanted to properly learn from these teachings. I rigorously followed this suggestion and generally accomplished it with little disruption. I also sang and played maracas. This combination of focused attention and singing constituted firmness. However, as I noted before, not everyone was physically endowed to be able to practice firmness on a consistent basis. From the place I used to occupy at CDLC’s ritual space, I watched others break the line and lie down on the floor to be helped by *fiscales* to a separate “healing space” as the effects of the ayahuasca brew began to take effect. I also acted as *fiscal*, a task that requires presence and attention in case someone needs assistance. A *fardado* that had an attitude similar to mine once said to me, “paying close attention to the doctrine gave me profound insights about my life, others, and myself...in my experience, these appeared as thoughts in my head or as visuals flashed onto the movie screen of my mind...I prayed and asked for *firmness* and it worked.” As for myself, I recognized that a

sense of structure in fact helped me be reflexive with respect to the images and sensations I experienced. However, unlike many others, my experience was never uncontrolled. It was perhaps due to my submission to the rules of the game and to the fact that I would not allow myself to flow freely during the work that my subjective engagement never took me to the astral plane or to other *miraços*. Although I was always conscious of being in an altered state of consciousness, most of the time I managed to remain grounded throughout each ritual.

Ceremonial drinking of the sacred daime involves the formation of two distinct lines separating male and female ritual participants, each one of them respectfully and patiently waiting to be given their personal cup to drink (often times after a personal sign of the cross). Once the daime has been ingested, participants then return in silence to their respective places. During the ceremony, any interaction between the male and female halves is strictly forbidden. Like military institutions, to enhance the regimented *salão* structure, Mestre Irineu decided that officially inducted female and male member “bodies” should wear a specific uniform. In an egalitarian fashion such uniforms provide uniformity, conformity and de-sexualization. For fardados and fardadas two types of attire exist: The blue *farda* and the white *farda*. However, most works require the use of the blue *farda*. The women’s blue *farda* is reminiscent of Amish pastoral simplicity. It consists of a blue skirt, and a white shirt with a black bowtie. In a fashion similar to the women, the men wear navy-blue slacks and a white shirt and a navy-blue tie. Both wear black shoes. The white *farda* is an all-white attire for both women and men. The tie remains navy blue. Following characteristic patriarchal attitudes, women cover up their body parts to not become a sexual distraction to men. The white *farda* reinforces this idea

since it enables women to play out an image of virginal and ethereal beauty historically associated with the non-sexual aspect of womanhood. Along with the white *farda*, women wear a rhinestone crown with white and silver sequins in reference to the “Queen of the Forest.” In Brazil, women who have already been sexually “initiated” fasten a rose to their *farda*, while a palm-leaf distinguishes virgins from the initiated ones. Thus, the differentiation in Brazil includes virgins forming a subgroup within the women’s battalion. This is not the practice in the U.S. where the formation arrangement is restricted to gender, height, and seniority. An assortment of flowers, ribbons, and pins may also be worn to differentiate the married from the unmarried. Non-inducted guests, on the other hand, are expected to dress in all-white attires, with women specifically required to wear long skirts and shoulder-covering tops.

Hymns, more aptly called *hinários*, are the focal point of the Santo Daime ritual ceremony. Broadly speaking, Santo Daime hymns appear in two liturgical settings. First, hymns exist as part of a collection known as *hinários*. Although some hymnals contain hymns donated or offered as gifts by others, most *hinários* are authored by a single individual and are arranged chronologically in the order such hymns are “received” from the astral plane. Second, and most importantly, hymns help to integrate the daime force into the previously mentioned “current” at the ritual space.

Music is so central to Santo Daime that it would be impossible to become a protector or church leader unless such individual was able to play an instrument (typically a guitar) and have the capacity to “channel hymns.” A Santo Daime ritual encompasses the non-stop singing from completed *hinários*, parts of *hinários* or a shorter collection of hymns from different *hinários*. As the singing takes place, ritual

participants either remain sitting down or dance on the floor as required by the type of ritual being performed. The most common sitting ritual is the *concentração* (concentration). During *bailados* (dance works) three repeated walking patterns set to mazurkas, waltzes, or Turkish marches are performed by ritual participants. The protector traditionally plays the guitar music accompaniment while other fardado musicians mostly play maracas (rattles) and occasionally some soft drumming. Other instruments I have observed in Santo Daime ceremonies include accordions, keyboards, flutes and/or harps. Of these instruments, the maracas play a crucial role within the ritual space and they are customarily played by any fardado who wishes to do so. They keep the beat and aid participants to summon the force needed for the *trabalho*. The maracas also intensify and make the force vibrate, potentializing spiritual power.

#### 5.5 *Santo Daime identities: in search of philia and agape*

In contemporary Miami, many Santo Daime followers are profoundly dissatisfied with mainstream values and identities. Work is seen as alienating; politicians are taken to be corrupt and consumer culture is taken to undermine the future of the planet. These individuals seek liberation from materialism and the “iron cage”—a term coined by Max Weber to refer to the increased rationalization inherent in social life, particularly in Western capitalist societies. The iron cage metaphor traps individuals in systems based purely on teleological efficiency, rational calculation, and control. Put differently, Santo Daime participants are keenly aware and suspicious of the forces of an encroaching global capitalism, which they feel must be resisted, disciplined, or accommodated. A typical complaint made by daimistas in connection with neoliberal values is registered in the following testimony:

*Our communities are decaying, our resources are being depleted...we face environmental degradation and climate change...the extinction of wildlife but no one wants to see it, juke! This system is controlled by corporate America and designed to serve the rich... It's run by fear and ignorance...I'm tired of it.*<sup>105</sup>

Paradoxically though, and as this study makes it amply clear, Santo Daime belongs to central aspects of our times and as such it exemplifies aspects of mainstream culture including the influence of the economic marketplace. Santo Daime “healing” ceremonies, therefore, become a symbolic production of the inherent conflicts of modernity reflected as personal trials to be “resolved” in the ritual space. Daimistas attempt to heal their divided selves with reference to the crisis of modernity by either accepting or rejecting the promises of modern capitalism as individuals imbued with strong personal volition. Both expressive individualists and utilitarian individualists, seek to find a balance with reference to their individual sacred selves as opposed to some institutional allegiance or dogma existing outside of their inner reality. Both sides therefore show a loss of faith in the ability of conventional institutions to provide meaningful identities, thus placing their devotion either in the form of resistance to modern capitalism or conformity with it. In order of appearance, the following two testimonies belong to a utilitarian individualist and to an expressive individualist:

*Even though I do not share my religious beliefs at work because no one would understand, I like my job. I work for a multinational financial services firm and expect to do so for many more years. My problem is not the capitalist system but rather my family...I have not talked to my father for twenty years and to my brother for some ten...I feel I am finally ready to heal those relationships.*<sup>106</sup>

*My moral compass tells me there's something profoundly wrong with our society. I wish I were closer to nature...I feel nature could bring clarity to our thoughts.*

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with Theresa, a 35-year-old yoga instructor, in Miami on September 6, 2018.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with José, a 52-year-old bank executive, in Miami on August 21, 2018.



*Our souls crave for peace of mind and I know I'm not going to find it sitting here.*<sup>107</sup>

Within the context of the Santo Daime ritual, despite the disarray experienced at times by participants, the intra-group's subjective energy usually acts as a safety net for all involved. This is in accordance with CAM practices that are inclusive of the family and social network (Kleinman 1980). Within a collective experience the ritual's structuring process comes into play providing ideology, order, social control, and meaning. Here, it should also be highlighted the feeling of love or, more precisely, the feeling of *agape* (spiritual love) and *philia* (brotherly love) experience by many at the ritual space. The substance and tone expressed by the following testimony is a common daimista depiction of the exhilarating feeling of affection produced by the Santo Daime ritual:

*At times during the work a profound feeling of love overwhelms me... for my brothers and sisters and for all humanity. The work produces in me a deep internal sense of awakening...I hope I have grown to be a more accepting, loving, and compassionate person.*<sup>108</sup>

Therefore, CAM systems such as Santo Daime, manifestly mirror the social and group energy typically found in the context of shamanic rituals and the like (Dow 1986; MacRae 1999; Wiedman 1990). Moreover, when the fundamentals of the ritual are manipulated through trance techniques—including the use of ayahuasca—the social, spatial, and temporal elements proper to the ritual act are amplified, leading to greater efficacy. As indicated above, ritual participants have noted the sense of personal self-

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<sup>107</sup> Interview with James, a 37-year-old musician, in Miami on September 5, 2018.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Alexandra, a 35-year-old graduate student, in Miami on September 11, 2018.

broadening from an initial egocentric perspective to wider dimensions of the psyche, including the cosmos. In this respect, the Santo Daime work becomes a tool for liberating mental processes and blurring the boundaries between the individual and their larger and ecological context.

Among the most important findings this study has observed is the unequivocal healing potential brought about by the Santo Daime ritual, regardless of the circumstances. I was able to confirm this fact via the answers given by all thirty participants to the following question: "In what ways has Santo Daime changed your life?" The answers were various, however, in the interest of not extending this section with complete excerpts, I provide a few general categories: reconciliation with estranged family members including marriages; greater self love and less judgment; the overcoming of feelings of loneliness; recovery from divorce; recovery from financial loss; control of anger triggered by ecological degradation; greater empowerment in the face of institutional abuse; greater self-esteem given the system's pressure to conform; recovery from various addictions; recovery from various physical ailments such as back pain and other diagnosed chronic conditions; recovery from migraine-headaches, among others.

Victor Turner believed a permanent tension in society exists between the tendencies to structure or order and those that push towards anti-structure or "communitas" (Turner 1969; 1982; 1987). Turner considered that there was a human necessity to participate in both. He claimed that people who do not integrate both forces within their psyche search for it in liminal rituals. He implied to say that this lack of integration causes illness. Thus, individuals holding inferior positions in the social structure aspire for a symbolic superiority and conversely, those who find themselves in

superior positions might aspire for the symbolic, universal fraternity, produced by an undifferentiated "communitas", and may even submit themselves to penance in order to achieve this experiential estate (Turner 1969; 1982; 1987). From this point of view, one might consider the Santo Daime ritual to be a ceremony that tends to move social life and, consequently, society, towards structure and order. I have witnessed Turner's theory come alive at every Santo Daime trabalho. Specifically, the end of a work marks a period characterized by great fellowship, hugs, smiles and expressions of unbounded love by ritual participants. I am describing a feeling of oneness where all social divisions: class, race, gender, and finances melt away. A classical example of this was articulated by a female daimista during a Yemanja ceremony I attended:

*When I incorporate Yemanja I feel very protective, maternal, concerned with others...it's a wonderful feeling. These are moments of great internal peace and love. Fear is dispelled... I become as strong and loving as the ocean goddess...It's easy to follow and dance to the music.<sup>109</sup>*

Healing "a la carte" and a hands-off attitude are so prevalent at Santo Daime rituals that in some cases the practice may be misused. When this occurs, the results are perhaps questionable. Mediumship can be cited as a special example of this tendency because, despite the complexity and potential transformative ways it promises, the Church does not formally teach mediumship to its followers. Considering the hazards associated with mediumship, it would stand to reason that some form of supervision should be responsibly introduced. Yet, as I indicated previously, all those who may be trying to unlock their psychic mediumship abilities are left to fend for themselves. Subsequently, the understanding and experience of mediumship becomes unpredictable

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<sup>109</sup> Interview with Kelly, a 38-year-old yoga instructor, in Miami on September 6, 2018.

and messy. If the development of psychic abilities takes place over a period of time and if no guidance is available, then daimistas may be led astray as far as mediumship is concerned. Many years ago, I attempted to discuss the subject with a CDLC fardado who exhibited the most violent type of incorporations at the ritual space. He was not a sociable individual and therefore did not share much except for the following admission, which I took as a warning sign: “don’t open that door [to mediumship] because you will never be able to close it again.” The following testimony from Alejandra confirms the lack of mediumship guidance in Santo Daime in general:

*Because mediumship is not from the time of Mestre Irineu... It starts with Padrinho Sebastião...in Santo Daime nobody teaches you. The hymns teach you, and you learn from the daime itself. Then you are going to desire to learn more. The fardados are better accommodated. But the good fardados are always looking for better knowledge.*

Another fardada had the following to say when I stated, “so, it looks like you are working on developing your mediumship.”

*Well, I'm looking for ways to work on it because it's not like anyone is telling me how to do it. Audrey [pseudonym] told me that she used to be like me, like a revolving door of beings coming and going and she would tell these beings that she wouldn't accept more than three incorporations during her work. So just having that intention helps.<sup>110</sup>*

To summarize, the ritual setting of Santo Daime channels participants' experiences in important ways. Symbolic visual imagery and non-linear thought processes referred to as *miraços* usually result in healing revelatory insights or insights about the self, others, nature, and the cosmos. The immediate capacity to engage with or become oriented in the world occurs by effort and reflexivity. Complementing the

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<sup>110</sup> Interview with Doreen, a 34-year-old office manager, in Miami on September 12, 2018.

aforementioned, and in accordance with Santo Daime belief, the ayahuasca brew itself is infused with divine healing power thus permeating the entire process with additional spiritual power. Furthermore, under ethnomedicine practices, people modify their activities in the world according to symptoms, and it is this reorientation of their lives that constitutes healing. As a symbolic healing system, Santo Daime mirrors these concepts. Finally, Santo Daime has proven to be extremely efficacious as a healing system. As a result, daimistas' feelings of helplessness have been positively changed to feelings of hope, constructing in the process stronger, happier and more resilient identities.

#### 5.6 *Conclusion: the triumph of healing despite church tensions in Miami*

While alleged excessive authoritarianism and control by the charismatic CDLC provoked the first Miami Santo Daime fissure, the emerging CDNE significantly broke with tradition. Due to its unconventional, bureaucratic style and bolstered by the possibilities significant material resources offer, CDNE rapidly rose within the organization. All the while, Miami—a city marked by segregation, ethnic conflict and severe social inequalities—appears to be unable to produce stable identities. Accordingly, New Age Miami dwellers feel compelled to experiment with other forms of medicine. Indeed, the vacuum produced by Miami's rootless identities, this study argues, has been partly filled by New Age spiritualities such as Santo Daime. Furthermore, Miami new agers possess characteristics that not only mirror this city's modern predicament but also invite the participation of New Age spiritualities. New agers' need for a diverse and probing lifestyle, coupled with the belief in the primacy of the self as the locus of individual power, has greatly facilitated the reception of the so called spiritualities of life

by this city. Also, given their disposition to freely pick and choose from a diverse offering of spiritual tendencies and owing to their disposition to construct individual, privatized spiritual practices, Miami new agers have de facto embraced, produced and reproduced, the existence of a religious marketplace, albeit in a weak form. All the while, these attitudes are further sustained by the effect of an American consumer culture and the secularization of religion. Under this scenario, utilitarian individualists attempt to fulfill the American dream by using supernatural power or seek personal and social advancement. Against this background, complementary medicine and traditional forms of healing have become attractive to Miami new agers because of the New Age promise of transformation such as wholeness, balance, and wellbeing. As part of the New Age repertoire, participation in Santo Daime has strengthened otherwise weak, individual, and collective identities. Notwithstanding wealth disparities by the two churches, in the final analysis, Santo Daime is mostly appreciated for its ability to deliver healing to its followers.

## CHAPTER SIX: THE ADMINISTRATION OF POWER: SACRED AND SECULAR STRATEGIES

### 6.1 *Resistance and accommodation to postmodernity*

This chapter focuses on answering this dissertation's second and third research questions that deal with the type of changes taking place at the organizational (RQ2) and devotee (RQ3) levels, including their contributions to the church's receptiveness in Miami. Many of the supporting arguments presented by this dissertation have analyzed the politics of ecological crises, nature discourses, the forces of globalization, the sacredness of the self and the impact of bricolage on postmodern spiritualities. This chapter will continue to draw on these important concepts as we examine Santo Daime's institutional resistance and accommodation to postmodernity. I argue, these themes are largely played out in what I have defined as strategies. I deliberately use the term *strategy* to highlight that Santo Daime is a church that stands in opposition to the *status quo* and therefore must seek ways to negotiate the surrounding environment. Being strategic means being perceptive, future-oriented, open-minded, proactive, and making decisions based on evidence and calculated hunches. Additionally, the adoption of this term does not necessarily imply a linear, historical unfolding of the policies implemented by the Miami churches. Full of unanticipated surprises and dramatic realignments, these tactics are occasionally contingent and provisional.

To better capture the Miami church dynamics under study, I differentiate between two types of strategies: "sacred" and "secular." Although the boundaries between these two strategies frequently overlap, on the whole, *sacred strategies* are concerned with topics related to the ritual space such as rules and guidelines as well as matters

concerning liturgy, namely the serving of daime, the choice of hinários including accompanying music style, and the organizing of a feitio. On the other hand, the second type of strategies relates to non-religious issues such as intra-church conflicts, spiritual tourism, and the planning for ayahuasca cultivation, to provide a few examples. However, this is not to say that secular strategies are totally devoid of religious content or that sacred strategies are not influenced by secular concerns. Furthermore, as this study has made it amply clear, most strategic decisions made by the Miami Santo Daime churches are often couched in either overt or covert discourses of power and politics. This finding should not be surprising. In a modern, pluralistic society with a spiritual marketplace, a chief goal by religious actors is to try to generate and/or preserve religious capital, i.e., legitimacy, acceptance, and influence. Finally, since these strategies are conceptualized and implemented through recognizable organizational structures, either supported or rejected by the faithful, their impact on church followers should be evident.

## 6.2 *Sacred strategies*

Chapters Two and Three cited Max Weber's charismatic domination and bureaucratic religious authority principles to refer to the two forms of control existing in the Miami Santo Daime churches. As I will explain, my research places CDLC within a traditional, charismatic structure and associates CDNE within a bureaucratic one. Having said this, these churches do not exhibit the perfect or ideal Weberian models as conceptualized by him, but rather variations of them. However, when the behaviors exhibited by these two institutions are compared, the appropriateness of these two terms becomes clear. This study claims that CDLC's charisma is displayed in its controlling



and rigid attitude in the ritual space while CDNE's rational style is largely manifested in its more permissive attitude in the *salão*.

### 6.2.1 *Control, power, and spirituality in the salão*

The first sacred strategy I intend to examine involves differences in the oversight of the Santo Daime ritual at the two churches. As the testimonies in this section suggest, Alberto at CDLC chose to invest the ritual with the same ethos found in the traditional Brazilian Santo Daime churches that stressed obedience. According to Cemin, “obedience is clearly highlighted in the ‘*Cruzeiro*,’ the hymnal of Mestre Irineu, and all other hymnals make reference to it in one way or another, because it is one of the basic components of the process of adapting the follower to the system” (2010, 40). Indeed, as interviews with CDLC fardados largely reveal, this church is mostly associated with a set of disciplinary methods intended to maintain a certain desired order at the ritual space as well as subtle control beyond the confines of scheduled *trabalhos*. There is little doubt that order and structure are deeply valued by the CDLC leadership, even at the cost of internal institutional rupture. As my interviews with fardados show, an authoritarian bent is noticed by most daimistas at this church. The testimony below was given by a daimista who habitually shares a coveted space at the *salão*'s center table:

*At CDLC we rely a lot on the protector...He is very strong, does a great job leading the work but as a person who has sat at the star table, I feel too many hand signals and looks of disapproval...are made telling me how to hold the maraca...this way that way...or just to close to my chest, ahhh ... by Alejandra to me. Alberto said, “just let it go”... It's a weird feeling because you are trying to do your best but you are still being scolded like a little kid.<sup>111</sup>*

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<sup>111</sup> Interview with Erika, a 31-year-old banker, in Miami on August 3, 2018.

Furthermore, several testimonies by CDLC fardados reported feeling under pressure and believed their voices were not considered. This lack of voice seems to contradict specific CEFLURGEM-AN directives requiring all U.S. churches the establishment of deliberating bodies such as “the Council of Stewards.” I provide the following testimony as an example of this problem:

*How many times I have tried to share with Alberto and Alejandra ideas I think may improve a few things here...you know, or how we could all chip in to improve what we do, but I don't think there's any interest in hearing us.<sup>112</sup>*

The following testimony, however, provides a different perspective. This individual is quite knowledgeable about church matters and her assistance is always sought.

*I will say that I find problematic a trend that I see in male charismatic leaders as the protectors of these churches and I feel something happens when their egos become aggrandized to the detriment of the health of their church and I could point out many examples...For example, let's count the two churches in Miami as one example. Undermining democracy and shared leadership. The protector feels that he is imbued with the right or responsibility to do things in the works like some preaching or talking outside of the scope of the ritual and fails to seriously consider feedback from church members, including other members, and yes I definitely see that in both churches.<sup>113</sup>*

Once, I witnessed an event at CDLC I thought was unnecessarily controlling, aggressive and uncalled for. It occurred during a trabalho when a new, very rhythmic song had just begun to be sung by all the ritual participants. At that moment, a highly respected fardado who habitually sits at the star table suddenly stood up, walked to an empty space in the back of the *salão* and proceeded to incorporate a caboclo entity

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<sup>112</sup> Interview with Erika, a 31-year-old banker, in Miami on August 31, 2018.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Barbara, a 35-year-old social worker, in Miami on October 22, 2018.

familiar to him.<sup>114</sup> This spirit possession—an act deemed to be an important aspect of sacred healing—was dramatically played out and included specific postures and noises of the caboclo entity being incorporated. It happened that this trance was cut short as Alejandra stood up from her seat at the star table and, violating the rule concerning gender divisions, crossed to the men’s battalion and proceeded to scold this individual, stating that the ritual underway did not allow for spirit incorporation. This occurred even though this individual was experiencing nothing less than the unmaking and the re-making of his self through trance, effectively placing the possessed individual’s psychic stability at risk. As revealed by various interviews and confirmed by my participant observation, this domineering attitude has tended to produce significant tension with some CDLC followers, both inside and outside the ritual space.

This situation worsened in 2019 when CDLC informed church followers that it would not allow church fardados and guests to attend rituals at CDNE. Appealing to a sense of loyalty, CDLC took this policy to the extreme by ostracizing violators, in many cases removing them from the church email list and not accepting them back into the church. When I asked Alberto about this matter he replied, “my leadership resembles friendship and my conception of friendship is loyalty.” However, unlike the charismatic model he draws on for inspiration, the following testimonies reveal that loyalty seems to only flow his way. The following testimony was given by a CDLC guest who is concerned about being forced to choose between the two churches and feels uncomfortable about it:

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<sup>114</sup> An Umbanda spiritual entity related to the spirit of natives of the forest.

*Yeah, that's one of the things I talk to Alberto about, that he does have a lot of bad blood not only against the other church but also against Paulo Roberto...He talks about this a lot and it puts me in a position I don't like to be in because I don't want to have to choose...you know, I'm not going to be a fardada any time soon.<sup>115</sup>*

A fardada who holds a utilitarian individualist point of view and who was warned about being deprived from future CDLC trabalhos on the grounds of her participation in outside ayahuasca rituals, considers CDLC's controlling practice to be very "dangerous." In her own words:

*This controlling attitude is senseless and energetically affects the church. Prohibiting daimistas from returning to CDLC simply for participating in other rituals is a provocation. Here, a serious break can occur...I imagine that violent reactions by annoyed participants at other Santo Daime centers have taken place. We all have jobs and reputations to keep.<sup>116</sup>*

Cecilia is a CDLC fardada who was given a key position at the ritual space's center table<sup>117</sup> after the departure of a fardada who previously occupied that position. She conveyed how she felt very uncomfortable at the star table because of the intimidating gazes by Alejandra. These unpleasant experiences led her to seriously consider talking to her:

*I did not appreciate the way I was being treated at the table. It's a very difficult place to be at. I was given looks if I did something wrong...Too much control!<sup>118</sup>*

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<sup>115</sup> Interview with Abaid, a 35-year-old academic, in Miami on August 8, 2018.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Constanza, a 43-year-old broker, in Miami on September 23, 2018.

<sup>117</sup> The star table is regarded as an important focal point through which the "spiritual current" generated in the ritual space is harnessed and directed. The local leader, called a Commander, sits at this table and is joined by musicians and instrumentalists who work under his close supervision. The center table is typically occupied by an equal number of male and female ritual participants. Seating at the six-star table also designates spirituality, firmness, and advanced understanding of the doctrine (Matas 2014).

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Cecilia, a 58-year-old service sector entrepreneur, in Miami on September 1, 2018.

Likewise, Robert, who decided to stop attending Santo Daime rituals at CDLC, indicated he was not pleased with what he perceived as very rigid, vertical structures at the CDLC. He also considered the veneration paid to Santo Daime padrinhos as part of an unacceptable socio-spiritual stratification within the Church. He specifically questioned the preeminence of church elders, including their morals. He explained,

*I did not like the Catholic aspect, the disciplinary aspect, when I saw Alberto scolding people, or the admiration displayed towards padrinhos. This is hierarchical, vertical, and these padrinhos are not angels.<sup>119</sup>*

To be sure, the above testimonies do not convey the strict adherence to the charismatic model which professes respect, motivation, and encouragement. However, CDLC's authoritarian style is generally not well received by Miami fardados and guests alike. Yet, their impact on the receptivity of Santo Daime in Miami is mixed. To some potential daimistas this attitude constitutes something they are not prepared to handle while, on the other hand, many fardados dismiss the problem as not necessarily being disruptive. For some, loyalty depends on the doctrine's symbolic aspects rather than with external forms, including church politics; these followers stress the esoteric as opposed to the exoteric. Also, during the entire length of a Santo Daime ritual, a premium is placed upon the self-disciplinary attitude of *firmeza* while under the mind-altering effect of the daime. Thus, regardless of ideology, everyone as a matter of normal practice seeks *firmeza*. As the next testimony suggests, daimistas negotiate confusions such as this by evoking their own practices of bricolage:

*I'm not going to tell you I appreciate or welcome Alberto or Alejandra talking down to people during a ceremony...However, I cannot let myself be distracted by*

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with Robert, a 54-year-old musician, in Miami on November 14 September 2018.

*it...I believe their criticism reflects the influence of patriarchy, Catholicism, the punishment of sins...I choose to dismiss Catholic teachings in favor of a more gentle spirituality like shamanism, in my case. So, I try to channel my miraços to places where I feel connected, such as the sun, the moon, and the stars.*<sup>120</sup>

Nonetheless, Alberto should be acknowledged for his tremendous focus and stamina as a Santo Daime protector. Indeed, everyone agrees that Alberto displays great command of the various intricacies proper to the Santo Daime ritual and can execute them with utmost precision, including singing and the playing of instruments. I have seen how he single-handedly carries out his duties at the ritual space with determination and zest. His level of excellence has been rewarded; CDLC has functioned as a recruiting magnet ever since the church moved to its new location in Fort Lauderdale.

Under his “routinization” of charisma argument, Weber contends that, upon the death of the charismatic founder, a gradual transformation must take place if the religion is to survive. According to Weber, the founder’s charismatic type of authority must be converted into a priestly or bureaucratic type of authority to ensure institutional continuance (discussed in Chapter One, section 1.1.). Weber’s routinization of charisma in Miami, however, takes place under a different set of circumstances than those envisioned by Weber. Here, it involves two institutions, and, in place of the death of a leader, we can think of the debilitation of CDLC. Similarly, in lieu of the “transformation” we may symbolically see the birth of CDNE.

If CDLC follows a charismatic type of leadership essentially devoid of any administrative or deliberating body, we can then assert with some certainty that CDNE subscribes to a rational-legal authority leadership model (also known bureaucratic

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<sup>120</sup> Interview with Cynthia, a 40-year old academic, in Miami on May 29, 2018.

authority). This is a form of leadership in which authority is largely tied to legal rationality, legal legitimacy, and bureaucracy. David made this approach clear to me during one of our several conversations:

*I try to create consensus and collaboration around everything. So, I try to minimize my importance. Like, it's very important to me if I'm gone that the work still takes place on the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup>. Just because I cannot be there till the 16<sup>th</sup>, we don't move the concentration to the 16<sup>th</sup> so that I can lead it. Somebody else leads it on the 15<sup>th</sup>...The charismatic spiritual leader is the daime itself. I try to create consensus and collaboration around everything. So I try to minimize my importance.*<sup>121</sup>

As David pointed out, one of the downsides of the charismatic strategy is that it does not encourage broad participation. Also, CDLC does not possess a plan to replace Alberto in the unfortunate event he becomes unavailable, nor does it possess a staff capable of taking charge should a misfortune of a different kind occur. At CDNE these preparations are already in place. Upon its founding and true to its bureaucratic style, CDNE quickly implemented the “Council of Stewards,” the deliberating body recommended by CEFLURGEM-AN to its member churches. Formed by David, Sarah, Adarsh, Estella, Marlene, James, Barbara, Denise and Daniela, this group’s chief responsibility is to reflect upon, discuss, and make decisions regarding ritual related matters and naturally, provide advice to the leadership. Contrary to the undemocratic or non-participatory style practiced by CDLC, CDNE encourages participation from everyone. As David clarified:

*Fardados have a lot of input... a lot of people talk to Sarah. Carolina talks to Sarah all the time, and so then when Sarah comes to the Board of Stewards’ meeting, she's talking about what Audrey said, what Carolina said, what Doreen said. I talk to George all the time. I learned from experience, that when the*

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<sup>121</sup>Interview with David, CDNE’S protector, on September 7, 2018 in Miami.

*burden falls on one person, if something happens to that person everything falls apart.*<sup>122</sup>

Or consider the testimony provided by Barbara on this issue:

*It certainly is more democratic at CDNE. They have an active Stewardship Council which, by the way, that is part of the charter of the CEFLURGEM-AN churches as well as a requirement. I think it is more democratic than the benevolent dictatorship model at CDLC.*<sup>123</sup>

Others have manifested that CDNE is perhaps too lenient. The following testimony directly addresses this issue and was made by someone who switched from CDLC to CDNE:

*Yes, you can definitely do more things at the new church but sometimes when I'm sitting there, I can see Estella wearing a black jacket. And I'm like "dude, don't you know!?" It's actually disturbing...it is visually disturbing... In a way CDNE is too relaxed, but in another way it isn't. Relationships have become too personal at CDNE so people forget what was the original purpose of this tradition...it is not just about everybody becoming family and friends. It becomes too cozy...everybody sharing this house or not...it is a little bit too much in my opinion.*<sup>124</sup>

To summarize, just as too much control at CDLC produces tension, the relative absence of restraint at CDNE also has a few detractors. The negative feelings about perceived restraint and freedom quickly wear off when practices of spiritual bricolage are brought into the mix. Whether a holistic view of Santo Daime is held or whether devotion is placed upon one or more deities from the Santo Daime pantheon, the individual reaction to daime styles of authority seem to be temporarily suspended. This does not

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<sup>122</sup>Interview with David, CDNE'S protector, on September 7, 2018 in Miami.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Barbara, a 35-year-old social worker, in Miami on October 22, 2018.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Alexandra, a 35-year-old graduate student, in Miami on September 11, 2018.



imply that these two types of leadership strategies have no consequences, as it will be discussed in the following section.

### 6.2.2 *Broadway musicals and rock 'n roll*

Aided by sporadic drum accompaniment and by the persistent rattling sound produced by the maracas, guitar playing at CDLC is Alberto's sole domain. He is the quintessential musician, capable of interpreting in succession hundreds of hymns in one night, as required by the Santo Daime ritual. In his role as commander of the male and female Santo Daime battalions, Alberto shines like no one else I have seen. Through his control of instrumental playing, singing, poise, and stamina, this charismatic leader is at the top of his game. On the other hand, and consistent with CDNE's more relaxed structure and adherence to a bureaucratic organizational style, David does not lead by playing guitar or by giving sermons. Unlike Alberto at CDLC, David is not a musician. Essentially, the strategic guitar-playing task at CDNE has been delegated to James. Formally a fardado from the New York church, James was invited to come to Miami for this purpose. Significantly, and keeping with CDNE's liberal ethos, James plays an electric guitar and has adopted a playing style partly reminiscent of rock'n roll sounds in which he incorporates "wah-wah" effects as well as other distortions and overdrive sounds.<sup>125</sup> To many, James' playing represents an unpleasant departure of the traditional, harmonious or pleasant-sounding music associated with Santo Daime. Many considered

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<sup>125</sup> A wah-wah pedal for the electric guitar alters the tone and frequencies of the guitar signal to create a distinctive sound, mimicking the human voice, hence the onomatopoeic name "wah-wah." Distortion and overdrive are forms of audio signal processing used to alter the sound of amplified electric musical instruments, usually by increasing their gain, producing a "fuzzy", "growling", or "gritty" tone.

James' playing style a complete distraction and one that seriously interferes with the effectiveness of the ritual itself. The following testimony expresses this concern:

*I know that James has created a bit of an uproar because of the way he plays the guitar. I am familiar with that but what else is going on? No, that's the big thing. You know, in Santo Daime, what we are doing when we sing the hymns? We're calling on spirits... We also generate a vibration when singing these hymns... We are indeed creating a current. So when the people leading the work are not harmonizing with each other, that influences the integrity of the whole current and when the space is not well held, the spiritual beings do not come... They don't come because the space is not held in a way that we can receive them.<sup>126</sup>*

Granted, while these alternative musical arrangements draw various forms of criticism, James' guitar playing stands as one more example of the type of groundbreaking modern contributions CDNE is introducing to the musical Santo Daime ritual.

Considerably more meaningful in this regard, however, are the hymns composed by David's wife, Sarah. Some of her music and lyrics are completely removed from the traditional European rhythms adopted by Santo Daime since its early formation in the Amazonian rainforest.<sup>127</sup> Also, deviating from tradition, her songs are written and sung in English. Having attained an MFA degree at Columbia School of the Arts and dedicated to a professional career as a theater director in Miami, Sarah put her considerable artistic talents and imagination to work in a different type of theater: the sacred Santo Daime ritual. Before she admitted it herself, I used to jokingly tell Sarah that through her music she had brought a taste of Broadway flare to the Santo Daime ritual space. Below I

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<sup>126</sup> Interview with Juliet, a 48-year-old real estate broker, on August 15, 2018.

<sup>127</sup> As previously stated, Santo Daime music exclusively follows the musical format proper to Waltzes, Mazurcas and Turkish marches.

reproduce “Buzz Buzz Buzz” from her *Caminho da Firmeza* (The Path of Firmness)

hinário “received” at Ceu do Mar in Rio de Janeiro in 2015:

*Buzz buzz buzz at the edge of my aura  
Buzz buzz buzz at the edge of my aura*

*I have two friends from New York City  
He’s kind of rad, she’s really pretty  
They’re minds are quick, and their spirits are strong  
They inspired me to write this song*

*Catch the fly, catch the fly, catch the fly, don’t let it die  
Catch the fly, catch the fly, catch the fly, don’t let it die*

*Sitting by the pool at Céu do Mar  
Wishing Baller were here playing guitar  
Anne Marie would sing and play the drum  
Tum tum tum tum tum tum tum tum tum*

*Buzz buzz buzz at the edge of my aura  
Buzz buzz buzz at the edge of my aura*

*Brother Spencer is the glue  
He introduced me to you and you  
Padrinho Paulo is the King  
He inspires all of us to sing*

*Catch the fly, catch the fly, catch the fly, don’t let it die  
Catch the fly, catch the fly, catch the fly, don’t let it die*

*Madrinha Nonata, so nice to meet  
I’m sorry I cannot share your pito  
But I feel the blessings of your heart  
What a beautiful way this year to start*

*Buzz buzz buzz at the edge of my aura  
Buzz buzz buzz at the edge of my aura*

*Catch the fly, catch the fly, catch the fly, don’t let it die  
Catch the fly, catch the fly, catch the fly, don’t let it die*

(Sarah [pseudonym], *Caminho da Firmeza* 2018)

Concerning the issue of breaking with tradition, I asked Sarah whether her compositions were the result of a deliberate act to break with church heritage. This is how she responded:

*No, they are just coming to me. But Padrinho Alex Polari, when he was here last year said when people receive hymns, they receive two things: the message from the Divine and their own cultural background, so that makes a lot of sense. So I had a song in a play that I worked on last year which made it into one of the monologues I wrote...the girl was singing, and this writer and the group said, “that sounds like a combination of shamanism and Broadway.” I wasn’t trying to do anything... that just came out.<sup>128</sup>*

Although Santo Daime has consistently provided simultaneous translations, it was Paulo Roberto who introduced in Miami the practice of singing in the vernacular language more widely. I personally remember singing at CDLC the complete English translation of *Nova Aliança* (New Alliance) one of Paulo Roberto’s hinários. Likewise, when I asked David about the same example, he responded in the following way:

*I see CEFLURGEM fundamentally as an American organization and I feel like we really have an American identity...and the history of the hymns, yeah, they come from Brazil but we're starting to receive a lot of hymns in our own communities that are...a lot of them in English.<sup>129</sup>*

To sum up, both James’ improvised pop guitar cords and Sarah’s Americanized lyrics and rhythms are examples of the type of “revolutionary” changes CDNE is introducing to the traditional Santo Daime ritual. What was initially conceived as the unquestioned adoption of a Brazilian-centered ritual by CDLC in Miami has, in a short period of time, progressively given way to an American-centered ritual at CDNE. Even though these two important events are recent, they clearly indicate that what is taking

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<sup>128</sup>Interview with Sarah, CDNE’s protector’s wife, in Miami on September 7, 2018.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with David, CDNE’s protector, in Miami on September 7, 2018.

place in Miami, and certainly at CDNE, constitutes an initial challenge to the hegemony over ritual purity at the mother church in *Mapiá*. It is too early to tell the full impact these changes will have on the daimista community. Nevertheless, these changes show the potential and willingness of CDNE to assimilate a modern American ethos.

### 6.2.3 *Braking taboos: the first female bateçao and other ritual inversions*

Another startling change introduced to the Santo Daime ritual at CDNE occurred against the backdrop of a *feitio* held at the Hummingbird House in May 2019. As noted in Chapter Four, by relying on a division of labor along gender lines, the Santo Daime *feitio* ritual reflects the profound gender asymmetry which permeates the Santo Daime church. Having said this, during the CDNE *feitio* referred to above, Marlene spontaneously stepped into the *bateçao* (beating of the vine) station, the domain of male *fardados*, determined to participate in beating the vine with the rest of the men. She remained there, among men, for quite some time and was later cheered by other *fardadas* on account of her audacity. In my view, this reversal of normal and socially accepted behavior at the CDNE *feitio* constitutes another milestone both at the organizational and congregational level. By going against the grain, Marlene, who incidentally is considered a church referent regarding *fardada* behavior, subverted long held Santo Daime views concerning power relations between the sexes. This idea is prevalent in gender studies and has been articulated by many scholars. Joan Scott, for example, has asserted, “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power” (1999, 28). Marlene’s bold move at the *bateçao* station reflects CDNE’s challenge to the patriarchal tradition that has guided Santo Daime since its founding in the 1930s. Once more, even

though the mixing of genders at the *bateçao* has not yet become standard practice in Miami, I cite this as another example of the potential for changes at the institutional and devotee levels occurring at CDNE.

Another notable change is CDNE's recent incorporation into the liturgy hymns written by the protector of Céu do Hawaii at the closing of every trabalho. Although not openly acknowledged by David, the promoter of this revision, the introduction of non-canonical material at such an important ritual juncture reflects the recognition of Céu do Hawaii as the principal church in U.S. territory to the detriment of Céu do Mapiá's historically unchallenged status as the leading Santo Daime church worldwide.

According to David:

*Because we're a little different than Brazil because we live in America and because our diame is coming from Hawaii and because we're part of CEFLURGEM-AN I've started implementing...they're going to sing the last hymn of Patrick and Vicky's [pseudonyms] hinário since they run the feitio as part of our official service... and I don't think anybody else is doing it, but because I feel we need to be spiritually tied to the our source of sacrament I'm going to recommend it to the protectors of all CEFLURGEM-AN churches.<sup>130</sup>*

The final sacred strategy I would like to explore is the sharing of the protector's role at the center table by individuals other than David, the only formal CDNE protector. The scope of this change has no precedent at CEFLURGEM-AN, and it is certainly not discernable at CDLC. Simply put, since David feels he may not be always available, he has designated at least four fardados/fardadas familiar with the ritual to serve as leaders during his absence. According to him:

*It's very very important to me that if I'm gone, the work is still taking place on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. Like, just because I cannot be there, I'd leave it in somebody else's*

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with David, CDNE'S protector, on September 7, 2018 in Miami.

*hands. And so, whoever's the commander of the work, which will not always be me, decides what to do. The other day, Marlene was leading a mass and she decided that she wanted to sing the "puntos." So, I didn't have anything to say about that, it was her work, she was leading it. In life in general, I don't want to make myself important... So, I perform this function but I don't give sermons or anything like that so I wouldn't say that my charisma is particularly important.*<sup>131</sup>

In large measure, the sacred strategies implemented by CDNE seem to point to a growing desire to liberate this Miami Church from perceived confining, old-style traditions promoted by the mother church at *Mapiá*. Thus, the Broadway musical influences introduced by Sarah, James's nontraditional guitar accompaniment cords, Marlene's taboo violations at the feitio ritual (not to mention its celebration by the women at the feitio itself), the sharing of the protector's role at the center table, as well as the introduction of non-canonical U.S. hymns at the closing of every trabalho, must be viewed not solely as individual explosions of creativity. Rather, these can be seen as collective strategies designed to chart a new, Americanized Santo Daime course in Miami. CDNE's bureaucratic and relaxed style has created a culture of innovation not seen in Brazil or at CDLC, for that matter. It has rendered traditional Brazilian boundaries more porous, allowing for the formal or informal introduction of new ideas into the Miami Santo Daime ritual. Within this context, the impact of U.S. popular culture and traditions gradually infiltrating CEFLURGEM-AN structures is impossible to dismiss. For example, the inclusion of fardados to conform a deliberating body, the Council of Stewards, is very reminiscent of the horizontal organizational structures and laity supervision found within U.S. protestant churches.

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<sup>131</sup> Interview with David, CDNE's protector, on September 7, 2018 in Miami.

To conclude, CDNE is quickly shedding traditional attachments while adopting aspects of the local culture. As far as the implementation of sacred strategies is concerned, the aforementioned examples also corroborate how the forces of “glocalization” are at work within CDNE in Miami. In contrast to the modifications introduced to the Santo Daime ritual by CDNE, a strong Brazilian and military ethos, brought to life through excessive discipline is not only interfering with the possibility of any ritualistic modifications at CDLC but, on the contrary, is contributing to internal dissent. Whether or not Miami’s Santo Daime sacred strategies correspond to fresh innovations or whether they stand as modifications of practices already in place, they constitute a challenge to all ritual participants. Eventually, either through active participation or passive acceptance, everyone will have to discover how these events challenge their personal impressions of Santo Daime. In the meantime, Miami daimista identities are becoming more Americanized. This means authoritarian attitudes are being challenged in favor of openness and creativity at the salão. In this sense, Miami’s Santo Daime sacred strategies help answer both RQ2, on the changes in the traditional organizational structure of the Santo Daime religious tradition, and RQ3, on the changes within the congregational (devotees) dynamics and their religious identities. The same can be said about the secular strategies I examine below.

### 6.3 *Secular strategies*

Owing to its overwhelming impact upon Santo Daime’s expansion in Miami, I will now turn my attention to the first secular strategy: the strategic deployment of material resources. Earlier, I mentioned how the wealth owned by the spouses of David and Estella was put at the service of the new Miami church. Both Sarah and Adarsh



began attending Santo Daime works at CDLC when the church operated from a house rental in North Miami. At the time, Sarah had just begun dating David. I remember her participation in the Santo Daime rituals was sporadic yet powerful, given her intense display of ecstatic states. Estella, on the other hand, invited Adarsh to the church many years after Sarah began attending regular works. I remember him for his Sufi style dancing at the ritual space while under the influence of the daime. Both persons had a very friendly disposition and were easy to befriend. Due to their financial backing of the church and given their marital status as spouses to important CDNE individuals, they quickly attained religious capital within the organization.

Also, as this chapter will argue, two very different types of struggles for influence have dominated Santo Daime church life in Miami over the last four years. The first type involves the local, intra-church confrontation resulting from the original CDLC fissure and subsequent entanglements produced by the founding of CDNE. The second, and considerably more significant struggle, corresponds to the personal character of the church policies embraced by the leadership. It is captured by the various secular strategies presently under implementation by this church. The new course chartered by CDNE is so far-reaching that it has the potential to realign the Church's existing power structure at the global stage.

### *6.3.1 Strategic deployment of material resources*

Initially, CDNE began holding works at Adarsh and Estella's South Beach apartment. However, it did not take long before CDNE, or more precisely, Sarah and David on the one hand and Adarsh and Estella, on the other, began to purchase properties for the purpose of holding Santo Daime ceremonies. Of the two properties acquired by

Adarsh and Estella, the larger one is in the Redlands, an agricultural area of Miami Dade County northwest of Homestead. This impressive compound estate which sits on a five-acre lot consists of a large, two-story main house, accessed through a long and winding entry pathway. The house purchased by David and Sarah is in South Miami, an upscale and centrally located Miami neighborhood, and showcases a large inside pond fed by spring water, making it even more attractive and unique. These two properties, named “The Hummingbird House” and the “Pond House,” respectively, underwent significant restoration work to meet the spatial requirements of Santo Daime works. While different, both locations comfortably accommodate a large number of ritual participants.

The unveiling of these two places of worship had a substantial impact on a wide range of areas involving both the institutional and congregational spheres in Miami. As noted previously, the founding of CDNE essentially doubled Santo Daime’s membership in the city to some forty members. Furthermore, the relocation of CDLC to Broward County and CDNE to the Redlands produced welcomed changes for both churches. The influx of Umbanda worshipers from Seara de Caridade<sup>132</sup> to CDLC benefited the church by attracting a Brazilian ethnic following. CDNE, on the other hand, consolidated an atmosphere of exclusiveness already visible since its early inception. Admittedly, as the following testimony reveals, due to their strategic locations and beauty, the two CDNE properties and the South Beach apartment certainly functioned as poles of attraction to well-off, educated new agers:

*I’ve been to the two churches and frankly CDNE is far more relaxed than CDLC...I like that...also I find a better fit for me here in terms of the people I*

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<sup>132</sup> Seara de Caridade Caboclo Tupinamba is an Umbanda terreiro located in Deerfield Beach, Broward County, Florida. This terreiro’s devotees are predominantly Brazilian immigrants.

*regularly see...concerning the space you can't beat this place (the Hummingbird House)...This is a first class location with all the facilities you may want...if you don't feel like being inside, you can step out and chill out in the garden...you just cannot do it at CDLC because you are trapped inside.*<sup>133</sup>

By virtue of the material affluence within CDNE's leadership and its willingness to use its resources for the advancement of the Santo Daime cause, a huge inequality between the two churches became visible. This resource disparity basically created two different forms of institutions. Indeed, one church became associated with extreme wealth and the ambitious deployment of resources, while the other remained trapped in scarcity just trying to make it from one trabalho to the next. Yet, material scarcity at CDLC is almost worn as a badge of honor by Alberto and Alejandra. This is partly because both of them symbolically associate material insufficiency with the type of conservative virtues they so diligently try to uphold.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, ever since the CDLC rift took place and the ensuing reactions, scarcity at CDLC has become a convenient currency for expressing self-validation and resistance against alleged "corruption" at CDNE. I make this claim based on emails and other opinions communicated by Alberto and Alejandra regarding CDNE's legitimacy to exist. As noted, Alejandra is constantly reminding disciples about CDLC's humble ways and lack

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<sup>133</sup> Interview with Julian, a 44-year-old financial services executive, in Miami on September 15, 2018.

<sup>134</sup> Historically, poverty has been associated with the conservative Catholic Church sector, which view this condition as a virtue. Of course, the origins of poverty as virtue can be traced to the Gospels and later to the traditional taking of vows associated with medieval Christian monks where a vow of poverty was often accompanied by the vow of chastity and the vow of obedience. In a 20<sup>th</sup> century example, Saint Jose María Escrivá de Balaguer, a Spanish Roman Catholic priest who founded Opus Dei, declared: "We have to make people see that poverty is an invitation which our Lord issues to each Christian, and that it is therefore a definite call that should shape every human being (Escriva de Balager 2008. *The Virtue of Poverty*. San Jose Maria Institute, April 14, 2016.

of resources. This attitude has not gone unnoticed by church fardados. The following testimony is representative of the perception of many at CDLC:

*This is not really about having or not having money. Money should not be used to describe the Santo Daime church. This is a personal negative belief not to be confused with the Santo Daime religion. Santo Daime is not about money...it's about spiritual growth...I'm not sure what Alejandra wants to convey by crying poverty...is she projecting?<sup>135</sup>*

The riches available to CDNE and the possibilities it presents to its leadership on the one hand, and the less privileged position by CDLC on the other, strike at the core of this study's second and third research questions. As I will argue below, CDNE transfigured the view of Santo Daime as a traditional Church characterized by very humble jungle origins into a place of conspicuous consumption and appropriation of spiritual and cultural artifacts. It brought a sense of privilege to CDNE followers which particularly promoted the utilitarian individualist perspective. The testimony below gives a generalized view wealth has had upon CDNE daimistas:

*True, this place reminds me of abundance...I'm okay with that. I believe we can condition ourselves to accomplish anything we want. I believe prosperity is an energy you manage. If you want to work with that energy, act with generosity... For example, at these works I usually give more than the suggested contribution. By doing so I send a positive message to the universe...if you want to receive you first need to give...yeah, this is all about karma.<sup>136</sup>*

Conversely, from a top down institutional perspective, CDLC developed into a church resigned to take a marginal, second place to CDNE in Miami. Moreover, CDLC found itself in the unpleasant position of having to watch from the sidelines the strategic maneuvers that would impulse CDNE forward. Yet, despite its financial problems, CDLC

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<sup>135</sup> Interview with Constanza, a 43-year-old broker, in Miami on September 23, 2018.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Julian, a 44-year-old financial services executive, in Miami on September 15, 2018.

blossomed by attracting a core of Brazilian participants and other New Age audiences. It is important to note how closely Santo Daime's institutional fissure resembles the deeply fractured Miami community referred to by this study. Indeed, the correspondence between Santo Daime's internal tensions and the strains observed in the larger culture is part and parcel what I have identified as postmodernity's discontent (Bauman 1997). If this is so, it could be argued that the Miami churches are being perceptibly influenced by the micro-social processes posited in RQ1.

### 6.3.2 *Brazilianness revisited: performing indigeneity*

Santo Daime's identification with Brazil and "Brazilianness," functions as a very powerful symbolic discourse among Miami Santo Daime disciples and represents the second secular strategy this chapter will consider. In previous chapters I identified Brazilianness as an attempt by the Brazilian state to construct hegemonic ideas of nationhood.<sup>137</sup> To promote Brazilian consumption, at the local level Santo Daime Miami has appropriated these discourses wholeheartedly. For example, the adoption of Portuguese as a liturgical vehicle plays an important role in the process of hybridization as well as the spread of brazilianness through the CEFLURGEM-AN cluster of Santo Daime churches in the U.S. In other words, the sacralization of Portuguese establishes efficacious and legitimate experiences of sacred alterity among these churches. Moreover, as pointed out in Chapter Five, this is occurring because exotic religious resources have been popularized, de-ethnicized, and psychologized. Indeed, the main motivation of their audience is to find in these resources efficient means to improve their

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<sup>137</sup>The Brazilian myth of racial democracy became part of a national discourse on race that presented the oversexualized body of the mulata as the essence of Brazilianness. It served the national elites to promote a romanticized image of Brazil for tourist consumption, Brazil as an exotic paradise free of conflict.

lives through the transformation of the self and its attitudes. Thus, despite the church inroads introducing English into the Santo Daime ritual, the Miami churches overwhelmingly continue to conduct their works in Portuguese. Closely connected to Brazilianness stands “ethnic dressing”—another form of exotic religious resource—relies on the wearing of Amazonian indigenous paraphernalia as an identity marker. If Santo Daime’s reliance on Portuguese as ritual language is considered a central Brazilianness strategy, then ethnic dressing may be viewed as its embodied counterpart. For reasons I will explain below, I also refer to ethnic dressing as “performing indigeneity.”

Owing to the reliance on indigenous paraphernalia, performing indigeneity is a technically and symbolically coded secular strategy serving various purposes. At a very practical level it helps many daimistas fill the spiritual vacuum, albeit in a playful manner, produced by the gap between each Santo Daime ritual ceremony, which may extend for a few weeks. However, this may not completely apply to a small percentage of fardados at both churches who are socially active among themselves and keep connected between works through activities such as hinário practice and social media group chats. These fardados typically have a long and dedicated trajectory with their churches and believe Santo Daime should ideally be practiced within a living community such as Céu do Mapiá, or Céu da Montanha in Rio de Janeiro or, barring that, be experienced as a “way of life.” To the great majority however, this is impractical, or they simply do not share the desire to further immerse themselves into the doctrine. To this group particularly, ethnic dressing functions as “encoded memory.” Because it is readily

accessible through performance, it rapidly validates daimista identities.<sup>138</sup> The next testimony, which refers to the Yawanawá tribe,<sup>139</sup> succinctly reflects this point:

*You know, I purchased two gorgeous wristbands and never remove them...I enjoy wearing them... they kind of infuse me with sacred Yawanawá power...so I wouldn't say I use them strictly as fashion...they mean more to me than just a fashion. I get this feeling of being close to our Yawanawá sisters. A lot of people use them here and so, like the farda, they also give me a sense of community...a community that supports and stands for Brazilian Indians.<sup>140</sup>*

Notwithstanding the idiosyncrasies of these two groups, collectively, performing indigeneity is indicative of the disapproval of the modern state treatment of indigenous rights. Symbolically, the practice validates daimistas' identification with an attitude of defiance against the destruction of the environment and the Amazonian rainforest, including its native population. Likewise, performing indigeneity transmits the authenticity of the “other,” in opposition to the modern corporate state, new agers' chief rival. The beaded indigenous bracelets, necklaces, and headbands showcased by daimistas stand as identity markers and as a form of resistance against the *status quo*. Ethnic dressing assists in concrete ways the co-construction of a new self—a modern daimista self that is constantly in a process of forming as conditioned by practices of bricolage, subjectivities, and the like.

Exotic bricolage, including Brazilianness and performing indigeneity, needs to be differentiated from the syncretism of religious populations in colonial and missionary

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<sup>138</sup> This practice should not be confused with the common “going native” ethos proper to cultural anthropology since this term only applies to anthropologists conducting fieldwork.

<sup>139</sup> The Yawanawá is a tribe of about 800 people near the Gregorio River in the state of Acre, Western Brazil which recently developed a relationship with CDNE (see 6.3.3). The Yawanawá have a rich culture and deep knowledge of entheogenic and medicinal plants.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Alison, a 39-year-old corporate consultant, in Miami on October 9, 2018.

contexts. In the latter, bricolage is not chosen but results from unequal power relations through which new symbolic resources are associated with Western domination. By contrast, the religious exoticism described in this study is not the result of relations of domination. On the contrary, ethnocentric fetishization, the desire to select and instrumentalize detached elements from other religions and to ignore these religions as practiced, points toward the reverse of uneven power relations. Given this set of circumstances, both Miami churches are deeply invested in the consumption of Brazilianness as a profoundly intersubjective and interpretative affair. However, if Brazilianness as a strategy does not remain confined to the church and instead is used for promoting indigenous essentializing, then the benefits brought about by Brazilianness may become compromised. When this occurs, performing indigeneity symbolically aligns itself to the dominant cultural forms and traditional indigenist discourses depicting silent, stoic Indians frozen in time. Although unintentionally, CDNE crossed the boundaries separating these two perspectives, contributing in the process to the disempowering notions of purity and authenticity that typically accompany indigenous essentializing. As I will explain in the following pages, when CDNE turned its gaze to the global South and decided to engage with tribal Brazil, it did so under the “representation” paradigm—i.e., reducing the idea of Brazilian indigeneity to its constituent parts in order to reinterpret them. The problem is that representation has consequences: how people are represented is how they are treated (Hall 1997).

From the mid-nineteenth century to the present, dominant Brazilian society has sought to represent ancestral peoples, and how the lives and ideas of those peoples have informed, engaged, or contested those representations. Thus, the problem of



representation is twofold: on the one hand, representation occurs without consent, participation, or often, even awareness of those who are represented. On the other hand, this self-appointed and self-justifying mode of representation is predicated on the idea and image of subaltern and native otherness that has often, for good or for ill, reflected the needs, interests, and desires of those doing the projecting more than it has of the projected. Therefore, it stands to reason that underpinning ethnic dressing lies the necessity by the daimista community to construct self-serving indigenous images as well as acceptable attendant self-identities. I cite the following testimony to describe this complex cultural phenomenon:

*My impression about this tribe, like others in the Amazonian rainforest, is that they are...in dire need of assistance. I think we are doing something good for them and personally, I'm trying to do everything I can to help. The fundraisers are a good way to lift them up economically...I think we have a lot to learn from the Yawanawá. They can teach us how to carry-on living based on simplicity; not focused on material consumption and things like that...they can teach us to develop our true spirituality...how to develop a sacred relation to the Mother Earth.<sup>141</sup>*

Despite arguments to the contrary, these benefits only accrue to daimistas and not to the targeted indigenous group. What the Yawanawá and every other indigenous group want is to call attention to situations of crisis; work to recover and preserve communal lands, memories, and their languages; rewrite and reinterpret the histories that have been imposed on them, or from which they have been all but erased; and reform educational processes and structures to make them more inclusive and representative (Duque Platero 2018). While this strategy applies to both Miami churches, for reasons that will become

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with Joao, a 57-year-old accountant, in Miami on August 29, 2018.

clearer later, performing indigeniety has been instituted at a larger scale at CDNE. To be sure, originally conceived as a fad, this particular strategy developed as a result of the partnership between Céu do Mar and Yawanawá leaders in the context of the consumption of rainforest-based medicines, and kinship production (ibis).

### 6.3.3 *Yawanawá politics: Santo Daime at cross-purposes*

The Yawanawá relationship to CDNE merits extra consideration because, notwithstanding the problem of representation, this association has not only advanced CDNE's emerging influence within CEFLURGEM-AN but, more broadly, among the constellation of all Brazilian churches. Even though this project is anchored in the symbolism associated with the ecological sustainability of the rainforest, the solution to indigenous problems and resistance to modernity, among others, its conception and implementation reveal a different narrative. I suggest this narrative has to do more with church politics than with any type of effort designed to rescue indigenous cultures. To be sure, this project has attracted the interest of other U.S. churches, thus bestowing considerable prestige to CDNE. Likewise, this association has strengthened the bond between Padrinho Paulo Roberto, one of the most visible Santo Daime leaders and protector of Céu do Mar in Rio de Janeiro, and CDNE. Moreover, the CDNE–Yawanawá relationship has become a convenient channel for CDNE to put to work its considerable material resources in a variety of secular projects. Clothed as “ethnic dressing,” the Yawanawá relationship, as well as other projects to be discussed in the succeeding pages, not only stand for and reaffirm a set of beliefs, values, and principles dear to the Santo Daime community, but has also facilitated the transnational projection of CDNE's newly found institutional power.

According to the leaders of Mutum, one of the eight villages that form the Yawanawá tribe, the relationship with the non-indigenous people belonging to the ayahuasca religions is part of a new time, the time of the rescue of “culture” (Platero 2018).<sup>142</sup> According to Céu do Mar’s narratives, the “indigenous rescue of culture” theme was precisely what motivated Padrinho Paulo Roberto to establish a relationship with the Yawanawá. However, based on indigenous traditions in Acre, the relationship Paulo Roberto developed with the Yawanawá may be better translated as a relationship couched in a system of reciprocal relations, through exchanges of gifts, visits and, in some cases, marriage partners (Platero 2018). Indeed, after some years since the beginning of this alliance, the Céu do Mar/Yawanawá relationship transitioned from a symbolic kinship association via the creation of *compadrazgo* relationship into a real kinship relationship.<sup>143</sup> This occurred as a result of the arranged marriage between Jordão Souza, Paulo Roberto’s son, to the daughter of the female chieftain of the village of Mutum in 2014 (Platero 2018).

Enhanced by the growing influence of Padrinho Paulo Roberto over David and Sarah, the aforementioned events set the stage for CDNE’s involvement with the Yawanawá. To this end, in 2015 CDNE created a not for profit organization called “Indigenous Celebrations” (IC) in which Jordão occupies the key Advisory Committee

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<sup>142</sup>In the official speech of some Yawanawá people, such as Shaneihu, son of Chief Biraci Brazil, the Protestant missionaries of the New Tribes Mission, arrived at *Tierra Indígena Río Gregorio* (River Gregorio Indigenous Land) in the 1950s and stayed for approximately 30 years. According to him, they were primarily responsible for the "loss of culture" of the Yawanawá.

<sup>143</sup>The *compadre*, literally "co-father" or "co-parent" relationship between the parents and godparents of a child is an important bond that originates when a child is baptized in Iberian, Latin American, and Filipino families.

Chairperson position. According to corporate documents no longer available at the IC website, IC was funded with a capital infusion of \$500,000. Marlene, who is very close to the CDNE leadership, with the assistance of Doreen in the social media and communications department, was chosen to run this operation. Both women are CDNE fardadas yet became de facto CDNE employees, a trend which, as the following pages show, became a prevalent practice at CDNE. Nevertheless, IC's own ambitious charter guided the personal attention and diligent follow up work Marlene carried out. According to IC's website, the organization's mission is to "preserve the forest and its wisdom, by empowering the world's Indigenous, through a celebration of culture."<sup>144</sup> In any case, IC quickly began deploying its resources by first organizing a one-month tour showcasing Yawanawá singers and musicians in various U.S. cities. The tour which took place during October 2016 covered Miami, Austin, New York, Marlboro, and Los Angeles. I had the opportunity to attend the Yawanawá concert at the Miami Theater Center in North Miami to a full house. CDNE's promoting efforts of the Yawanawá took different forms. For example, at another time, Yawanawá arts and crafts were showcased and sold at a Wynwood gallery. This exhibition's title was: "Toward a New Indigene-AUTOCHTHONOUS celebrates a world re-defined by cultural coalescence and a blurring of identity." The gallery pamphlet also stated:

Marlene [pseudonym] brings to us treasures from Indigenous Celebration, a non-profit organization empowering indigenous communities on tribal lands of Rio Gregorio in Brazil. With a shared mission to preserve the Amazon rainforest and

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<sup>144</sup>The website also claims the following: "IC facilitates the transfer of wisdom between indigenous peoples and the modern world through a celebration of culture, art and music; IC is a not for profit company that celebrates indigenous arts and culture throughout North and South America. All sales and donations support IC's charitable mission."  
[https://www.facebook.com/pg/indigenousexhibition/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/indigenousexhibition/about/?ref=page_internal)

the wisdom of its people, we are honored to showcase wearable crafts and beaded creations from the Yawanawá tribe of Brazil.

Regarding the artwork, the same catalog mentioned: “Indigenous Artifacts and Jewelry from 18 Indigenous communities in the Amazon Rainforest, Brazil. Hand made by indigenous women artisans.” Accordingly, through IC, CDNE ostensibly ventured into ecologically oriented activities, including the preservation of the Brazilian rainforest, and its indigenous inhabitants. CDNE set out to accomplish this impressive set of goals through charity work, fundraising activities, and the sale of Yawanawá arts and crafts.

Shortly after IC’s activities got underway, CDNE rolled out a parallel operation named *Caminos Abiertos* (Open Roads). According to David, this operation is designed to encourage and supports travel to Céu do Mapiá and to make it possible as well for Céu do Mapiá locals to travel to America. Due to the complicated logistics required to reach these places, *Caminos Abiertos* is no small endeavor.<sup>145</sup> As David put it, the local Brazilian structure consists of three individuals working locally in order to set up a bread-and-breakfast operation in Mapiá.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, if we consider that *Caminos Abiertos* may also facilitate travel to and from Mutum, then the scope of these two operations combined would resemble that of traditional religious tourism. A typical trip to Mutum would include elaborate entertainment by the Yawanawá, including ritual dancing, sing-alongs, community meal celebrations, jewelry sales, participation in aboriginal body and face painting and more.

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<sup>145</sup>A trip from Miami to Céu do Mapiá takes approximately five days, if transportation is readily available.

<sup>146</sup>Interview with David, CDNE’S protector, on September 7, 2018 in Miami.

During a long conversation I held with Marlene<sup>147</sup> on May 7, 2019, I mentioned that the Wynwood gallery brochure depicted a biased Western perspective of the Yawanawá which had little to do with indigenous ontologies. I explained that the brochure relied on “representation” understood as the colonial attitude of telling the subaltern “other” who they are, as opposed to listening to them tells us what they are. I then asked her about the utilization of the money raised from the fundraiser efforts. To this, Marlene explained how a considerable amount of money sent to Mutum had been used to purchase cellular phones for the village youths. When she asked Jordão in the field about the logic behind such acquisition, she was told the mobile phones would provide security to youngsters in case they get lost in the jungle.<sup>148</sup>

IC’s Western-centric representations of indigenous cultures as affirmed by the Yawanawá case, are typical of the growing industry of aboriginal tourism. This postmodern politics of identity poses a challenge to the cultural preservation and economic survival of indigenous groups, since they are not the only ones who engage in performing indigeniety. After all, those who self-identify as indigenous make use of their personal attributes and life stories as best they see fit according to their needs, interests, skills, resources, and the current political demands. On this basis, IC’s good intentions appear to be insufficient to support cultural translation. Furthermore, to the extent IC efforts to aid indigenous causes is mixed with religious tourism, then this project is also imbedded in market economics. At worst, IC could potentially construct a new social

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<sup>147</sup>Marlene is a 30-year-old entrepreneur and member of the Council of Stewards at CDNE.

<sup>148</sup>Since I did not record this conversation, the facts I am disclosing may have been slightly different. The phones may have been used as an early warning system against attack by other indigenous tribes.

class structure of inequality due to the monetizing of the tribal economy. The anthropological literature is full of examples concerning the dangers to small-scale societies converted or “aided” by “advanced” cultures. Indigenous cultures are often unprepared for the sudden overdose of social novelty and exploratory excitement introduced by Western knowledge and related technologies. When this occurs, the stabilizing forces of ancestral taboos and customs weaken, giving rise to cultural turmoil and further disintegration.

Not surprisingly, Indigenous Celebrations is not viewed by all CDNE disciples as a worthwhile cause. Some feel the project does not adequately reflect church concerns and view it as a misguided effort. For example, when asked, what kind of reciprocity are the Yawanawá getting? Are they in agreement as to the way they are being represented by Indigenous Celebrations? Do they have a voice? I was given the following answer:

*I personally do not resonate with that project. I fail to see or feel the direct connection between those particular people in the Santo Daime doctrine. Or, sorry, more like origin story... For example, I would be more interested in learning about and supporting cultural preservation of the people that first gave Mestre Irineu and the people he first drank ayahuasca with. Those would be the people that I'm more interested in knowing and supporting. Further, as someone with an anthropology background, I have deep concerns about the way the investment in Yawanawá contributes to cultural change and I'm uncomfortable with that.<sup>149</sup>*

To other daimistas, however, the IC project is viewed as a worthwhile and necessary endeavor; as something to be proud of. That is, as a morally grounded project, designed to rescue the indigenous from the grip of a technologically driven, exploitative, unethical, and violent neoliberal system.

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<sup>149</sup>Interview with Barbara, a 35-year-old social worker, in Miami on October 22, 2018.

The Santo Daime allure and CDNE's support of pseudo-commercial, secular strategies have also spun off other, less commercial ventures. One of these is "DaimeGear" a Facebook-based operation described as "a platform created for artisans within the Daime community to sell their crafts and artwork." (DaimeGear Facebook). A cursory search of its Facebook page reveals the sale of apparel, jewelry, Santo Daime accessories, as well as other daime related products. In a typical commercial fashion, the following statement was used on Facebook to launch a new product:

*Merle's curripis have finally arrived. Made from a variety of hard woods, these are in a different league of quality than what we are used to. Hand crafted, sustainably sourced, these curripis have character. Made from hard wood, they are durable and beautiful. Looking for a piece that can really deliver? These curripis pack a punch that make the toes curl of even the most seasoned of ruma users.<sup>150</sup>*

To sum up, the CDNE–Yawanawá relationship is symptomatic of a series of decisions that seem distant from the original intentions that led to the establishment of the Santo Daime organization in Miami. As much as some daimistas appreciate the creativity, entrepreneurship, and sensationalism behind these projects, few seem to have developed any form of strong identification with them. As insinuated above, CDNE's new willingness to formally establish relations with indigenous tribes in the global South does not appear to be exclusively to advance their indigenous rights but rather obeys to a growing desire for international recognition. The CDNE–Yawanawá relationship also raises questions about the potential role CDNE may play in the broader context of aid to Amazonian Brazilian communities in situations of need. Ample opportunities to work on

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<sup>150</sup> *Curripi* is a tobacco snuff tool, a rapé pipe, for sniffing tobacco or *ruma*.



environmental sustainability through Céu do Mapiá already exist ([www.santodaime.org](http://www.santodaime.org)). This strategy, attitude or change of direction speaks directly to this study's last two research questions concerning institutional change (RQ2) and the impact on church followers (RQ3). In the following section I analyze the third secular strategy which is centered on a series of land acquisitions made by CDNE in Miami, Hawaii, and Brazil. Largely sustained by Sarah and David's wealth, CDNE has plotted an acquisition and investment course no one foresaw a few months prior.

#### 6.3.4 *CDNE: land acquisitions and the politics of influence*

By the time I finished my fieldwork in December 2018, CDNE boasted three first-class ritual spaces: 1) the Hummingbird House; 2) a luxury waterfront high-rise apartment in South Beach owned by Adarsh and Estella; and 3) the Pond House owned by the David–Sarah team. These locations and particularly the Hummingbird House furnished CDNE with a tremendous amount of flexibility which, not surprisingly began to be used to stage religious rituals of a different kind. Given CDNE's proclivity to challenge Church orthodoxy, it soon widened the repertoire of ayahuasca sacred rituals beyond CEFLURGEM-AN churches to non CEFLURGEM-AN churches as well as to other plant-based rituals conducted by external shamans circulating in global New Age ritual networks. Examples of this departure include: the mediumship-centered rituals by the Church of the Holy Light of the Queen<sup>151</sup> from Ashland, Oregon; the shamanic rituals

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<sup>151</sup> The Church of the Holy Light of the Queen is a non-CEFLURGEM-NA Santo Daime church led by Jonathan Goldman. This church mixes Santo Daime teachings with the mediumship developed by *Baixina*, a well-known Brazilian medium, as well as other forms of energy healing. Compared to traditional Santo Daime rituals, Goldman's rituals are less structured, and participants typically sit on the floor of the ritual space.

conducted by *Voo da Águia* (The Flight of the Eagle) led by pseudo-shaman-daimista Leo Artese; and the sacred Hikuri Cactus ceremonies led by Roadman, Kuauhtli Vasquez. As a result of these external ritual activities, Miami daimistas as well as other new agers became exposed to different ritual experiences past the well-known Santo Daime CEFLURIS trabalhos, thus adding a new set of bricolage religious experiences to their already diverse New Age repertoire. Led by George, CDNE daimistas recently formed a separate group dedicated to another form of New Age shamanic practice called *Aliança Divina* (Divine Alliance). More importantly however, the quality of CDNE's ritual spaces, which include comfortable living quarters, opened another door to the church. It finally permitted the hosting of all padrinhos and comitivas in Miami.<sup>152</sup> Indeed, it did not take long before Miami was included as the last stop in the itinerary by every padrinho conducting overseas tours. This is significant because Miami began playing center stage to the global circulation of padrinhos, thus confirming CDNE's growing visibility within the organization. As a result, the Miami property acquisitions made by CDNE brought about significant changes to the institution. At the institutional level, it instantly placed Miami at the center of the daimista world map and by doing so it raised the relatively obscure Santo Daime Miami profile to one of prominence among the CEFLURGEM-AN churches. By increasing the transit of networks and flows with Santo Daime padrinhos, CDNE strengthened its cross-border relationships with Céu do Mapiá

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<sup>152</sup>Although CDLC also organized padrinho road shows, due to its lack of resources and organizational know how, it was not able to host on average more than three *padrinho*-led rituals annually. Most *daimistas* interested in attending these important rituals had to travel to churches where these performances took place. For example, as a *fardado* at CDLC, I visited large churches in New York, Texas, and Maryland. If we consider that some five comitivas headed by different padrinhos make on average some two annual global tours, then the number of padrinho-led works in Miami increased by seven annually.

to something unimaginable just a few months after the real estate investments were made. Likewise, at the rank and file level, it broadened the range of ayahuasca ritual experiences to followers thereby encouraging new forms of New Age alliances and other forms of bricolage practices. The impact of these events on CDNE daimistas is captured by the following testimony:

*CDNE has widened the range of ceremonies we have access to. To me, this shows how open this church has become. This is not what you see at CDLC where it's strictly Santo Daime...but to be honest, this is not high on my list of priorities because I've been doing other ceremonies even before I joined Santo Daime. It would take me too long to describe everything I've done but red road ceremonies and sweat lodges are the things I like...and keep doing.<sup>153</sup>*

If the secular, real estate acquisition strategy by CDNE in Miami led to impressive results, its Hawaiian and Brazilian land acquisitions are no less dramatic. Concerning Hawaii, it has been reported that David and Sarah purchased three tracks of land valued at \$2.5 million dollars. According to David, these acquisitions were made with the following purposes in mind: the building of a healing center; the cultivation of ayahuasca and as a gift for the protector of Céu do Hawaii so that he may stage his own healing works. Concerning Brazil, in partnership with Paulo Roberto, David and Sarah made a very large land acquisition in Serra Grande, Bahia, known as the *Guanashe* project. During my interview with David,<sup>154</sup> he mentioned he had two objectives in mind concerning the Brazilian land purchase: the creation of a Santo Daime healing and ritual center as well as the development of agroforestry projects guided by the principles of sustainability and conservation. Ayahuasca was not mentioned, however, it would stand

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<sup>153</sup> Interview with Mario, a 36-year-old health worker, in Miami on June 16, 2018.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with David, CDNE'S protector, on September 7, 2018 in Miami.

to reason that considering the general scope of this project as defined above, ayahuasca cultivation would also be included. I was also told by other informed sources, the *Guanashe* project was very ambitious both in terms of infrastructure, but above all, in terms of its strategic positioning within Santo Daime Brazil and globally. The *Guanashe* project thus appears to be a stepping-stone for what appears to be a global North penetration and transformation with the potential to shift the balance of Santo Daime hierarchies in Brazil. Adarsh himself mirrored my impressions. During one of our many meetings, he indicated he envisions three future Santo Daime centers of power: 1) Miami, where David and Sarah will build a large church capable of hosting a feitió, 2) Guanashe, where “many things are going on,” and 3) Céu do Hawaii. The scope of Guanashe seems to be such that Adarsh thinks it will replace Céu do Mapiá in terms of importance. “Paulo Roberto apparently moved there,” he asserted.<sup>155</sup>

#### 6.3.5 *Administrative ambiguities: the daimista labor market*

Considering CDNE’s real estate investment portfolio and related activities together with its bureaucratic style of leadership and administration, it is not surprising to observe the relatively large payroll this church has assumed. However, what is most meaningful to this study is that the totalities of its employees are CDNE fardados. The hiring of fardados constitutes this chapter’s fourth secular strategy. This practice signifies a considerable shift from past Miami Santo Daime protocols, and there is a potential for disrupting amicable relations among daimistas at CDNE. The names and positions these fardados occupy include: Denise as David’s personal assistant with responsibility over

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<sup>155</sup> Interview with Adarsh, Estella’s husband, in Miami on August 31, 2018.

Santo Daime's local projects and other external ventures; Marlene as the IC administrator; Doreen as the IC social media and communications personnel; James as the guitar playing musician and green house attendant and; George as captain of David and Sarah's private sailing yacht. Likewise, under Adarsh's supervision, many fardados work for hourly wages at the Hummingbird House either managing the place or doing different chores. I remember, at one time an older fardado was working as a general foreman. CDNE also cuts deals with daimistas who do not have the means to pay for the expensive Santo Daime works. This is done by exempting them from paying the suggested contribution in exchange for help with such things as staging the ritual space, cooking, various cleanup tasks, etc. Being allowed to reside for long periods of time either at the Pond House or at the Hummingbird House, rent-free, is another form of compensating daimistas for services rendered. It is hard to quantify how many people have participated under these various arrangements, however, what is clear is that a transactional *quid pro quo* between fardados and property owners is at work at CDNE.

To the extent Caminos Abiertos depends on local Brazilian assistance, the payroll extends to Brazil as well. When I asked David about the potential drawbacks of hiring fardados, he responded confidently that he felt comfortable with the decision arguing, "what better than hiring Santo Daime people that you know and trust," adding that they also needed the money. Sarah, who happened to be with David at the time of the interview, added that she felt the gift of wealth she had been endowed with should be put to work in the interest of altruistic causes. Although David described the issue of fardado hiring as a practical, win-win situation, this was not necessarily the case. Eventually, this

practice began showing its structural cracks and as time went by, the initial honeymoon between working fardados and CDNE began to wane.

Since these practices significantly deviated from policies implemented by other CEFLURGEM-AN churches or by the Miami church prior to the founding of CDNE, the hiring of daimistas by CDNE is part of the important changes affecting both the church and its followers. I am not suggesting that brutal capitalism is at work at CDNE, however, drawing on David Harvey in Chapter Five, I am claiming that capitalism, wherever it happens to be, permeates all aspects of life and society in transformative ways (Harvey 1990). Thus, the hiring of daimistas as CDNE workers does suggest the church is acting in ways that validate the argument that postmodern religions operate under the logic of an economic marketplace. In this case, the market happens to be the labor market where individuals sell their work for wages. Borrowing from Karl Marx, even though this hiring practice occurs at a small scale, hired daimistas must be confronted with the same feelings of confusion and alienation which affect more exploitative relations. Although I never interviewed working daimistas about this predicament, Daniela mentioned to me the matter of daimista hiring had come to a head at a Council of Stewards' meeting over the hiring of James as the guitar player. According to her, at the meeting, Marlene, James' girlfriend, brought to light the inconsistencies and unsettling consequences produced by the fardado hiring policy. As I was told, it was a very tense situation which prompted strong reactions on the part of David.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup>Interview with Daniela, a 60-year-old real estate broker, in Miami on August 9, 2018.

The issue of daimistas working for wages is indicative of utilitarian attitudes prevailing in the modern world, which includes the idea that we are all commodities for sale at the economic marketplace. By engaging in this practice, which effectively created status positions within the organization, CDNE gave rise to an internal fardado hierarchy that disrupted harmonious relations inside the church. Those who landed the most prestigious spots even underwent attitude changes completely opposite to the solidarity principles advocated by Santo Daime. For example, many daimistas from CDLC who were contemplating switching churches confided in me that they had felt very unwelcomed by a cluster of certain “privileged” working fardadas, some of whom also sat at the Council of Stewards. The following testimony is representative of the feeling shared by some at CDLC concerning this issue:

*I don't enjoy going to CDNE...Whenever I show up over there I get the feeling I'm being looked at from top to bottom...It's terrible... people are just not friendly...you feel, like, rejected.<sup>157</sup>*

As already pointed out, I claim that what seems to be taking place at CDNE is the reproduction of Miami's cultural characteristics discussed in Chapter Two. As far as the Miami ethos is concerned, the above testimony reflects some of Miami's central problems such as social exclusion, alienation, and inequality. Speaking for myself, despite many requests to be granted an interview, this same group of working fardadas mentioned above persistently ignored my various petitions. I took it as a sign of Miami snobbishness, tribalism, and as an attitude of self-importance.

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<sup>157</sup>Interview with Cecilia, a 58-year-old service sector entrepreneur, in Miami on September 1, 2018.

### 6.3.6 CDNE and the perils of indigenous reciprocity

As the above-mentioned projects got underway, the two couples David and Sarah and Padrinho Paulo Roberto and Madrinha Nonata took steps to further strengthen their bond. This new phase of the relationship developed as a result of the Guanashe joint venture but particularly by the upcoming arranged marriage between Michael (pseudonym), David's son and Simone Melo, Madrinha Nonata's adopted daughter. Given the potential for upsetting Santo Daime hierarchies worldwide, this event constitutes this chapter's fifth secular strategy. Based on David's testimony, it turns out that Michael has been living in Guanashe already for a few years and has been making the rounds to Céu do Mapiá and Mutum, the Yawanawá village with considerable frequency. Michael is gradually consolidating his own influence within the Yawanawá and Santo Daime spiritual community in the rainforest, despite his young age and thanks to David's close connection with the elders at these places. This is how David explained this new development to me:

*He's got a visa to live in Brazil. He is Michael, my second son...They're not engaged yet technically but he has been promised to somebody in Madrinha Rita's household, so they're probably getting married within a year or so. Her name is Simone and she is an adopted daughter of Madrinha Rita. She was born in Mapiá and Madrinha Nonata brought her to Guanashe...she kind of stuck them together...Madrinha Nonata is more than a matchmaker.<sup>158</sup>*

Through this planned marriage, David and Sarah are positioning themselves as rightful heirs to the highly revered Padrinho Sebastião's spiritual lineage including all the authority and privileges such connections confer.<sup>159</sup> However, on the basis of indigenous

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<sup>158</sup> Interview with David, CDNE'S protector, on September 7, 2018 in Miami.

<sup>159</sup> In order of descent this lineage includes Madrinha Rita (widow of Padrinho Sebastião), Padrinho Alfredo, Padrinho Valdete and Madrinha Nonata (offsprings of Padrinho Sebastião, Madrinha Rita),



epistemologies, this strategy could bring unintended consequences to the parties involved, perhaps complicating CDNE's ascendancy within the organization.

Blood relationships among the indigenous and caboclo inhabitants of the Brazilian rainforest carry a different meaning than those of Western societies. For example, marriage is not conceived solely on the ideal of romantic love, but rather as a communal affair with broader tribal utilitarian purposes. While the arranged marriage between Michael and Simone is not entirely circumscribed by indigenous traditions, I posit that symbolic aspects of exchanges by Amazon rainforest's tribal societies must naturally extend to Céu do Mapiá, including resident families. Indeed, anthropologists recognize exchanges based on socially recognized family and kinship status as a form of generalized reciprocity.<sup>160</sup> When this occurs, strong pressures to share resources, food supplies, and possessions mark relationships among families that form bonds. According to Scupin (2011), under generalized reciprocity agreements, goods are circulated, yet primarily serve to solidify social relationships by creating mutual obligations among related kin. Given the existing economic asymmetries between the families entering into this matrimonial pact, Michael's family may be expected to behave in very generous ways, something they may not be prepared to do. Likewise, considering the cultural difference that separates these two families, the reciprocal expectations may not be understood by either of the parties, leading to confusion, imbalance and possibly failure

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Padrinho Paulo Roberto (husband of Madrinha Nonata) and Jordão (Padrinho Paulo Roberto and Madrinha Nonata's son).

<sup>160</sup> There are three types of reciprocity: generalized, balanced, and negative. Generalized reciprocity refers to an exchange that incurs no calculation of value or immediate repayment of the goods or services (Scupin 2011).

and resentment. If this arrangement functions well, it may resolve the problem of succession common to all religious lineages. Namely, as the leadership grows old, new people must be groomed to fill leadership roles. Under this scenario, Michael and Jordão could be recognized as the individuals endowed not only to assume such roles at CDNE and Céu do Mar, but also within CEFLURIS itself.<sup>161</sup> This likely development has the potential to be one of the most significant game changers at the institutional level. That is, the introduction of dynasty intermarriage for strategic purposes such as the future control and direction of the Santo Daime church. Furthermore, this speculative finding must be seriously considered as one of the many elements responding to RQ2 and RQ3.

#### 6.3.7 *U.S. expansion of daime cultivation*

The sponsoring of ayahuasca cultivation leading to daime preparation in Miami is the sixth and final secular strategy this chapter will examine. The impetus to carry out such an endeavor is rooted in a 2013 Padrinho Alfredo directive calling for the establishment of churches capable of locally growing ayahuasca (Matas 2014). The idea of self-sustainability concerning access to the sacred plants has been a topic of concern for the Church for some time. The apprehension sprung from the fear of overharvesting of *rainha* and *jaguve* in Santo Daime's plantation fields in Brazil. With Padrinho Alfredo's edict and the assumption that South Florida's semi tropical weather is suitable for the growth of the ayahuasca plants, early in 2016 CDNE began an ayahuasca nursery trial at the Hummingbird House. According to conversations held with James, who was in charge of the greenhouse, after a few years the *rainha* grew substantially but it was

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<sup>161</sup>Needless to say, the offspring of Padrinho Alfredo also belong to this group.

determined that the Miami soil, which is essentially made up of coral, was not suitable for *jaguve* cultivation. The *jaguve* roots simply did not penetrate the soil sufficiently to firmly anchor the plant and allow it to take up water and minerals in the needed quantities.<sup>162</sup> Nevertheless, by early 2019 a sufficient amount of *rainha* had grown and was ready to sustain a small feitio. Accordingly, plans were made to stage a feitio such that it would coincide with a Padrinho Alfredo's U.S. tour. Accordingly, in May 2019 the first Miami feitio took place. For such purpose, *jaguve* was shipped from a plantation near Orlando, Florida.

As claimed in Chapter Four, staging these sacramental rituals bestows the churches capable of organizing them considerable institutional prestige, not only within the CEFLURGEM-AN family but also within the broader, international Santo Daime centers of power. Furthermore, the ability to stage feitios enhances transnational connections and confers a special status in the Church's worldwide chain of command. As an initiation ritual (Polaris 1999), the feitio contributes to the consolidation of individual and institutional hierarchical power structures within the Santo Daime organization. As noted in chapters Two and Four, partaking in feitio rituals is highly encouraged since it is a sign of the highly valued Santo Daime *firmness*. At the rank and file level, it represents an affordable way for Miami daimistas to attain the otherwise very costly recognition and status enhancement derived from feitio participation overseas. However, travelling to participate in them either in Hawaii or Brazil is not always available since this two-week-long ritual demands a considerable personal investment of

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<sup>162</sup>Interview with James, a 37-year-old musician, in Miami on September 5, 2018.

time and money. Due to its ability to produce and deliver daime to the continental churches, the distinction conferred by feitio production is presently centralized in the Hawaiian church, yet, as time progresses it will be increasingly challenged by CDNE.

#### 6.4 *Santo Daime Miami: a church for the rich?*

Due to their relevance at the Santo Daime church, matters concerning money and personal finances require a separate examination. The two major outlays Santo Daime adherents face on a regular basis are the cost of ritual participation and the various fundraisers sponsored by the Church. Feitios become additional expenses to those desiring to participate in them. The average contribution to attend a Santo Daime work at both churches is approximately \$50-\$75, on a sliding scale. However, special works, including trabalhos led by padrinhos and their comitivas usually run at the rate of \$150 per day or \$250 for two days. The fundraisers, which usually take the form of additional trabalhos, are usually held to support charity and other enterprises pertaining to the mother church. The fundraisers I attended were those to help finance the construction of a church at Céu do Mapiá as well as those to cover the medical expenses of ailing Madrinha Rita, Santo Daime's matriarch. Fundraisers by Indigenous Celebrations have lately become very popular in the modality of Facebook birthday fundraisers as well as the traditional online sale of beaded jewelry. In 2018, a new fundraiser named IDEA designed to raise funds to defray the rising costs of farm and greenhouse operations was launched by Céu do Hawaii. IDEA is an internet-driven fundraiser that requires participants to become members and make monthly contributions.

Operationally, the revenue that different rituals generate is sent directly to the Hawaii church. There, the funds are allocated pursuant to various collective

understandings formalized during plenary meetings. Based on information I gathered, the proceeds from Santo Daime trabalhos are allocated as follows: 1) Ceu do Mapiá: to cover the construction cost for a new church under construction; cover costs pertaining to the installation of an industrial kitchen and to cover Madrinha Rita's ongoing medical expenses; 2) Hawaii: To cover the costs involved with daime production or feitios; cover administrative expenses and plantation costs; cover costs associated with the delivery of daime to each church, and to cover costs pertaining to the expansion of production facilities; and 3) to cover legal costs, administrative costs, four days of plenary meetings once a year, and miscellaneous expenses. When the sum of the costs involving ritual participation, various fundraisers, and perhaps a feitio every two years is considered, a regular fardado at any of the two Miami churches may spend \$7,500 annually.

Furthermore, except for IC fundraisers, this amount cannot be deducted as charitable contribution for income tax purposes. This amount is exorbitant when compared to what is charged to attend Santo Daime ceremonies in Brazil. Consider the case of Céu do Mar, Rio de Janeiro's oldest church. According the church's website, the standard ritual suggested donation is U.S. \$5. An important work such as the *Trabalho de Iemanjá* that took place in February 2020 was \$10. Based on its price tag, Santo Daime in Miami is only available for people who are well-off, essentially excluding the poor.<sup>163</sup> In stark contrast to the Miami churches' elitism, many devotees at Céu do Mar come from

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<sup>163</sup> The U.S. Census estimates that 13.4 percent of Americans, about 42 million, lived below the poverty line in 2017. The poor are largely made up of: Service workers, women, Hispanics and Latinos, children under 5, non-citizens immigrants, black and African Americans, adults with less than a high school diploma, American Indians and Alaska natives, Americans with a disability, the unemployed, single recent mothers. USA Today, "Faces of poverty: What racial, social groups are more likely to experience it?" October 10, 2018.

Rocinha, the largest *favela* in Rio de Janeiro. The disparity between the participation costs and the socio-economic level of ritual participants of Miami and Brazil also points to the type of transformation currently underway in Miami. The effect produced by the economic asymmetries between CDLC and CDNE, by curtailing Miamians' ease of access to the Santo Daime church, the *trabalhos*' elevated cost reflects this city's visible inequalities as well as class and race discrimination. Against this background, Miami daimistas are further pushed to co-construct the same sense of tribalism and perhaps exclusiveness they witness in Miami, the society in which they live. Paradoxically, by adopting a type of exclusive spiritual identity, Miami daimistas re-construct the same exclusive power structures most of them reject.

#### 6.5 *Conclusion: the politics of church governance*

This chapter reviewed a series of Santo Daime institutional changes and the impact these changes had on the two Miami churches and their followers. The chapter also examined the administration of power and the generation of religious capital by the two Miami Santo Daime churches. If power within religious organizations is difficult to admit for some people, it helps to understand any religious group as a kind of society, as individuals influencing one another in social interaction, influenced by a power structure, as in any other group or society (Charon and Vigilant 2009). From an institutional perspective, the authority/power deployed by CDLC and CDNE reflect two different leadership approaches, namely charismatic and bureaucratic, respectively. Ruled by charisma, CDLC's power centers on the personality of Alberto, its leader, as well as the church's complete submission to the liturgical principles and ritual staging designed by Mestre Irineu. A modern revision of Mestre Irineu's traditional and demanding ways is

presently not available for consideration at CDLC. As a result, contrary to encouraging certain behaviors among devotees by way of eloquent communication, persuasion and force of personality, power at CDLC is manifested in the form of coercion. On the other hand, while CDNE's power is equally embodied and enacted as CDLC's, it differs from it because it is diffused rather than concentrated, and discursive rather than purely coercive. Yet, unlike CDLC, which candidly draws attention to its lack of resources, CDNE has ingeniously and aggressively used its wealth for political purposes within the Santo Daime organization. CDLC and CDNE's deployment of power is central to the various activities, goals, and changes promoted by the Miami churches. Thus, whether power surfaces in the form of the firm grip the Church has on inductees, the domestic and foreign real estate acquisitions, the ability to host local feitiros, or the ability to organize spiritual tourist projects, the use of power and its ramifications are thorough and all encompassing at both churches.

The two observed leadership styles also reflect two contrasting attitudes concerning adaptation to postmodernity. Thus, while CDLC's traditional style may be regarded as resisting adaptation to postmodernity, CDNE's active role in promoting change suggests the opposite. In terms of the question raised by RQ2 on the changes occurring at the organizational level of the Church, it would appear CDLC is firmly invested in maintaining the status quo while CDNE is endorsing a break with it. The Miami Santo Daime churches' ability to change is therefore deeply rooted in its chosen leadership style, understanding that any chosen style obeys to the character and personality of its leader. For better or worse, while CDLC chose to remain unobtrusively local, CDNE made the decision to widen its scope of action. Aided by a significant

amount of resources and betting on an adventurous set of transnational projects, the church set out on a path that would potentially challenge Church hierarchies worldwide.

This chapter has also framed certain strategies within the confines of a religious marketplace or with postmodernist aesthetics that celebrate the commodification of cultural forms. CDNE's performing indigeneity reminds us that precisely because consumption is about signs and not products or cultural artifacts, it has the power to define us. As an expression of our collective experience, popular modern culture reminds us "we are what we consume." In this sense, even though symbolic exchange may turn out to be genuine, enchanted, or even magical, it also maintains and organizes social relations and hierarchies. In this context, whether indigenous reciprocities are bound to become another example of hegemonic Western discourses of representation remains to be seen. If handled with sufficient care, empathy and grace, these efforts will most likely succeed in conceding CDNE exclusive membership into the tightly knit Mota de Melo family as well as a preeminent position within the Santo Daime hierarchy. Whether intended or not, through the implementation of secular strategies, CDNE in a few years has attained unparalleled recognition and power within the organization. Based on its plans, CDNE's influence is only likely to increase within the Santo Daime organization. Daimistas' spiritual identities from both Miami churches will shift according to their degree of acceptance of the narratives underpinning both sacred and secular strategies. The impact may prove to be more intense on those daimistas who view Santo Daime as a way of life. If their experience is generally viewed as positive, then those daimistas will have benefitted from a greater sense of belonging in the process of co-constructing their self-identities. Conversely, if their experience becomes negative, plagued with undue



criticism, or if they feel taken advantage of, or worse, rejected by the church, then they will naturally develop ambivalent identities. The range of possible alternatives shows the unstable nature of the boundaries which separate the sacred and the secular, both within Santo Daime and among New Age spiritualities.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 *Summary*

This dissertation pursued three primary objectives: 1) to determine the micro- and macro-social processes which facilitated the expansion and establishment of the Santo Daime church in Miami; 2) to identify the type of changes occurring at the institutional level in the Miami churches and to clarify how such changes complicated or enabled the church's receptiveness in Miami; and 3) to elucidate how the above two processes and alterations contributed to further changes at the congregational level, paying particular attention to religious identities. By situating Santo Daime's global adventure in cultural context I sought to bring clarity to the decisions and dynamics that took place at the institutional and devotee levels.

Concerning the first objective, this study identified secularization, pluralization, religious transnationalism, and "exoticism" among the most relevant processes leading to the establishment of Santo Daime in Miami. Although not totally distinguishable from these developments, the effects of globalization upon these processes are also considered (Berger 2002; 1994; Harvey 1989; Appadurai 1996; Heelas 1996; Stark 2003; Rocha 2013; Groisman 2003). Secularization and religious pluralization (Weber 1946; 1922; Durkheim 1912) contributed to the creation of two related social phenomena: 1) the influx of foreign religious traditions into the United States; and 2) the simultaneous creation of conditions that gave way to fragmentation, de-localization and related social phenomena (Harvey 1989; Giddens 1991; Nijiman 2011; Croucher 1997). These processes, which

form part of a deepening cultural trend, are at the core of the processes underpinning Santo Daime's globalization.

These issues are developed in *Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review* and *Chapter Three: The Localization and Globalization of Santo Daime*, respectively. Chapter Two argues that the overseas expansion of Santo Daime was bolstered by late modern tendencies including religious transnationalism. A prominent theme in this discussion is the desire for exotic consumption of subaltern religious traditions by the global North (Said 1978; Aparicio and Chavez-Silverman 1997; Huggan 2001). Furthermore, the new religious movements (NRMs) that embodied exoticism found a receptive beachhead in Miami, a city identified with a liberal ethos as well as other postmodern characteristics such as diversity, rootlessness, and fragmentation (Altglass 2014; Nijiman 2011; Croucher 1997). The second part of Chapter Two argues that the advent of New Age spiritualities (Hanegraaff 1998; Heelas 2008; Patridge 2004) and the related development of a religious marketplace (Stark 1997; Iannacone 1992), assisted the positive reception of Santo Daime in Miami. Likewise, as a micro-social process, the increase in the popularity of ethnomedicine (Rocha 2009; Fotiou 2012; Sidky 2009) as an alternative to biomedicine, considerably eased Santo Daime's transnational crossing into the global North. Chapter Two also broadens the concept of bricolage by removing it from the narrow confines proposed by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) and expanding it to signify cultural mixing, diversity, fragmentation, fluidity, and eclecticism—traits this dissertation associates with both Santo Daime and the postmodern culture in which it is inserted.

Framed by religious transnationalism and Church history, *Chapter Three: The Localizaiton and Globalization of Santa Daime*, highlights the preeminence of CEFLURIS. Under the leadership of Padrinho Sebastião, CEFLURIS is credited with spearheading the internationalization of the Church. The role played by padrinho touring *comitivas* (entourages) and the personal efforts made by Padrinho Paulo Roberto in the creation of foreign Santo Daime churches are discussed as determinant factors in the consolidation of the Church's global expansion. Likewise, CEFLURIS' strong inclination for the type of cultural mixing found within New Age spiritualities is recognized as another important factor permitting Santo Daime's acceptance in Miami. The "turn to self" (Luckmann 1990) is another discourse permitting the global diffusion of NRMs to the global North. This concept is important because it ostensibly empowers postmodern religious identities, including New Age spiritualities, with divine qualities. In other words, it fosters the belief that the divine is imbedded in the human body (Heelas 1996). While certain beliefs within Santo Daime's religious repertoire promote ideas such as animism and pantheism, it is the claim that the daime or ayahuasca is imbued with such divine power that leads daimistas to accept this doctrine as true.

Supporting this view, *Chapter Four Feitio Politics: The convergence of pre-modern and postmodern cultural productions*, examines Santo Daime's deeply rooted nature veneration through the lens of the feitio ritual. Essentially, by privileging nature in the culture/nature binary, Santo Daime sacralizes nature and the plants used for daime preparation. Equally significant, and by reason of its apparent permanence, it renders nature an instrument of salvation. With Santo Daime's overseas expansion, this nature connection plays an important role since it enhances new agers' appeal to this religion,

furthering its receptivity in Miami. Chapter Three discusses late modern attitudes with respect to the consumption of entheogens, arguing that it is another micro-social process implicated in advancing and supporting the global circulation of subaltern religious networks, including Santo Daime. After examining the macro- and micro-social processes, this dissertation's scope of analysis narrowed from the global to the institutional.

As a point of departure, during the eight-year period since the founding of CDLC in 2007 to the formation of CDNE in December 2015, no important changes registered at the institutional level in Miami. Throughout this period, CDLC held a steady course characterized by little visibility and institutional clout. Yet, as the only constituted Santo Daime church in Florida at the time, CDLC enjoyed the prestige bestowed by being unique and unrivaled. Nonetheless, during this period the church nurtured a leadership style which, as Chapter Five narrates, eventually led to the first Miami Santo Daime institutional rift and to the formation of CDNE. A propos of the changes this division eventually unleashed, this dissertation accentuates the importance played by leadership styles as well as the access to resources as features that drove change and continue to do so. In this respect, CDNE became the focus of this dissertation. As this study claims, the depth and scope of the changes registered at CDNE ultimately constituted nothing less than a challenge to Santo Daime's orthodoxy as well as a potential challenge to established Church hierarchies. Unfortunately, CDNE's preeminence on the U.S. stage had the effect of relegating CDLC to a distant second place in Miami, leading to a rupture between the leadership of the two churches.

This study also claims that the articulation and consumption of “Brazilianness” (Aparicio and Chavez-Silverman 1997; MacRae 2004), nourished by a vivid imagination (Adogame and Spickhart 2010; Appadurai 1996; Anderson 2016), significantly contributed to both the internationalization and continued development of Santo Daime in foreign geographies such as Miami. I draw a parallel between the apparent correspondence between Miami’s postmodern ethos and the contested nature of Santo Daime, leading to its fracturing.

These issues are chiefly developed by *Chapters Five: Miami: A city of two churches* and *Chapter Six: The administration of power: Sacred and secular strategies*. Chapter Five’s principle contribution to this debate centers on the leadership and attendant impact upon church politics. Drawing from the theory developed by Max Weber (Weber 1946; 1947; Oakes 1997), this dissertation imputes the Miami churches with two distinctive leadership styles: charismatic and rational/bureaucratic. According to this dissertation’s findings, these two ways of administering power and authority are vividly expressed by CDLC and CDNE, respectively. As Chapter Five describes, the markedly authoritarian style of CDLC generated a significant amount of tension at the ritual space, leading to the December 2015 split. Once formally instituted, CDNE spontaneously adopted a more rational and progressive leadership style. From this moment forward, the institutional visibility and power wielded by these two churches moved in opposite directions. As CDLC deepened its charismatic leadership style by adopting an increasingly authoritarian design, CDNE, aided by considerable material resources and a small bureaucracy, developed into an energetic agent of change.

I refer to the type of changes implemented by the Miami churches, as “strategies.” As described in Chapter Five, two classes of strategies underpinned the articulation of changes at the institutional level: sacred strategies and secular strategies. According to this nomenclature, sacred strategies describe any important alterations to the ritual space, including prevalent forms of leadership. An example of this is a marked tendency by CDNE to introduce revolutionary practices that directly challenge Santo Daime’s traditional ways. The secular strategies can be described as interventions occurring outside the ritual space. Supported by significant resources, CDNE implemented a series of strategies that not only resulted in a challenge to traditional Santo Daime customs but also functioned to contest established Church power structures. This dissertation documented CDNE’s ambitious territorial expansion as another secular strategy. Issues of power and privilege—deeply rooted in resource asymmetries—emerge effortlessly, almost organically, from the various strategies implemented by the Miami churches. However, this is characteristic of the way power and privilege occasionally emerge: imperceptibly, silently, and malleably. This phenomenon is observed, for example, when the relatively high attendance cost to participate in a Miami-based Santo Daime ritual is critically examined. In this regard, Chapter Six concludes with a reflection of the production and reproduction of inequalities and elitism by the Miami churches. Indeed, despite Santo Daime’s anti-establishment claims, the church cannot escape mirroring the deep disparities, discrimination, and fragmentation ethos wielded by Miami, the host city.

Concerning RQ3, this study argues that Santo Daime’s allure to Miami new agers is anchored in their identification with postmodernism. As Chapter Two noted, unlike the modern identity, postmodern individuals seek above all to avoid a fixed identity. They

achieve this by reflexively choosing a series of disjointed, brief life projects and by keeping their options open (Bauman 1997; 2009; Giddens 1991). In other words, postmodernity encourages the deconstruction and reconstruction of the self as “fluid, fragmented, discontinuous, decentered, dispersed, culturally eclectic and hybrid-like” (Elliot and du Gay 2009, xii). Paradoxically, when lives are experienced without any limits, and any type of behavior is possible, the individual becomes unsettled and unsatisfied. As others have argued, instead of finding oneself, the individual loses him or herself (Elliot and du Gay 2009).

Since Miami tends to reproduce postmodern identities (Nijiman 2011), Miami new agers feel naturally drawn to Santo Daime’s spiritual bricolage. This occurs because the fluidity of their own identities is reflected by Santo Daime’s peculiar and eclectic spiritual architecture. The “pick and choose” attitude promoted by postmodernism finds a home in the equally and mutually disconnected religious traditions within the Santo Daime canopy. This New Age characteristic, which allows for the construction of private, customized, subjective religious worlds, strongly resonates with Santo Daime’s vast spiritual repertoire. Furthermore, new agers’ attraction to Santo Daime is enhanced by the Church’s Amazonian rainforest connections and environmental ethics. Likewise, these folks’ attraction to Santo Daime is further strengthened by the appeal of exoticism and Brazilian lore (Said 1978; Aparicio and Chavez-Silverman 1997) and corresponding promises of therapeutic gains produced by “mind expanding” altered states of consciousness (ASC) via ayahuasca consumption (Lavate and Cavnar 2014).

Chapter Four noted that, driven by their conviction about Santo Daime as a nature religion, and motivated by nature’s healing power, the feitio offers an instance for



validating those convictions. As conveyed in Chapter Four, lured by discourses of uncorrupted nature, daimistas choose to privilege nature over culture. As a rite of passage, feitio participation also emboldens daimistas' otherwise fractured and rootless identities, thus advancing a much-desired need for self-worth, healing, and the generation of religious capital.

Chapter Five furthered the understanding of postmodern identities influenced by a religious marketplace. This chapter identified three key economic or market related institutional features: consumerism, neo-liberalism, and privatization (Elliot and du Gay 2009). This chapter also identified the production of two Santo Daime identities: utilitarian individualists and expressive individualists. While the former tends to manipulate the Santo Daime ritual experience for material gain (Elliot and Lemert 2006), the latter assumes that the adoption of materialistic values does not necessarily promote spiritual salvation. Rather, they claim the path to realization is through authentic personal growth and the experience of harmony with the natural world and those they encounter. This chapter concluded by examining the healing efficacy of the Santo Daime ritual.

Chapter Six further contributed to the development of a daimista identity by identifying and analyzing the sacred and secular strategies of the two Miami Santo Daime churches. The abundance of material resources at CDNE and how these resources were used contrasts with the humbler CDLC church and created conflicting responses by its membership. This chapter put forth that leadership styles are subjectively monitored and evaluated by daimistas while symbolically standing outside or detached from the ritual confines. As Chapter Two outlined, the construction of differentiated spiritual and social identities allows this process to occur effortlessly. Accordingly, CDNE's secular

strategies produce both positive and negative reactions among church daimistas while CDLC's authoritarian attitudes largely tend to produce rejection. Despite these contradictory feelings, the sacredness and efficiency of the ritual remained intact.

## 7.2 *Conclusions*

This dissertation set out to examine how the Santo Daime church, a Brazilian NRM, has been incorporated into Miami and the impact this process has had on the identity of this church and its followers. The better part of this concluding section will be dedicated to addressing the second and third research questions since the findings related to the first research question have been amply examined throughout the preceding chapters—including this one under Summary 7.1. While RQ1 probes the macro-social and micro-social conditions that facilitated Santo Daime's globalization, it is RQ2 and RQ3 that consider church agency and the ultimate consequences by the actions of the leadership upon their followers.

### *Research Question 1*

Briefly, for RQ1, I described Miami as a city representing the problems of late modernity, which included ethnic tensions, social inequalities, fragmentation, and human estrangement. Within this context, I asked under what conditions a foreign, exotic, subaltern NRM might bring relief to the existential problems experienced by uprooted Miami new agers. In response to this question, I showed how modernity's malcontents are confronted by a combination of indigenous, Afro-Brazilian, and folk Catholic knowledge exemplified by Santo Daime. I described how Santo Daime's reception in Miami was facilitated by a commonality with postmodern identities. Likewise, I showed how New Age's own bricolage further eased its reception. Yet, once planted in foreign

soil, leadership issues and the unrestrained effect of affluence, or lack of it, began to problematize the church's acceptance and subsequent evolution in Miami. Eventually, Santo Daime would reproduce the same divisions, inequalities, wealth extremes, and discrimination found in Miami. The influence of macro-social processes and postmodern tendencies upon Santo Daime in Miami threatens to overrun the church, which has been unable to control their ramifications.

### *Research Question 2*

Turning to RQ2, when I began conducting my fieldwork with the Miami Santo Daime church I quickly understood that the Santo Daime institution was a leader-centered organization. Firstly, because Santo Daime revolves around mammoth, scripted, rituals lasting anywhere from five to twelve hours. These rituals, rightfully named *trabalhos* (works), are completely under the control of a single "director" who is insightfully named commander or protector. Secondly, protectors sit or stand at the center of the ritual space surrounded by church adepts, typically formed in a geometric pattern. This arrangement places them at the center of the action. Furthermore, as this study has pointed out, these demanding rituals require that leaders possess a unique set of "artistic" skills without which the rituals would be incomplete. Yet, as my reflection upon leadership and ritual efficacy progressed, I began shifting my gaze to questions of power and authority within the church and ritual structures.

I realized two features circumscribed power and authority at the church, namely, leadership style and the availability of material resources. Within this context, I saw signs of underlying power structures such as a religious economy and the broader commodification of culture that ideologically supports it. I noticed the influence these

micro-social processes exerted was not obvious but rather entangled with the leadership style and resource access in ways I initially found difficult to discern. Nevertheless, I gradually realized the unrestrained use of authority and power became problematic whenever the chosen leadership style, namely charismatic or bureaucratic, was misused. Because of personality differences and/or pressure concerning resource availability, both CDLC and CDNE leaders found it difficult to articulate a balanced approach to church governance. Their inability to avoid these challenges caused discord at the Miami churches, giving way to institutional breaks and to the deterioration of intra-church and inter-church relations.

Beginning with CDLC's charismatic leadership, it has been observed that very few leadership attributes have as dangerous a downside as the charismatic leadership style (Evje 2020). In this sense, it appears that too much charisma and personal ability by Alberto became an end unto itself. Considering his devotion to traditional ritual demands, Alberto thought that his religious zeal would be reciprocated with loyalty and that this would be enough to hold the church together. Charisma as a sacred strategy did not produce harmonious relations at CDLC; on the contrary, it caused its rupture. As indicated earlier, fardados who did not fully comply with the loyalty principles "outlined" by Alberto wound up paying a very high price. During the first semester of 2020, at least three fardados were dismissed from the church for allegedly engaging in "forbidden," outside, ritual practices. Some of these dismissals have been accompanied by emails sent to CDLC's membership using abusive language. In one case, sources informed me, Alberto's punishing attitude led to the presentation of a formal complaint to CEFLURGEM-AN by the fardado in question.

The founding of CDNE was an event earnestly contested by Alberto, CDLC's protector. His major complaint to CEFLURGEM-AN, whose approval is required in the formation of new churches, rested on his perception that the new leader did not meet the necessary qualifications for the position. Although a subjective claim, this observation has some merits. Since Santo Daime began to be the subject of anthropological research, the image of the shaman has always informed specialists. Some of them, for example, consider Santo Daime to be an instance of collective shamanism (Monteiro da Silva 1983; La Rocque Couto 1989). Thus, in a fashion consistent with shamanic attributes embodied by medicine men inhabiting the South American jungles, the Santo Daime protector is expected to be a musician, an artist, and a performer. His authority and power derive not only from harnessing and manipulating spiritual agencies but also from skillful performance. According to this view, it is with these talents that shamans are capable of efficiently leading ayahuasca-centered ceremonies.

Not surprisingly, among the current Miami Santo Daime protectors, Alberto is the only one resembling the shaman's persona. Unlike him, the others are not skilled musicians, and, in one case, the individual has not produced a book of *hinários*, proof of the aptitudes and gifts a Santo Daime leader is expected to possess. Hence, Santo Daime in Miami represents an imperfect case of cultural translation. As Santo Daime is incorporated into various U.S. landscapes, American cultural traits are visibly being appropriated and transformed by the Church, with CDNE a vivid example of this. On the other hand, using a strategy of resistance to change, CDLC has been unable to maintain its ideals of ritual purity in harmonious and healthy ways for all involved. Instead, it has imparted a rigid, authoritarian leadership style that has become widely critiqued.

CDNE quickly developed into an energetic agent of change by wielding considerable material resources and adopting a markedly more bureaucratic style. These new strategies are already challenging Santo Daime's orthodoxy and the established Church hierarchies. Furthermore, these important developments may also be evaluated in the context of power. The more Santo Daime churches become Americanized and liberated from the mother church, the greater their power of transformation. Similarly, the more resources are deployed in areas this dissertation has identified as secular strategies, the more religious capital will accrue to churches willing and able to use those resources. Performing indigeneity is an example of this. This study has argued performing indigeneity is a model that principally served CDNE's goals and needs over that of the indigenous group's interest; despite this controversy, however, as most scholars in this field know, this is a common occurrence among activists involved in the defense of indigenous rights (Conklin and Graham 1995; Cepek 2018). Concerning organizations that support the Indian, Alcida Rita Ramos, another expert voice, for example, has observed, "defending Indians has become a sort of business enterprise, complete with market competition and publicity" (1994, 162).

During Santo Daime's first eight years in Miami, a charismatic yet authoritarian style characterized CDLC's leadership, producing a significant amount of tension among believers. As noted in this study, the strains generated by such an attitude culminated in the eventual split of the church in December 2015 and in the founding of CDNE. In July 2019, the inability by CDNE to resolve its own internal tensions eventually became the basis for a new institutional rift, and for the formation of a third Miami church. However, the creation of the third Miami Santo Daime church does not form part of this study.

Therefore, I will limit my comments concerning the post-July 2019 period to remarks that serve to further the understanding of the years that anteceded the July date. Unlike the case with the original CDLC split, the conditions that gave rise to a third Miami Santo Daime church occurred when David chose to part ways with Estella. Since Estella was never inducted as a CDNE protector and only occupied a symbolic leadership role, David's decision is better understood as a desire to fully break away from the Estella-Adarsh team. Considering that Estella and Adarsh held joint ownership of the Hummingbird House, probably CDNE's most important ritual site, this estrangement entailed the simple "restructuring" of CDNE into two new separate churches. This had two immediate consequences: first, it compelled David to form a new church, headquartered at the Pond House; and second, it gave rise to a third Miami Santo Daime church with Estella as its duly inducted new protector. Considering that the new churches emerged from the reorganization of CDNE into two distinct churches, the re-assignment of fardados to already existing places of worship, namely the Hummingbird House and the Pond House, became necessary.

### *Research Question 3*

Responding to RQ3, personal relationships and doctrine related issues also disrupted the rational bureaucratic leadership style adopted by CDNE. In a rather short timespan, the resulting conflict reached a breaking point, culminating in the second Miami Santo Daime institutional schism, mentioned above. However, unlike with CDLC, the dissent at CDNE resulted from the increased dissatisfaction by hired daimistas, discussed in Chapter Six, 6.3.5, and an accumulated tension between Adarsh–Estella and David. The latter developed out of the various land purchases and investments made by

David and Sarah that telegraphed a very distinct strategic course for CDNE from the one charted up to that moment. Furthermore, these initiatives were planned and carried out by David and Sarah, without seeking out the participation or opinion of Adarsh and Estella. Adding to Estella's discontent was her unfulfilled leadership aspirations within CDNE.

Concerning the hired daimistas, since most of them sat at the Council of Stewards, existing tensions were strongly vented at these meetings and became a source of irreconcilable differences. With few exceptions, these individuals have returned to where they lived before moving to Miami. Moreover, as mentioned, David's opposition to allow Estella to lead Santo Daime works and his lack of interest to bring Adarsh and Estella as partners into the various church related investments exacerbated the tensions between them. Issues concerning authority, power, and money, therefore, figure prominently among the reasons underpinning Santo Daime's intra-church and inter-church conflict in Miami. Four years after the first division took place, three Santo Daime churches currently populate Miami.

The religious marketplace has incidence over the events just narrated. Participation in a Santo Daime ritual is a transaction whereby money is exchanged for a product or service, namely, the ayahuasca experience. Under this logic, believers are the consumers of spiritual services, while the church is the institution delivering the goods and services. Likewise, the creation of utilitarian individualistic and expressive individualistic identities also has its origin in the manipulation of the Santo Daime ritual to either attain material gain or, alternatively, to turn against it. Similarly, the hiring of daimistas is an example of the commodification of sacred processes and spaces. Equally



important, the elevated cost of a Miami Santo Daime ceremony directly discriminates against the poor, thus constituting an example of social exclusion.

As I conclude this dissertation, two thoughts occupy my mind. The first one is that Santo Daime Miami is a relatively new organization, and much remains to be done before the church attains institutional stability. Also, since deterritorialization and re-localization of exotic spiritualities naturally produce translation issues, the reception of Santo Daime in Miami will inevitably face challenges. When religious practices are unmediated by traditional cultural markers, they tend to become something different and, therefore, confusing. Since Santo Daime is deeply imbedded in its own cultural matrix, achieving unaltered reterritorialization is impossible. If the Church does not adapt to local idiosyncrasies, as seems to be the case with CDLC, then Miami's receptiveness may be further compromised. The appropriation of shamanic practices across cultural boundaries is more complex than what eager participants are ready to admit.

The second thought occupying my mind concerns RQ2 and RQ3 and focuses on the relationship dynamics between the institutional and rank and file levels. This dissertation has demonstrated that, by and large, tensions in this realm have taken two distinct directions, namely conflict and reconciliation. The strains, which pitted adherents against church structures such as leadership styles of authority (sacred strategies), often generated irreconcilable positions. On the other hand, spiritual or existential problems affecting devotees were ultimately mediated and resolved at the ritual level. Thus, while different ailments, addictions, and other personal disorders were met by healing energies in the salão, leadership-devotee conflicts were only partially resolved (see 6.2.1). Consistent with the identity theory discussed in section 2.3, the Santo Daime ritual's

impact on the transformation of social or secular identities is limited, yet it is very efficient regarding the transformation of spiritual or personal identities. I have a high degree of confidence in this claim since this study has shown how the Santo Daime ritual has positively transformed the lives of all my informants. The negotiation and final integration of conflicts within the human psyche is, after all, Santo Daime's promise to all Miami new agers. Given today's postmodern condition this could not be otherwise. Today, an emergent individualism centered on continual self-actualization and instant self-reinvention is sweeping the globe.

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- 2018 Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness America 2018 Conference: Presented: *Getting Culturally Lost in Nature: The Amazonian Jungle and the Making of Ayahuasca (March 22-25, 2018).*

- 2018 The International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences 2018 Conference: *The Efficacy of the Santo Daime Healing Repertoire in the Context of Religious Bricolage (Brazil, July 2018)*
- 2016 Society for the Anthropology of Lowland and South America 2016 Conference. Poster presentation: *The Santo Daime Feitio: Deconstructing Imaginary Representations of Nature*
- 2013 AAR 2013 Conference. Presented: *The Politics of Good and Evil: Vodou, Black Magic and Social Control*