

Portals to the unseen

Re-inventing ayahuasca practices, shamanism, and
the anthropologist in the entheogenic field



A Master's Thesis

By Camilla Fleime Møll

Department of Social Anthropology

University of Bergen

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Abstract

In this thesis I bring forth the phenomenon of re-inventing and re-creating ayahuasca practices, especially in Brazil and Norway. Based on a one-month fieldwork in Brazil in January of 2020 in a Santo Daime community and a weekend ayahuasca retreat in Norway in the summer of 2021. Because of the COVID-19 lockdown, the fieldwork was shortened which changed the trajectory of the project.

Ayahuasca is a concoction from the heart of the Amazon and has dispersed all over the world in a mere century. Where it first was thought of as the “devils brew” by colonists to now be sought after by people from all over the world, in different religions and belief systems, from different social groups and backgrounds. The practices surrounding ayahuasca are largely shamanic where an unseen world is as real as the material one.

Through the text I will show how a diverse cultural and religious landscape in Brazil have shaped the ayahuasca religions and practices and subsequently the dispersion of ayahuasca abroad. Santo Daime emerged in 1930 where people sought after it for healing and enlightenment. The founding members were of lower socio-economic classes while today the largest bulk of the Santo Daime members are from the new-middle-class.

By looking at the ritual structure it uncovers a system that is put in place for the safety of those involved in ayahuasca practices.

I discuss how the anthropological method is a good way to gain insight into such practices as well as situating the anthropologist in the entheogenic field.

Keywords: Re-inventing Ayahuasca Practices, Shamanism, Santo Daime, Ayahuasca
Diaspora

Table of content

Abstract	i
Table of content	ii
Table of Figures	v
Acknowledgement	vi
Acronyms	vii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Scope of thesis	1
The Ayahuasca religions	4
Céu de Estrela	5
First encounter	6
Chapter overview	11
Chapter two: The anthropologist in the field	13
Introduction	13
Approaching the subject: ethics and method	13
Participant Observation	14
A production of knowledge through being and action	16
A potentially revolutionary praxis	17
Access	18
Positioning	19
Time is essential	19
The anthropologist in the entheogenic field	20
Ending remarks	21
Chapter three: Psychoactive substances and views on health	23
Introduction	23
What is ASC?	23
Psychoactive substances	24
Ayahuasca	25
The spirit of Ayahuasca	27
The effects of ayahuasca	27
Dangers when using ayahuasca	30
Ayahuasca Diaspora	31
Shamanism	32

Table of content

A view on health	33
Ending remarks	37
Chapter four: Development of the usage and dispersion of ayahuasca in Brazil and abroad	39
Introduction	39
History	39
The Amazon	40
Research in Amazon area	42
Caboclo Identity	43
Religious, social, and environmental movements	44
Origins of Santo Daime	45
One doctrine, two branches	47
Padrinho Sebastião	48
Legal status	50
Ending remarks	50
Chapter five: Santo Daime Cosmology, belief, and world view	52
Introduction	52
O mundo de ilusão	52
Apolitics of transformation	55
The Astral realm	57
Spirits	58
Mediumship	59
Gender	59
Ending remarks	60
Chapter six: Santo Daime ceremonial repertoire	61
Introduction	61
Ritual theory	61
The ritual structure	62
Feitio	65
Hinário	73
Concentração	75
Santa Missa	75
Umbandaime	76
Structure and social theory	77
Ending remarks	79

Chapter seven: Norwegian experiences and “hidden” networks	81
Introduction	81
Norwegian and online Ayahuasca diaspora	82
The Norwegian experience	84
Day one	84
First ceremony	85
Day two	90
Second ceremony	91
Day three	92
Changing perspective	93
Ending remarks	94
Concluding thoughts	95
Appendix	100
Santo Daime hymns from O Cruzeiro	100
By Reimundo Irineu Serra.	100
Songs sung by the guide in Norway	103
References	105

Table of Figures

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Caravaca cross outside the church. Photo by author. 7

Figure 2. Lead shaman performing a ritual by the fire inside the church. Photo by author..... 9

Figure 3. Scope of the Amazon. Photo by WWF (World Wildlife Fund, n.d.). 41

Figure 4. Mesa inside the salon in Céu de Estrela. Photo by author..... 64

Figure 5. Working area for cleaning the leaves. Photo by author..... 66

Figure 6. Washing station for the leaves. Photo by author. 68

Figure 7. Leaves of the Psychotria Viridis, “Chacruna”. Photo by author..... 69

Figure 8. Casa do Feitio, where the liana is shredded and the daime is cooked by men. Photo
by author..... 72

Figure 9. Hinario with baptism and receiving of the Star. Photo by author..... 74

Figure 10. In contrast to other works, Concentração is conducted in darkness. Photo by
author..... 75

Figure 11. Ceremony room on the second day, one of the assistants are preparing the room.
Photo by author. 86

Figure 12. The altar. Photo by author..... 87

Figure 13. Frank playing during ceremony. Photo by author. 92

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Acronyms

CEFLURIS - *Centro Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal Raimundo Irineu Serra* (The Raimundo Irineu Serra Eclectic Center of the Flowing Universal Light)

ICEFLU - *Igreja do Culto Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal* (Church of the Eclectic Worship of the Fluent Universal Light)

CICLU - *Centro de Iluminação Cristã Luz Universal* (The Universal Light Center of Christian Illumination)

ASC – Altered State of Consciousness or Altered States of Consciousness

SSC – Shamanic State of Consciousness

Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis addresses the trans-national dispersion of the psychotropic concoction, *Ayahuasca* and the practices surrounding it. It is a cross-cultural project to gain more understanding of what ayahuasca is and how it is used by different people and cultures. As Brazil is the homeland of ayahuasca and where the Amazon has much of its vast area, it became a natural source of information about the concoction. Ethnographic data is from a short field stay in Brazil and a weekend in Norway. More data is from research online in different groups talking about ayahuasca, both international and Norwegian. I have also conducted some telephone interviews that have made useful supplement information. Albeit much data has been recorded, this thesis relies much upon other people's research, and I will explain the reasons for this below. In this introductory chapter I will outline the aim and scope of this thesis and a chapter overview.

Scope of thesis

Ayahuasca, a psychoactive brew from the heart of the Amazon, has crossed borders and is present in every continent today. When opening a door to a new area, a new subject, many pathways appear. By searching for people involved in ayahuasca practices, a whole network emerged. Some of the material and data used in this thesis is derived from a one-month fieldwork in Brazil and one weekend ayahuasca retreat in Norway as well as conducting telephone interviews. The community I stayed with in Brazil, Céu de Estrela, is a Santo Daime church, an ayahuasca religion originating from Brazil, that also conducts shamanic ceremonies. I will elaborate on how ayahuasca is more than a psychoactive drug, rather it is an entity capable of its own agency in relations with people. First, I will describe how I came to research this subject as this was not my initial plan.

The plan was to study the usage of indigenous plant medicine in ritual settings outside its native context with the aim to gain more understanding of altered states of consciousness (hereafter ASC). My interest was mainly concerning ASC and consciousness in itself and how or if this had effect on the psychological and physical health of those employing it. It

expanded to how or if these altered states had anything to do with living sustainably as many communities with the emphasis on practices that alter the state of mind also had a significant interest in sustainability and the therapeutic value¹. Research then led me to plant medicine practices and the same patterns occurred again and again. An emphasis on community, harmony with nature, a knowing of the self and sustainability appeared when researching different retreats offering plant medicine ceremonies in Europe. I wished to see how the shamanic practices of South America were performed and used in the European new religious and spiritual scene.

Ayahuasca is one of many “plant teachers” in South America and falls under the category of psychotropic agents. The substances and plants that are included in this category have enjoyed several terms throughout the years like “phantastica” (Nichols 2004:132), mainly used before 1950 which was when psychiatrist Humphry Osmond coined the word “psychedelics” (Nichols 2016:266). This is the most common term today along with words like “hallucinogens” and “entheogens”. Being psychoactive or hallucinatory, however, is not quite enough to describe the effects of daime or ayahuasca. The word *entheogen* is more accurate. It refers to a substance or material that generates God or the divine within someone (Ruck et al. 1979:145-146). I will mainly use this term or “plant teacher/medicine” further in the text. The effects of these substances are highly dependent on the set (mental expectations) of the user and the setting (environment) (Nichols 2016:269). This means that a so-called “bad trip” is often related to these two components, and I will discuss how the ceremonial setting is vital in the Santo Daime context in Chapter six. A “bad-trip” is characterized by atypical courses of intoxication which occur more in recreational settings (Nichols 2004:135).

These substances have an impact on the psychological, sometimes physical, health of the people using them. Most interestingly for my inquiry, entheogens seem to be able to form knowledge, connections and belonging. Such substances have been under research in “waves”² of investigation, but, despite their promising reports, are both still illegal and stigmatized today. Just a click away on your computer, there is a whole world of plant

¹ Searching on Google, you will find retreats offering practices like meditation and yoga in compliance with vegan diet and/or other sustainable measures or retreats offering plant medicine who focus on being self-sufficient.

² The research has been dormant for a couple of decades after the second “wave” lasting from 1938-1976, which came after the first era lasting from 1880 to 1930 (Sessa 2012:53-54).

medicine available for people and suited for almost every need. How did ayahuasca, which have compounds that are for the most part illegal in the whole world, gain such interest and praise? Why was it illegal? And what difficulties did the people using it endure? Was it as available as it seemed and if so, how?

To assess these questions, among others, I contacted a retreat in Spain that practiced natureopathy³, permaculture, nutrition and, most importantly, had ceremonies involving plant medicines like cocoa and *ayahuasca*. A family of five were living and running the retreat, Mirmara in Spain, and I was invited to travel along with them to Brazil where we were going to an affiliated community in the outskirts of Curitiba in the southern parts of the country. The affiliated community was a Santo Daime community following the Santo Daime doctrine as well as a shamanic practice developed through ancient practices by the lead shaman. The religion is a highly eclectic religious practice where each community make use of different aspects of the religion on account of many factors, of which some I will discuss here. Being affiliated communities means that Mirmara gets all their medicine from Céu de Estrela and their ceremonies are in some degree influenced by the church. At Mirmara they have conducted shamanic ceremonies for the last 5 years, before that they held Santo Daime ceremonies, all in all 15 years of experience. Mirmara has worked with the main shaman for years and Paula had just been in Africa with him in the fall of 2019. His name is Jon, and he has been the main shaman, ritual commander and padrinho (godfather) of the church since it started over 20 years ago. He lives in the city center with his wife, who is naturally the Madrinha (godmother) of the church, she sits by his side in all the Santo Daime ceremonies. He also leads a shamanic organization as the lead shaman, accompanied by a lead female shaman. Her name is Lina, and she was part in leading the two shamanic ceremonies I witnessed. The plan was to spend one month in Brazil before spending 5 months at Mirmara in Spain. However, what would happen in the spring of 2020 had great impact on the outcome of this research.

The year 2020 was a year of great change; it was the year the whole world went in lockdown due to the COVID-19 virus. The lockdown and extent of the virus have touched nearly everyone on the planet, including myself and other anthropology students. The shutting down of borders and the uncertainty of the situation led to fieldtrips being cancelled or never even begun. I spend one month in Brazil, but before the fieldwork started in Spain, I had to

³ A form of noninvasive natural healing.

evacuate back to Norway. When talking to my fellow students and people in general, many had never heard of ayahuasca and did not know of any practices in Norway. As such, it seemed that ayahuasca practices were absent in Norway. But after much research and many conversations, I uncovered that ayahuasca was present in Norway where many people have either been abroad or been to ceremonies “at home”. After some time, an opportunity presented itself. I conducted one short field stay in Norway where I was a part of ayahuasca ceremonies during one weekend in the summer of 2021. During this weekend I took part in two ayahuasca ceremonies. In Brazil I was part in two shamanic and seven santo daime ceremonies as well as one *feitio* ritual, the ritual of making the daime (ayahuasca), expanding over 11 days. I will now shortly explain Santo Daime and the community before I present the first encounter in the field.

The Ayahuasca religions

Ayahuasca religions have three main directions which are most known: Santo Daime, Barquinha and União do Vegetal (UDV). Each contains numerous smaller institutions and communities. The one thing they all share is the sacrament of ayahuasca, called *daime*, at the center of the religions (UDV calls the brew *hoasca*). They all originated in Brazil where Santo Daime was the first one to emerge. The Santo Daime consists of two main directions, one following a stricter regime in Alto Santo and the more “hippie”⁴ influenced community of ICEFLU (*Igreja do Culto Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal*)⁵. Santo Daime is reflecting the cultural landscape of Brazil and include many religious and spiritual practices and symbolism. Among them is popular Catholicism, from which it derives many saints, Jesus, angels, vocabulary, and many of the celebrational dates. Popular Catholicism in Brazil at the time of the origin of Santo Daime in the 1930s was “imbued with paganism” and accustomed “to a magical universe” in which “people could barely distinguish between the natural and the supernatural, the visible and the invisible, part and whole, the image and what it represented (Mello de Souza 2003:48).” The Brazilian popular Catholicism then seems adaptive its approach.

Santo Daime is often portrayed as syncretic, meaning it combines different forms of beliefs or practices. Titti Kristina Schmidt highlights that this word may insinuate that some

⁴ Referring to the use of the term “hippie” during the countercultural movement in the 1960’s and 1970’s.

⁵ Further explained in Chapter four.

cultures or religions are pure while others are the ones borrowing. In a way all cultures are hybrids as they rely upon former values and visions before emerging as something different and new (Schmidt 2007:37). One of the main branches, the ICEFLU lineage, uses the word eclectic in their organizational name which essentially means the same as syncretic and underlines the openness of this line in Santo Daime (Labate & Assis 2017:60).

Céu de Estrela

Céu de Estrela is a Santo Daime community with incorporated shamanic practices partnering with the International Alliance of Universal Shamanism. Twenty years ago, Jon founded the church *The Eclectic Center of the Fluent Universal Light Céu de Estrela* under the line of ICEFLU with the purpose of serving the doctrine through harmony, love, truth, and justice⁶ and in time making an ecological, sustainable community in the forest. The church has many affiliated communities both within and outside Brazil. This makes the community a popular location for outsiders and *daimistas* (Santo Daime members) alike. The church conducts one shamanic ceremony each month, holds a shamanic music festival each year as well as shamanic courses throughout the year. In these courses, instructions on the “medicine wheel” are taught. The medicine wheel is shaped like a circle with a cross inside representing the four seasons where each section has certain colors, animals and attributes connected to them. The shamanic practice used in this church is influenced by North and South American shamanism and is a re-invention of a collection of practices. The church collaborates with different indigenous tribes for the exchange of information and practices as well as for finding ways to protect the environment and indigenous tribes. This collaboration has great impact on the “flavor” of Céu de Estrela, making it a place where shamanic practice is highly respected and used in compliance with the Santo Daime ritual repertoire.

“Miscibility” is a word used by Gilberto Freyre when describing Portugal’s ability to expand and maintain vast oversea areas of different continents, such as Brazil, despite it being a relatively small nation. Freyre credits this success to “the Portuguese people’s capacity to mix with other peoples and cultures, i.e., their miscibility (Freyre cited in Labate & Assis 2017:61).” The next section presents the first time coming to the field and will show the eclecticism, the *miscibility*, of the community and the Santo Daime religion.

⁶ The church’s leading principles written on their website which I cannot disclose.

First encounter

I am sitting in a van packed with luggage, food and people. I travel with the family I intended to stay with at their retreat Mirmara in Spain: Vincent and Paula with their three children, Ren (12), Alina (9) and Luna (4). We are on our way to our new home for the next month, I have no idea what to expect or where we are supposed to stay. I only know that I have a tent which will be my home and these strangers will be my family. We drive off the chaotic highway and enter a dirt road. After a while we get far out in the countryside of Curitiba, we pass hillsides of lush green forests, there are banana plants everywhere. After hours in the crowded car, we finally arrive at our destination. We are in the middle of a forest in rural landscape with plants and trees surrounding us. We drive through a big gate, beside it, a sign with the church's name: Céu de Estrela, in beautiful writing painted by hand with an eagle and a star with a double armed cross in the middle. We slowly roll up on the bumpy dirt road, in front of us is a big open space with maybe 6-7 cars. The area is filled with gear for tents and merchandise.

We park the van right by the entrance on the left side. On the right, there is a house, and I can see a tired old dog walking around. I learn that this is the house of the janitor, whose name is Max, the only one who lives here permanently now. Paula was here during the feitió⁷ last year. She is eager to introduce her family to the friends they have here, both Vincent and Paula know some of the people. We pass people setting up stalls for the weekend. There is going to be a shamanic music festival where the church collaborates with indigenous tribes and shamanic inspired organizations both for merchandise such as cocoa, instruments and jewelry and for musicians who play at the festival. At the end of the big open space is a small house with beautiful paintings of colorful flowers on it. This is the kitchen, on the left side of it, an area for dining outside. Further up the path to the right we pass the dorms which are separated for men and women and a little room that is dedicated to the children (casa de crianças). On the left side of the path there is a reception. Here we meet Roberto. He is a tall, smiling man with a long beard and a hat. Roberto has a print of Buddha on his shirt, and he has open arms in expectations of hugs from all of us. He shows us the way to where we can put up our tents.

⁷ Making of the daime (ayahuasca).



Figure 1. Caravaca cross outside the church. Photo by author.

We follow the path that leads past a big hexagon house which Roberto explains is the church. Through the windows I can see that people are working, putting up sound systems and a stage. We follow the path on the right side, past the main entrance. Surrounding the church there are Chacruna trees with beautiful green leaves and Jagube lianas hanging all around, the two ingredients in the “daime”. In front of the entrance is a big “double armed” cross like the one on the sign outside. It is called the “cross of Caravaca” (see figure 1) and is one of the main symbols used by the Santo Daime. We follow the main path around the church

leading into the forest. A few meters and a left turn later we arrive at a more open area. Some of the trees here have been cutdown to make room for tents. Roberto shows us some open slots and we put up our homes. He explains that the festival will officially start with a shamanic ceremony, and there will be more music than in a usual ceremony.

The sun has set, and I see people gather both outside and inside the church. I have been instructed to bring something to lay down on and a cover to keep me warm through the night. The stage is set for all kinds of instruments to be played. In the middle of the church, where there earlier was just a floor is now a big fire pit. I sit and observe the myriad of people around me. I hear many different languages, there are people from all walks of life, from young to old. Many of them are in white clothes. I am advised to wear white in the ceremonies as it is considered “light in energy” and is good for letting go as opposed to black which can be dense and can “hold on to energy”. This is not mandatory but advice from several people. I am accompanied by one of the children I travel with, Alina. Today is her first ceremony where she will drink ayahuasca. Her mother tells me that while in Spain, she is not allowed to drink as it is strictly illegal and seriously frowned upon while it is normal to distribute ayahuasca to children in the Santo Daime communities in Brazil. Alina is sitting on my lap and looking around while she expresses her excitement for the coming ceremony. Next to us is a woman in a colorful dress with face paint that glows in the dark. She paints Alina’s face along with whomever wants.

As evening turns into night, more people settle down in the church and now, we are roughly a hundred people. Everyone has a small portion of the floor where they can lay down or sit, we do as we please, I am told. Jon is welcoming us and talks briefly about the festival and what we will do tonight. He opens the ceremony by standing at the north, west, east, and south side of the fire while he takes a puff from his big tobacco pipe (without inhaling) and turns it with the mouthpiece in the direction he is facing while blowing the smoke. After, he sits by the fire in silence doing some hand gestures over the fire (see Figure 2 on page 9). After he is done, he walks over to a station by the stage that has carafes of daime and glasses on it. Lines are being formed and people receives the daime one by one. Some put the glass to their hearts or forehead, some do a cross with the glass or simply holds it for a brief moment before drinking. The mood is respectful and quiet.



Figure 2. Lead shaman performing a ritual by the fire inside the church. Photo by author.

When I approach the station I have butterflies in my stomach, I am excited and afraid of what is to come. Jon looks at me with a soft smile and measure a cup according to my size. As I sit down, I watch the musicians on stage who are performing songs while everyone who wants or knows the lyrics can join. I was told that sitting straight is best for the body to tackle the effects, so I do. A couple in front of me are placing crystals and instruments I have never seen in front of them. As the ceremony goes on, they use the instruments and stones in various ways, like placing the crystals on parts of the body or using the instruments to produce enchanting sounds. After a while I start to get cold and lay down under my sleeping bag. Just a minute or two after I can sense the effects coming. Slowly my body starts to tense, and my legs start to shake. I look around, a bit worried as I do not know what to do. I mimic the

others and try to sit and just listen. The shaking does not stop, and I need to stand up. By this time, the visual effect is appearing. The colors in the room are becoming stronger and brighter all the while kaleidoscopic patterns are beginning to form. I stumble my way out the main entrance. I start to walk around the church as I notice that this soothes the shaking. I look up at the full moon, today she is colorful and will not sit still in the sky. I walk around a while before I go back in. When I am inside again, a few people are walking around with various instruments to aid people on their journey. I found myself sitting with a triangle shaped crystal instrument dangling and spinning over my head producing an enchanting and soothing sound. The stage is often filled with people who sings and play, others sing along. Periodically there is silence or the sound of singing bowls or other instruments. Then, Jon announces that its time to receive rapé, a South American snuff containing herbs and tobacco that is frequently distributed during shamanic ceremonies and in daily life. It is given by one person through a pipe⁸ where the giver blows the snuff into each nostril of the receiver. I see people get in line in front of four people around the fireplace. Each person can tell the giver if they want anything in particular, that be “calmness”, “love” or “security”. The giver can internalize it in the rapé and give it to the receiver. The ritual is slightly different from person to person; some touch the pipe on the forehead or heart of the receiver, some give the pipe to the receiver for them to hold and give intention, and afterwards the giver blows the remaining residue to one side or each side of the head of the receiver. I see this ritual frequently during my stay, often before or after Santo Daime ceremonies or during the shamanic ones. During feitio it was frequently used to ground ourselves and focus our attention.

After a while I feel the effects wear off, and I feel the exhaustion from the long travel. I try to sleep in the church, but the constant music and singing is keeping me awake. I refrain from drinking more even though it is offered more times and recommended by some. When the clock is close to 4.00 AM in the morning, I take my stuff and go back to the tent where I fall asleep almost instantly. When I wake up at around 7.00 AM, the ceremony is still going on.

Through this short ethnographic vignette, it is possible to get a glimpse of the eclectic nature of this Santo Daime community. As this was a shamanic ceremony it is quite different from the ceremonial repertoire of the Santo Daime which is significantly more rigid. In the days after the ceremony, I encountered people from many parts of the world, Denmark, Slovenia, United States, United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. During the two shamanic

⁸ There are V-shaped pipes for self-distribution as well.

ceremonies I was part in, it seemed that people could include whatever elements they desired such as crystals or instruments. In the second shamanic ceremony I attended, tobacco was used in the same way as described above (Jon addressing all the cardinal directions) as well as everyone receiving a rolling paper and tobacco to roll a cigarette for prayer. We were not to inhale and when I asked why, one of my informants told me: “Because it’s a living spirit, it must not be inhaled. With tobacco we address the Great Spirit, we converse in such a way. Through blowing we communicate our prayer” (Informant, personal communication, May 18th, 2021). Pregnant women, infants, children, and adolescents are offered daime in the Santo Daime community, however, the quantities are much smaller than an adult portion. An infant would get a little daime from its mothers’ finger or a teaspoon while children and adolescents get a quarter or less depending on their age, weight, and height. When talking to Alina, she told me she slept through the whole ceremony. Throughout the month, 9-year-old Alina was served daime several times. I could not see any difference in the little girl’s behavior except from one night when she was giggling more than usual. She was always lively and talkative, often having more questions than anyone could answer.

Chapter overview

Chapter two takes forth the methodological and ethical implications of fieldwork as well as situating the anthropologist in the entheogenic field. It looks at why anthropological method is a good way to study ayahuasca practices as well as presenting some issues when dealing with access and positioning.

Chapter three explains the composition of ayahuasca and how it is classified, presenting what ayahuasca is, where it comes from and some of the effects it endures. This chapter also discusses the ayahuasca diaspora, shamanism as a practice and Amazonian views on health. It compares the Amazonian view of health to the archaic world views and looks at what this connection can mean.

Chapter four is an overview of the historical background of Brazil that has shaped the cultural and religious landscape that is the origin of some ayahuasca practices and the ayahuasca religions. It shows how the colonization, the slave trade, migration, landownership, and labor in the Amazon have affected the cultural and social landscape that is apparent today. It discusses the emergent of the caboclos and give insights into how a diversified religious landscape has shaped new religious movements and how these movements can be interchangeably social and environmental movements. It explains the origin of Santo Daime

Chapter One: Introduction

by telling the story of the founder and the development of the doctrine as well as the controversies within and towards the doctrine and the challenges faced because of this.

Chapter five deals with the cosmology, world view and belief of Santo Daime in and outside Brazil. It discusses how the daimista world view is comprised of the astral world as the “most real of all” while the material is “the world of illusion”.

Chapter six introduces the ceremonial aspect of the doctrine and shows how each detail is a part of a ritual setting that kept in place for the safety and success of each member. It offers a ritual analysis and compares the ritual structure with the term “set and setting” used researchers to describe two vital elements when going into the “psychedelic experience”. Each ceremony I took part in will be included in this chapter.

Chapter seven deals with the research and fieldwork done in Norway. Here, I will explain some of the scope of the Norwegian ayahuasca diaspora and present an ethnographic description of the short time fieldwork I conducted. I also present some comparable elements with the Santo Daime.

Chapter eight will be the finishing thoughts surrounding the themes of this thesis.

Chapter two: The anthropologist in the field

Introduction

In this chapter I explain the methods used in the process of making this thesis while presenting the ethical aspects of researching this subject. Discussing how the anthropological methods can help get insights into the subject and how the anthropologist can navigate in the entheogenic field. It also discusses how the anthropologist uses the body as a methodological instrument to gain information, position, and access. I argue why time is an essential part of the process.

Approaching the subject: ethics and method

The leading method in anthropology is participant observation and this was the primary method for gathering information during my field stay in both Brazil and Norway. I used unstructured and informal interviews (Bernard 2017:163) where I engaged in conversations without any specific structure or questions planned. These conversations were a source of much information, but as my focus in Brazil was on the family and how they brought practices with them to Europe, I used most of my time talking to them. A substantial amount of the information I gathered from these conversations was regarding nutrition and sustainable food sources and has not been given much space here as the focus of the thesis changed over time. As I was initially planning to go to the retreat in Spain where they mostly spoke English and French, I did not partake in a Portuguese language course. I tried to learn as much Portuguese as I could beforehand but when I arrived, I understood my limitations were prominent. This affected my access a great deal as I could not engage in normal, everyday conversations. In the time after the field, I have gained some knowledge through telephone interviews. I had made questionnaires and printed out many consent forms to use during the 5-month field stay as I planned to do in depth interviews there. Otherwise in Brazil and in Norway, consent was obtained in person and verbally.

Before going to the field, I assessed and read the American Anthropology Association's (AAA) "Principles of Professional Responsibility", the "code of ethics" and abided by them throughout the field and after. Ayahuasca has been legal in Brazil since 1992,

but DMT is still regarded as an illicit drug (Labate 2014), so is marijuana. DMT is illegal in Norway and even though ayahuasca is not mentioned in the law, since DMT is one of the main components in ayahuasca, it can be interpreted as illegal. Naturally, this posits some ambiguousness and accentuates the importance of the anonymity of my interlocutors. In both cases, I made notes with no reference to places or people while using general, mixed-up personas inspired by MaryCarol Hopkins. In “Is anonymity possible?” (1996), she raises the issue of anonymity and how the technological advancements in the world make academic texts more available for those who have internet access, including our informants. As such, she made her informants individually unrecognizable by mixing looks and ways of acting. This in itself presents some issues conceiving the scientific validity of anthropology, but I will not go into this here.

With all this in mind, I wondered how I could and should study a delicate topic like *ayahuasca*, which is a part of indigenous culture and very challenging for the individual ingesting it, making them exposed and vulnerable. It is a big challenge for body and mind to ingest ayahuasca, one of the most powerful psychoactive substance we know of today. Many anthropologists and researchers have immersed themselves in similar traditions and have had extraordinary experiences⁹. How could I study this if I did not drink the brew? Would it affect the outcome? First, I will explain participant observation and some aspects that affect the anthropologist in the field before I assess how I came to the decision of participating in the rituals, including drinking ayahuasca.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is a method where the researcher is participating with and observing the subject under question. The “subject” can be anything from a tribe in the Amazonian jungle to an office at a bureaucratic institution. The aim is to become a part of people’s everyday lives so that the information conveyed through observing, participating and later questioning can be as “raw” and true as possible. The focus for the anthropologist is thus getting access to the field of choice and then slowly becoming a natural part of people’s lives. Time is needed for this to be viable. I do not mean to say that all fieldwork that is short-timed is invalid, but for the quest of the anthropologist, which is to understand people, their culture, and relations holistically, time is essential, and I will show some examples as to why.

⁹ See Harner 1968:28-29, Narby 1995:6-9 and Castaneda 1968 for example.

Julie Zahle distinguishes between four types of participant observation. Simply put, type one is when the researcher is focusing on the ones who are “competent evaluators”. Watching how people react to other people’s behavior can become a good indicator of what is accepted behavior and not (Zahle 2012:56). She also states that one must be careful to make the assessment of who is the competent evaluator as a mistake can lead to insufficient and misleading data. By cross-checking observations of situations, it can become clear who is competent and what behavior is acceptable and not (Zahle 2012:60). Type two is observing these competent evaluators and how they act. Type three focuses on the actions of the anthropologist herself and observing the response of competent evaluators. Type four is when the anthropologist is the competent evaluator herself (Zahle 2012:57-59). This will be further out in the time frame of fieldwork because it takes time to work up enough experience and knowledge to do so. I would say that the last two stages, and even the two first, are only valid if the time required to get such information is possible. Due to the complexity we all live in individually, it goes without saying that learning and observing other people’s way of life takes time. Zahle also points out that contemporary theories stress the fact that individuals are having a hard time explaining tacit (practical) knowledge and thus simply asking people questions is not enough to get the whole picture (Zahle 2012:50-51).

The same point shines through in Timothy Jenkins’s text “Fieldwork and the perception of everyday life” (1994). The article investigates the argument that fieldwork is a suitable method for gaining knowledge of everyday life. He explains through his own example how fieldwork is like a series of apprenticeships uncovering “practical knowledge” and how the lives of informants also contain this learning of practices. He observes at a cattle market in France that much of the knowledge that actors rely on is non-verbal, tacit and, as the anthropologist is committed through his body, he can gain access to this knowledge over time (Jenkins 1994:439). He points out that here is no single, social order to be discovered but heterogeneous practices and the knowledge they bear. Although anthropology may lack the status of “absolute”, the knowledge observed is complex and is displayed in shifting, interacting contexts (Jenkins 1994:453). Acknowledging that not only is the anthropologist learning through observing and practice but so are the people under study, and the emphasis on the division of us/them shifts to finding ourselves in the other and the other in us (Jenkins 1994:452).

These articles highlight the importance of time in the anthropological process. By this measure, my one-month and one weekend field stay were not nearly enough to get full access

or gather sufficient information. For example, the Santo Daime community is largely based on the voluntary help from its members and during *feitio* (making the daime [ayahuasca]), other non-members participate as well. Through conversations I understood that getting help from outsiders was normal and they were used to explaining what they do. Even though this was the case, I could not only rely on the information conveyed, but I also had to see how people's behavior was presented and acted upon by competent evaluators. There were times where the behavior of the visitors was commented upon by competent evaluators thus showing norms and accepted behavior. During my stay I could assume certain things according to the information given to me by leading figures of the culture, perceiving them as "competent evaluators". This seems simple enough but there are so many nuances of data I did not have time to collect, thus giving me an insufficient foundation to which I would pinpoint my arguments if I would make any. My gathered data thus becomes secondary information in this thesis, a colorful description of some of the rituals that are common in the Santo Daime as well as portraying some usable observations for comparing. Before I left, however, I had a decision to make. Would I participate in the rituals? Would I drink the brew? To understand my decision, we must consider certain perspectives on using the body as a method in anthropology.

A production of knowledge through being and action

Alpha Shah suggests that participant observation is a production of knowledge through being and action (Shah 2017:48). By doing the things that "they" do, the anthropologist can come close to feeling, being and sensing the things "they" are. All the senses clarify the complexity of the situations we are faced with. Not only seeing but also hearing, sensing, and feeling throughout the fieldwork brings forth the nuances in the intricacy of people's lived experiences. This thought is highlighted in Seth Holmes's monography. He did long-term fieldwork with migrants from Mexico, living and working in the US. He managed only a few days' work compared to the migrants working almost 16 hours a day, 7 days a week (Holmes 2013:88). By not only observing but experiencing the pain from the work he could bring up questions surrounding these subjects. He uncovered systematic racism, the failure of institutions, the absence of rights and how this affected the people he was with. He also challenged definitions about migrants, as US citizens' opinions varied from the migrants taking their jobs to them being lazy and alcoholics (Holmes 2013:149, 151-154, 182-200). By being submerged in the field for a longer period, Holmes could enter these spheres based on

experience and tell a different story (Holmes 2013:34-35). This underlines Shah's statement that participant observation is potentially a revolutionary praxis that challenges the hegemonic definitions in the world (Shah 2017:49). By being and doing, Holmes established new definitions and nuances that can not only portray the complicated lives of his informants but also help the migrants and the people who have strong, misguided beliefs about them.

In my opinion, the texts referred to above sum up the anthropological quest very clearly. It tells us that human nature and the ability to learn is not only by seeing but also by doing while using all the body's senses to do so. Through using the body as an instrument, as a method in itself, we gain insights into the world we study. But these insights come at a cost. Turning to my own deliberations: as the ingestion of psychedelic substances makes you vulnerable as well as presenting some ethical issues regarding the illegal status in Norway, it was a complex road to a decision. I studied experiences of other researchers as well as everyday people in advance. Through the statements by users and other anthropologists it became clear to me that what happens during the influence of ayahuasca is *ineffable*, that is, near impossible to describe in words, especially to those who have not gone through the "psychedelic experience" (Sessa 2012:17-18, 23). Consequently, I decided to try – at the best of my abilities – to take part in the everyday life, including ingesting ayahuasca.

A potentially revolutionary praxis

Shah explains how participant observation is a potentially revolutionary praxis:

"Participant observation is potentially revolutionary because it forces one to question one's theoretical presuppositions about the world by an intimate long-term engagement with, and participation in, the lives of strangers. It makes us recognize that our theoretical conceptions of the world come from a particular historical, social, and spatial location" (Shah 2017:49).

During my fieldwork in Brazil, I quickly realized that my perception and perspective could cloud my ability to distance my own beliefs from the situation and be objective. Beforehand, I had prepared myself for this exact problem. I had given myself the freedom to express myself in the field diary so that I also could see the changes in how I perceived the community I was in. All new information could change these perceptions. The way I thought things were in the beginning, mostly by observing, was not how they were at the end and changed again after analyzing the data. This underlines the importance of time in a field and after. For even

though one thinks one has understood a complex situation it always seems to have hidden nuances.

Access

As a woman, my natural access was with the women. During the days, when chores were divided, I was naturally given the task of going to the kitchen to help with making food or cleaning the church or other facilities. The men I talked to, on the other hand, helped with chopping wood and doing heavy lifting. As the days went by and I talked to my new friends, the differences between men and women became clearer. As far as I had noticed, this was not based on suppression or judgement but merely an observation of the different physical structures of women and men. However, for me to make this assessment I would have to stay longer so that I could cross-check information through first observing more people and assessing whether they are competent evaluators and then validate these through interviews and conversations. Men and women worked in different houses during the *feitio*. We were together during the ceremonies or when we, the women, came to the men's workspace, the *casa de feitio*, to sing hymns in front of the brew. This gave me a chance to observe the men and how they did things. As the men and women were not to talk to each other during *feitio*, or at least keep it to a minimum, I merely observed what the men did during the 11 days it went on.

As my field stay was so short, everything I have written here about my own fieldwork are observations from a limited timeframe and thus not a full ethnographic description. A full description would entail being "there" longer, conducting interviews and cross-checking information which I did not get a chance to do. By staying longer my perceptions of things would have been interrupted time and again until in the end I would hopefully have a bigger picture of what it was and how to present it in a text to make it understandable for a person who has never been there or seen what I have seen. I became aware of my predisposed thoughts and perceptions of things and broke down barriers of my own beliefs, as Shah and Zahle discuss in their texts. In a theoretical sense, my fieldwork was a kind of rite of passage itself, entering a liminal phase where information and lines of definitions were blurred. Though I had a distinct role I had to be in, this role was also in constant change as I had never been in the field before.

Positioning

Positioning can be challenging in a new environment and not knowing what appropriate behavior is or not can be difficult. The challenge for the anthropologist is to explore the positions she has available and using them for her advantage as a means to an end. This can mean negotiating your status as Dr. Stephanie Schwander-Sievers did in her fieldwork in Kosovo and Albania. After some time in the field, she had been assigned different roles as to fit in to the culture. But slowly, by using different techniques like wearing a wedding ring to portray a married woman, carrying notebooks as to underline her scientific and academic nature, she managed to define her own role as a kind of mix of different roles (Schwander-Sievers 2009:182-185). She was called a *burrneshë*: “a woman as a man” meaning a woman with man qualities (Schwander-Sievers 2009:186-187). This gained her access to different spheres that in the beginning were inaccessible to her. By using participant observation in light of Zhale’s four different types of observing, one can uncover accepted behavior and play on these throughout the field. These changes in position can be valuable to assess when looking at culture, though it often seems stable and static, culture is evolving, expanding, and always changing, just as nature is.

Time is essential

Participating and observing alone will not generate the outcome that the anthropologists are setting out to find, rather the whole mix of methods ranging from questionnaires to interviews, observing and participating and in the end analyzing through your own lens portrays a rather unique outcome. By being there for a long period of time, addressing our own predisposed beliefs, our positioning and access, and how this may have had an impact on what gathered information has come to light, we can better get the big picture of how complex and nuanced human experience can be. Objectivity is unrealistic, I might say impossible as objectivity would entail not having any predisposed thoughts or physical appearance affecting your access. A camera is objective, but it is also just objective to what its portraying. Outside the frame there is a whole world of nuances being missed, and for the anthropologist, by submerging, doing long-term, holistic research the outcome will include many nuances and become a perspective of reality. For the anthropologist to be free of predisposed beliefs and gaining a position of access, time is needed. For the informants to behave as natural as possible, time is needed. For the information conveyed to be assessed and cross-checked, time is needed. Time is the essential component here.

The anthropologist in the entheogenic field

Time is an essential part of the project as it is vital for assessing and interpreting the field. The duration of time needed is near impossible to assess before going to the field as there are so many factors involved. The access depends upon both the appearance and personality of anthropologist her/himself. Gender and skin color can affect access in both a positive and negative manner, so can one's marital status, whether one has long or short hair, and so on. It depends largely on the people you study and the norms and rules that are embedded in their way of life. But to gain access, a certain amount of communication skill is needed. The social skills of the anthropologist are also important to gain access.

The anthropological process is an apprentice process of learning and unlearning. Had I stayed longer my apprenticeship would involve managing ecstasies, that is managing the power of the daime and travel between realms. Though I got to take part for a month, challenging myself to be a part of the tiresome Santo Daime ceremonies, they were just that to me, tiresome ceremonies. They were challenging and such hard work that I only perceived them as such. It was only after the field I slowly uncovered the meanings behind them. My predisposed beliefs surrounding religion, belief, and gender made the ceremonies challenging as I did not understand the meaning of the core of Santo Daime belief or the separation of gender in ceremonies. As the trip to Brazil was last minute, I had read very little about Santo Daime beforehand and it was not until several months into analyzing the data that I could comprehend some of what was happening. One short month was not enough time to master “the force”¹⁰ induced by the brew and as such, navigate the realms of the unseen.

I had to cancel one of the fieldtrips in Norway as it was two weeks between the two ceremonial weekends, which I thought would be enough based on the experiences in Brazil. What I did not consider was the difference of the contexts. First, in Brazil, I was part of a community where my only job was to be there, participate, and observe. We were outside in the forest, with no television or computers. In Norway however, I was at the end of my last semester, and had to work with computers and books inside at my desk right after the ceremonies. Second, I hadn't considered that the medicine in Norway in itself would both feel and be different in composition. As such my experience became deeply challenging and I had

¹⁰ My informants said “I am feeling the force” when they were affected by daime.

to refrain from drinking ayahuasca twice within such a short timeframe. This presented a challenge for the second ayahuasca organization as they had expected me to be part in every way, as we had discussed. So, without drinking I was not able to be part of the ceremony as they believed it could disturb the other participants. As people come to ayahuasca for healing and are often in very vulnerable positions, this was understandable. Deciding to take part in drinking ayahuasca affects the access in certain instances. I mention this to humanize the anthropologist. She is not a superhuman ready to adapt to any situation. Though she adapts, she has her own cultural baggage which can make things challenging. If these issues are not looked at beforehand it can come as a shock to the anthropologist. I would say this is especially important if one is to ingest a psychoactive substance as part of a field. It does change you in different ways and it is important to be aware that it is normal to be left somewhat different afterward. This is as true for those studying ayahuasca as for anyone else conducting a fieldwork. I also stress the importance of making clear for the reader on which base we stand and the development of that base throughout the work of the thesis/article/doctorate so that the information may be seen in light of that, not changing what our informants say but elaborating on what perceptual antenna it is perceived through (the researcher). The anthropologist is not invisible, and we cannot pretend that she is. Bringing forth that I did not have access to the spheres of men means that a whole part of the society was, in some ways, out of reach for me. When these aspects become so clear that access is influenced, I suggest it will be unrealistic not to mention them.

Ending remarks

By looking at how I gained the information and established the frailty of a short timeframe as well as the language barrier, we can establish that both access and position in the field were not optimal. It is important to note that we all interpret through our own lens and mind, thus making the observations somewhat different than it was originally. I would argue that there is no such thing as total objectivity. Anthropologists try to gather information that would normally be unavailable to them, through that information we see many differences. But ultimately there is common grounds that many people share, or at least this is my impression. These common grounds are the need or want of belonging and essential physical safety such as shelter, food, and water. To belong somewhere can mean different things to different people, what I argue for is the *feeling* of belonging. The overall perception I got from my interlocutors in both Brazil and Norway, was an essential desire to belong in the world and

with an emphasis on community and nature, in both instances with a focus on love, harmony and honesty. There is an emphasis on transformation or change of the self, where many of my informants talked of either “shedding layers of the ego”, “ego-death” or “self-transformation”. Just as the ayahuasca experience is *ineffable* i.e., hard to explain in words (Sessa 2012:17-18, 23), so is the feeling of something hard to grasp or to study, like belonging or transformation. To understand what happens under influence I believe taking part in drinking ayahuasca will render a better result. There is a lot to be discovered without drinking ayahuasca in these settings, but through the anthropological method of participant observation we can come close to “being there” as “they are”.

Chapter three: Psychoactive substances and views on health

Introduction

What is ayahuasca? And what effect does it have? In this chapter I will go more into detail about what altered states of consciousness is, and attempt to describe what ayahuasca is by assessing what a psychoactive substance is. I will then explain how ayahuasca is perceived as more than a narcotic concoction. We will go through some of the physical and psychological effects of ayahuasca before we turn to explain what the ayahuasca diaspora is, what role shamanism has, how health and morality is bound together and how this affects people's view on the world.

What is ASC?

As mentioned in the introductory chapter in this thesis, anthropologists have been studying ASC for a long time. There are many names to describe this state; altered or alternate states of consciousness (ASC), shamanic states of consciousness (SSC), non-ordinary states of consciousness, trance, hallucinations, and dream, to name a few. What defines an altered state is any other state than normal waking state. The states can be measured by brain waves which occupy different categories of frequencies. Beta is considered normal waking state while Delta, Theta, Alpha and Gamma are considered the "altered" states (Brahmanker, Dange & Mankar 2012:15-16). As science have evolved, so does our perception of what is an altered state. Throughout the day a person may be in all the different ASC and as such, a "normal" waking state is a definition used to distinguish it from other states.

Andrew Dawson has advanced arguments for the use of "alternate states of consciousness" rather than "altered state of consciousness" in accordance with daimista world view (Dawson 2013a:120). The world view is comprised of the material as an illusion and the immaterial, the "astral" as the "most real of all", paired with the view on the subjective self as a 'multifaceted phenomenon'. Thus, "the notion of a single, uniform and fixed state of consciousness which is altered from an otherwise default position of 'normality' (thereby) sits uncomfortably with *daimista* reading of both the multidimensional self and the pluriform

world(s) it inhabits” (Dawson 2013a:121). In accordance with this statement and my own observations and research, I will use ASC when I mean alternate states of consciousness. I will go on to discuss the cosmology and world view of Santo Daime in Chapter five.

Practices like meditation, yoga, sensory deprivation, fasting, and even praying can alter one’s state of mind and there are numerous studies on the effects of different substances and practices that induce these states. Santo Daime congregations not only use repetitive, trancelike movements as addition to repetitive singing, which in itself can induce some alterations to one’s state of mind, but more importantly they use the very powerful plant medicine ayahuasca, which is a concoction containing psychoactive compounds.

Psychoactive substances

The sacrament, *daime*, which is consumed regularly during rituals, is psychoactive and induces ASC. The definition of a psychoactive substance is a chemical substance that affects the nervous system function and can result in alterations of perception, mood, cognition, motor functions and consciousness (World Health Organization 2004:2, see tables at p. 107-110). This means that anything from caffeine to heroin is classified a psychoactive substance. Jean Delay distinguished three major types of psychotropic (equivalent to psychoactive) drugs that are still in use today. The two first groups are the psychic sedatives and stimulants while the third is the psychic deviators, referred to as “psychedelics” or “hallucinogens” (Delay cited in Dobkin de Rios 1972:20).

Psychedelics is the definition used on substances that relates to the serotonin receptor, the so-called hallucinogenic drugs that fall into the category of psychoactive substances (Nichols 2004:132). Contrary to what the convention on psychotropic drugs of 1971 states (UN 1971:17), subsequently incorporated in laws in many countries, and what large sections of the population believe, these substances are considered safe and do not lead to dependence or addiction (Nichols 2016:274, 322, Nichols 2004:132, 134). In this category there are many mind-altering substances, including DMT, which is one of the compounds in ayahuasca, psilocybin¹¹ which is the component in so-called “magic” mushrooms, ibogaine, the active substance in an African plant used by certain tribes and mescaline, the component in both San Pedro and Peyote which is used by some indigenous tribes in the Americas (Nichols 2004:132-133) and in the Native American Church of United States (Nichols 2004:137).

¹¹ Psilocybin is converted to psilocin in the human body (Nickols 2004:135).

There are more substances that fall under the category including LSD, MDMA and ketamine, but I will mainly talk of “plant teachers” or “plant medicine” which are believed to have been used by humans predating written history (Nichols 2016:266, Dobkin de Rios 1972:19).

Ayahuasca

Ayahuasca is a word from the Quechua language meaning “vine of the soul”, “vine of the dead” or “vine of the spirit”. *Aya* means “spirit”, “soul”, “corpse” or “dead body” and *huasca* means “woody vine”, “liana” or “rope”. It is a generic term denoting a concoction of a substance containing DMT and another containing harmala alkaloids but can also mean one of the two in some contexts. The liana is prepared and used by horticultural and indigenous groups in the Amazon (Dobkin de Rios 1971:256) and until the mid-1980’s, when ayahuasca was mentioned in anthropology, it was exclusively referring to the vine alone (Highpine 2013). Additions to the brew are common and today the term ayahuasca often means the combination of the vine and the shrub (Hamill et al. 2019:108, Alverga 1999:10, Cemin 2010:39, 194, Labate, Cavnar & Gearin 2017:1, Luna 2011:3). In this thesis, when I talk of ayahuasca or daime, it is the combination of these I mean if not otherwise explained.

The bark of the liana and the leaves of the plant are cooked together with water to produce the concoction. The leaves contain DMT (*N,N*-dimethyltryptamine), a tryptamine which resembles the structure of the regulative hormone neurotransmitter serotonin and the vine contains alkaloids which serves as monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOI) that make the DMT orally active (Highpine 2013, Hamill et al. 2019:108). Though we do not entirely understand how, neurotransmitters send information to various parts of the brain and body. DMT acts upon these by altering perception and motor functions as mentioned above.

The practices of using this psychotropic substance passed on from indigenous to non-indigenous cultures through its use among the mixed-race communities and rubber-tappers in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century (Dawson 2013a:9). Today it is known around the world as it has crossed borders through tourism and spiritual and religious practices. Different types of the vine and the plant have been used in tribal communities and the ones used by the Ayahuasca religions that originated in Brazil include the vine *Banisteriosis Caapi*, called *Jagube* and the shrub *Psychotria Viridis*, called *Chacrana* (my own observations) or *Rahina* (queen) (Labate & Assis 2017:58).

Ayahuasca presents its own ability to create a connection for those ingesting it. People who have been in the “psychedelic space” share a sort of common ground which others who have not, do not possess. It is a sense of knowing on a level of experience what someone else has endured or seen. In the thesis “The value of experience: psychedelics, phenomenology and contemporary perspectives on drug use”, Anna Maria Høifødt discusses how her interlocutors describes entering a “space” when ingesting a psychedelic drug, and that people who have been to this space can “sense” it in one another. It forms an immediate connection that otherwise would not be there (Høifødt 2018:64-65). Høifødt explains this “space” as “not another place in a geographical sense, but a different perceptual dimension, different from that of everyday perception (Høifødt 2018:36)”, “as a vast universe of our own minds (psyche)” (Høifødt 2018:23). She further explains how when ingesting a psychedelic substance there is a “perceptual reimagination of the environment” and as such, “hallucination” is not a suitable word as “people generally do not see what is not there, but rather they see what is there in a different way (Høifødt 2018:36).” As such the surroundings (setting) shows itself to be important to the experience. It is important to understand that the effects of these substances are highly dependent on the set (mental expectations) of the user and the setting (environment) (Nichols 2016:269). A psychedelic experience is dependent on these two aspects. If one’s mental state is depressed, this can be heightened by psychedelics. If the surroundings are loud, unfamiliar, or inhospitable this influences the experience. This means that the so-called “bad trip” is often related to these two components, and I will discuss how the ceremonial setting is vital in the Santo Daime context.

Ayahuasca has many names, Luis Eduardo Luna listed 42 of those in his thesis *Vegetalismo: shamanism among the mestizo population of the Peruvian Amazon* (1986). As ayahuasca is used by a plethora of different indigenous tribes and by different national populations, it is also discussed in different languages. “New” names like *daime* in the emergent of new religious movements apply to the list. For ayahuasca drinkers, especially shamans and members of the ayahuasca religions, ayahuasca deposits its own agency and is talked of as a conscious entity of which a certain effect is presumed, and a connection and knowledge acquired. What effect it gives can vary, but that it will have an effect, an impact, is evident. The agency attributed is related to the spirit of ayahuasca.

The spirit of Ayahuasca

Among various indigenous and ethnic groups, plants, animals, and places are under the domain of a “mother spirit” or “spirit guardian” (Schmidt 2007:101). These are the creators, owners, and guardians of those plants, animals, or places they are ascribed to. Those connected to animals can often be regarded as dangerous while many mother spirits of plants are referred to as *plantas professoras* (plant teachers) or *doutoras* (doctors) as they have the ability to transmit knowledge to those working with them (Luna 1986:14-15). Engagement with plant spirits is common in shamanic practice and the Amazonian shaman gains both power and knowledge in communication with spirits where the “engagement” often signifies the shamanic flights (ASC). Graham Townsley studied Yamanihua shamanic knowledge and how it emphasizes “ways of knowing” rather than “a system of things known”. The knowledge is derived from shamanic techniques where the knowledge comes from the visionary experience from ritual. (Townsley 1993:449). The ways of knowing is derived from these mother spirits and they are highly respected entities. One of the most powerful plant spirits is *Ayahuascama*, the mother-spirit of ayahuasca and essentially the spirit of the daime (Schmidt 2007:101, MacRae 1992:36, Gow 1994:95, 107).

Among the Napo Runa of the Amazon (who exclusively used the vine) the ayahuasca vine is considered to be “the mother of all plants” and serves as a mediator between the human and plant world (Highpine 2013). As such, the spirit of ayahuasca is called upon by a shaman to aid him in his endeavors. The way the shaman calls upon a spirit varies but singing, whistling, drumming, and chanting are the most common ways of doing so. In the ayahuasca religions, *Ayahuascama* is known but not necessarily visible in contexts which do not incorporate specific shamanic practices. Even though I was in such a place, I never heard the word *Ayahuascama* but was intrigued by the way daime was talked about as an entity having its own agency. Had I been there longer and with better language skills I would know more of the relationship Céu de Estrela had to the ayahuasca spirit.

The effects of ayahuasca

Though the effects can vary substantially, there are several elements that recur in intoxication. One of these elements have been “attested across different cultures, spiritual traditions and personal background”, namely its “ability to propitiate encounters with radical otherness” (Labate et al. 2017:xvi).

“Speaking myriad languages, through dozens of religious and spiritual idioms and within infinite possibilities of individual variation, ayahuasca drinkers across the globe have described visions of celestial landscapes beyond comprehension and encounters with awe-inspiring, alien intelligence that alternately tantalizes and terrorizes them with healing and bodily degradation, spiritual salvation and ego disintegration, ecological wisdom and universal apocalypse. The ayahuasca experience defies ordinary notions of causality, space, time, and logic.” (Labate et al. 2017:xvi)

During my fieldwork in Brazil, contrary to the Norwegian fieldwork, people rarely talked of their visions from the ceremony, but as mentioned I had a different perspective and limited Portuguese skills, so the information on this was limited. Through research however, it becomes apparent that visions are entrenched with symbolism and myths that fit into the Santo Daime narrative. Symbolism seen under the influence by daimistas resembles the visions of other ayahuasca users as well. There are common animals, places and patterns that appear again and again. Some of the animals regularly seen are the snake¹², the jaguar, and the eagle, all of which has significance to shamanic and Santo Daime practices (Labate et al. 2017:2). In Santo Daime, these animals, including hummingbirds¹³, are seen as animal spirits (Dawson 2013a:124). Geometrical patterns are almost unavoidable where kaleidoscopic visions with expressive colors and shapes appear.

The physical sensations that can be felt after ingesting ayahuasca can vary due to the ingredients and the process of manufacture (Lewis 2008:111). They tend to take effect after 30-50 minutes. When the effects begin, the pupils dilate, and the body temperature drops significantly¹⁴ the first hour before it rises again. This can result in shivers and a feeling of being cold but usually does not last very long. Blood pressure and heart rate increase, though it is regarded as less hazardous than effects of the intoxication of many other substances¹⁵ (Hamill et al. 2019:111), people with heart disease or issues with blood pressure should always consult a doctor before ingesting the powerful entheogen.

¹² The snake is prominent in many ancient and indigenous cultures worldwide. For more information see Narby 1998.

¹³ Informants told me that the hummingbird was a messenger between the spiritual and the material world.

¹⁴ As I experienced, see page 9.

¹⁵ Like IV DMT, oral alcohol, insufflated cocaine, smoked marijuana, and oral MDMA.

Around one hour after ingestion, the visual effects can be more prominent. Geometrical patterns, animals, symbols, and other worldly things may be seen, the visions are extra-ordinary. Experiences of intense connection to oneself, nature, other participants, and the universe at large are often reported. Many have experienced loss of control of their thoughts or even acquire the ability to control someone else's thoughts. Radical modifications to the self may happen both during and after the ceremony and "shape shifting" is a common phenomenon (Shanon 2003:133-134). In a phone call, a young Norwegian man named Thomas, who had participated in two ceremonies in Norway in the winter of 2020/2021, told me of his experience during one of the ceremonies. "I felt so big and strong, I was a gorilla. Ahh!! I was roaring like a Gorilla and just kept screaming." Another participant explained how she became a tiger when purging in a ceremony. Radical behavior (like what Thomas experienced) under influence is not rare. Though in Santo Daime these behaviors are not particularly encouraged except from in certain ceremonies. At times people work through traumas where memories of such traumas may appear. This process can be characterized by pain in certain places in the body, nausea, purging and diarrhea. The purging is seen as a necessary part of working through set trauma. Thomas told me that he suffered from a lung disease and in the ceremony, he had coughed up small "marbles", as he called them, of disease which went on for hours. For Thomas, this experience was painful and scary but afterwards he has not regretted it as he has minimal troubles with his lungs compared to before. Curing physical ailment is a central part of ayahuasca use in South America and it is visible in ayahuasca practices around the world as people use these practices for curing various illnesses.

As the view of the world of daimistas is placed within the Santo Daime narrative, which is the world of Jurimidam i.e., the world of daime, the modern industrialized world can seem foreign to the more "natural" outlook of the daimista. After ceremonies and intoxication, the individual self may change and sometimes showing up in the world at large may present challenges (Shanon 2003:134). Coined by Stanislaf and Christina Grof as "spiritual emergencies" such instances can be described as crises that emerge when "the process of growth and change becomes chaotic and overwhelming." In such cases individuals may experience that their sense of identity is breaking down, "that their old values no longer hold true, and that the very ground beneath their personal realities is radically shifting (Grof & Grof 1989, back cover)." More often than not however, even though the ceremonies can be difficult to endure, people come out of them with a feeling of being "cleansed, revived and

empowered” (Lewis 2008:111). Often people experience what is called “ego death” or “death and rebirth”. When participating in the Norwegian ayahuasca retreat, we talked about birth and death as these subjects often appear during intoxication. Ayahuasca and other psychedelics are said to shed you of your “ego selves” which we collect throughout our lives. The parts of us that are “not us” but imprinted on us through culture, society, childhood, and traumas. To an anthropologist, this is very interesting, as what or who “the self” is has been under scrutiny time and again. The methods of the anthropologist which brings her very close to the subject she studies is an excellent way to gain insight into such perceptions, again the anthropological quest seems valid in search of understanding.

Dangers when using ayahuasca

Ayahuasca is seen as a medicine and teacher in many South American communities. Laws outside of the continent affect how it is perceived elsewhere as its substances are considered illegal and dangerous in most parts of the world. The laws have resulted in people being prosecuted in Spain, Canada, USA, France, Italy, and the Netherlands¹⁶ (Santo Daime B, n.d.). The illegal status makes regulation difficult and people claiming to be shamans utilize the market and can offer services which are unsafe. There have been reported instances of sexual abuse during ceremonies where the leader of the ceremony has taken advantage of women when they are under the influence and in a vulnerable position (Maybin & Casserly, 2020). As a response, scholars are working towards a community guideline to be aware of and to prevent sexual abuse (Peluso et al. 2020). It seems that deaths linked to ayahuasca are ambiguous and often it is not the substance that is the cause of death but other factors. For instance, some shamanic practices use tobacco in their concoction of ayahuasca. One reported death in Peru was considered due to ayahuasca, but after some investigation it appears that the deceased perished from nicotine overdose (Sinclair 2017). Another reported instance where a 71-year-old woman died after ingesting ayahuasca showed through investigation that the nicotine level in the blood of the deceased much higher than expected (Gable cited in dos Santos 2013:181). According to Narby, the nicotine level in South American botanical tobacco is 18 times higher than in Virginia-type cigarettes (Narby 1998:120). In lights of the events described above, this is valuable information when dealing with South American tobacco. Another concern exhibits the problematic issue of prescribed antidepressants paired

¹⁶ See iceers.org for more information regarding legal status of ayahuasca (Iceers n.d.).

with ayahuasca. The blend can cause serotonin syndrome which is potentially fatal (Callaway & Grob 1998:368). Assessing these issues are vital for the safety of those using ayahuasca and if one of these factors, high blood pressure or heart condition are present, one should always consult a doctor before taking part in any substance use. Because of the instances above, changes have been offered in certain communities. Many Santo daime communities have strict policies assessing new members before joining a ceremony. It may differ from place to place, and some may not include it. Each new person must answer some questions before participating where one such question is exclusively regarding antidepressants. Several other communities I researched online including the two groups I contacted in Norway, also made this point very clear. As such there are crucial elements to consider for the safety of those choosing to ingest these substances.

Ayahuasca Diaspora

Diaspora refers to a dispersion of any people outside of their origin. The ayahuasca diaspora refers to the ayahuasca using religions and practices outside South America. Defining ayahuasca can be challenging as there is not sufficient research on the ethnobotanical aspect of these plants and because various plants may be added to the mix (Labate et al. 2017:1). Some researchers include other forms of ayahuasca, for example changa which is an herb blend containing DMT and gives similar sensations and visions as ayahuasca. Changa is smokable and was created by an Australian named Julian Palmer in 2003-2004 as an alternative to smoking the crystallized DMT (St John 2017:151-152). The effects can vary but usually last around 20-40 minutes. Used in some ceremonial or ritual settings, this form of “ayahuasca” (also called “aussiewaska”) is in its effect similar to the brew but it lasts much shorter, and the nausea and purging are less frequent. Yopo is a DMT containing snuff made of beans called *Anadenanthera peregrina* which show similar effects to changa and lasts about the same amount of time. In contrast to changa however, it is a traditional snuff used by indigenous groups. Remains of snuff powder has seldom been found and never identified, however carbonized remains have been found to show similar chemical reactions to DMT in archeological findings and analysis of smoking pipes found in the Jujuy province in Argentina tracing back 4000 years (Pochettino, Cortella & Ruiz 1999:128). In Brazil I heard of this snuff many times.

Along with the dispersion of ayahuasca, the Amazonian view on health (though diversified it has many similarities), seems to be crossing borders and reaching western

societies through ayahuasca practices. However, the use of psychoactive substances has been a common practice for thousands of years on almost every continent and thus the view on health is embedded in a sort of shared practice. This practice is known by scholars and by the population at large as *shamanism* where practices of using psychoactive substances have correlations with shamanism as an ancient practice. Archeological findings suggest shamanic practices and use of herbal medicine can date back as far as to the Neanderthals 60,000 years ago (Solecki 1975:880-881). Discoveries of an ancient burial of a disabled woman dating back 12,000 years shows evidence of her being some form of shamanic practitioner (Grosman, Munro & Belfer-Cohen 2008). In the article, they discuss how disabled people were often believed to have magical or healing powers. Most recently, a shamanic pouch was discovered, and biological traces showed the presence of psychoactive substances in a 1000-year-old ritual bundle (Miller et al. 2019).

Shamanism

With *shamanism*, I mean a religious, spiritual, or methodological practice in which the “shaman” is the specialist. The shamanic cosmology is comprised of multiple (normally unseen) worlds which are inhabited by various spirits (Backman & Hultkrantz cited in DuBois 2009: 41) or deities. It is believed that shamanism is an ancient religious practice dating back to hunter-gathering cultures of the Upper Paleolithic period¹⁷ (Eliade 1998:35, Furst 1976:4, La Barre 1972:161, Sidky 2010:69). European explorers came to South America some 500 years ago, where they encountered people who claimed to communicate with spirits. In the 17th century when Russians began colonizing Siberia, they met people claiming the same and the term was first used. The Russian explorers had heard and recorded the word *Schaman* (or *Šaman* [Eliade 1998:30]) among Tungusian tribes when referring to their religious leader (Laufer 1917:361, Narby & Huxley 2004:1). Over the next hundreds of years, scholars encountered “shamans” in North and South America, Northern Europe, the Arctic region, southeast Asia, Australia, and Oceania, (Guo & Liang 2015:48). There are also early records of practitioners of various kind that can be described as shamans. A Latin text from 1178 and 1220, *Historia Norwegia*, is the earliest account of Saami religious ritual which clearly has shamanic details (DuBois 2009:13). Encounters from the thirteenth century in Greenland by Icelandic pagan settlers in the *Erik’s saga* also reveal shamanic details. The Viking age’s

¹⁷ From 40,000 to 11,500 BP (Britannica 2019).

Seiðr can also be seen as a shaman as they were practitioners of magic and in communication with the supernatural (DuBois 2009:32). Thus, shaman is a generic term that denotes the practitioners of shamanism.

The term “shaman” means a specialist in communicating with the spiritual world and today it functions as an umbrella term for all the different roles of shamanic practitioners in the world. The shamanic world view often describes a separation of the world of spirits and the world of the material or tangible. To connect to the supernatural or spirit world the shaman must be a practitioner of alternate states of consciousness (trance, SSC, non-local consciousness). To do so he/she practices certain methods of obtaining ASC such as drumming, chanting, movement, fasting or ingestion of a substance (most likely a plant teacher). As such, the shaman is an expert in traveling between realms of existence by safely leaving his body (Eliade 1998:183) and does so through practices of ecstasy (Eliade 1998:31). The purpose of the shaman may vary from community to community but the communication with spirits is the most important element, and he/she does so on the behalf of the community or an individual of that community. The reason for communication is to perform a variety of social roles that can affect the political or social order, he/she may heal or harm, predict futuristic events or ask for protection or blessings from spirits in aiding the community’s hunt or other activities (Pullock 2019).

“Shaman” is mostly an academic term and is used in popular media. It is used to describe a person with aforementioned abilities. The names for such a practitioner in their designated community varies substantially; *vegetalista* (mestizo shaman), *pajé* (master caboclo shaman), *curandeiro* (healer), *ayahuasqueros* or *noaidis* (Saami). It seems that the names, through “entheogen tourism”¹⁸, has reached other communities and westerners may be called shamans as well. One of my informants, Paula, is an *ayahuasquera*. She distributes *ayahuasca* to people during ceremonies and is expected to “hold space”, i.e., keep a safe space for the participants.

A view on health

In earlier societies and within nature religions that were widespread before the Christianization of Europe and the medical revolution, we can identify many shamanic

¹⁸ Tourism for entheogenic experience or merchandise.

practices or world views such as communication with nature and spirits. With colonization, the conversion of religious beliefs followed. During the Christianization of Europe, the Inquisition was formed, an institution created to hunt down and punish heresy (DuBois 2009:16) People accused of using magic were hanged and burned. These practitioners were often people with knowledge of the flora, they were healers, herbalists or even doctors that were accused of practicing black magic or satanism. When the colonial powers set out to conquer the world some of these practices disappeared, like the Druids or Seiðr, because of the dominating power of the conquerors. Shamanic practitioners were seen as “enemies of rationalism and truth” through the eighteenth century (DuBois 2009:21).

This discrimination can be seen today where indigenous people still have to defend themselves from exploitation and annihilation. Indigenous organizations¹⁹ are not only trying to preserve their cultural identity but also the land on which they live. The rainforest has been talked of as “the world’s lungs” and provide a good portion of the oxygen we breathe²⁰. Unfortunately, the fires in the Amazon rainforest rage each year and along with the development of trans Amazonian highways and logging, this posits a serious threat for the world’s population of humans and animals.

Shamanic practice is a practice of knowledge and connection where the knowledge is distributed from spirits of nature and from the unseen worlds into this one. The ayahuasca drinking people across the world do not belong to one social, demographic, economic or geographical sphere. The culture of people using ayahuasca can vary substantially as they are from all over the world and from many social classes and environments. I would suggest, however, that by using ayahuasca in ritual setting (excluding recreational or solo usage) one is likely to get an insight into the Amazonian and archaic way of looking at health and illness. The Amazonian use of ayahuasca is varied in its ritual construct but shamans use similar tactics to either heal or hurt.

Dr. Michael Harner was a well-known social anthropologist studying shamanic practice and was the first anthropologist who ever told in depth of his personal visions during

¹⁹ See organizations such as Cultural Survival, Survival International, Minority Rights, Amazon Watch, CWIS, IWGIA.

²⁰ The ocean being the number one provider, estimated to be between 50-80 percent (National Ocean Service, n.d.).

intoxication (Narby 1998:53). He worked with shamans in South America and recognizes core methods of shamans worldwide, regarding shamanism as a “methodology, not a religion” and as such, it can be practiced by people of any religion or background (Horrigan 1997). He established the Foundation of Shamanic Studies to introduce the West to shamanic practices and coined the trance of the shaman as Shamanic State of Consciousness (SSC) (Horrigan 1997). Harner explained how the shamans among the Jivaro Indians of the Ecuadorian Amazon are sorted into two categories of shamans: bewitching and curing. Both kinds use hallucinogenic drinks called *natema* (ayahuasca) in order to enter the supernatural world which is considered by the Jivaro to be the real behind the seen “illusion” of the material world (Harner 1968:28). The difference between the two shamans is mainly the use of their powers. The bewitcher uses different techniques and call on spirit helpers called *tsesenak* by whistling or singing to bewitch someone to cause illness or even death. The bewitcher sends *tsesenak* or “darts” to the person in question and this is believed to be the main cause of illness or death in daily life (Harner 1968:29). The curing shamans of the Jivaro are complementary to the bewitcher as the curing shamans first mission when called is to assess if an illness is caused by witchcraft or not (Harner 1968:32). To do that, he ingests *natema* in order to see into the body of the patient to determine the cause of illness. After ingestion he sings so he might receive help from the spirit helpers, *tsesenak*, the same beings used by a bewitching shaman to cause illness. The curing shaman must identify the “dart” and use a replacer to suck out the magic from the patient. The replica must be identical so it can harness the magic of the *tsesenak* used to bewitch (Harner 1968:28-33). The notion of being bewitched is also apparent in the community Marlene Dobkin de Rios investigated in Peru where illness and disease, if unable to be treated with common medicine, are regarded as either being caused by magic or supernatural entities (Dobkin de Rios 1972:7). In the ceremonies described by Dobkin de Rios, the shaman assesses the cause of illness through his visions after ingesting ayahuasca, sometimes alone but most often in groups with patients ranging from four to thirty people (Dobkin de Rios 1972:69). During the session, each person is helped by the *maestro*, as he is called (Dobkin de Rios 1972:68), in various ways, like sucking on a painful area often bringing forth a spine or thistle, believed to have been magically injected by an enemy or evil spirit (Dobkin de Rios 1972:72).

Luis Eduardo Luna investigated the ayahuasca using shamans among mestizo population in the Peruvian Amazon. The *vegetalistas* receives their knowledge from the plant spirits of the unseen world. He mentioned that due to the acculturation inflicted through

colonization, shamanic practice has been reduced from functioning as a spokesman for the community to the unseen worlds regarding everything from political and social topics to now be mostly for healing (Luna 1986:32). The shamanic function was thus bounded to health, politics, and sociality, and thereby to morals and over all well-being. The shamanic world is a world where the unseen and the seen is complementary to each other. To know more of the usage of entheogens (*hallucinogens*) in South America, see the tables at page 38-42 in Dobkin de Rios' *Visionary Vine* (1972).

Turning back to the shamanic world view, by looking at the shaman's function, it is possible to establish that health, well-being, and morality have deep connections to the spirit world which again have connections to nature. In the Amazon, the knowledge that is provided through connection to the "unseen", the plant teachers and the spirits renders an outlook that can be compared to the outlook in archaic societies. Accordingly, one can speculate, that this world view is not only Amazonian but universally archaic as practices resembling shamanic are found in all corners of the world and across time. There is a constant exchange of information between modern communities that rely on shamanic practices but are not necessarily defined by them. Rather they are re-invented in accordance with modernization and the "modern woman/man" as individually accountable for her/his own fate. In Santo Daime and other new age religions and practices there seems to be a mixing of archaic beliefs on health, wellbeing, and morals with the modern western individualized outlook on life. The view on health is undoubtedly connected to the view of morals and "ways of acting in the world". As Schmidt calls her book *Morality as Practice*²¹ (2007), it is the ayahuasca practice that renders this morality. The modern woman/man can then, through her/his actions as a morally justified being, assess and regulate her/his health according to that moral belief.

Human health in the Amazonian view²² has connections to the globe's health, meaning the health of nature. This can be seen in many shamanic practices and especially in ayahuasca practices, as I hope to show throughout the text. The people operating in these systems have a connection to the earth that overrides the societal structures defining their practice as "illegal" and/or "wrong". As the western outlook on health has little to do with the "unseen", people

²¹ Full title is *Morality as Practice: The Santo Daime, an Eco-Religious Movement in the Amazonina Rainforest*

²² Keep in mind that this is a wide generalization and does not portray the differences that are present in the Amazon.

operating in another world view naturally feel excluded or distant from the society they are living in. I believe this is one of the reasons laws and legislations are being ignored by many practitioners, their practices are in accordance with their world view and thus are “true” in their eyes. This is an important point that affects the conversation around legislation and jurisprudence. Differences in world view seems to be one of the main points that drives the separation in these conversations. Knowing more about the differences becomes important and can offer a way of communicating and understanding. Thus, the anthropologist as a method is a valid method of gaining insight into this issue, as she immerses herself in the world view of another.

Ending remarks

Ayahuasca diaspora is a term that is used to talk about people and cultures using ayahuasca around the world. In this diaspora, changa (aussiewaska) and yopo are also considered as ayahuasca. Changa was regularly used during the Norwegian weekend and the effects and use of it has much potential for both therapeutic and ceremonial use (The Wizard, personal communication, May 30th, 2021). I have explained what a shaman is: a generic term for a religious or spiritual leader of a community or a group that communicates with the supernatural, the unseen and the spiritual world. Nature religions and shamanic practices have existed in all the world’s continents throughout time and the shamanic world view or outlook shares many traits with archaic societies. I have not gone into extensive detail here, but I present an observation. The practices are wildly diversified but what is common is that the shaman is a mediator between the spirit world and the material world. Health in the Amazon then resembles ancient religious and spiritual world views where health and morals are bound up to nature and to the spirit world. As such, it seems like “the shamanic world view” is native to all humans but in different forms, and I suspect this has something to do with its popularity and acceptance. The term *neo-shamanism* “is a set of discourses and practices involving the integration of indigenous (especially American) shamanic and psychotherapeutic techniques by people from urban, Western contexts” (Scuro & Rodd 2015:1). I would argue that this is a usable term to describe the dispersion of shamanic practices in the West as the expertise of the shaman in tribal context is often different to that of Western practitioners. The expertise, as we have gone through in this chapter, involves skills in not only communicating with the unseen world, but also interpreting the symbolic messages that comes through and acting accordingly. It takes time to learn and often the

shaman apprentice must go through trials that expand over longer periods of time before completion, much akin to an education. To become a shaman is often not an individual choice but rather he/she is the successor or chosen by the spirits or by a master shaman (DuBois 2009:56-81, Eliade 1998:30-40). The western guides I talked to in Norway had not gone through an apprenticeship that characterizes shamanic practice all over the world (Eliade 1998:80-91). Although, both facilitators had encounters with ayahuasca, one where he was approach under influence and the other was told by two of his mentors that “the mother was preparing him.” The dispersion of ayahuasca is connected to the growth of the ayahuasca religions as well as the rise in entheogen tourism.

Chapter four: Development of the usage and dispersion of ayahuasca in Brazil and abroad

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe some aspects that have impacted the emergent of Santo Daime and the development of the ayahuasca diaspora. By looking at the history of Brazil which has been part in forming the social and cultural landscape in the Amazonian area, we can get a better understanding of the emergent of Santo Daime and the dispersion of ayahuasca practices. I will discuss the origin of Santo Daime and two of its most prominent and influential figures.

History

Archeological findings suggest that Brazil has been inhabited since 9000 BC, but it was “discovered” in 1500 by Pedro Álvares Cabral. The first establishment of government was set in motion in 1533 but since the land was claimed, there have been many attempts by other European colonies to overthrow the Portuguese. As the area is so immense it was difficult for the Portuguese to remain in power. Upon conquest, the indigenous people were exploited as labor force but since the 16th century when slave trade begun in Brazil, slaves became additions to the workforce (Schneider et al. 2021). When slavery was abolished in 1850's, more than three and a half million slaves had been sequestered, more than in any other country in the world (Curtin cited in Sheriff 2001:13). Even though this was the case, the history is entrenched with the lack of labor force which pressured the slaves, landowners, indigenous people, and migrants.

Brazil, with its 3 million square miles, covers almost half of South America (Skidmore & Smith 2005:199) (see figure 3 on page 41). Though it had its independence from Portugal in 1822, tension was still present as the leader, which was a monarch at the time, was descendent of the monarch in Portugal. Independence took place rather peacefully and as opposed to other South American countries that had been divided after independence, Brazil also retained its vast area (Skidmore & Smith 2005:139). The era of the monarchy (which lasted until 1889) was a time of change, especially regarding the large population of slaves. Though the slave trade effectively ended in 1850, legislation on the rights of slaves took much longer. The Abolitionists became the nation's first national political movement working to

free the slaves of Brazil. In 1871 the first law was introduced, ruling that all children henceforth birthed by slave mothers would be regarded as free with the addition that landowners had the option to reserve labor rights until the child's 21st birthday. A decade later, a new law passed, according to which all slaves above 60 years of age would be free with no compensation. After the Paraguayan war which lasted from 1864-1870, where Brazil was victorious, many slaves had been set free for their dedication in the war. The number of slaves in the military was large and in 1888, the military refused the governmental request for the capture of slaves that fled from captivity. This amplified the abolitionists' agenda and in 1889, the "Golden Law" was passed: henceforth all slaves were free with no compensation (Skidmore & Smith 2005:144-146).

Due to the turbulence in- and outside the nation, export changes were occurring resulting in cycles, producing pockets of prosperity and decline for several industries. Sugar was the first large export, then rubber, then coffee. The discovery of vulcanization was vital for the rubber industry to boom in 20th century, making the rubber sustain both heat and cold. The golden era of the rubber boom lasted from 1900-1913, making up one third of the nation's export (Skidmore & Smith 2005:147). The sugar and coffee industries along with their plantations had great impact on the Amazonian area. The additional African population and the rubber boom had great impact on the cultural and religious landscape in Brazil.

The Amazon

The Amazonian rainforest stretches its branches through most of northern South America, being a part of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana (France), Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela. The population of the Amazon is poorly quantified, and the information seems to vary from website to website. For example, stated on IWGIA's website that 896 917 indigenous from 305 ethnic groups live in Brazil (IWGIA n.d.) and according to the Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), the estimate population is around 30 million people, of which 9 percent (2,7 million) are indigenous from over 350 different ethnic groups in 9 nationalities (World Wildlife Fund n.d.). As most of the Amazon is in Brazil it seems likely that most of the tribes reside here (see figure 3 on the next page).



Figure 3. Scope of the Amazon. Photo by WWF (World Wildlife Fund, n.d.).

The deforestation and destruction of the rainforest have naturally become a core issue for its many inhabitants. Their livelihood and quality of life is ruled by the rainforest, which is a harsh environment in itself. When deforestation occurs, it puts indigenous and people living in the Amazon at risk for losing their livelihood and quality of life. The anthropologist's interest in the Amazon has been highly focused on the indigenous, but throughout the 80s, scholars took upon themselves to challenge this view by doing research on other groups in the area (Parker 1985:xviii).

Research in Amazon area

Anthropological knowledge developed through the interest in the “exotic” and “primitive” as opposed to the “known” and “civilized”. This led (Western) anthropologists to the most “distant” places in the world, staying with people who spoke different languages and lived entirely different lives than the anthropologist. As the years have passed in the 20th century, anthropology has evolved to encompass the culture, relations, and practices of practically the whole world. Earlier in the century the study on the Amazonian people were defined by the study of indigenous groups (Parker 1985:xviii). Today however, the Amazon population, as mentioned above, is only 9 percent indigenous. This means that today’s Amazonian is more often than not, non-indigenous. The non-indigenous in rural Amazonia are mainly the *caboclos*.

Early in the 18th century, *caboclo* originally described the Amerindians, the indigenous people of the Amazon that had been forcefully removed from their land and tribe to live as laborers in missionary communities. They learned a new language, adopted the Catholic faith and symbolism and as their former socio-cultural identity dissolved, a new form of identity emerged. They became *caboclo*. As the Europeans were mostly male, the government encouraged intermarriages between Europeans and indigenous women. Their children became known as *caboclo* as well (Parker 1985:xx-xxi). The *Caboclo* are the Portuguese-speaking Amazonian peasants (Parker 1985:vii). The *caboclos* stem from the disenfranchised Amerindians where part of the indigenous culture and knowledge is based on their strong connection to the forest with knowledge of the flora and fauna.

Due to the rubber boom, which started slowly in the late 19th century and lasted well up to 1920, people from the northeast migrated due to drought and in search for work, and the term *caboclo* encompassed people of African descent as well. People of African descent had to, as did other migrants, adopt the ways of the *caboclo* with skills of the flora and fauna, as well as fishing and hunting expertise to survive in the harsh natural environment that is the Amazon. The *Caboclo* culture is a blend of different people’s cultures and practices. The actual composition of the blend depends on the place and what the cultural emphasis is in the area. For example, the access to churches and chapels heightens the Catholic symbolism while other more isolated communities can place more emphasis on plant spirits and other local knowledge (Schmidt 2007:101). The African influence, however, is largely restricted to the northern part of the region as it was here the people of African descent migrated for work

(Parker 1985:xx, xxii-xxiii). Generally, caboclo people have low socio-economic status, often living by the river's edge where they fish, hunt, and do small-scale agriculture (Parker 1985: xliv). While *mestizo* is a Spanish term and refers to mixed-race people, caboclo is exclusively referred to the rural inhabitants of the Amazonian rainforest²³ or people living in urban areas for periods of time because of work such as mining (Parker 1985:xiii).

Caboclo Identity

What does it mean to be a caboclo? This question has many answers, depending both on the person responding and the context of the question. In the absence of any precise definition, one can say that caboclo mainly signifies people of mixed descent in rural landscape. People of a higher socioeconomic status than the average caboclo, often refer to them as poor and less educated. Which often is true in the matter of material goods and school education (Pace 1997:82). This is an outsider view. The insider view is often more varied and some caboclo themselves tend to flow between definitions or many do not identify as caboclo at all. A part of this has to do with the stigmatization in certain areas. In some places the caboclo is associated with crime and laziness (Pace 1997:82), but elsewhere the caboclo are seen as a people who hold great wisdom of the forest (Schmidt 2007:117). The people who identify as such do, in some cases, discard the identity and at other times chose to acquire it (Schmidt 2007:119). This is the case of the Santo Daime church and the eco-village Céu do Mapiá situated deep in the forest in Mapiá in northern Amazon. As the people gathering here are often from different villages and cities, it can affect their outlook on what a caboclo is. The elders of the community often say it proudly, connecting it to knowledge of the forest and hard work. Younger people from surrounding villages can say something else as their villages are often quite poor and their living conditions rough – which they again relate to the caboclo identity (Schmidt 2007:114-117). It can vary due to people they talk to, where they live or personal experiences. It is also important to note that the caboclo identity is often used by others to describe someone else or by scholars academically describing a group of people. Caboclo then, is a culture, an identity, and an ethnic category.

²³ Although some upper-class members of urban areas talk of poorer urban people as “caboclos” (Lima-Ayres 1992:23).

Religious, social, and environmental movements

The Brazilian religious field is varied both in structure and composition, but also highly impacted by historical culture and practices from different areas. The various religions are therefore not clearly distinguished from one another but rather creatively make use of each other's content. The mixing of race and culture has made the religious arena in Brazil a re-inventing and re-making of religions which has been a positive source of social change and a way to deepen democracy in Brazil. In this sense, a religious movement is often seen equally as a social movement challenging political power structures within the nation (Schmidt 2007:33). Titti Kristina Schmidt characterizes Santo Daime, among other movements, as a religion that “creatively borrows from other religious traditions (Schmidt 2007:36).” This correlates with the evolution of the peoples of Brazil as the blending of cultural and religious practices are apparent throughout its known history and is still seen in the collective landscape today.

Viewed as a social movement, religion was often a way for people of lower socioeconomic status or people facing difficulties due to the regime and the political agendas of various parties, to practice autonomy and foster a feeling of identity (Schmidt 2007:36). As the indigenous, the slaves and subsequently the caboclos were often exploited and threatened by landowners, the development of religious and spiritual practices became a source of stability and belonging. This resulted in numerous new religions emerging in Brazil where many were influenced by millenarianism²⁴.

The new religious groups in Brazil seen in the light of Brazil's history suddenly fit perfectly into a wide and diverse religious and social landscape. Though the practices at first glance can seem unique and peculiar, patterns of evolution of the earlier culture of the region are apparent, as are incorporated practices from migrants. The Santo Daime, among other religious movements, involve a care for the environment, specifically the vast Amazonian rainforest. This makes sense as their livelihood and spirituality are directly connected to the forest. The Santo Daime is thus not only a religious and social movement, but also an environmental movement, called by Schmidt an “Eco-religious movement in the Amazonian rainforest” and on their website called “the doctrine of the forest”²⁵. This can be

²⁴ More on millenarianism on page 55-57.

²⁵ In Portuguese “Doutrina de Floresta” (Santo Daime a, n.d.).

seen in the efforts of the Santo Daime communities where organizations and groups work towards sustainability and harmonious relationship with nature.

Origins of Santo Daime

Santo Daime is an eclectic religion that originated in the city of Rio Branco in the Amazonian state Acre in northern Brazil. A man named Reimundo Irineu Serra founded the religion in the 1930's after several encounters with ayahuasca. He was a descendant of slaves, raised Roman Catholic and in poverty. He left his home village Sao Vicente de Férrer, migrated to the north-eastern state of Maranhão to seek work as a rubber tapper in Acre, where he arrived in 1912 (Labate, MacRae & Goulart 2010:2). The promise of a better life as a rubber tapper was dimmed as he saw that the rubber tappers were exploited, and the industry suffered as cheaper labor was found in the British colony in Malaya. This resulted in an economic collapse in the region. During the next few years, he worked as a commander in the Territorial Guard (Cemin 2010:39). He was mainly spending time with caboclos, mestizos and indigenous people where he first was introduced to ayahuasca (Labate et al. 2010:2). He took part in ceremonies drinking ayahuasca, learned how to make it as well as different healing techniques (Eggen 2010:55). The first time he drank ayahuasca was on the Amazon frontier of Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru in 1914. He initially saw the brew as the devil's work but after trying it several times, he was convinced that the "tea" was a tool to connect with God.

Once drinking the brew, he looked at the moon and saw a beautiful woman who presented herself as Clara and Rahina de Floresta (Forest Queen). She asked Irineu to sing, but he hesitated as he said he was no good at it, but she insisted. He sang and received the first hymn of the doctrine; "Lua Branca"²⁶ (The White Moon). She then told him to go into the forest alone with the brew, fasting for 7 days. During the seven days he encountered the Forest Queen several times, this time presented as the Virgin Mary. He received messages telling him to create a doctrine with the sacrament ayahuasca at the center. He received hymns as the doctrine's guiding principle which is today the only written text in the religion. The Virgin Mary gave him the hymns and the hammer that is used to shred the Jagube liana during feitió. And after he managed the trials and fasting, she granted him one wish. His wish was that he would obtain the power to heal, and he requested her to put all her healing powers into

²⁶ See appendix.

the brew, which she granted. As he cared deeply for his country, he also wanted to know that the brew would be helpful to Brazil as a whole and was willing to give up the calling if this was not the case. Virgin Mary assured him that this was the salvation of the country. During the last days he heard a hymn singing “Dai-me forca, dai-me luz, dai-me amor” meaning “give me power, give me light, give me love”. The name of the religion thus became Santo Daime which means “give me the holy” (Eggen 2010: 53-56). The Forest Queen gave him the title of “Chefe Império Juramidam”, believed to be a powerful spiritual entity (Goulart cited in Blainey 2013:178) and refers collectively to all the members of the Santo Daime “family” (Schmidt 2007:88). Edward MacRae explains:

“Work in the astral plane is conceived of as a war or a battle against weakness, impurity, doubt or illness. The daimistas are the soldiers or ‘midam’, who alongside Jura (God) make up the Juramidam Empire, a source of strength for the obedient, the humble and the clean of heart. Thus, Juramidam means God or God and his soldiers, a notion of the divine which is both individualistic and collective.” (1992:55)

Irineu was believed to be the reincarnation of Jesus, of which the second arm of the Caravacca cross represents (Dawson 2013a:77). The light of Jesus and Juramidam lives in the daime and has returned to earth as a tool for humanity to connect with God (Eggen 2010:26, 56). The first official rituals were conducted in houses of disciples in 1931, though they looked much different than they do today. During *provas*²⁷ (trials), Irineu and a few others received hymns that told of the doctrine’s beliefs. In 1945, Irineu and his community built a church in Acre, establishing the community of Alto Santo. Santo Daime was formally established in 1945, gaining government recognition in 1971, the year Irineu passed (Labate et al. 2017:6).

In 1946 there was a dispute during a ceremony and Irineu refused to hold any for two years. During this time, he received and developed the strict and structured form of the ceremonies at present, excluding any other psychotropic agents such as alcohol or marijuana. The founding members were mostly rubber tappers and/or people of low economic status who joined as a form of resistance to their situation in the country, to have a community or to heal themselves, as medical doctors were too expensive. As the doctrine is mostly orally communicated and only the hymns are written down, illiterates could join without problems (Eggen 2010:52, Labate, Assis & Cavnar 2017:104). On a journey to see his hometown in

²⁷ What the founding members called the ceremonies (Dawson 2013a: 65).

1957, Irineu was on a boat ride for three days drinking daime where he received the information about the uniform: *farda branca* (white uniform). This was one of the final piece of the ceremony. In 1970, five years after he last received a hymn, he received thirteen hymns called “Hinarios Novos” or “O Cruzeiroinho” which are seen as a synthesis of the whole doctrine (Eggen 2010:12).

Throughout several decades Irineu developed the rigorous structure of the ceremonies and to this day it has not changed much. Before he died, he passed the leadership over to Leoncio Gomes saying:

“I will for always stay in the command of this work, I am the president. I am going to a spiritual plane to help. You do not have permission to change anything in this doctrine, the doctrine is ready. You will greet everyone who comes here and show them the doctrine. You do not offer daime to anyone, but never [deny] it. And I will be there to help (retold).” (Eggen 2010:62)

This statement is part of why there has not been any other master since Irineu and the crucial injunction that all churches of Santo Daime should keep: never to offer the daime to anyone, as it can be dangerous for those who are not ready (Eggen 2010:6, 35, 77). Over the next decades, several churches were established in Acre and Alto Santo. After a division due to disagreement on leadership and the ritual repertoire, the Santo Daime was comprised of two main groups. One group remaining in Alto Santo with the new appointed leader by Mestre Irineu, Gomes, and the other group followed Padrinho Sebastião into the forest. This represents two very different directions in Santo Daime.

One doctrine, two branches

Santo Daime can be seen as an umbrella term for many organizations and churches that follow the doctrine of Santo Daime and Mestre Irineu’s teachings. There are the two main branches within. The first being a number of smaller groups, mostly restricted to the state of Acre in Brazil, and collectively known as “Alto Santo” or the “Alto Santo line” (Dawson 2013a:19). As mentioned, Alto Santo was founded by Mestre Irineu and is called *Centro de Iluminação Cristã Luz Universal* (The Universal Light Center of Christian Illumination), or CICLU, which today is led by Madrinha (godmother) Peregrina Gomes Serra, Mestre Irineu’s widow. The second, and largest branch, is *Centro Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal Raimundo Irineu Serra* (The Raimundo Irineu Serra Eclectic Center of the Flowing Universal

Light) or CEFLURIS which was founded by one of Irineu's disciples, Padrinho (godfather) Sebastião, Sebastião Mota de Melo. This center is much larger than CICLU and stretches internationally to which most, if not all, churches founded outside of Brazil are connected. In 1998 CEFLURIS changed its name to *Igreja do Culto Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal* (Church of the Eclectic Worship of the Fluent Universal Light) or ICEFLU and has members all over the world (Labate & Assis 2017:59, 66).

Padrinho Sebastião

Sebastião is said to have seen spirits at the age of eight. He was trained by Oswaldo, a Kardec (kardecism as explained in the next chapter) medium who trained him to use his powers for healing. From a young age Sebastião was practicing as the village healer as the poor rarely had money to go to the doctor (Alverga 1999:4). Padrinho himself sought out Irineu in the hopes of being cured from an illness which no one could seem to heal (Alverga 1999:72). Alex Polari de Alverga, a Padrinho of Céu do Montanha in Brazil wrote a book about his meeting with Padrinho before his death in 1990. This excerpt is from when Padrinho Sebastião tells of the first time he drank daime:

“I drank the Daime, went to my corner, and sat. After some time, things began to happen, and I became fearful. I got up to leave very quietly because everyone was silent. I started to leave on tiptoe and as I passed by the place where people drink the sacrament, the Daime enveloped me in an awful smell. It made me go quickly back to my place. As I arrived at the bench, I heard a voice saying, ‘The Mestre asked if you are a man, and up to now the only thing you have done is moan.’ Then my old body hit the floor and there it stayed. I was outside my body looking at that old junk that was me. All of a sudden, I saw two men who were the most beautiful beings I had ever seen in my life. They were resplendent, like fire! They began to take out my whole skeleton from within my living flesh without hurting anything. As they worked, they vibrated everything from side to side, and I, on the other side, was watching all they were doing. Next, they took out my organs. One of them held my guts in his hands. Together they used a hook that opened, separated, and extracted from my guts three nail-sized insects, which were responsible for what I felt walking up and down inside me. Then the one who had been seated next to my prostrate body, which was still stretched out on the floor, came very close to me and said, ‘Here it is! What was killing you were these three insects, but now

you will not die from them anymore.’ Then they closed my body. Do you see any scars? There are none. Thank God I healed, like a child.” (Alverga 1999:76-77)

It is not rare that participants get physical pains and contractions during ceremonies, but it is believed that they are fighting the darkness in themselves and/or certain spirits. The way to handle such *miracão*²⁸, according to the daimistas, is to go through it with discipline and firmness (Dawson 2013a:65).

While Padrinho Sebastião’s engagement with Alto Santo and Irineu grew after this initial meeting with the doctrine, he started to receive hymns of his own and became a close friend to *Mestre* Irineu. Irineu encouraged him to keep working with the daime and soon Sebastião was holding his own ceremonies at a center called Colônia Cinco Mil, not far from Alto Santo (Dawson 2013a:24). After some time, as the community grew, Sebastião wanted to make daime in the community and with permission he started conducting *feitios*, supplementing half of the daime to Alto Santo. As I noted above, disputes occurred after Irineu’s death and the split was colored by the fact that Sebastião was largely influenced by Kardecism and Umbanda, whereas Alto Santo was not (Labate & Assis 2017:59-60). The dispute also concerned the use of marijuana in ritual contexts, as Alto Santo was very strict about only using daime while Sebastião believed and had received visions stating that cannabis was the embodiment of Santa Maria (Holy Mary) and could be used in both ritual and everyday life (Dawson 2013a:57-59). The centers attracted both political and media attention, and especially Colônia Cinco Mil, for its use of daime as well as cannabis. The laws in Brazil concerning daime were ambiguous, but cannabis was strictly illegal and still is today. For the daimistas however, the usage of cannabis is largely allowed both in ritual settings and in daily life as long as it is somewhat hidden. This is mainly in the churches that receive non-members. In Céu de Estrela, I witnessed marijuana being smoked daily. Some days I could only smell something and other times it was part of a ritual. Never inside the church or in the ceremony but as a part of the *feitio*, of which it was a big element (see Chapter six).

²⁸ “The “*miracão*” is a term that was coined in the Santo Daime tradition by Mestre Irineu to designate the visionary state that the drink produces. The verb “to look” corresponds to look, to contemplate. From it derives the noun “*mirante*”, which is a high and isolated place where you can see a vast landscape. The word “*miracão*” unites contemplation plus action (aim+action) [...] (Santo Daime d. n.d.).”

After some struggling years, Sebastião and his group settled and raised the church Céu do Mapiá deep in the forest of Igarapé Mapiá close to the Peruvian border. He had visions of a “new Jerusalem” and focused on building a sustainable village in the forest where he could welcome people who came there on pilgrimage or to settle. The religion is sought after, not only for spiritual enlightenment, but also for physical healing.

Legal status

The centers and churches were often portrayed as “drug-cults” in the media and many people were concerned if the daimistas were a danger to themselves and/or others. The police came several times to Sebastião’s communities. They burned their crops of cannabis plants more than once and several allegations were made towards the community and ayahuasca religions in general, ending in the ban of the Jagube vine in 1985 (Labate et al. 2010:5). The Conselho Federal de Entorpecentes (Federal Narcotics Board) or CONFEN assembled a multidisciplinary team that would do in depth fieldwork in Santo Daime and UDV communities to investigate the ritual use of ayahuasca to assess the allegations. CONFEN’s findings stated that the communities and people in them were disciplined and hardworking, at no risk to themselves or others and certainly not a drug cult, more so a devoted religious practice (Silva Sà 2010:171). The results lifted the ban on the vine and most importantly made way for new laws and restrictions surrounding the ritual use of ayahuasca. This was once again challenged a few years later, upon which the council again conducted a fieldwork resulting in the same findings and legalized ayahuasca in 1986 (Silva Sà 2010:175). Marijuana is still illegal in Brazil, though it is consumed by many daimistas today.

Ending remarks

The wide and colorful cultural and religious scene in Brazil along with its dark history of exploitation of certain peoples have rendered a diverse cultural and religious landscape. The turbulence inside the nation has led the re-invention of religions and cultures. The Santo Daime seems to have gone full circle (Labate & Assis 2017:70-71). It has gone from the forest to civilization with Mestre Irineu who “civilized” the brew and the practices around it. He turned the shamanic whistling into catholic Holy Mary inspired hymns (Eggen 2010:53), which were received from the astral, the real forces that affect the material plane. Through Padrinho Sebastião, the doctrine went out to the urban middle-class while at the same time returning into the depths of the forest. It reached far beyond the Amazon and is today both an

Chapter four: Development of the usage and dispersion of ayahuasca in Brazil and abroad

Urban and a forest religion. Today the Santo Daime diaspora is present in all the continents in 43 countries, 22 of those in Europe (Labate & Assis 2017:66).

Chapter five: Santo Daime Cosmology, belief, and world view

Introduction

Grasping the cosmology of the Santo Daime religion is not an easy task. As I mentioned in earlier chapters regarding the caboclo culture, the beliefs and focus of the religion seems to change according to the demographic and the cultural heritage of each community. It seems that each place shares many traits, among them the ritual setup, but also put emphasis on different aspects of the religion, like spirits or catholic figures. Dawson (2013a) goes at length to describe how the new middle class is re-shaping and re-inventing the ritual repertoire of the doctrine. He shows how the apolitical character of daimistas have changed as the largest bulk of their members today are from the “new middle-class”.

O mundo de ilusão

The main point made by Mestre Irineu is that we all live in the world of illusion: O mundo de ilusão. By this he meant that the material world we all can see and live in is an illusion as opposed to the astral and spiritual which is the real (Schmidt 2007:122, Eggen 2010:57). The purpose of the “battalions” (the groupings inside churches in ritual) is to convert lower energy to higher frequency energy, this allegedly happens during ceremonies and rituals (Cemin 2010:40). Spirits are the main aspect of converting this energy, though some places do not express the power of spirits in the same way as the mother community (Céu do Mapiá). Through the daime, each participant, if able, can access the astral realm, connect with God and through the rigorous ritual set up, the goal is to manage to uphold the intense energetic current in the room (Dawson 2013a:64, 75). When the current is flowing, it is easier for everyone involved to convert spirits and energies – these can be synonyms for each other. In Céu do Mapiá, spirits attach themselves to people and can manifest in them as thoughts, feelings, or diseases. Spirits are in places and in natural forces; they are often called caboclos or are mother spirits of plants. The daimistas believe that we all hallucinate and that daime wakes you up from that illusion. This thought is prominent in indigenous cultures in the Amazon. Harner explains how the Jivaro see the material world as “a lie” or illusion as opposed to the supernatural forces that affects daily events, are real (Harner 1968:28).

Dawson shows how the daimista narrative and repertoire is a representation of how the daimistas show up in and use the world around them. Daimistas seem to “narrate an explicit suspicion of the world at large, the contemporary daimista paradigm does so by rhetorically distancing themselves rather than actually extracting its members from prevailing processes and constitutive dynamics of late modern society (Dawson 2013a:78)”. He calls this act “dislocution” rather than dis-location. Dislocution is formed by mixing dislocation and mislocution to capture Santo Daime’s locution of the world’s contents without fully excluding “the practical and symbolic possibilities made available by the prevailing socio-cultural context (Dawson 2013a:78). This shows how daimista narration of contemporary society does reconfigure, disturb, and unsettle “mainstream understandings of humankind and its relationship with the world at large (Dawson 2013a:79)”. This dislocution at the heart of daimista narration can be shown in how the daimistas talk of the world as “illusory” but still use the material goods it contains. “Albeit worthless, the things of this world are by no means useless (Dawson 2013a:79)”. One of his examples show how Bernard, a daimista, is critiquing the world as unreal and worthless but still takes use of it by buying the things he needs (Dawson 2013a:78).

The astral plane is where the daimistas can directly communicate, experience, and embody God. God is the creator of everything, the eternal father²⁹ (*Pai Eterno*) as it is often described in the hymns. After a shamanic ceremony in Brazil, I talked to one of my informants where I explained my visions during the ceremony. It was like zooming in a microscope where I would see massive geometrical patterns while I felt like it was all rushing past me, getting smaller and smaller. At one point I was seeing less and less before there was nothing but a white light surrounding me. Telling her this, she told me that this was God. I tried to grasp what she meant but we were interrupted. In a later video conversation, I asked her about what God was to her:

“I usually do not use the word [God] much. It is not a person but an energy that is everywhere. We are part of that energy. When I connect with myself, because I am a part of the universe, [and] the universe is God. I feel his presence. It’s like a big hug of love, security, everything is ok, don’t worry. You understand everything. When I feel this big hug, I feel very happy. This for me, is God. It’s in me, it’s in you.” (Informant, personal communication, May 18th, 2021)

²⁹ See appendix.

I believe that asking the daimistas to define what God is to them will give different answers, not necessarily meaning that the notion of God is very different, but the words used to explain it would probably vary substantially. “The creator god (traditionally, though decreasingly, termed ‘Father’) is a remote divinity who, though lauded in hymns³⁰ and prayers, remains otherwise disengaged from ritual activity” (Dawson 2013a:122).

The daimistas believe that what happens in the astral has a direct effect on what is materialized in the material world, just as the Jivaro do. The veil between two worlds is pruned by the energetic current and by the help of the spirit of ayahuasca through the daime. The daime has been explained as a “shortcut”, “tool” or “key” to access an altered state of consciousness (Schmidt 2007:124, Eggen 2010:25, 79, Blainey 2013:42, 58, 200 Labate et al. 2010:216). The astral plane consists of many worlds or realms and each daimista is challenged to master going in between them. It is a skill that the daimistas must learn to master as an “apprentice of ecstasy”. “Ecstasy” here is related to how Eliade explained that the shamanism was a technique of ecstasy (Eliade 1998:31). The time under influence can be seen as a liminal phase where the daimistas are between life and death, reality and illusion.

Introspection is highly valued, as a big part of the rituals is to learn about the self. The daimistas believe in an ego which is driving them in the material plane and considered “low” in energy. Through the astral they can connect to their “higher selves” to get directions in life. Blainey states that his informants “consistently refer to their ayahuasca rituals as a kind of ‘key’ technology that unlocks the solutions to psychological and existential problems in their lives” (Blainey 2015:295). Blainey explains the “gaze” of introspection by the term *suiscope* (Latin *sui-* [“oneself”] + Greek *-skopein* [“to look at”]). Allan Watts, Stanislav Grof and psychologist William A. Richards (cited in Blainey 2015:295) portrays entheogens as comparable to microscopes or telescopes “in that they are ‘tools’ to help one see otherwise inaccessible domains of existence”. Suiscope is the introspective equivalent to the telescope or microscope as it allows “the observing self to observe itself” (Blainey 2015:295).

Through the ritual construct and the *suiscope*, the daimistas can get insights into what is causing their troubles in the material world (by examining the astral). An illness can be resolved in the astral if it is caused by spirits. Such an instance can be resolved by taking measures in one’s own daily life or in “spiritual surgery” by “spiritual doctors” in the astral as Sebastião experienced in his first Santo Daime ceremony. According to Kardecism, spirits

³⁰ See appendix.

can either be benevolent or less benevolent, and they evolve from “imperfect to perfect by means of reincarnation (Dawson 2013a:22)”. The mission of the daimistas is to help the spirits that have latched on to them and converting their “low” energy to “higher” energetic states. This conversion is ideally the outcome and mediums are highly valued for their expertise in the spiritual. They can assist the daimistas through healing journeys, by telling them what the spirits wants (Schmidt 2007:138-140). The mediums use their body, mind, and spirit, their *aparelho* (tool) to get into contact with spirits (Schmidt 2007:139). In Céu do Mapiá it is believed that everyone has a mediumistic ability, but it can manifest through different expressions. A subtle form is a writing medium who passes messages from the astral through text (called *psicografer*), while a more expressive form is when people embody spirits (Schmidt 2007:139). Schmidt explains that “the best way to become aware of the constant interaction with the spirits is, according to the members, to drink daime (Schmidt 2007:136)”.

All the parts of the ceremony, which I will explain in the next chapter, contribute to the safe setting the doctrine tries to uphold. Therefore, it is important for the daimistas to stay firm (*firmeza*) and disciplined (*diciplina*) in the ceremonies. All participants have their own inner journey, but they must all be aware and respect the boundaries put in place so that each participant has space to follow the dance and song. If people manage to stay with the formation, then the spiritual energetic current of the space increases and the astral plane is more available for those involved (Dawson 2013a:64).

Apolitics of transformation

Dawson suggests that the apolitics of the daimistas has changed from a “community ethos” which he calls “apolitics of social transformation” to an “individualized focus” which is called “apolitics of self-transformation” (Dawson 2013a:80). The apolitics of social transformation is rooted in the millenarian thought which was historically prominent in Brazil’s popular religious imagery and repertoire. Millenarianism is identified by Norman Chon as ‘a particular type of salvation’, where the millenarian paradigm can be identified through its characterization of salvation as:

“(a) collective, in the sense that it is to be enjoyed by the faithful as a collectivity; (b) terrestrial, in the sense that it is to be realized on this earth and not in some other-worldly heaven; (c) imminent, in the sense that it is to come both soon and suddenly; (d) total, in the

sense that it is utterly to transform life on earth, so that the new dispensation will be no mere improvement on the present but perfection itself; (e) miraculous, in the sense that it is to be accomplished by, or with the help of, supernatural agencies.” (Chon 1970:15)

Brazilian millenarianism is characterized by messianic millenarianism where God or a savior is prompted to bring the “new world” and take the believers with him/her. This form of millenarianism in Brazil is characterized as apolitic in character because of the strategic impotence, as portrayed by an inability to strategize social transformation, and systematic marginalization that the Brazilian peasantry endured (Dawson 2013a:82-83). According to Robert Levine it is “likely that dozens or even hundreds of millenarian and messianic movements sprang up and died of their own accord over the centuries” (Levine 1992:218). As mentioned, the response from many peasants and people of lower socioeconomic status was to establish or take part in religious and social movements. The characteristics of Santo Daime is affected by this but as the religion grew, people from other socio-economic classes joined, which again affected the Santo Daime narrative from apolitics of social transformation to apolitics of self-transformation. We can gather from the historical recollection of millenarianism in Brazil paired with the foundational hymnal (collection of hymns), like “O Cruzeiro”, which clearly employs millenarian motifs, that situates the daimistas in a battle between supernatural forces of good and evil. Irineu was identified as the “Imperial Chief”, where a reckoning of “judgement” and “purification” was predicted. Paired with the strong communitarianism and internally organizational hierarchies showed by the battalions and the individuals’ position in them (Dawson 2013a:84-85), a division between the believers and the world or “illusion” is employed.

The millenarian motif and the apolitics were affected by the reality the members of early communities were facing. The millenarian motif has also been recognized in later hymns and can be seen in the historical context of which it had its source. For example, Goulart (2004) noticed an increase in millenarian motifs in the ICEFLU leader’s, Padrinho Sebastião, hymns after the divide from CICLU. This was in accordance with the displacement to the Amazon rainforest of the community he had founded. His hymns were interpreted as “signs” of a “prophecy” that would come to pass. He was seen as the reincarnation of Saint John the Baptist who would lead a “chosen people” to the “New Jerusalem”. His followers followed him to his community, Colônia Cinco Mil. But they would move the community to a third place before they settled the mother community, Céu do Mapiá, in the depths of the forest to become the “New Jerusalem”. The troubles along the way were colored by burdens

such as illness and landownership disputes. These “trials”, however, were understood as stages of “salvation”. The “chosen people” (the daimistas) were “prepared” by Padrinho Sebastião for the arrival of a “new time”. Goulart also states that “the new members were mostly from the middle classes of the most economically developed regions of the country, and a specific type of travelers, both Brazilian and foreign, that appeared at that time”. Travelers coming to Mapiá were often described as “wanderers” or “backpackers” and were related to the counterculture of the sixties and seventies. They were inspired by for example Castaneda’s book which was popular at the time, where he describes his relationship with “the man of knowledge”, Don Juan, and how they used “magic” and “power plants”. This sparked the curiosity of travelers for psychoactive plants which led many to Padrinho Sebastião’s community. It was because of his openness to travelers and other “power plants” that distinguished him from other Santo Daime leaders (Goulart 2004:85-86). This openness is a source of the eclectic formation ICEFLU has today.

The Astral realm

Included in the cosmology is the realm of the indigenous shaman, the plant spirits, and forces of nature. These plant spirits and forces are regularly mentioned in hymns or have hymns dedicated to them³¹. The cosmology of the Santo Daime is mainly conveyed through the hymns but in the late second half of the 20th century, hymns began to be written down (Labate & Assis 2017:62). Today hymns can vary from church to church as people in each place “receive” hymns from the astral (Labate, Assis & Cavnar:105, MacRae 1992:67). It is the commander that oversees the approval of each hymn and declares if it is received from the astral or not.

In the caboclo and Amazonian culture it is common to use shamans, curaderos (healers) or a pajé (master shaman) for medical purposes. Many individuals live in isolated places and access to western medicine is scarce (Schmidt 2007:102). The shaman must learn how to communicate with spirits for guidance, healing, and help. She/he must learn how to be an herbalist and stores great knowledge of the forest flora. As mentioned, the plants have their own spirits, and the shamans interact and learn from “the plant teachers”. One of the main plant teachers is *ayahuasca*, called upon in healing sessions of the pajé. The session is called “trabalhos” (works) (as in Santo Daime). Often the pajé prepares the ayahuasca alone

³¹ See appendix.

as it is believed that the brew is sensitive to negative spiritual beings and can only be controlled by the pajé (Schmidt 2007:104-105). This belief is central to the daimistas as there are rules of conduct during the preparation of the daime (feitio) (Dawson 2013b:230). The belief that the brew will incorporate the energies around was a common notion in Céu de Estrela. In the pajé ceremonies, both the pajé and the patient consume the brew, like the *ayahuasquero* practices of the urbanized mestizo population and horticultural groups in Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil (Dobkin de Rios 1971:256). While this is true, the practices of ingesting ayahuasca are exclusively restricted to the shaman among some ethnic groups. Ayahuasca enhances people's ability to connect with the spiritual world as well as cleansing the body. For the cleansing to be optimal, a strict diet and conduct must be followed. For the pajé, this means no eating or sexual activity 24 hours prior to and after the ritual (Schmidt 2007:105). For other shamanic practices this can vary and for the daimistas, one should refrain from animalistic produce and sexual activity three days prior and after *works*. The diet and conduct are common for all ayahuasca religions and practices, including the Santo Daime.

Spirits

The caboclo spirits live in the forest and are deceased souls that have different special skills or are known for doing special things. If something occurs in the forest, an undefinable strange sound, it can be attributed to a caboclo spirit as a message or even a warning. There is an indeterminable number of caboclo spirits, and some are more famous than others (Schmidt 2007:100-101). The caboclo spirits³² comprise just one line of spirits out of many. The spirit lines are drawn from Kardec, Umbanda and Amerindian shamanism and there is an enormous number of spirits in circulation from lower to higher levels of energetic frequencies through incarnations. Daimistas differentiate between two groups of spirits: “spirit-guiders” and “suffering spirits”. The purpose of interactions with spirits is either to help or to ask for help. Those that are considered in need of help are the suffering spirits, the “lower” spirits, and the daimistas, through ceremonies and mediumship, conducts spiritual charity to aid the spirits (Dawson 2013a:149).

³² Mentioned in hymns, see appendix.

Mediumship

Mediumship is highly sought after in the Santo Daime. It is rooted in the Brazilian Kardecism and Umbanda. Kardecism is explained as such:

“Mediums communicate with spirits of the dead as a means of contributing to God’s plan of universal spiritual progress. God creates all human souls in an innocent state, and our purpose is to progress, spiritually and ethically, as we face the expiating challenges of a series of (re) incarnations on this world (and others). Charity is the core virtue. Disincarnated souls – both those awaiting their next resurrection and those sufficiently advanced to require further incarnations – work compassionately with earthly mediums in order to help their less evolved incarnate fellows with their spiritual progress.” (Schmidt & Engler 2016:187)

Umbanda began as a mixture of Kardec spiritism and Afro-Brazilian traditions, primarily Candomblé³³. In rituals, mediums are incorporated by highly evolved spirits that can help those in question (Schmidt & Engler 2016:204). Mediums are those who are trained to handle spirits and who can channel them safely through their bodies. Mediums are sought after for their ability to find causes of illness, discomfort, or mental distress. Santo Daime mediumship is a blend of different mediumistic practices from kardecism, Umbanda and today exceedingly more new-age influences. The visibility of spirits in ceremony is far greater in new-middle class communities than in more traditional Santo Daime communities (Dawson 2013a:142-146). Leaders of certain churches outside of Brazil emphasize on welcoming spiritual entities in ceremonial setting. In more traditional communities however, there are designated rituals in place to handle spirits. These were mostly developed by Padrinho Sebastião as he had been working with spirits from a young age and had encounters with spirits throughout his life, which progressed the construction of such works.

Gender

It seems that the relationship between men and women reflect the traditional gender roles in caboclo society (Schmidt 2007:91). During my field stay I experienced a difference in tasks performed by men and women. As an outsider and being there for a short amount of time the

³³ An Afro-Brazilian religion that worship *orixás*, “African deities associated with specific elements in nature that come to earth where they possess human beings in festive and public ceremonies, in a specific kind of trance characterized by the loss of consciousness (Schmidt & Engler 2016:170)”.

differences seemed to be mostly dependent on the physical attributes of men and women. I saw only men chopping wood for the fire as well as them maintaining it and women being the only ones making food in the kitchen. This aspect is clearly shown during the feitio ritual, which is the making of the daime. It lasts over several days where women clean the leaves, and the men hammer the lianas to shreds and cook the daime. Through research it seems that the social structures of the religious communities have much to do with geographical placement but at the same time there is an emphasis through the doctrine on the natural place of men as providers and women as homemakers.

Ending remarks

In this chapter I have discussed how the doctrine sees the material world as an illusion while the astral world is the real. The astral realms are the primary source of guidance in the Santo Daime. The “unseen” world is filled with spirits, and it is here that the daimistas can connect to God. As the daime can influence balance and bodily functions, it takes time to be able to withstand the effects while upholding the ceremonial structures put in place. Not everyone can access the astral realm and it takes time to learn how to navigate under the influence of the daime. As such, the daimistas can be seen as “apprentices of ecstasy”. While under influence, in ecstasy, they use the “suiscope” to see themselves and their actions from a different perspective. To access the astral, the daimistas use daime and the disciplined structure which aid them in seeing through the “illusion”. The structure is detailed from positions and clothes to movement and singing. The details are regarded as vital for the formation of the spiritual current produced in ritual. The current must be upheld to hold the integrity of the ceremony. The focus of the doctrine has changed over time it has spread globally where most of the members are part of the “new-middle-class”.

Chapter six: Santo Daime ceremonial repertoire

Introduction

There are different types of ceremonies conducted throughout the year. The ritual repertoire is based in the “Official Calendar of Works” (Calendário Oficial de Trabalhos) issued by Céu do Mapiá (Dawson 2013a:49-50). I will present those I observed during my field, explaining briefly how it is done as well as describe some of my own observations and experiences. The ceremonies are called “trabalhos” or *works*, the same as in Umbanda and pajé ceremonies. It denotes that there is hard work done in the rituals, as I hope to show through this section that it is. As Dawson points out in his book; Daimista ritual space is no place for the faint-hearted (Dawson 2013a:65).

Ritual theory

Ceremony and ritual are often used to explain the same thing; an act or series of actions that are performed in the same way every time. In ceremonies there are often observers and participants where the participants can be a person or a group of people and the observers look at the ceremony, they see a performance. While in a ritual there may be one or more people performing it, but it can be without spectators. Throughout anthropological history the notion of rites and ritual has been contested time and again. The ritual analyses are many and the definitions even more. Victor Turner saw ritual as a “prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to belief in mystical beings or powers. The symbol is the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties of ritual behavior; it is the ultimate unit of specific structure in a ritual context” (Turner 1967:19). I choose here to see the ceremonies as rituals entrenched by symbolism.

Though I cannot determine the extent of symbolism that was apparent in Céu de Estrela, the overall structure of the rituals is certainly symbolic. The hero’s journey is apparent, and the hero’s journey often has to do with rites of passage. Even though the ceremonies are not rites of passage from one age group or one social status group to another, it seems that through the ceremony a “liminal space” is accomplished, and in this space “communitas” is established. Liminality is recognized as the “threshold” in a rite of passage which occurs in the middle when people have left their previous status but not yet entered another. The space in between is liminal and in this uncertain space, many things can occur,

like abnormal behavior. When several people are going through this simultaneously, a form of communion is created (Turner & Abrahams 1969:94-97). I believe that the Santo Daime ceremonies have many traits that can be recognized as a rite of passage, liminality, and *communitas*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are hierarchical differences in the ceremonial space where daimistas use what is available for them to further their ritual maturity. As such, not all daimistas have the same ritual position and cannot be classified as being in the same status less liminality. Rather, what happens in each *miracão* can often be liminal as practitioners embody their material body but at the same time are traveling to (or in) other realms of existence. They are in this sense between life and death, between the seen and unseen, going through a bodily rite of passage from one state to another. The liminality here is in the unseen rather than in the material. In ritual space there are rules put in place which each daimista must uphold, but, if one has a challenging ceremony manifested in loud or abrupt behavior, one is helped and guided by the *fascias* (helpers during ceremony) or if needed, by the commander. People who have especially disturbing behavior are extracted from the ceremonial space. The bonds between people, some not knowing one another, or visitors coming from other cities or countries, still create a feeling of community as they work together for a common goal. This can be seen as *communitas*. As there are several ceremonies each month this *communitas* tends to strengthen and never ceases.

The ritual structure

The structure in the ceremonies is highly detailed from the movements of the participants to their outfits. It all starts and ends with three *Our Father* and *Ave Maria* which represent the opening and the closing of the ceremony. In the middle there is often music and dancing which guide the daimistas on their inner journey. The ritual is a dialogue with God and the spirits and gives the daimistas a chance to be in contact with their higher selves. During the ceremonies, each daimista has their own journey and can have battles with their shadow sides that are often portrayed as different dark beings or things. The dark side can also be “evil” spirits or entities that have attached themselves to them, these can make the person experience pain in their bodies or manifest as disease (like *Padrinho Sebastião*). The *miracão* can show the daimistas what challenges and problems they face in their life, but it is up to each daimista to do something about it in the material plane. The daimistas see the *miracão* as a portal to the astral plane. The *peia* (pain) is the discomfort or pain that the daimista can go through during a ceremony and the *purga* (purge or vomit) is the cleansing (Eggen 2010:25). The *fiscais* (designated helpers during the rituals) are important to uphold the structure (setting) of the

ceremony, they help the members through *purga* or *peia* (set) in the context of the Santo Daime narrative. Still, with the helpers, the members are expected to rise or at least try to go through the pain with integrity, as it is a sign of spiritual maturity to do so.

Some works are deemed “lighter” or “heavier” than others, both individually and collectively. The works may start heavy, because of negative or distorted energy, and through the concentration and discipline of each daimista, become lighter. But it can also mean that if one member is stuck in the negative energy that is circulating in a work, it can affect the collective as a whole (Cemin 2010:40). It is necessary for the daimistas to learn to master the art of drinking Daime and it takes hard work to do so. As an apprentice, the daimistas can struggle, even the most experienced ones can be challenged in a work. All the different aspects of the rituals, from the uniform, the hymns, dancing, rattling maracas and even the table in the middle of the church, serve as helping guidelines for the members.

The daimistas believe that the firm structure is needed for a “safer” journey through the astral plane, which is like the shamanic journey where worlds are crossed. The church itself is to be oriented in the direction of the rising sun with no complete walls. The inside is called the *salon* where the east and south side is occupied by women and the north and west side is occupied by men. In the center of each *salon* is the alter called *mesa*. The mesa is seen as the source of transmitting and receiving energy from the astral plane (Cemin 2010:44, Matas 2014:41). Inside the church, ornaments like flowers, incense, pictures of important persons or entities and a caravacca cross is placed on the mesa (see figure 4 on page 64).



Figure 4. Mesa inside the salon in Céu de Estrela. Photo by author.

Around the table are a few chairs for the musicians, the Padrinho and the Madrinha. In Céu de Estrela, the Padrinho often played the drums accompanied by 3-6 other musicians, often men. On the floor there are marked up squares in six sections around the mesa (see figure 4). People are placed hierarchically according to affiliation, position, age, and height. Facing the table on either side the juniors are on the left, middle raged in the middle and seniors on the right. In the front stand the people who have attained the star, meaning they have received a star medal and become a fardado (uniformed member), but positioning depends on seniority. To become a fardado means that one has more responsibility and is obligated to be of service to others if needed during works. This does not include the *fiscais*, the assigned helpers during ceremonies who do not ingest the daime. There are usually two women on the women's side and two men on the men's side depending on the size of the group. The placement on the

floor is important as many of the daimistas I talked to said that the current of the energy was stronger closer to the altar. The position in the church affects the social position outside the church and the “spiritual maturity” of each individual (Dawson 2013a:70). The rest of this chapter is dedicated to the different Santo Daime rituals.

Feitio

Feitio is the ritual where the Daime is made. As with each of the rituals, small differences are found in each community, much dependent on the amount of daime made. Because Céu de Estrela is a large church, supplying multiple other communities in Brazil and abroad, feitio went on for 11 days. Usually, it is much shorter. The women and men have different tasks and are expected to talk to each other as little as possible during the workday. The men oversee the shredding of Jagube and cooking the daime in the *Casa de Feitio* while the women clean all the leaves by hand in a separated structure. The Jagube and Chakruna are attributed with gender, the former being masculine and the latter being feminine. As such, “the division of manual labor and the use of ritual space within the feitio is a material mirroring of the sacred plants' metaphysical properties (Dawson 2013b:239)”. Work outside the making of the daime also relies on voluntary work from members and visitors. Chores like cleaning the church or making food in the kitchen are given to uphold the ceremonial standard. I will now present an excerpt from my field experience when working during feitio:

Walking through a forest of dense vegetation, a path is clear in the wilderness. Out of nowhere a big house appears, the feitio house. The house is two stories high, supporting itself on many beams around the building. The walls are more like fences, so the top floor is open to the raw nature outside. It is placed just by a hill so one can go on the right side, a small path which goes upwards and around some chakruna shrubs before one enters the feitio house which smells distinctively sweet of the ayahuasca brew. A path that leads straight forward takes you to the first floor which is nothing but walls and several big, long fireplaces that are built inside the downstairs walls and upstairs floor. There are four of these but only one is lit and I will soon see why. We stop outside the entrance where the woman in front exchanges quick words with a man.

The large fireplace is supporting up to six big casseroles of brew cooking in holes on the 2nd floor. The rest of the women keep walking up in the forest and away from the big house. After a few meters I can glance some sort of roof in front of me. Totally camouflaged

in the forest is a small roof supported by six beams. A table made up of different smaller tables in plastic, covered by plastic drapes. Around, there are chairs. Behind the table, in the center of the back there is an altar (see figure 5 on below). The ground has been carved out in the hillside so the alter is leveled at hip height. There are pictures of master Irineu, Padrinho Sebastião, an angle statue, candles, and Palo Santo. Palo Santo is the bark of a sacred tree native to South America, it is used as incense, for cleansing and to get rid of bad energies. Beside the altar is a tall, small table with a carafe containing the medicine. At the far end in front of us, on the left side of the little shack, are books for writing our names and how much work we manage to get done each day, a trash can, and more chairs.



Figure 5. Working area for cleaning the leaves. Photo by author.

The clean leaves are measured by hanging them on a portable scale to establish the amount of work well done. On the far left, there is a big, blue bucket at least one meter in diameter and a big casserole by its side. This is the washing station.

Only people who are trained to give the daime can distribute it and since none of the women here at the moment were adapt, we had to get a man who was qualified. Later the same day and all the other days, a woman was distributing daime. As we wait, we hear repetitive banging from the men's house. I learn and later observe that they use small wooden, sledgehammers and sit in a circle, or in a designated area in two rows facing each other with small tables between them, hammering the lianas till they are shredded, long bits. As the women, they sing throughout the day, and we can hear their deep voices in the distance. When a man comes, we start by standing together around the alter while saying a prayer before drinking daime. The amount distributed during the feitio is maybe a third of what is given in the ceremonies and is distributed to all who want, whenever they want. Although it seems as everyone synchronize and drink together most of the time except when people arrive at different times for the work shifts. Some sit by the table and wash the leaves, some sit down by the big bucket (see figure 6 on page 68) and start to use their hands up to their elbow and shoulder to swirl the leaves around in the water.



Figure 6. Washing station for the leaves. Photo by author.

I watch the women use delicate, but large motions to move the leaves. Usually, there are at least three people around the bucket depending on how many we are, on days when we are more, there can be up to five people washing in the same big bucket, sometimes grabbing a bunch, and rubbing them gently towards each other. After a while they transfer the leaves to the other container where they are swirled a bit more before they are put in a bag inside a laundry basket. The holes in the laundry basket give the water a chance to drip out before the bag is hung on a nail on one of the beams. Leaves (see figure 7 on page 69) are poured out on the table. They have been through the washing station, and we will now use our fingers to

look at every leaf and clean them. We are to use our hands as much as possible but get a cloth to wash the worst parts off.



Figure 7. Leaves of the Psychotria Viridis, “Chacruna”. Photo by author.

We sit with one cloth in the lap for cleaning and one on the table for placing all the clean leaves that will later be put in a new, washed bag. The one in charge often delegates work and switches up the placements as the washing station is especially hard. Besides the woman in charge, other people stand up and take charge of bringing the clean leaves into the bag or

pouring new leaves on the table, all done with minimal word use. The women show me how the stems and dead leaves are removed, some discoloring is acceptable, but I am told too much will leave a bitter taste in the daime. In the beginning I ask a few times when I am unsure of the leaves, and I can see the excellent and experienced eye they have as they touch the leaf to see if its viable. They look at the color and feel the stem to see if its “alive”. Dead leaves lose some of their firmness. I notice the experience levels are different and I see that the knowledge they bear lies in their tacit knowledge, the sensing knowledge. We change places during the day over the course of three shifts lasting from three to six hours, depending on the flow of work, how many leaves there are left and how many people are working. The work is voluntary, and all the women come when they want though there is an emphasis on beginning and completing if one starts a shift.

I am told that during the feitio, you are not only cleaning the leaves but also yourself. They emphasize that every person who is here to help must also watch their thoughts and how they act in front of the leaves. They (the leaves) absorb the energy around them and if someone has ill intentions, thinking negative thoughts or wishing bad things on others, the daime can be compromised. I remember I ripped a few of the leaves and the sheer sound of it made everyone cringe. But, still, I heard no harsh voices or complaining, the techniques take practice, and the women were happy to assist when I seemed to get it wrong. The overall feel and vibe of the place was calm and peaceful. We occasionally took breaks and throughout the days I noticed everyone taking care of each other, reminding one another to drink water and take breaks so we did not exhaust ourselves. Rapé³⁴ is also frequently distributed in the breaks. They told me it helped us ground ourselves and remind us of the holy work we were doing.

The days are characterized by silence apart from hymns being sung and stories of other feitios, ceremonies, Jesus Christ or other holy beings of the religion are told. Some of the women also tell me stories of how they got in touch with ayahuasca. Some had no experience before coming to the church while others had tried other types of ceremonies. They emphasize that the doctrine’s focus on work and discipline had helped them overcome different challenges in life. Tracy, a young woman who was in charge some of the days of the feitio told me her story. Tracy had been miserable, addicted to alcohol and had little respect for herself before she came to the church. In the beginning, the work was difficult, and she

³⁴ See chapter one.

purged a lot during the ceremonies. She told me that she thought about giving up many times, but the support of the community and their emphasis on her finding her own way helped her stand her ground and stay. After a few ceremonies she started to feel she could control her emotions, her actions and behavior much more than before. Tracy had now stopped drinking and was living a healthier life. She said she would likely not be alive if she had not joined the doctrine. Another woman, Martha, told me her experience. She had taken part in other ayahuasca ceremonies before coming to the church and had great experience with it, but it was hard to bring the insights to change undesirable behavior into daily life. When she became a part of the Santo Daime, she learned discipline and quit her office job to start an alternative healing center. The stories I heard (and read about) resemble each other in the way that following the church changed their life owing to the discipline and dedication the devotees endure, the healing effects of the daime and the community.

One day, two of the children from the family I travelled with come with me to the feitio house. The women are excited to see the young girls and offer them a seat and ask them if they want to drink daime as well. Today the youngest, Luna (4), does not want, but the eldest, Alina (who has already participated in a ceremony – see chapter one) (9) wants. She gets a tiny cup, less than what the adults get, and soft cheering from the women.

Some of the days we go down to the feitio house (see figure 8 on page 72). There is limited talking and an emphasis on not speaking in general. We start by standing and saying a prayer, the same one as in the beginning and at the end of every ceremony and every day in the feitio. For about two hours the women sit in front of the brew singing while some men work, and others join. We each sit on chairs which occupies the space between the casseroles and the area where the lianas are prepared. We sing hymn after hymn. A man is playing a guitar and some of the women use the maracas to keep the beat. I am told that this singing is a crucial part of making the daime, as the hymns are a way of worship and respect, we try to bring the best out of the brew, so to speak. In front of us are two rows which have 6 holes in the floor, only the furthest away from us are being used at the moment. In each of the casseroles some of the plant material is showing on top. I can see shredded vines and some leaves sticking out. As with the women, there is one man in charge, and he is using hand gestures, pointing and as few words as possible to convey what needs to be done.



Figure 8. Casa do Feitio, where the liana is shredded and the daime is cooked by men. Photo by author.

He uses a long stick to stir the leaves and vines, poking the mass with a slow, careful force in the casseroles to get the juices from the plants into the brew. After doing this, a man with a long metal pole accompanied by another man goes on each side of a casserole and stick the pole through two metal holes on the top. They brace themselves before carrying the heavy, boiling brew to a filtration station. The filtration station is a big metal slide with two metal hooks serving as breaks on the sides and a net on the front. Another man has put a new casserole underneath the slide and the two men carry the full one and manage to flip it on the side. The breaks hold the casserole in place as the brew pours out leaving all the leaves and shrubs of vine behind in the net.

The material may be used again depending on the outcome of the brew produced. If it is assessed that they may be used again, new and fresh water is poured in, and it is boiled

again. The cooking lasts for about 4-8 hours for each brew, depending on its concentration. The brew that is distributed to communities outside the church cook for longer and is more like a syrup than a tea. They call this one “mel” or honey and is far stronger than the regular brew. The area just behind us is reserved for the scraping and cleaning of the vine, I see small tools and am told that each liana is carefully rinsed of any dirt so that the daime will have a good taste.

As this section is mostly from my fieldwork it is important to state that this is data from *one* feitió in *one* community. After reading about feitiós, some aspects coincide with what I have witnessed: the separation of work based on gender and the agency of the chakruna and Jagube, the singing of hymns to the daime and while working, the Jagube hammer, and the washing of the leaves. The hymns are very important as they serve as protective vibrations for the daime to turn out the way it is supposed to. Differences are mainly based on how much daime is being made thus deciding how many days it will take and how much labor force is needed. Some differences are caused by the cultural emphasis or local history. Smaller communities often rely upon other affiliated communities to get their daime, but some also have their own feitió though on a much smaller scale (Dawson 2013b: 238).

Hinário

The *hinários* (hymnals) are a collection of hymns that are performed on special occasions. The collection is either decided by the Padrinho or Madrinha of the church or by the mother community. During the hinário musicians play music while the others sing and dance (*bailado*) in the squares on the floor. The *farda branca* (white uniform) is worn during hymnal ritual (see figure 9 on page 74). The ceremony usually lasts for as long it takes for all the hymns to be sung, varying from 80-150 hymns, usually around 120. This takes at least six hours and often eight or more. No-one but the fardados use maracas and have the responsibility to keep the rhythm with the musicians. I witnessed visitors wanting to use their maracas but were politely told to stop. The fardados in the front are also responsible for keeping the singing going and in the Céu de Estrela, they had microphones as well as singing very articulately and louder than others. The ceremony starts after everyone has either found their place or been placed by the fiscais. Then the Padrinho says a few words before a long series of prayers are said. After the prayer, daime is served. A line of women on the left and men on the right forms by a table in the back of the church. The Padrinho always serves but is

often helped by the other members. There is little or no talking, and everyone are focusing and preparing for the work ahead.



Figure 9. Hinario with baptism and receiving of the Star. Photo by author.

Sometimes between hymns the Padrinho says some words and often does a series of “vivas”; viva (church name), Virgin Mary, Jesus or other important figures. When reaching halfway through the hinários, there is a break for a half an hour to an hour when people do as they please. Inside the church people often sit down and relax where the silence is kept. Some go outside. When reaching the last hymns, the Padrinho in the church I visited often asked if we were willing to sing some more or encouraged us to keep going for the last little bit. At the end there is the same prayer as in the beginning and immediately after there are smiles, chatter and everyone seems very satisfied. Fruits are served as people slowly leave the church to go home.

Concentração

This was the first ritual presented to Mestre Irineu and is held on the 15th and 30th of each month. For this work it is common to sing a collection called The Concentration (Concentração), which begins with three Our Father's, three Hail Mary's and Key of Harmony (prayer) and Prayer, a collection of hymns associated with the Prayer ceremony (not an official work) (Santo Daime e, n.d.). But in contrast to other rituals, chairs are placed in each square on the floor, where people sit in the first part of the ritual in darkness in meditation with just a few candles lit (see figure 10). In Concentração the *farda azul* (blue uniform) is worn. Everyone rises and stands still for each hymn. The second part can then be directed by the commander who decides what hymns should be sung and whether there should be dancing or not. The only Concentration ritual I took part in in Brazil ended with lights on, bailado and hymns.



Figure 10. In contrast to other works, Concentração is conducted in darkness. Photo by author.

Santa Missa

I did not get to be part in this ritual as I was working in the kitchen at the time. This ritual is the most solemn. It starts with a Catholic prayer and between every song there are three repetitions of Our Father and Hail Mary. Ten hymns concerning death are sung and there is no

dancing or instruments, and the singing is calmer. The mass is for the dead and each hymn and prayer are for members who have returned to the spiritual realm. It is held every first Monday in each month but also on the day of the death of important persons like Mestre Irineu and Padrinho Sebastião as well as on the day of the soul which is the second of November. It must be performed at 4:00 PM and in blue uniform (Santo Daime f n.d.).

Umbandaime

This ceremony is influenced by the Brazilian African spiritist religion Umbanda (Labate & Assis 2017:67). Developed by Padrinho Sebastião after his meetings with an Umbanda priestess in the mid 1980's. Interactions with spirits are sought after in the ICEFLU diaspora and Dawson points out that through the new middle-class, these interactions have increased (Dawson 2013a:148-152). In regular ceremonies, the hinários, which regularly does not employ the interactions with spirits in the traditional communities, are increasingly seeing more of corporal mediumship, i.e., "possession". Schmidt argues that for her informant's, "possession" is not a word they consider appropriate for mediumship as it renders an *involuntary* possession of someone's body while mediumship is *voluntary* interaction or incorporation of spirits (Schmidt 2007:140). No particular uniform is worn in the ceremony though everyone wears white if they can. The positioning of the group inside the church was different.

Here is an extract from my field and experience during this work:

Upon entering the church, I notice things are different. All day I have heard my friends talk about how excited they are for this work and told me it was about spirits and possession. The star shaped mesa was still in the middle of the room along with the instruments and microphones. The men were on the right and women on the left but this time not surrounding the table but rather forming a half circle facing the main entrance leaving a big open space between the men and women. Behind us were two stations for healing, on the left side there was a circle with flowers and incense where people would stand in the center while a healer performed a ritual and, on the right, a mattress of banana leaves for people to lay down on while receiving healing. There was no choreographed dancing like the bailado, rather everyone danced and moved as they pleased. After ingesting the daime, people started singing and slowly begun to move inside the circle. They danced and moved in rapid or slow movements, often imitating some sort of animal. At times there were as many as ten people in the circle, some screaming or laughing, some making bird noises or howling, and some

twisted their faces and seemed too not be themselves anymore. As in all the ceremonies there is a short break in the middle for about half an hour before it starts again. The whole ceremony went on for about six hours and I observed people during healing sessions as well. On the left side people seemed peaceful as they stood inside the circle receiving the healing or blessing. On the right-side people laid down and I could see some people moving as the hands of the healer hovered over their body. Shooting their chest up, shaking slightly or heavily in their body as well as some making loud noises. After the ceremony, fruits are served, the church fills with solemn chatter and slowly people leave to go home.

Structure and social theory

The ceremony is a place for individual exploration, but the collective is vital as the energetic current can only be achieved through the communal efforts of everyone involved (Santo Daime c, n.d.). Though people enter *miracão* without ceremony or the force of the energetic field created in ceremony, the ritual space is important for the safe travels of those involved. By the power of standing collectively together, each daimista has their own unique journey that will help them in their particular way. Often it may be physical or mental healing, it can be spiritual contemplation or to know themselves better. In the spirit of Eliade one can say that the daimistas become “apprentices of ecstasy” as they learn to move through the astral realm after ingesting an entheogen. La Rocque Couto (1989) developed the argument of “collective shamanism”. According to him, anyone partaking in the Santo Daime ceremonies can go on shamanic flights and thus forms collective shamanism.

The *Padrinho* of Céu de Estrela told me that “the way you meet the medicine is the way you meet life”. In ceremonies one is expected to at least try to follow the doctrines virtues, firmness (*firmeza*) and discipline (*disciplina*) (Dawson 2013a:187). The structure of the ritual is there for safety as the sacrament makes each person vulnerable, and thus having the hymns as guidance and the dance as a persistent, repetitive focal point is valuable and considered necessary by the daimistas. Even the *maracas* have a significance when travelling in the unseen. The collective is giving the individual strength and structure to manage their inner journey.

Dawson (2013a) offers a view of ritual space as a social space where it is created by us and something in which we are created. In this sense it is instrumental (as producer) and ideological (as product) and makes both social and ritual space a political arena as it reflects

one set of values rather than another by orienting and regulating the individual in set space. To explain this, Dawson presents another social theory by Bourdieu. A field of force, according to Bourdieu, is a ‘network’ of different ‘positions’ where each position is determined by the extent of their ‘capital’ or ‘power’. The field is regulated by ‘rules of play’ which is used by the different occupants of positions to optimize their condition by benefiting of what the field makes available for them. The benefits pursued are distinguished as ‘primarily private’ such as the “spiritual goods enjoyed” by individuals (healing, purification, and self-understanding) and ‘principally public’ signifying the relational goods illustrated through notions of status, prestige, and reputation (Bourdieu cited in Dawson 2013a:70). The individual then, uses their capital to further their position in the field of force to ultimately make the most out of the benefits offered. In the Santo Daime field of force, Dawson offers five different capitals and shows how each is used to gain ritual recognition and access.

The first capital mentioned, and the first one I noticed in ritual space, is *individual capital*. Individual capital is the person’s sex, height, age and overall well-being or health. As mentioned, physical attributes dictates where you stand in ritual space, but experience will override these. The second, *performative capital* is the complete range of ceremonial practical knowledge. Many daimistas spend much time learning hymns and seek out factual data on key figures or historical Santo Daime events. This is to establish a repertoire of the doctrine which then again gives the *daimistas* recognition for being knowledgeable. It includes knowledge of traditions, laws, and customs as this affects how one operates in the ritual space. To know the symbolic and practical disciplines that regulates ceremonial space is elemental for competent cultic performance. Performative capital also includes basic requirements of different skill such as dancing, singing and Portuguese pronunciation. Part of this capital is knowledge of musical instruments as well as expertise in healing and mediumship. *Social capital*, the third capital, is “accrued through interpersonal relationship, general utility, and extra-cultic prestige (Dawson 2013a:73)”. Throughout the Santo Daime world, though more pronounced in Brazil then elsewhere, blood relations and close friendships with those in authority can serve to augment the individual’s position in ritual space. Daimistas may name-check other members or leaders with whom they have shared ritual space or have received a star or daime from. Practical utility is offered through practical skills such as constructing, tailoring, legal training, and such. The fourth capital, *cultural*, is most esteemed “when closely associated with the spiritual cradle of Santo Daime (Dawson 2013a:73).” Across the movement as a whole, Brazilians are respected by the fact of being

from the religion's homeland and "those from Amazon region are looked upon as living embodiments of the heritage and wisdom (Dawson 2013a:73)." Cultural capital also includes knowledge of the Portuguese language and its pronunciation along with pilgrimages to esteemed Santo Daime communities such as Céu do Mapiá, the "New Jerusalem". The last capital, which grants daimistas access to ritual space, is the *economic capital*. Costs of ceremonies are a delicate issue for many daimistas as many do not wish, in accord with government-sponsored bodies such as CONFEN and CONAD, that ayahuasca should be commercialized, thus "bought, and sold as any other commodity (Dawson 2013a:73)." Still, the costs of producing, distributing, and storing are considerable and must be faced. Members pay a monthly donation, while non-members voluntarily pay a donation for ritual participation, of which a small portion goes to organizational formation and operations (Dawson 2013a:74). The economic capital regulates according to national and local contexts.

Ending remarks

The hierarchical structure put in place in ritual space is connected to the different capitals and the effect goes beyond the ritual setting. Individual practitioners are the key element to ritual efficacy where individuals participate in corporate ritual practice while infused by the catalyzing effect of daime to achieve a collective spiritual current. As such, the daimistas access a stronger field of energy in collective practice that would ordinarily not be available to them in ritual isolation (Dawson 2013a:72-75). The ritual setup is especially detailed from the clothes to the movements of participants. This is to keep the daimistas safe and aiding them in reaching the potential connection to the astral plane. Through the ethnographic descriptions it is possible to get a glimpse of the liminality and *communitas* I explained in the beginning of the chapter. We can see that the gender division is based in that the Jagube and Chakruna are ascribed metaphysical attributes related to the feminine and masculine. The cultic repertoire of the Santo Daime is fluent and changing, even though the rigorous ritual setup has mostly been kept in place from the time of Mestre Irineu. The new-middle class have re-shaped the doctrine of the Santo Daime, both in and outside Brazil. As I was only a part for a short amount of time, I am not able to assess thoroughly Dawson's capitals in relations to the fieldwork. Through his theory, we can see that there are multiple factors that dictate the ritual space and the position of the daimistas in set space. It also shows how the capital produced in the ritual affect people's status both inside and outside of the ritual space.

Chapter six: Santo Daime ceremonial repertoire

Chapter seven: Norwegian experiences and “hidden” networks

Introduction

In this chapter I will talk about the “hidden” networks that operate in the ayahuasca diaspora in Norway. As more research is needed, only a small observation on my part will be presented. I go through an ethnographic vignette which will talk about the short field work I had in Norway as well as some gathered information on the subject. This chapter is more of an encouragement to further research than any concrete conclusions, keep in mind that the ethnographic descriptions are from one weekend with supplementary telephone interviews and questionnaires.

The reason I write hidden in quotation marks is because of the seemingly hidden culture of ayahuasca. In Norway, ayahuasca is not discussed in public. When talking to my fellow students, faculty, and family members, few knew what ayahuasca was, often unable to pronounce the name because of how foreign it seemed to them. Some had heard the name before and knew of it through research. DMT is illegal in Norway (Narkotikalisten 2021) but the plants or ingredients containing it (which is an unmeasurable number of plants and seeds in the world) are not. Ayahuasca is not a topic that is brought up much in the media beyond a couple of articles mainly expressing individuals’ experiences from drinking it. In these articles (Lindekleiv 2021, Vold 2019), there is a focus on the experience of those drinking it abroad, but also warnings from doctors expressing the dangers of using such a substance. Accordingly, it may seem that ayahuasca is absent in Norway except among people who have travelled to the Amazon jungle. There is a Norwegian website promoting ceremonial use of ayahuasca in Norway. I tried contacting the people behind it through the site but later found out that the website was out of date and not in use for the time being. So, how much presence does ayahuasca have in Norway? Are there Norwegian facilitators or foreigners coming from far away to conduct ceremonies? Are there ayahuasca groups or organizations? Are there any ayahuasca religions present in Norway? I have some information pertaining to these questions, but more research is needed to assess this topic thoroughly. For the time being I will present my findings.

Norwegian and online Ayahuasca diaspora

The minute you search online, especially on Facebook, a whole network emerges. There is a form of community online, in numerous groups, talking about plant medicine and psychedelics. Worldwide this number is so vast it will take many hours of research to get any statistics on it. Norwegian groups were notably less frequent and had fewer members. I managed, however, to become a part of one group that exchanged experiences from drinking ayahuasca. Several other groups were talking about plant medicine or psychedelics in general. As mentioned in chapter one, Høifødt discusses in her thesis that “the space” achieved when using a psychotropic substance is common and the ability to recognize if someone else has “been there” creates a semblance of a shared experience. This feeling of shared experience seems to be common in the online communities. After I posted a questionnaire in numerous groups on Facebook, I was contacted by two different organizations. I was invited to take part in two weekend ceremonies but was only able to attend one of them. I conducted two telephone interviews with the facilitators of the group I could not visit. For the purpose of order in the text I call this group X and the group I was in ceremony with, group Y.

Information from group X derives from two telephone interviews and conversations through Facebook Messenger. Talking to the facilitator, Markus, I understood that the group has requested to be approved as a religion and denomination (“trossamfunn”) by the county governor or by the Ministry of Justice. As such, they hope that the use of the sacrament of ayahuasca will be approved. One part of the request for approval explains briefly about the church:

“‘Church X’ offer its members and supporters, as well as non-members (who should also be protected under and by the Church's dogmas and doctrines), who are considered both potential and future members of ceremonial Ayahuasca ceremonies, retreats/healing collections for human personal development with one of the most powerful Shamanistic medicines on the planet. Based on a professional, psychotherapeutic approach that has already reached millions of people worldwide, providing real and decisive answers as well as solutions to (human) problems. In the future, through testimony, the outside world will see how Ayahuasca can renew you through our voluntary organization that is founded for the well-being of the individual and our desire to give everyone who comes, - [A better individual human life].” (Translated by author)

Church X is a voluntary organization which bases its belief in native knowledge and emphasizes Mother Earth as a sacred being. They hold beliefs of God and the Great Spirit of Ayahuasca. Their purpose is to live harmoniously with Mother Earth and all its beings, and they do so through ayahuasca ceremonies. They also highlight the therapeutic value of ayahuasca and freedom of belief.

Markus told me that many years ago he had a profound experience with “magic” mushrooms, realizing a new layer to his existence. Many years passed before he would drink ayahuasca. In his first ceremony he was told by the Spirit of Ayahuasca that he had now found his purpose. During the ceremony he intuitively helped several of the participants by knowing what they needed. After this he was convinced that this was his mission. His partner, Hilde, was at first reluctant to be part of the ceremonies, but when she eventually did, she received the guidelines for their doctrine. Now they have facilitated ayahuasca ceremonies in Norway for almost 5 years. Markus and Hilde conduct their ceremonies alone or with an assistant. Each ceremony is opened and closed with all the participants and the facilitators and lasts for about 4 hours. Every participant must dedicate these hours inside the ceremonial space as much as they can. Markus tells me that this dedication is for everyone involved so that the bond is not broken, which can have an effect on people's journeys. The bond is the communal energy created by those involved and as such this is not only an individual journey as they influence each other.

When I asked Markus if he drank in the ceremonies, he told me it depended. Mostly he did not drink, he did not need to. He entered “the space” either way. This is interesting as some of my interlocutors in Brazil told me that the more you drink, the less you need to enter “the force” as they called it. Markus then told me that after a ceremonial weekend he had drunk the rest of the ayahuasca, which was about half a liter and yet, nothing happened because it “was not supposed to”.

Santo Daime is also present in Norway but due to legal issues they were reluctant to talk over the phone but invited me to their next event in Sweden. I was not able to attend but got some brief information. Santo Daime in Norway is connected to an ICEFLU church in Finland which again is connected to a church in the Netherlands. When I was at Céu de Estrela I encountered a group from an affiliated Santo Daime church in Slovenia; so I would presume that the Dutch church is connected to a church in Brazil, but I am uncertain. The Santo Daime group in Norway does not have a physical church but use venues or travel to

other countries to be part of larger ceremonies there. Through research, it becomes clear that there are more groups operating in Norway. There are also many ceremonies conducted by foreigners or shamans from South America.

The Norwegian experience

In this section I will present an ethnographic description of the weekend I spent with group Y. It was a short weekend and there was no time for in-depth interviews. This means that the information draws on my observations and participation as well as a couple of phone interviews.

Day one

I meet Lars, Mats and Morten. Lars has organized so that the facilitators could have a place to conduct ceremonies while the two latter are assisting in them. We are outside the city center, far away from populated neighborhoods and there is lush vegetation all round. I help carry some of the food that will be served this weekend while we approach a harbor. We load luggage and groceries onto a small boat. The boat ride takes about 20 minutes, and we jump ashore in an enchanting place. A long path connects the dock to two houses up a hill. I walk barefoot in the soft grass as I look around. The forest seems ancient and the life inside it is beaming with energy, color, and sound. Both houses have bedrooms and bathrooms, and one has a large room which will serve as the ceremonial space. In the kitchen I meet Frank, the guide who will serve us medicine this weekend. He is a sympathetic man with bright blue eyes shining at me while we talk. He is dressed in South American inspired clothing and is eager to show me the process of making ayahuasca. Frank tells me that he usually makes the medicine at home, and while talking about ayahuasca he always uses the word “mor” (mother) or “medisin” (medicine). He travelled from another city by plane and could not bring the concoction with him. He has mailed the ingredients, which he presents to me. One bag is full of Syrian rue seeds, this is Paganum harmala, the MAOI containing element of the tea, which apparently one can find in certain grocery shops in Norway. The other bag is full of shredded Jurema bark which contains the DMT. I am surprised as the ingredients are so different from what I saw in Brazil where the bark contains harmala while the leaves contain DMT. Frank asks if I want to help prepare it and I gladly do. We measure an amount of each ingredient and put them in two separate pots with water and some lemon juice to cook slowly for the next 4 hours. After all the ingredients are put in, Frank stands in front of the pots smiling and

thanking mother. After the boiling has slowly begun, Frank has other things to attend to and leaves the kitchen.

After a while more people show up, we mingle in the grass in the sunshine. I listen attentively to the excited people, how they hope this ceremony will help them in various ways, how humanity needs this medicine, that love is the ultimate answer. I hear of different dimensions and how we live in all of them on an energetic level, I hear about conspiracy theories that are not conspiracies, that we should wake up to see the beauty of nature and many more subjects.

After I go for a small walk in the forest to collect my thoughts and observations, I go inside the ceremonial room that is slowly changing form. Mats is working on covering the windows with big black plastic bags to make the room darker. We chat for a while as he tells me his story of meeting ayahuasca. Mats had a life colored by criminality and a drug addiction and before drinking ayahuasca for the first time he explained how a mushroom trip had saved him from taking his own life. After an introduction to plant medicine, he came into contact with group Y three years ago. Since that day he has devoted much of his time and energy in assisting and taking part in as many ceremonies as he could. I look at Mats, he has vital, glowing eyes and a resting smile on his face. The criminal and drug abuse history seems so remote from the man I see in front of me. Morten and Frank walk in. Morten tells a similar story and how grateful he is to the mother for giving him guidance. Frank also has a background filled with trouble and drug abuse. He found his way back to a happy life by going through the immensely tough and often scary ceremonies with the powerful entheogen. He explains how the Christ energy is working through the ayahuasca to awaken the Christ energy in all of us and how one can use Santa Maria (marijuana) to ease or catalyze a journey.

First ceremony

The next section is my recollections of the hours in ceremony. The following words were only a portion of what I was feeling, seeing, sensing, and hearing. The events or experiences were hard to describe in words, i.e., ineffable.

After I have changed into the ceremonial clothes, preferably white, I go down to the ceremony room. It is about an hour till we start. I feel nervous and my body is slightly shaking. As I walk into the room it is totally transformed. The walls are filled with vivid

colors, artwork of “psychedelic” art, the Indian god Shiva and green forests. I am transported to a place not resembling Norway. It reminds me of pictures from shamanic ceremonies in the Amazon and from retreat centers (see figure 11 below).



Figure 11. Ceremony room on the second day, one of the assistants are preparing the room. Photo by author.

I walk toward the altar (see figure 12 on page 86), where instruments of various kinds, incense, flowers as sacrament to the mother, angel cards, angel statues, candle lights, two empty carafes and a small glass are placed. Mattresses are laid on the floor with blankets and pillows on them, a bucket, paper towel and a bottle of water are in front. Two mattresses are on each side of the altar which are for the assistants.

Everyone is cleansed with Palo Santo, including Frank before we sit together in a circle by the altar. Frank gives thanks to all who have come, the medicine and mother, he calls upon protection and help from various angels as well as guidance from mother ayahuasca. When I ask him about this prayer, he tells me it is alive and different every time. As we sit down, I feel my stomach getting slightly upset, I feel nauseous. According to Frank, the medicine is already at work. We go through some rules before we start and are advised to stay as much as we can on the matrass, it is our “flying carpet” in this journey. Frank blows tobacco smoke over the carafes before he calls forth each participant, serving them one of the two drinks, the harmala. All the while the assistants are using schacapas³⁵ making a repetitive swishing sound. After 10-15 minutes we do the same again where the DMT containing tea is served. The taste is sharp and unpleasant, the harmala especially. While we lay down Frank sings songs and icaros³⁶ (see figure 13 on page 92) which he has learned from his teacher, he whistles and makes bird noises. After a while we start to feel the effects, someone in the room is purging. The assistants and Frank explained earlier that we are in a communal space where each one of us is affecting one another. So, if one purges this may trigger a process or purging in someone else. As ayahuasca is a “tool”, so are we “tools” for each other. Frank rises and approaches those who are purging. He waves the schacapa with some iconic flower essence³⁷ that is very popular in the ayahuasca diaspora. To me, the smell is unpleasant and strong. He walks around and waves the smell all around and I feel more and more nauseous. The time has seemed to stop, and I hear many voices in my head, it is annoying, and I feel bad. A voice tells me “I don’t want any more” and I try to figure out a plan to escape this horrible feeling. Kaleidoscopic patterns are emerging and disappearing one after another. Then I remember the advice from many of the assistants and Frank: breathe! Relax, keep relaxing. And I do, or I try. After a while, the peak of the effect slowly wears off. But now it is time for round two, this time we get both brews at the same time.

One by one receives the drink. I get up in front of Frank, he looks at me, more colorful than before, and asks me how I feel. I manage to say “I feel it” while giving him a thumbs up. He smiles while measuring a similar cup as the first one. I take it and inhale deeply before drinking. We are offered grapes to chew on after we drink to ease the taste. I eat two before I

³⁵ “A rattle made from tying together a bunch of dried leaves (De Rios 1972:69).”

³⁶ “Icaros are power songs sung by the shaman during healing rituals to attract spirits who will do the healing and guide journeys (Pratt 2007:220).”

³⁷ Called “Agua de Florida”.

am served the other cup. Just as I am receiving it in my hands, one of the assistants, a mere meter away from me starts purging, it is loud and breaking the overall silence. I look at him before I look at Frank who blows air out of his mouth producing a swishing sounds. He does this every time someone purges. I drink it while the sound of vomit is in my ear and grab three grapes this time. I am struggling to keep it down but manage to stumble up on my mattress and lay down. This time there is a lot happening in my stomach and lower abdomen, I feel more and more nausea and I want to purge so I can feel better. But it takes time, it feels like a large snake is coiling inside me. As I am not sure about time in this space, I would guess from one to two hours of nausea and various pains in my body before I finally get up in front of the bucket. I place my hands on either side of it as they have instructed. Sitting on my knees this produces a straight back and helps the energy to move, I am told. And then it starts, it is only spit in the beginning and my whole body is clinching and trying to exit something. In my drowsiness I feel a presence of someone and feel a light breeze above me. And then the smell hits me, it is so nauseating that I vomit. When I lay down again, I laugh at myself for the absurdity of the situation. I try to write my observation on the smell as I understand it can be a tool for purging. I manage to scribble a word before I must lay down again. Around me I see everyone is on their mat, some are laying on their side slightly moving while others are laying perfectly still.

Now I enter a stage of confusion. I feel vulnerable and scared. Around me everything feels just as confusing. I see one of the participants sitting in a corner, away from his mattress just shaking his head. When I look at Frank, it looks like he is confused and looking for something for a very long while. I hear the voice of one of the assistants in one part of the room, but I see her in another part. Everything is echoing, the sounds of the music and voices. Suddenly a voice is saying something like “we are all gnomes in this magical realm” and the room fills with laughter. I am excited to laugh too. I am not sure if I am hearing what people are actually saying or if it is the space that I am in. The nausea is creeping up on me again, so I follow another instruction. I lie straight on my back with my arms on the side and legs uncrossed for the energy to flow freely. After more purging and countless minutes later, we are entering the finishing stages of the ceremony. When we are summoned to the circle to close the ceremony, I feel a sort of bliss. Holding hands, we say one word to describe our journey, I say “confusing” while others say “blissful” or “though”. The ceremonial space will be open for a few hours more and we can all stay if we want. Food is being served and

we are encouraged to eat, it is important after the ceremony. I choose to go to bed, I am exhausted after a day of mingling, many feelings, and a very challenging ceremony.

Day two

We slowly wake up in our own time. The kitchen is open to those who want but are encouraged to not eat heavy foods or too much. People are gathered in front of the house where the ceremony is being held. I sit down and listen to the eager conversation. I am asked how I am doing, and I explain that I feel confused after yesterday’s ceremony and am not sure if I want to drink today. In response to my uncertainty, I am encouraged to drink. Morten tells me that it is two days for a reason. We begin the process on the first day and on the second day most of the uncertainty and confusion is resolved in ceremony. He tells his own experience the first time he drank ayahuasca and how he was reluctant to even enter the ceremonial space after the first night. But as the night came and the ceremony started, he faced his fear and drank. This was a turning point, and he believes he would have never returned to ayahuasca if he had not finished the second day. Most of the others agree but are persistent that this is my choice, and I should do what feels best, just to be wary of not succumbing to the fear.

One of the assistants, the Wizard (trollmann) as he is called, is distributing changa³⁸ to those who want. He has made the blend himself and the other assistants confirm that it is “the best in all of Europe, maybe even the world”. Two of the participants, Karl and Sarah are now on the lawn that is further away from the house to smoke changa. Sarah is screaming or yelling from time to time, lasting for about one hour. Karl is quietly laying by her side. Two of the assistants are circling around to keep them safe, one with a drum keeping a beat and the other ready with the changa if they want to “journey” some more.

At about 4.00 PM we gather to have a sharing circle. Everyone gets a turn to talk mainly about the ceremony but can say whatever they feel is important to them. As I listen, I understand everyone has had very different “journeys”. The assistants (who have been part of many ceremonies) explain that they had challenging but blissful experiences and are eager for today’s ceremony. Some had been drinking more than others and one did not drink at all. The participants’ experiences are also described as challenging but blissful. Lars is telling us

³⁸ See chapter two.

about his ongoing awakening of the masculine energy and how he is eager to learn more in tonight’s ceremony. Frida, another woman who has been part of a ceremonial weekend before but interrupted the weekend on the second day, talks about her experience. She had a tough ceremony but today she was not as scared as last time. Her intention is to finish the weekend and defy the fear. Karl describes his experience with changa as potent and with extraordinary visions. The other one, Sarah describes her journey while she smiles and chuckles from time to time. She has discovered that she is a healer and that the screaming was releasing trauma. No-one has mentioned the participant shaking his head or that Frank was looking for something. I understand that the confusion was my experience and that my observations were influenced by the entheogen.

Second ceremony

We gather in the ceremonial space around 6.00 PM for a breath meditation. In our ceremonial clothes we lay on the mattresses and are guided through a meditation which focuses on the breath. We are encouraged to use this during the ceremony. Around 7 PM we are ready to start. The opening is the same as the day before. This time I drink once and only a small dosage. The ceremony is much as the day before, Frank is working all the way through the ceremony. Whenever someone purges, he comes with the fan. Sometimes he sits by their side while they purge, or he places his hands somewhere on the person's body. One time, he had his hands on each side of Mats’ body, shaking him while making swishing sounds. Some of the assistants are periodically drumming or using singing bowls while Frank plays music (see figure 13 on page 92). When we finish the clock is around 2.00 AM. We close the circle, missing one person, Karl. He is up in his room but refuses to come down. As closing and opening the ceremony with everyone involved taking part is important, I notice that this is a bit disturbing. Food is served in the kitchen and the ceremonial space will be open.



Figure 13. Frank playing during ceremony. Photo by author.

Day three

The third day we all participate in cleaning before we have a sharing circle, and everyone leaves. Frank specified that we should take care of ourselves during the next few weeks. The processes and the medicine are working in us long after the ceremonies. As such, we are advised to eat ecological and healthy foods, keep drinking of alcohol or ingestion of other substances to a minimum (preferably not at all), walk in nature and drink lots of water. Karl was not part of the sharing circle either and I meet him at the docks as he is my ride home. I am happy I share a ride with him as I am curious about what has happened. In the car ride he

tells me that he is convinced that he got something else than ayahuasca the second day. The sensations were very different from the day before. When he tells of his experience I recognize much of the confusion and the impressions I had in the first ceremony. After we talked, we were both surprised by the correlations in our experiences. Days later I learn that he has talked with the Wizard and that his anger had been addressed.

In a telephone interview with Frank, he explains to me how the head of their organization, the one who started it all, Jonas, was trained by a therapist and shaman in the Netherlands and how Jonas became Frank’s mentor. After 12 ceremonies “on the mattress” (as a participant) he was assisting in 40 ceremonies with Jonas, sometimes accompanied by a South American Shaman named Nuno. Both Jonas and Nuno said that Frank was being prepared by mother ayahuasca. It was his seventh time facilitating “alone”, though he is always accompanied by assistants. He does not call himself a shaman as he explains to me that a shaman means “one who knows” and travels on behalf of his patients or the ones who seek him. In ceremonies, the participants are travelling for themselves, so he can be called a “guide” or a “medicine man”. Jonas and Frank are planning to build a temple so they can conduct ceremonies there in the future. As with organization X, they want to go through the system so they can conduct ceremonies legally. Frank explains that the subject is so ambiguous that the cases always fall through between the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court. He hopes that ayahuasca will become legal in two years’ time.

When I ask him about the cooking process, he says that from now on the organization will conduct ceremonies at one place so that the whole process can be sacred. He explains that when he makes the medicine at home it is very different. He lights candles, prays, plays guitar and sings. He also explains that much of what the group does is based on intuition and they are being guided. He points out that it is important to not overthink or analyze.

Changing perspective

What I am left with after this weekend was not what I expected, I suddenly saw ayahuasca in a new perspective and understood that much more research and fieldwork is needed to ever get an understanding of the place the concoction has in people’s lives in Norway. It would be interesting to conduct proper fieldwork on Norwegian ceremonies as well as conduct a larger survey to assess the real scope of the ayahuasca diaspora in Norway. I suspect that the access

was easier due to no language barrier and as such, “fieldwork at home” can render access faster than if one does not know the language.

Ending remarks

It seems that the Santo Daime and the two Norwegian groups, though they are very different, have certain aspects in common such as wearing white clothes, music, purging as cleansing and using the sacrament as a tool. Group Y had views on ayahuasca and marijuana which were similar to the outlook in Brazil where ayahuasca is seen to embody the energy of Christ and marijuana embodies the spirit of the Virgin Mary. Marijuana can also soothe or catalyze the effects of ayahuasca. In a break in one of the ceremonies at Céu de Estrela, I was sitting on the floor with my legs crossed. One of the *fiscals* approached me and uncrossed my legs – the same Frank said the assistants would do if they saw us crossing our legs or arms in the ceremony. In both cases it was justified by saying it blocks energy from moving freely. The view on health in Norway seems to be bound to the unseen as it was in the Santo Daime. The archaic, shamanic outlook thus exist in Norway where people bound their health and moral justification up to nature and “mother earth” as a living entity. More research is needed for this comparison to be viable though. During my research, I have also heard of other plant medicine being used in ceremonies, like the famous Liberty Cap mushroom or Amanita Muscaria, both native to Norway (and other parts of the world). The latter is a large mushroom with vivid red color and white spots, commonly known to be poisonous but through certain processes like cooking for example, the toxins disappear (information from informants). The Liberty Cap is a tiny little mushroom and was frequently mentioned in online groups where people shared their harvest or described their journeys. Through this chapter it is possible to established that “plant medicines” are used in Norway.

Concluding thoughts

Throughout this thesis I have tried to determine what ayahuasca is, what practices surrounds it and how it is thought of by the people using it. I have described the Santo Daime world and its practices as well as give an insight into the ayahuasca diaspora. Because of the implications of law and vulnerability, I have anonymized so that the people or places involved are not compromised, showing parts of the Santo Daime and ayahuasca world but keeping each individual and community safe. The “mother community”, Céu do Mapiá, is public and has been correctly named.

As said in the second chapter of this thesis, I had to assess if I would drink ayahuasca. After discussing some anthropologists methodological and empirical data I concluded that I would be taking part of as much as I could. This assessment is important for the safety of the anthropologist as ingesting ayahuasca in a setting far from home in an unfamiliar environment is not an easy task. It had such an effect on me both mentally and physically that I had troubles being part of my own world when coming back. This is a known phenomenon for anthropologists coming home from the field, feeling a stranger to their own culture, and I cannot say that without the sacrament it would be different though I suspect it would. Again, both time in the field and after is shown to be important. Not only does the anthropologist need to prepare for the field ahead, but she also must prepare for coming back home. Having a period of readjusting is important for the more “professional” look to develop.

Santo Daime emerged out of a religious and social landscape in Brazil that supported the millenarian outlook and with the apolitics of social change. I have further shown how the doctrine has crossed borders and social classes and as an effect of that, the focus of the doctrine has changed. With more media exposure and due to the connection’s created by the internet, Santo Daime became progressively popular in middle class environments and the millenarian focus dimmed. The apolitics changed from social transformation to self-transformation. The reasons for the expansion are multiple, but most important is the eclectic nature of the religion, its miscibility, and the openness to different interpretations or perceptions. This openness has led to collaborations beyond belief and religion, as with Céu de Estrela’s cooperation with the Native American church of America and some of the indigenous tribes in Brazil. I have explained how the daime is vital for the religion to be practiced, without it the whole ritual act will have to change dramatically. The ritual structure is vital for the vulnerability of those involved and every aspect of the rituals have a meaning

Concluding thoughts

and a purpose. The ritual construct can be compared to the importance of “set and setting” to not induce a so-called “bad trip”.

Searching online there is a vast number of ayahuasca practicing communities that offer a variety of things. The basis is the same, the sacrament of ayahuasca, but the emphasis on the ritual context is influenced by the regional area, the persons involved or leading experiences (that if he/she is a trained ayahuasquero for example). Sustainability is often heightened in communities concerning ayahuasca as it is seen as being a part of nature. This connection is apparent in the ayahuasca diaspora and often sustainable action is involved in the communities. As Céu de Estrela was protecting the land area and animal life, so does Céu do Mapiá. Churches and communities that are connected to Céu do Mapiá, such as Mirmara for example, naturally keep their vision of a harmonized connection to nature.

Many plants that contain psychoactive substances which are regarded as dangerous narcotics in the West are regarded as medicine and teachers in other geographical areas. Ayahuasca, tobacco, mushrooms, peyote, and San Pedro are regularly used across the globe, though for various reasons and through different practices. Through archeological findings and old scriptures, we can estimate that the use of psychoactive substances dates back several thousand years, while shamanic practices date back even further. Entheogens can be regarded as an integral part of human existence. Certain damaging uses of substances, considered traditional, should not automatically be reckoned as useful or healthy. But, in the instance of ayahuasca, where people report mystical healing from trauma and illnesses as well as there being no records of death caused directly by the substance and thousands, maybe millions of people using this sacrament every year, I would suggest a wider gaze for those in charge of legislative power. I do not mean to promote use of any illegal substance, what I am simply trying to do is draw a picture of the situation we are in at the moment regarding these substances.

Ayahuasca (and other plant medicine) has the potential to dissolve cultural patterning and structuring in the human consciousness and as such, they naturally have a political charge. In online communities, ayahuasca and other plant medicines are talked of without censorship according to laws or restriction. People who engage in these ritual practices disregard the laws of their countries, but it seems that their actions are supported by research on different plant medicine. The research is legitimizing them as both integral part of indigenous communities and human history as well as a therapeutic ‘tool’ for people in need.

Concluding thoughts

In this vein, it seems that even though laws are restricting these substances as schedule 1 narcotics, considered both addictive and destructive, people using them do not deem them so. To many people across the globe, in indigenous, rural, and urban communities, the plant medicines are an important, integral part of their life, be it from occasional to daily interactions. People using various practices involving entheogens in both Norway and Brazil employ a variety of occupations. They are part of different state and communal institutions, in the health sector and in the therapeutic sector, they are businesspeople, highly educated and informed people. They are also people who are “outside” of society and from lower socio-economic backgrounds. It seems that changes are slowly happening across the globe regarding the legal status of certain substances. Legislations are being changed in United States, and in the fall of 2021, a new drug reform was suggested but denied in Norway. Though it differs from place to place, the overall outlook on “psychedelics” are changing.

As I hopefully have shown, ayahuasca is used in therapeutic, religious, spiritual, shamanic, and sometimes recreational contexts, though the latter is often an implication of a therapeutic purpose. It seems that many people I have collected data from, online and in the field have an enormous respect for ayahuasca. Ayahuasca is understood to have its own agency, a power to change one’s life in different ways. Ayahuasca’s spirit is by some called *ayahuascama* and is often related to a feminine energy or having feminine attributes, like nurturing and motherly. All the while it is perceived by the Santo Daime and group Y to possess the power of Christ energy, a masculine attribute while Santa Maria is seen as the feminine equivalent to ayahuasca. It is also recognized that people do not fully know what they will face when drinking ayahuasca and that the journey may be very difficult physically, shown in the expectation of peia and purga. Although this does not happen to everyone, it is often expected and perceived as a good thing. It is also challenging psychologically and emotionally which we can understand through statements from ayahuasca drinkers. Ayahuasca can break through barriers in memory and trauma by showing the user how certain things may have affected or affect his/her life. Ingesting ayahuasca can be dangerous when combined with certain medication, or when the brew has added supplements like nicotine. One should be cautious if one suffers from heart disease or high blood pressure. Screening people who want to participate is important for the safety as many do not know any of the implications beforehand.

The agency of ayahuasca is powerful, both for people believing in it as an acting entity or spirit, and for people who have no such connection to it. I have outlined the position of the

Concluding thoughts

daime and tried to show how the implication of law as it is ambiguous. I uncovered that ayahuasca has a foothold in Norway. Not only does Santo Daime exist in Norway but there are numerous shamans travelling each year to conduct ceremonies as well as three main groups conducting ceremonies, of which two I was able to collect information from. The ceremonies can be traced back at least 10 years and I am certain they have been here longer. Ayahuasca as sacrament and as treatment gets treated differently by its users but is perceived as a powerful (plant) medicine either way. I have tried to show the methodological challenge of studying such a thing as ayahuasca practice. As it is a powerful psychoactive substance, called an entheogen by many, meaning “full of God”, it invokes the divine within. So not only does it have an often extreme physical and mental effect, but it is also culturally and spiritually attributed with divinity. I have stressed the importance of researching and assessing the anthropologists' participation beforehand as ingesting ayahuasca can have an enormous effect. I believe a long field stay will yield better results as there are layers to be uncovered. I also believe that the anthropologist should have time after the field to readjust to her culture. From personal experience I can say that ayahuasca does change you and one would be wise to assess if it is necessary for your project or if you would handle the changes. With that said, I believe that taking part in drinking ayahuasca is just as important as observing the events.

After the extensive work that is a master thesis, it still leaves me with more questions than I have answered. It seemed to me that each answer I managed to unveil produced a myriad of new directions and questions. As such, I am still not sure what ayahuasca is and how it works (as many other scholars studying ayahuasca). I wonder if “the space” that is achieved is common beyond the substance? Is “the space” achieved with other entheogens or through practices like drumming or dancing? How does ayahuasca heal? Is “the force” felt by ayahuasca drinkers the same no matter what the combination of ingredients there are? And who is Ayahuascama? Questions on appropriation can be raised and even claims such as that the ayahuasca shamanism is erasing the indigenous shamanism (Foutiou 2016) are important to assess. Further research is needed to see the implications the western search for plant medicine and shamanism has on indigenous practices.

Narby has speculated on the correlations of shamanic knowledge and DNA. As an anthropologist, he did not take what his interlocutors said literally but through extensive research on shamanic practices in the world and across time. He found similarities and speculate that “the snake” as the cosmic origin of the universe (which are common in archaic and shamanic belief), and the information that is derived from the visions are indeed from the

Concluding thoughts

creation of life: DNA. Thus, he speculates that what his informants say are literally what is happening, they obtain knowledge of themselves and the world around them through communicating with the snake, the DNA (Narby 1988). What actually happens in ayahuasca visions, what hallucinations really are and what the origin of the universe is, are questions with complex and multi-faceted answers, if there are any. The meaning people put into their practices and what it is used for, however, is obtainable information. I wonder if the western interest in shamanism and plant medicine practices is a search for belonging. Of coming back to nature. The civilized man has (almost) successfully drawn himself out of nature to the point where our natural habitat is foreign and scary. Maybe these practices are not so foreign to us, down the lines of ancestry we have all lived in and by nature. The shamanic practice is a method of gaining confidence in the natural world, to understand and make connections to it. In a world of technological advancement, polarities, and diseases threatening our health, I wonder if the interest in “plant medicine” will increase in the coming years.

Plant medicines force us to look at various strands of our cultures and societies. They compel us to examine the relationship of spiritual and personal freedom and law, and how societal and cultural structures cripples’ various parts of the whole of humanity. Plant medicine seeps through the cracks of the structured concrete cities and opens dialogues with nature. By the potential they have to alter our consciousness they open doors in sciences like neuropsychology by broadening our understanding of consciousness itself, they are put in use in psychiatry for their potential to mend psychological challenges and illnesses, they give new understanding into archeology and expose new lenses for the anthropological gaze. Plant medicines have existed and been used in every continent on this planet, and they are today in growing popularity being put to use in re-creative, re-inventive ways. As such, this is a subject highly entitled to our attention and we would be wise to explore it in a sustainable fashion.

Appendix

Santo Daime hymns from O Cruzeiro

By Reimundo Irineu Serra.

Meu Divino Pai

Oh, Meu Divino Pai
Só por vós devo chamar
Tantas vezes vos ofendi
E vós me queira perdoar

E vós me queira perdoar
Que eu pequei por inocente
Porque não tinha certeza
Do nosso Deus Onipotente

Oh, Meu Divino Pai
É vós quem me dá a luz
Eu nunca mais hei de esquecer
Do santo nome de Jesus

O povo estão iludidos
Por completa ilusão
Porque não querem acreditar
Na mãe de Deus da criação³⁹

[...]

My Divine Father

Oh! My Divine Father
Only You should I call
So many times, I offended You
And may You forgive me

May You forgive me
For I sinned due to ignorance
Because I was not certain
Of our Omnipotent God

Oh! My Divine Father
It is You who gives me the light
Never again shall I forget
The holy name of Jesus

People are deluded
In total illusion
Because they don't want to believe
In the Mother of the God of Creation⁴⁰

[...]

³⁹ Serra n.d.:108

⁴⁰ Serra n.d.:109

Lua Branca

Deus te Salve oh! Lua Branca
Da luz tão prateada
Tu sois minha protetora
De Deus tu sois estimada

Oh, Mãe Divina do coração
Lá nas alturas onde estás
Minha Mãe, lá no céu
Dai-me o perdão

Das flores do meu país
Tu sois a mais delicada
De todo meu coração
Tu sois de Deus estimada

Oh, Mãe Divina do coração
Lá nas alturas onde estás
Minha Mãe, lá no céu
Dai-me o perdão⁴¹
[...]

White Moon

God hail You, oh! White Moon
Of such silvery light
You are my Protectress
You are esteemed by God

Oh! Divine Mother of the heart
There in the heights where You are
My Mother, there in heaven
Give me forgiveness

Among the flowers of my country
You are the most delicate
With all my heart
You are esteemed by God

Oh! Divine Mother of the heart
There in the heights where You are
My Mother, there in heaven
Give me forgiveness⁴²
[...]

⁴¹ Serra n.d.:84

⁴² Serra n.d.:85

As Estrelas

As estrelas ja chegeram
Para dizer o nome seu
Sou eu, sou eu, sou eu
Sou eu um filho de Deus

As estrelas me levaram
Para correr o mundo inteiro
Para eu conhecer esta verdade
Para poder ser verdadeiro

Eu subi serra de espinhos
Pisando em pontas agudas
As estrelas me disseram
No mundo se cura tudo

As estrelas me disseram
Ouve muito e fala pouco
Para eu poder compreender
E conversar com meus caboclos⁴³

The Stars

The stars already arrived
To say their name
I am, I am, I am
I am a son of God

The stars took me
To travel the whole world
To discover this truth
To be able to be true

I climbed a hill of thorns
Stepping on sharp points
The stars told me
In the world, everything can be healed

The stars told me
Listen much and speak little
To be able to understand
And speak with my caboclos⁴⁴

⁴³ Serre n.d.:255

⁴⁴ Serra n.d.:254

Songs sung by the guide in
Norway

Madre Ayahuasca

By Diego Palma

[Verso 1]

Madre Ayahuasca
Aquí están tus hijos
Hoy hemos venido
Para estar contigo

Madre Ayahuasca
Aquí están tus hijos
Hoy hemos venido
Para estar contigo

[Verso 2]

Madre Ayahuasca
Curaciones pido
Para mis hermanos
Que hoy están conmigo

Madre Ayahuasca
Curaciones pido
Para mis hermanos
Que hoy están conmigo ⁴⁵
[...]

Mother Ayahuasca

By Diego Palma⁴⁶

[Verse 1]

Mother Ayahuasca
Your children are here
Today we have come
To be with you

Mother Ayahuasca
Your children are here
Today we have come
To be with you

[Verse 2]

Mother Ayahuasca
I ask for healings
For my brothers and sisters
Who are with me today

Mother Ayahuasca
I ask for healings
For my brothers and sisters
Who are with me today

[...]

⁴⁵ Received by Frank June 12th, 2021.

⁴⁶ Translation from Palma n.d.

Incarito Medicina

By Arthur Mena

[Verso 1]

Al compás del tamborcito

Danza, danza, curandera

Regalando visiones

En muchas bendiciones

Al compás del charangito

Danza, danza, curandera

Regalando visiones

En muchas bendiciones

[Verso 2]

Ayahuasca medicina

Cura, cura cuerpecito

Tú eres la llave

De mi corazoncito

Chacrunita pinturera

Pinta, pinta las visiones

Colores de la tierra

Colores de la selva⁴⁷

[...]

Little medicine Icaro

By Arthur Mena⁴⁸

[Verse 1]

Dance, dance, healer

To the rhythm of the drum

Giving visions

And many blessings

Dance, dance, healer

To the rhythm of the charango

Giving visions

And many blessings

[Verse 2]

Ayahuasca, the medicine

Heal, heal my body

You are the key to my heart

Chacruna, the painter

Paint, paint my visions

With the colors of the earth

With the colors of the forest

[...]

⁴⁷ Received by Frank June 12th, 2021.

⁴⁸ Translation from Mena n.d.

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