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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Céu do Mapiá: Social Organization and the Role of Ayahuasca in the Amazonian Santo Daimé
Community

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies

by

Nikola Bulajić

Committee in charge:

Professor Christine Hunefeldt, Chair
Professor David Mares
Professor Leon Zamosc

2018

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2018

DEDICATION

For Luá...

Everything, always, for Luá.

EPIGRAPH

Finally: It was stated at the outset, that this system would not be here, and at once, perfected. You cannot but plainly see that I have kept my word. But I now leave my cetological system standing thus unfinished, even as the great Cathedral of Cologne was left, with the crane still standing upon the top of the uncompleted tower. For small erections may be finished by their first architects; grand ones, true ones, ever leave the cope-stone to posterity. God keep me from ever completing anything. This whole book is but a draught—nay, but the draught of a draught. Oh, Time, Strength, Cash, and Patience!

Herman Melville, Moby Dick

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMVCM.....	Associação de Moradores da Vila Céu do Mapiá - Residents' Association of Céu do Mapiá
IBAMA.....	Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente - Brazilian Environmental Protection Agency
ICEFLU.....	Igreja do Culto Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal - Church of the Eclectic Cult of the Fluent Universal Light
CEFLURIS.....	Centro Eclético da Fleunte Luz Universal Raimundo Irineu Serra - Eclectic Center of the Fluent Universal Light Raimundo Irineu Serra
FLONA.....	Floresta Nacional - National Forest
INCRA.....	Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária - National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform
IDA/CEFLURIS.....	Instituto de Desenvolvimento Ambiental Raimundo Irineu Serra - Institute for Environmental Development Raimundo Irineu Serra
EMFLORES.....	Organização de Mulheres - Women's Organization
MAPS.....	Multidisciplinary Association for the Study of Psychedelics
ESC.....	Ethnobotanical Stewardship Council
LSVM.....	The Libertarian-Socialist Village Model
RFCFP.....	Regularização Fundiária das Comunidades na Flona do Purus - Land Regularization of Communities in the Purus National Forest
CCO.....	Univeridade Federal de Viçosa Centro de Ciências Agrárias - Center for Agrarian Science at the Federal University of Viçosa
PDC.....	Plano de Desenvolvimento Comunitário – Community Development Plan
ICMBio.....	Instituto de Conservação da Biodiversidade Chico Mendes -Institute for conservation of Biodiversity Chico Mendes
MMA.....	Ministerio do Meio Ambiente – Ministry of the Environment
IGBE.....	Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística -Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Céu do Mapiá: Social Organization and the Role of Ayahuasca in the Amazonian Santo Daime Community

by

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Master of Arts in Latin American Studies

University of California, San Diego, 2018

Professor Christine Hunefeldt, Chair

This thesis is an ethnographic case study of a secluded Christian community called Céu do Mapiá located deep within the western Brazilian Amazon. The roughly 700 permanent residents are members of the internationally recognized, fairly young Brazilian religion called Santo Daime. This thesis is the product of ethnographic field research conducted in July of 2015, its author having visited the isolated community, having observed and interviewed many of its inhabitants, and having himself participated in village life. The principle goal of this study has been to create a reliable pool of information about the Céu do Mapiá community in order to

better be able to understand the nature of its socio-economic organization considering its important role as the mother community for all Santo Daime parishes around the world. It is important to understand the causes for the community's ability in maintaining such a sizable population, comparatively speaking, in such an isolated and hostile environment. The successful model of conservation of the 560,000 hectares of the surrounding National Forest of Purus and Mapiá-Inauini also deserves attention. The information gathered in the following pages also explores vital questions of U.S. drug policy, considering Santo Daime's sacrament, the ancient Amazonian entheogen called ayahuasca is classified as a Schedule I controlled substance in the US. Considering also that ayahuasca has increasingly been the focus of intensive academic, medical, and scientific research of late, this thesis considers implications of its classification and argues that reconsideration of its legal status and use is a question of not merely reason but also fundamental human rights that ought to be addressed.

INTRODUCTION

What model of political and social organization best promotes collective well-being, broadly defined, while simultaneously being least intrusive on individual liberties and privacy? This has arguably been one of the most central questions of political and social philosophy tracing as far back as the emergence of agriculture and sedentary societies in ancient Mesopotamia. One need only be mildly familiar with the current global state of affairs plagued by chronic violence such as in the Levant, mass outbreaks of famine and disease such as Ebola, Zika, and Cholera, or violent religious fundamentalism plaguing much of the Middle East along with the (real or perceived) fear of it plaguing much of the rest of the world, chronic civil unrest, mass protests and social upheaval exercised by our own body politic here in the U.S., mass migration of individuals fleeing violence and economic or environmental hardships such as those from Syria, South East Asia and North Africa, record-breaking environmental disasters causally related to climate change manifested with worrying frequency throughout the world exacerbated by the burning of fossil fuels, etc., etc., to see that an adequate response remains elusive. Throughout history various ideologies and experiments tried to argue for alternate versions of the answer; from Plato's arguments for the need of a philosopher king, to Hobbes' preference for a leviathan, and from Marx's urgent battle cry for the dictatorship of the proletariat, to Smith's concept of the social consequences of what he referred to as the invisible hand. The central question however remains unanswered, with no certainty that such an adequate answer even exists. Here it is perhaps most appropriate to echo the famous professor and father of modern Linguistics, Noam Chomsky's conviction when he says; "I don't think we're smart enough to design, in any detail, what a perfectly just and free society would be like. I think we can give

some guidelines and, more significantly, we can ask how we can progress in that direction."¹ In my view, a small Amazonian village called Céu do Mapiá represents one of the more fascinating attempts at this elusive and noble endeavor.

The past century has witnessed an emergence of novel ideas about how best to approach this dilemma. One such idea predominant in Western Europe and North America developed from a conscientious effort of individuals typically unsympathetic to ideologies promoting nationalism, nativism, consumerism, and the constraints imposed by mass culture, to excuse themselves from these milieus and instead explore a different approach to the principle question of social self-organization. Their response comes in the form of sociocratic communities whose principle values typically stress direct democratic participation, a near complete lack of internal hierarchy, detachment from material possessions, dissolution or stretching of cultural boundaries, economic self-sufficiency and a more intimate relationship with the natural environment. The focus of this thesis is a fascinating community located deep within the Brazilian Amazon rainforest that seems to have successfully implemented some of the above principles in order to support its growing population composed of individuals who come from various corners of the world and walks of life, but all of whom share a religious ideology as put forth by one of Brazil's younger religions called Santo Daime.

Subject of Inquiry

The subject of this Master's thesis is a fairly isolated community in the far south-western parts of the Brazilian Amazon rainforest called Céu do Mapiá composed of about 700 permanent residents, all followers of the Santo Daime church of Brazil. Research on this particular community is incredibly important in that it represents a unique example of such a large community that has found a way to survive and grow in an isolated corner of the hostile Amazon jungle while continuing to expand its religious doctrine globally to the farthest corners of the world. The motive for this inquiry is the near complete lack of reliable information and academic output about this very unique and fascinating community, even though its influence grows with each new Santo Daime community that develops in Brazil and abroad having reached as far as Japan. The long-term success of the residents of Céu do Mapiá in learning to live for over three decades in such a hostile jungle environment, while also managing to conserve vast stretches of the surrounding rainforest is as admirable as it is perplexing.² The community's residents are a mix of individuals of all social backgrounds, typically from throughout Brazil but also including expats of other nations, but all followers of the internationally recognized syncretic religion called Santo Daime established in the 1930s in Brazil. According to studies sanctioned by the Brazilian state, the residents of Céu do Mapiá generally enjoy a higher standard of living in comparison to their regional compatriots, despite the fact that many of its newer members share a history of mental illness and/or substance abuse before coming to the community³.

Céu do Mapiá is considered the spiritual home of the Santo Daime church, and what is also very unique about this religious tradition is that its members regularly consume an ancient

Amazonian entheogen as a sacrament, the powerful brew called ayahuasca which has strong psychoactive properties. The consumption of this tea which is classified as an illicit Schedule I drug in the U.S. takes place across the entire spectrum of the community starting from birthing mothers to those raging “against the dying of the light”.⁴ Its consumption takes place on a regular basis as a group activity, and never outside of the religious context. Ayahuasca is so central to the doctrine of Santo Daime that the sacrament shares the nomenclature and is referred to simply as *Daime*.

The academic significance of this inquiry is complemented by the fact that ayahuasca, whose regular consumption is the predominant characteristic of Céu do Mapiá and all Santo Daime churches regardless of its legal status in host countries, has in the last decade been the focus of extensive research largely of a biomedical nature; multilateral scientific research, although not the focus of this thesis, has identified a strong potential of the brew as a treatment for numerous psychological disorders such as those associated with addiction, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, various food disorders and overwhelming anxiety for terminally ill patients, among others.⁵ Considering its characteristic predominance within the community, I wish to study the effects of this practice as they relate to the *socio-economic organizational structure* of Céu do Mapiá so that we can better understand the reasoning and consequences of the brew’s status. This is important considering the question of legality of its use in religious contexts has even reached the U.S. Supreme Court by the other large Brazilian church União do Vegetal which treats ayahuasca as a sacrament and which was the first to have successfully argued for formal recognition and legalization of use in the United States.⁶

Function of Research

The function of this research has been a mixture of action research which combines the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake with application, and instrumental research which fulfills academic requirements. To better be able to understand the dynamics of what I will henceforth refer to as the *Libertarian-Socialist Village Model (LSVM)* and its relationship with the natural environment, it is first necessary to understand the socio-economic organizational structure of the community, and adequately describe life and demographics there. Céu do Mapiá might prove to be a viable model that partly elucidates the evolution of responses to our original dilemma as described in the introduction. It also might provide valuable data that could supplement further research on community dynamics. The successful model of conservation of the 560.000 hectares of the surrounding National Forest of Purus and Mapiá-Inauini also deserves attention.⁷The information gathered sheds light on how the community is able to thrive, and it might aid in exploring the potentiality of exporting their successful community conservation model to other tropical areas.

Additionally, the information gathered might also provide an opportunity to promote further dialogue supported by academic and scientific research into the potential beneficial effects of ayahuasca on psychological and even physiological well-being. My social research on the community might complement the ongoing scientific research which approaches the topic from a biomedical angle, and if it is further confirmed that an informed/controlled use of ayahuasca has the potential to treat psychological disorders, than perhaps it will be beneficial to reconsider official U.S. policy toward the substance. Such policy change is not unprecedented,

considering the very recent legalization of recreational use of another Schedule I substance, Marijuana, in some U.S. states, and considering the matter of ayahuasca's use has already been raised with the U.S. Supreme Court arguing on religious freedoms grounds.⁸ In this regard Céu do Mapiá provides a unique opportunity to study the social effects of this particular substance on a demographic sample whose isolation provides near-optimal conditions for a case study that aids in reaching meaningful and instrumental conclusions. The public has valid reasons to challenge state efforts to quell responsible scientific research, and should be eager to launch this debate, if for no other reason than simply to be able to consider the positive characteristics already reported about ayahuasca's treatment potential.

In addition, there has in the past decade sprung a significant niche in the tourism industry in the Amazon basin catering to the needs of patrons wanting to experience an ayahuasca ceremony. Most of these fall in the category of international tourists typically familiar with the brew from hearsay, individuals coping with mental illnesses who turn to the tea as a treatment of last resort, as well as veterans of war carrying deep psychological consequences from their experiences in conflict zones. To quote the optimistic predictions of a leading consortium of academics working on research with various psychotropic substances including ayahuasca, the Heffter Research Institute, "the current political and intellectual climate offers new opportunities to reopen avenues of research that have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to pursue in the past within conventional frameworks."⁹

On the Libertarian Socialist Model

A word about the "Libertarian-Socialist Village Model" categorization briefly introduced earlier is required; after having concluded my field research I struggled with trying to define or classify the community in the most accurate way. Although potentially problematic, ultimately I find classification to be helpful in that it serves as a valuable heuristic if nothing more. Thus the most accurate characterization I could create is the *Libertarian-Socialist Village Model*. The reasoning behind this classification will become clearer throughout the thesis, however for now suffice it to say that my research has led me to believe that this is the most accurate label for the following reasons; I claim that the village of Céu do Mapiá was in its origins one in which libertarian socialism was the predominant underlying *social* ideology, alongside its *religious* nature which is a central feature of this community. One might be tempted to point out the apparent contradiction in terms given their meaning in contemporary U.S. understanding, however I must insist on Dr. Noam Chomsky's repudiation claiming that the fact that the two terms are contradictory in the U.S. is merely a sign of the perversity of the American culture - here (in the U.S.) the term "libertarian" means the opposite of what it meant to everyone else all through history".¹⁰ What is meant by the term "libertarian" in this thesis is the *traditional* meaning of the term described by Adam Smith and Thomas Jefferson, who, according to Chomsky "were anti-capitalist and called for equality, and thought that people shouldn't be subjected to wage labor because that's destructive to their humanity..."¹⁰ Thus, the argument goes, societies in which vast disparities in wealth exist cannot be considered free, and thus the term "socialism" reflects this basic principle which describes a society in which wealth is equally distributed by a governing entity/the State.

Also, I chose to use the word *village* instead of *community*, for example, because the term *village* denotes more clearly a residential unit in physical space, one that is substantially smaller than what is imagined by the term "town", rural as opposed to urban in nature, and usually considered fairly self-sufficient. For this reason, the term *community* seems weaker due to the possibility of it encompassing a much broader range of meanings that would not all apply to Céu do Mapiá proper; for example, the term "community" *can* quite satisfactorily describe the international membership of all those who identify as belonging to the Santo Daime church and tradition, however the majority of these individuals have never physically visited the village of Céu do Mapiá. Thus, the Céu do Mapiá village is self-standing as such, yet simultaneously a central part of the larger community of followers of the Santo Daime religion.

It will become clear that this characterization is one that I believe *to have* applied to Céu do Mapiá originally, but as my findings point out has been undergoing significant changes, and that it may no longer be entirely accurate. As the reader will come to realize, I argue that the community, as it stands today, is not as egalitarian as it allegedly used to be since its origins and up until the death of its founder, Sebastião Mota de Melo. Perhaps the colorful (and potentially contradictory) characterization used to describe the nature of the community today is best borrowed from one of its residents who, in an interview classified the community a "monarchia anarchica" translating to *anarchical monarchy* - anarchical referring to the nature of its settlement and the lack of the expected relationship with the state apparatus as is described further bellow, and monarchical because there nonetheless is a recognized religious headmaster, today that individual being Alfredo Mota de Melo, the son of the original leader Sebastião Mota de Melo and the current president of the nonprofit religious organization ICEFLU representing the Santo Daime church.¹¹



Image 1: Alfredo Gregório de Melo holding a photographs of his father and founder of Céu do Mapiá, Sebastião Mota de Melo, himself holding a photograph of the founder of Santo Daime, Raimundo Irineu Serra.¹²

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

*Definition: a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs one's research.*¹³

Theory and Concepts Informing Research

My interest in the question of social organization stems from my undergraduate studies in social and political philosophy at the University of Michigan. Plato's *Republic* was my introduction to considering the question of how society could best be organized in order to maximize liberty and justice for the citizenry. All versions of an answer to this question necessarily must be derived from an account on human nature, and this is one major source of contention among various thinkers in history who devoted ink to the topic. Plato's optimistic views about the general nature of man led to his version of the answer which advocated for need of a powerful philosopher king - a natural leader of acquiescent subjects whose basis for power is principally his superior wisdom, temperance, love for justice, and generally his supreme ability to live a virtuous life.¹⁴ In my experience, the founder of Céu do Mapiá, is widely regarded by the wider Santo Daime community, Sebastião Mota de Melo, as having been precisely such a leader.

In contrast, Thomas Hobbes' pessimism about the nature of man condemned to a "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" life calls for the need of a leviathan – an overarching ruler subjected to no limitations, endowed with supreme powers to dictate order and punish

disorder.¹⁵ This necessary precondition of the governing body to possess a “monopoly on violence” would later be elucidated in Weber’s writings on the subject.¹⁶

With the changing nature of economic and social dynamics largely exacerbated by developments in productive capacities of nation states, communication and transportation technologies, and war, new ideas were continuously being offered. From those elucidated in Rousseau’s *Social Contract*¹⁷ and Locke’s *Treatises of Government*¹⁸, to Thoreau’s essay *On Civil Disobedience*¹⁹ and Augustine’s *City of God*²⁰, the age old question remains a central topic of political and social philosophy to this day with Nozick and Rawls continuing the conversation. It was however the example offered by the Welsh social reformer Robert Owen, widely considered the father of what was later mockingly described as “Utopian Socialism”, that bears most semblance to the village model I wish to study. His transformation of the New Lanark cotton mill into a thriving community of workers and their families was a novel philanthropic as well as corporate success, providing us with perhaps the first example of an egalitarian, communitarian village model originally envisioned in Céu do Mapiá. These goals are reflected in the mission of Céu do Mapiá outlined in the Plano de Desenvolvimento Comunitario – Community Development Plan (PDC):

“The purpose of Céu do Mapiá is spiritual development. It exists to be a healing center. It represents the realization of the (Santo Daime) doctrine in the social (equality, fraternity, community) and ecological (preservation and reforestation) sphere. Céu do Mapiá is a social cell of the Santo Daime doctrine which acts as the domicile of the eclectic center, and aims to create a new spiritual life, to live united, far from the city and the illusion, so that the people would prosper following the guidance of Sebastião Mota de Melo, live from natural resources, plant and be united. New life, new time, new System.”²¹

This phrase, “New life, new time, new System” is indicative of the community’s desires to begin a new way of life, away from the “illusions” and decadence of urban environments, striving for a more intimate relationship with the natural environment, aiming for a “simple life” based on farming and self-sufficiency, and striving for peace, equality, and unity in the community. The phrase is found with regular frequency through the hymnals, as will be elaborated on in subsequent chapters.

Prior Experience / Identity Memo

My own experience with such communities originates in Spain in the summer of 2012 when I had the opportunity to get acquainted with life and people of Lakabe. This small village is home to about 50 diverse individuals and a constant flow of non-residents who visit on extended stays attending various lectures and workshops hosted by the community; at the time of my visit there were about 20 visitors attending a week long workshop on conflictology. The village is entirely self-sufficient when it comes to food production in virtue of gardening and animal husbandry, and similarly when it comes to energy production due to solar panels and hydrokinetic and wind turbines. It was established about 35 years ago when a small group of individuals reoccupied and revived an abandoned village south of the Pyrenees, deep within Basque country. The community members come from all over the world, enjoy an equal opportunity to participate in all decisions affecting the collective, and appear to enjoy a high level of general satisfaction and overall well-being. There are today hundreds of similar communities scattered throughout the world but they pale in size compared to Céu do Mapiá which over 700 permanent residents call home. No other community to my knowledge engages

in regular, ritual use of ayahuasca, so this factor also makes Céu do Mapiá a unique example deserving academic attention.

Beliefs and Assumptions

In my opinion the self-sufficient communitarian village model largely isolated from state interference represents an interesting alternative to the increasingly unattractive, global trend of urbanization, with an increasing number of the younger generations moving from rural or suburban areas to heavily urban zones in the pursuit of work.²² As much as skyscrapers and industrial chimneys were the epitome of progress a century ago, so today there is an increasing social awareness of the environmental and personal costs of such notions of progress, ushering a desire to explore new options that promote dematerialization and "simplification" of life. My experience with the demographic makeup of communities such as Lakabe is that the members are usually very informed of current world events, tend to have a high level of formal education, technical prowess, and knowledge of the arts with many being artists themselves, tend to be well traveled, and tend to have a strong personal affection for the natural environment. The prediction can be made that the emergence of such communities will continue to expand at a faster rate globally considering the trend toward industrialization of food production, state interference with individual privacy and expansion of authority for the sake of national security, increasing bureaucratization and decreasing democratization of the political process influenced by powerful private and corporate interests, the continued reign of the military industrial complex in dictating foreign affairs, and the trend of decreasing social welfare.²³ As technologies continue to improve the level of comfort achievable off the grid, and as citizens become increasingly disillusioned with the status quo, I predict that an increasing portion of the population of western states will

turn to the communitarian village model which they expect will award them greater control over education, food production, autonomy and individual liberty, child rearing, and labor/productive capacity.

A significant portion of informed, globally aware, and technologically savvy citizens in economically developed societies have started to recognize the inherent contradictions of market capitalism with its promotion of consumerism and material fetishism, along with the rest of its intrinsic flaws vis a vis labor and production, and have decided to exclude themselves from it by forming these types of autonomous communities. The overwhelming tendency of these communities is a lack of hierarchy and a sociocratic system of governance that includes every member in the decision making process. A sharing economy and sustainability are especially emphasized. And considering the strong desire for self-sufficiency, farming, gathering and animal husbandry are an essential characteristic shared among all such groups. This in turn leads to the development of a close symbiosis with the natural environment which results in more careful resource extraction and better long-term planning and protection of the surrounding biosphere. However, considering Céu do Mapiá constitutes the religious headquarters of the Santo Daime church where hierarchical power structures do exist, it represents a more conservative version of what I have thus far described as the Libertarian-Socialist Village Model, which makes it quite unique.

Thought Experiment

Considering the systematic, regular use of ayahuasca in the community, I think it is prudent to explore its role in this question of social organizational structure of Céu do Mapiá. My

presumption that Santo Daime doctrine and ayahuasca as a religious sacrament together act as a social glue without which Céu do Mapiá would not be able to reach or maintain such a high level of operational success has proven to be true. Most of the more recent academic work on Ayahuasca has occurred within the medical or scientific frameworks; however I have been interested in the *social* consequences of long term regular use in an isolated communal setting. It would be interesting to consider an experiment where the use of ayahuasca is simply excluded from Céu do Mapiá. Considering the central role ayahuasca plays in the village, my preliminary assumptions are that this would have detrimentally negative effects on the community as a collective, and that the village would likely shrink in size dramatically or even cease to exist as such within a very short time, i.e., within a few years. I base this assumption on my observations of village life and interviews with residents of Céu do Mapiá who universally expressed the same declaration - "sem daime, nada!" - Meaning, without daime (ayahuasca); nothing!²⁴

Conceptual Paradigm

The primary conceptual paradigm in which I originally had planned to situate my research is the philosophical study of experiences and consciousness called *phenomenology* as developed by Edmund Husserl.²⁶ Phenomenology is an attempt at scientific categorization of mental phenomena by creating conditions for the objective study of philosophical problems typically regarded as subjective; these include consciousness and the content of the conscious experiences such as judgments, perceptions, and emotions. In this attempt to be maximally scientific, phenomenology attempts to position itself at a clear distance from other disciplines, i.e., it does not attempt to study consciousness from the perspective of clinical psychology.

Instead, it seeks through systematic reflection to determine the essential properties and structures of experience.²⁷

Two approaches in a phenomenological study are possible. *Transcendental phenomenology* focuses on people's reported meaning of a lived experience or phenomenon while *hermeneutic phenomenology* refers to a researcher's interpretation of texts in order to determine a subject's lived experience with some kind of phenomenon.

Soon into my field research I became aware that the goal of trying to understand, much less to accurately analyze or even describe someone's experiences in a religious setting while under the influence of ayahuasca, arguably the world's most potent psychoactive substance, is hopelessly futile. This is not only due to my limited experience and professional or academic background, but mostly to the nature of the experience which simply overpowers the capacity of language to encapsulate and manage adequately. It is perhaps for these reasons that it is considered uncouth or even taboo in Santo Daime circles to inquire about what another participant "saw" or felt during the processions which are called "*trabalhos*", or works. What is expected is that each member present undertakes the experience for his/her own personal growth while participating in a collective ritualistic environment that is designed with the intentions to have each participants' individual, indescribable experience contribute to the collective efforts and identity of Santo Daime as a religious community. Every aspect of Santo Daime processions, from the uniform to the hymnals, gender roles and organization of physical space, is fine-tuned with this goal in mind, and each will receive its due ink in the pages to follow.



Image 2: Aerial image of the Village with a red arrow pointing to the school²⁷

This field research was conducted primarily in the Céu do Mapiá village, which is located in the Brazilian state of Amazonas about 30 kilometers up the Mapiá River from the nearest town called Boca do Acre. Céu do Mapiá was established in 1983 and is the spiritual headquarters of the growing Santo Daime religion which has a strong following throughout 50 churches in Brazil and 50 more abroad at the time of writing.²⁸

The Association of the residents of Céu do Mapiá (AMVCM) collaborates with the Brazilian Environmental Protection Agency (IBAMA) to oversee approximately 560.000 hectares of The National Forest of Purus and the National Forest of Mapiá-Inauini designated as nationally protected land.²⁹ According to the community's website quoting an IBAMA report,

“only 0,066% of the area has been deforested, though most of this areas had already been cleared before the settlement of the people of Céu do Mapiá.”³⁰

This thesis also contains some conclusions reached after conducting brief field research in two related Santo Daime communities, *Virgem da Luz* in Rio de Janeiro, and *Colonia Cinco Mil* in Rio Branco. Some mention of the local Los Angeles Santo Daime community *Céu dos Anjos* will also appear throughout the thesis when relevant.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis is a result of empirical social research defined as a “systematic observation and analysis of social life for the purpose of finding and understanding patterns in that reality.”³¹

The main question this field research wishes to explore can be summed up as the following: what is the nature of the socio-economic organization of Céu do Mapiá; i.e., what is the organizational structure of the village, how does the village community function and how does it interact with the surrounding environment?

An underlying theoretical question is whether sociocratic governance in the absence of recognized hierarchical structures in such large communities (defined here as having a population greater than 100) is possible? My conclusion is that some form of a highly structured hierarchy, whether officially sanctioned or informally recognized and respected, is necessary for the development and governance of such a large, isolated village community as Céu do Mapiá. Thus, communities based on more conservative values which assumes a formal system of hierarchy might have a significantly stronger chance to grow and prosper as opposed to those that are strictly sociocratic, due ultimately to the operational characteristics of such arrangements. Whether this hierarchy would or should remind more of the “Philosopher King” model rather than of a “Leviathan” should best be left as a topic of future works.

A secondary and unavoidable question asks what effects on social organization and development does the use of ayahuasca have in Céu do Mapiá, and similarly, how does Santo

Daime doctrine relate to environmental conservation. These questions naturally raise a series of sub-questions in each of the following categories:

Economic – What economic activities do residents engage in and how is labor structured and compensated? What goods and services are consumed and produced? Where are the markets for consumption and sale of goods and services used/produced by the community? How are revenues allocated?

Political – What kind of political model is practiced in this community? Is there a sanctioned hierarchy of authority and how are such powers derived/assigned? How are major decisions affecting the collective made? Is there some form of a legislative structure in the community and if so what is the structure of rules and/or laws and how are they enforced?

Religious – What are the core beliefs and practices, and are these defining characteristics shared among all members? What is the importance of ayahuasca in the religious context? What is the relationship to persons and ideas non-aligned to Santo Daime doctrine?

Social – What is the nature of the social corpus and how is it organized? What are the demographics of the community? Are there common traits shared by a large portion of the population? How is education and healthcare conducted? What cultural norms are promoted and what practices and ideas are discouraged? What is the nature of the family unit?

The majority of current knowledge is derived primarily from the community's own website and from a very limited academic articles available online, thus my presence in the community for the purposes of conducting this necessary field research has proved to be invaluable in gaining a deeper insight into its social organization and community dynamics. It is principally that personal experience that informs this thesis.

METHODOLOGY

This research is an ethnographic case study. I intended to spend eight weeks residing in the community. However my time there amounted to two weeks instead, due primarily to having difficulties in making initial contact and getting information on how best to gain permission to stay and conduct research, and finally by reactions to anti-malarial medication which caused constant debilitating headaches due to one particular side effect, cerebral hypertension. Nonetheless my two weeks were very productive and insightful, and they allowed for sufficient time to develop important relationships in the community and gain understanding of community dynamics that have informed my research and methodology. Although surveys might have been helpful, the bulk of the information was derived from various field research methods such as systematic participant observation and interviewing. Historical methods were of limited benefit due to the unavailability of historical literature on the community. I was able to conduct 18 interviews encompassing a wide array of individuals, majority of whom are permanent residents with three being foreign visitors, aged between 18 and 93, eight of which were interviews conducted with women and 10 with men. My visit came shortly after the conclusion of the most active period of religious festivities and celebrations which take place in June, as well as the special commemoration of the 90th birthday of the community's matriarch Rita Gregório de Melo, affectionately called Madrinha Rita. During the summer months over 500 foreign visitors from all over the globe descended on the community as they do each year, majority of whom, I was told, are Santo Daime followers in their host countries.³² Nonetheless, the two weeks during my stay were surprisingly very active with events and ceremonies with on average one special procession happening every third day. I was also able to witness a community meeting organized

by the Resident's Association (AMVCM) which had called for a general assembly to discuss a multitude of issues needing collective review. I was also given full access to the AMVCM office and invited by its current president to sift through hundreds of pages recording the community's communications with the state, NGO's, and other agencies, and outlining the community's plan for further development. A stack of paperwork nearly two feet high provided extremely valuable insight into how the community established itself and how it continues to develop. The level of detail and professionalism in developing this cache of documents is very impressive indeed and perhaps speaks to the ample presence of academics and professionals who did and still do call Céu do Mapiá home. This was also the time of the production efforts to replenish the sacrament used during the June visits which provided a very unique opportunity to witness and analyze the labor practices and other interesting processes described in detail in subsequent chapters relating to the production of ayahuasca.

Selection of Data Source

Selection of data sources was limited to Céu do Mapiá. The most optimal sampling style I could imagine is randomly selecting residents of all ages who have resided in the community for at least two years. I think random sampling was most valuable in reaching the widest range of relevant data I wished to gather about life in the community. I intended to conduct my interviews between males and females along the demographic characteristics of the community and believe that I was successful in accurately portraying the ratio considering an official census has not been performed since 2011.³³ As anticipated, my interview questions and observational strategies continuously evolved with the goal of becoming more “focused, context-specific and diverse” as I employed creativity to adapt the general research questions into methodology.³⁴ It was crucial

for me to develop trust with the residents I interviewed, for small community dynamic have proven to be a difficult maze to maneuver as elucidated in subsequent chapters. Thus some interviews were of a very formal nature with time scheduled with the interviewee to sit down and go through a set list of questions in an uninterrupted time and space, while other interviews happened during leisurely walks, or during the working hours at the production facility in which I volunteered, or even simply being the designated ear to covert whispers while sifting through a pile of uncooked beans at the local kitchen; the grievances of some residents are many, and numerous were those eager to have their discontents recorded by me, while equally numerous were those whose discontents were obvious but who clearly did not feel at liberty to voice them openly to me, a visitor collecting such sensitive information. My presence in the community was at times greeted with less than welcoming attitudes, particularly by the matriarch of the community herself, Rita Gregório de Melo who, upon my casual and erroneous introduction by a local resident as a journalist, did not hesitate to voice her immediate disapproval of my presence and politely deny any prospects of an interview.

Data Analysis

In order to better be able to evaluate early conclusions I intended to analyze my data simultaneously during collection, however the scarce availability to charge my recording devices made this very difficult. For the sake of expediency and protecting the anonymity of my subjects, I used the strategy of coding for data analysis. Coding has allowed for categorical organization of data for further analysis and review which, as was expected, has revealed repeating themes. Such a system was divided into three sub-categories, namely the organizational, substantive, and theoretical. Organizational category is defined as a collection of generally broad subjects or

issues that are established prior to interviews or observations, or that are anticipated.³⁴

Substantive categories are primarily descriptive, in a broad sense that include “description of participants’ concepts and beliefs” without implying a more abstract theory.³⁴ The process of abstraction however takes place within theoretical categories.

Ethical Issues

I did not anticipate or experience any overarching ethical issues to be concerned about. It was important to establish a professional relationship with the local population and make the purpose of my visit clear in such a way that did not interfere with the research. As anticipated, my level of integration in the community was fairly involved considering Céu do Mapiá is an isolated village where I was residing as a guest in resident's homes for the duration of my research. I never stifled the potential local efforts to involve me in the quotidian activities of the community for I wished to gain deeper insights only achievable in this way. I also wished to develop a working relationship with the community for I was their guest and I desired to hear from as many of the residents as possible.

Validity & Reliability

There are a number of questions pertaining to validity and reliability that had to be addressed. It was prudent that I adequately determine the causal relationships within the community relating to their operational successes. The challenge lay in proving that the positive or negative effects that I was observing are related to a particular phenomenon in the community rather than another, or a combination of others. For example, how could one be certain that the higher general wellbeing of community members compared to their regional counterparts as

quoted earlier is due to regular consumption of ayahuasca rather than other factors such as their communal lifestyle or even their faith, or availability of resources and support, etc.? How can one be certain the positive characteristics aren't a result of a combination of factors? How does one make any steadfast conclusions about the distribution of wealth if the actual dollar amounts of remittances entering the community are not known or revealed? In such a difficult environment it proved to be a challenge to try and examine particular variables in isolation. Search for discrepant evidence and negative cases would also have strengthened the validity of reached conclusions, and more time in the field would have allowed for this. However, the intensive nature of my research in virtue of my total and complete immersion in the community helped elucidate deep insights over a short period of time while helping to avert premature theories.

Comparative analysis might be possible with other self-sustained communities to explore the question of whether sociocracy and direct democracy is a viable governing style with long-term successes for communities with large populations comparable to that of Céu do Mapiá. However this comparison might be difficult to realize because to my knowledge no other comparable community comes close to having such a large population, which seems to be the key variable here. Also, no other community to my knowledge engages in collective, regular, and ritual use of ayahuasca and/or has one principle religion shared among all members. Nonetheless devoting some effort to looking at social dynamics of other such communities would undoubtedly be of benefit, but was well out of reach of this humble work in progress.



Image 3: A busy procession in Céu do Mapiá, photographer unknown, 2015.³⁵



Image 4: The most recent aerial image of the village center showing the church reconstruction project in progress, photographer unknown.³⁶

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

ON THE ORIGINS OF SANTO DAIME & CÉU DO MAPIÁ; A BRIEF HISTORY

Santo Daime is the recognized name of a syncretic religion with Brazilian roots in the western state of Acre in the 1920's. The contemporary religious organization that heads the church is called "*Igreja do Culto Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal*" (ICEFLU, formerly CEFLURIS) which translates to "Church of the Eclectic Cult of the Fluid Universal Light". According to one of my interviewees who holds an administrative role in the community, the defining characteristic of Santo Daime doctrine as an Eclectic Cult is that it is "an entity with a capacity to receive and answer to everything that comes from the eternal spirit of the good which is God".³⁷ The narrative of inception is attributed to a man named Raimundo Irineu Serra, a rubber tapper and grandson of slaves who at age 18 went to the Peruvian border to work as a rubber tapper. There he encountered Amazonian shamanist traditions many of which used what is widely considered the most powerful psychoactive substance, a rather simple plant brew called ayahuasca. According to the official ICEFLU organization website, the story goes that Raimundo Irineu Serra spent eight days fasting in the rainforest, and while under the influence of ayahuasca, he received an apparition of the Virgin Mary instructing him to start a new religion.³⁸ Within a short time this new syncretic tradition gained a substantial following among the rural farming and rubber tapping communities of the western Brazilian Amazon, weaving the main Christian teachings with other esoteric, spiritist, indigenous, animist, and afro-Brazilian traditions around the ritual use of ayahuasca which was from then on referred to as "Daime". In fact, ayahuasca is so central to the religion that its name, Santo Daime, can be translated into "holy ayahuasca". The word Daime also relates to the imperative in Portuguese for "give me",

which alludes to the Santo Daime belief that ayahuasca is a source of various insights and virtues one can be enlightened with through participation in religious ceremonies. The phrase "*Dai-me força, dai-me amor*" translating to "give me strength, give me love" is one that reoccurs with regular frequency throughout the hymnals. Santo Daime ceremonies are called "*trabalhos*", which translates to "works" alluding to their physically and psychologically strenuous nature resulting from both the length of processions that can last up to 12 hours, and to the physiological and psychological effects of the sacramental brew ayahuasca. In the Santo Daime circles ayahuasca is often referred to as a teacher plant and thus according to their beliefs, one must "work through" and endure the severely nauseating and exhausting physiological and psychological effects of ayahuasca in order to be enlightened, humbled, and encouraged, as well as to receive understanding and deliverance.



Image 5: Raimundo Irineu Serra standing tall at 1.98 meters.³⁹

How it came to pass that a grandson of slaves, Raimundo Irineu Serra, who was exceptionally tall and dark skinned got to be addressed as "Master" in the Brazil of the 1930's is intriguing in its own right. What followed in these early stages of Santo Daime was the systematization of practice through dress, song, dance, ritual, and organization of physical space, all of which are detailed in further pages. After his death in 1971, his principle disciple, a canoe maker by the name of Sebastião Mota de Melo (1920 -1990) took reigns of the non-profit religious organization then called Centro Eclético da Fleunte Luz Universal Raimundo Irineu Serra (Eclectic Center of the Fluid Universal Light Raimundo Irineu Serra - CEFLURIS). Two years after the death of Raimundo Irineu Serra, Sebastião Mota de Melo along with a humble following initiated a small community outside of Rio Branco, the capital city of the state of Acre, which they named *Colonia Cinco Mil* with goals to put into practice his own ideal of communitarian life.⁴⁰ There, during the 1970's, a large church was constructed which stands to this day to serves the community with a population of about 40 where I also had a chance to spend some time in late July of 2016.



Image 6: Sebastião Mota de Melo in the center of his congregation, in front of the Colonia Cinco Mil.⁴¹

In 1980 however, Sebastião Mota de Melo left Colonia Cinco Mil to occupy 10,000 square feet of fairly productive land south of Boca do Acre, allegedly in search of a more rural location outside of the influences of the city. However, according to my own findings from various interviews I conducted in Céu do Mapiá and Colonia Cinco Mil, the reason for this move actually is attributable to internal conflicts within the community that developed over the religious use of cannabis.⁴² Disagreements between elders who saw no reconciliation for the use of cannabis in Santo Daime rituals and those who revered it as an important sacrament (so much so that its assigned nomenclature is "*Santa Maria*") caused a rift within the community, and about one hundred members in favor followed Sebastião Mota de Melo out of Colonina Cinco Mil and into a new territory south of Boca do Acre where they would start a new community which they named *Rio do Ouro*. This community labored there for over two years until the unexpected contestation of the supposed proprietor of the land, a rubber plantation by the name of Santa Filomena made claim to the occupied territory.⁴³ Despite the alleged expressed

authorization of the occupation of this territory by the Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária - INCRA which stands for the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform - a federal government authority responsible for agrarian reform, national registry of land, and administration of public lands.⁴⁴ The appearance of the original landlord prompted the group to abruptly pack up and move to an even more isolated, entirely vacant part of the National Forest of Purus (FLONA Purus) up the Mapiá river and into a long-abandoned rubber tapping camp deep into the jungle that eventually would become Vila Céu do Mapiá. Prior to the move a federal commission assigned by the Ministry of Justice was sent to Rio do Ouro to inspect the community and investigate the use of ayahuasca. The commission was headed by an army colonel, and in its company were three scholars: the anthropologist Fernando La Rocque, the psychologist Paulo Roberto Silva de Sousa, and the writer Alex Polari de Alverga who spent years imprisoned and tortured as a vocal political dissident of the Brazilian military junta. All three would later adopt Santo Daime doctrine, assume honorary distinctions of "*Padrinho*" (Godfather) in Santo Daime circles, and be the first ones to usher the expansion of Santo Daime doctrine outside of the Amazon between 1982-1983, leading new parishes in Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, and Visconde de Mauá respectively.⁴⁴ According to one of the current residents I interviewed who occupies an administrative role in the community, the Brazilian government made a promise of indemnity to CEFLURIS for the occupation of the new territory, the village of Céu do Mapiá in the early 1980's.⁴⁵ Now, over thirty years later, Céu do Mapiá represents the "third stage" of Sebastião Mota de Melo's vision according to another resident of the community.⁴⁶

The first expedition sent up the Mapiá River to settle the new location included 30 men and 4 women, who immediately ran into severe difficulties transporting the few tons of provisions including food and tools up the *Igarapé Mapiá* waterway which is more accurately described as a narrow and shallow canal, rather than a river. The descriptive noun "*Igarapé*" stems from the Tupi words for "*canoe*" and "*path*".), and a later chapter describes in detail the skills necessary to navigate these waters.⁴⁷

Life in the village was extremely difficult for the about 100 initial settlers of the area. Lack of access and electricity forced the dependence on brute manual labor to slowly construct the community while also maintaining a strict adherence to the religious calendar. Stories are proudly repeated over late night bonfires of how up to 60 people slept in hammocks in the first constructed dwelling that could easily be converted into an open space (called Salão) where Santo Daime ceremonies would take place. Severe bouts with Malaria that persist in the community today swept through regularly threatening the survival of the community. Malaria in these isolated parts where any serious medical help is a grueling and dangerous boat ride away is a life threatening illness, and although medical knowledge in the community of local medicinal plants has evolved to make life a bit easier for those struck with the illness, there are no guarantees. In fact, one of my interviews involved a young man who very recently overcame his second bout with malaria, which, in his own words, made him feel as though he "lost a decade" of his life.⁴⁸ Western medicine is largely unavailable, expensive, and inadequate; I myself, after only two weeks in the community started to have constant debilitating headaches, which I later learned were caused by the malaria pills I was instructed to take daily up to a month after leaving the area, and which caused cerebral hypertension and which ultimately can lead to a permanent

loss of vision. Another American I interviewed who is extensively involved with the Santo Daime church in Hawaii also decided to leave the community after he started exhibiting symptoms of malaria having spent six weeks there. This part of the Amazon jungle, no more so than all the others I assume, is a hostile and unforgiving place that not many could or would want to call home. About the quotidian challenges faced by the residents more will be said.

During the reign of Sebastião Mota de Melo the main food sources were plantations of rice, beans, corn, and manioc, while the main source of income for the entire community was rubber, up to two tons of which was tapped from the surrounding rainforest monthly and sold in the two closest urban centers, Boca do Acre and Pauaini, upstream and downstream the Purus river respectively.⁴⁴ The income earned went toward procuring the various necessities such as sugar, cooking oil, fuel, soap, tools, and other provisions that could not be sourced from the community, which were then equitably shared among the community members each month based on each family's needs.⁴⁸ According to some of the original settlers of the community I interviewed, the eldest of whom is in her mid 90's and one of 3 nonagenarians in the village, this form of a monthly stipend for each family maintained a certain form of equity in the standard of living for all members while fostering a stronger communitarian identity. According to all those I interviewed who were present in those earlier times, this strong communitarian identity slowly started to disintegrate after the introduction of capital in the form of money and private enterprise in the community in the mid 90's following the death of Sebastião Mota de Melo.⁴⁹ The sharing of wealth through the practice of monthly stipends along with the absence of money and private enterprise in the community all led to an elevated standard of life for the community's residents as compared to other river communities in the region.⁵⁰ The universal and strict adherence to

conservative Christian ideology is often credited with the resulting lack of many other problems that plagued urban areas, such as alcoholism, crime, malnutrition, and violence. The general trend that I discovered through observation and interviews has indicated a rise in unequal distribution of wealth, with those having stronger ties to the Melo family and maintaining an influential role in the ICEFLU organization enjoying a much more comfortable existence than others, particularly those residing in the outskirts of the community. Some of these residents seem to have strong grievances against the current status quo; one middle aged woman, a mother of five who is of indigenous descent and works any odd job she can find such as cooking and cleaning in the community, revealed to me that the original egalitarian model is non-existent and that her family "even goes hungry" from time to time.⁵¹ Another man who is a sole proprietor of a little grocery store in the village center made little effort to conceal his discontent with the way the village was run, claiming that "corruption" and redirection of funds from foreign visitors which constitute a significant source of income for the community businesses was rampant and always skewed toward the Melo family and their kin.⁵² According to many interviewees I conducted, alcohol and hard drugs such as cocaine have also allegedly entered the community in recent months which has negatively influenced the sense of cohesion and even introduced scenes of overt conflicts between residents to which I myself have been a witness on multiple occasions. In one astounding episode that took place immediately upon the conclusion of an hours long procession at the church, some of the village elders and particularly the daughter of Sebastião Mota de Melo gave a strongly worded diatribe and warning about the increasing appearance of outsiders from Boca do Acre in the region, particularly young males who, according to her, come to sell drugs, procure sex and introduce other perceived vices into the community. After 15 minutes of an increasingly agitated monologue, she called out a teenage boy in the crowd who

was not uniformed and apparently not from the village, shaming him for his shirt bearing an image of a cladly dressed woman which prompted the boy to storm out from the church and into the dark night in embarrassment. She repeatedly kept mentioning how the cohesion her father created has been slowly eroding as of late, and upon the conclusion of her speech everyone left home without the usual socializing that typically follows church processions. Her authoritative message for the residents to heed caution with young visitors from the region seems to have been received by all present, for hers was the last word of the night.

Answering the question of “why does Céu do Mapiá exist” in a 2004 report, author and resident magna Cunha dos Santos and Renato Magalhães responded – for a simple life in the forest, with harmony and spirituality.⁵³

ON COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

The community prides itself on the creation of ten institutional organs that together work toward the original goal of creating "a model aimed at self-sufficiency in harmony with the forest".⁵⁴ Each institution is volunteer based and claims to have no individual leadership although I found this to be inaccurate for some. Some institutions are more active in the community, and most operate in an informal manner to address various needs in the community. What follows is a succinct description of each institution currently operating in Céu do Mapiá.

1. *Igreja do Culto Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal* (ICEFLU) which translates to the *Church of the Eclectic Cult of the Fluent Universeal Light*, formerly *Igreja Culto Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal Patrono Raimundo Irineu Serra - CEFLURIS* which translates to *The Eclectic Cult of the Fluent Universal Light*, is the official nonprofit religious organization registered with the Brazilian state. This organization is the patronage of Sebastião Mota de Melo often affectionately referred to as "Padrinho" Sebastião, the principle disciple of founder Raimundo Irienu Serra referred to as "Mestre" Irineu. After the death of Mestre Irineu, Padrinho Sebastião established two communities prior to founding the village of Céu do Mapiá as described in previous chapters. The first community is called Colonia Cinco Mill where Sebastião Mota de Melo along with a number of original followers of Mestre Irineu raised a modern and fairly large Church which still stands and offers services to this day. He would eventually leave to establish a new community called Rio do Ouro which would, after about two years of endurance abandon its location and move to the current location of Céu do Mapiá. The current organization is led by one of Sebastião Mota de Melo's sons, Alfredo Mota de Melo

popularly referred to as “Padrinho” Alfredo, and has expanded the Santo Daime doctrine to 50 churches in Brazil, and 50 abroad at the time of writing although this number allegedly continues to grow.⁵⁵ Céu do Mapiá is considered the spiritual headquarters of the Santo Daime religion, and thus of the ICEFLU organization.

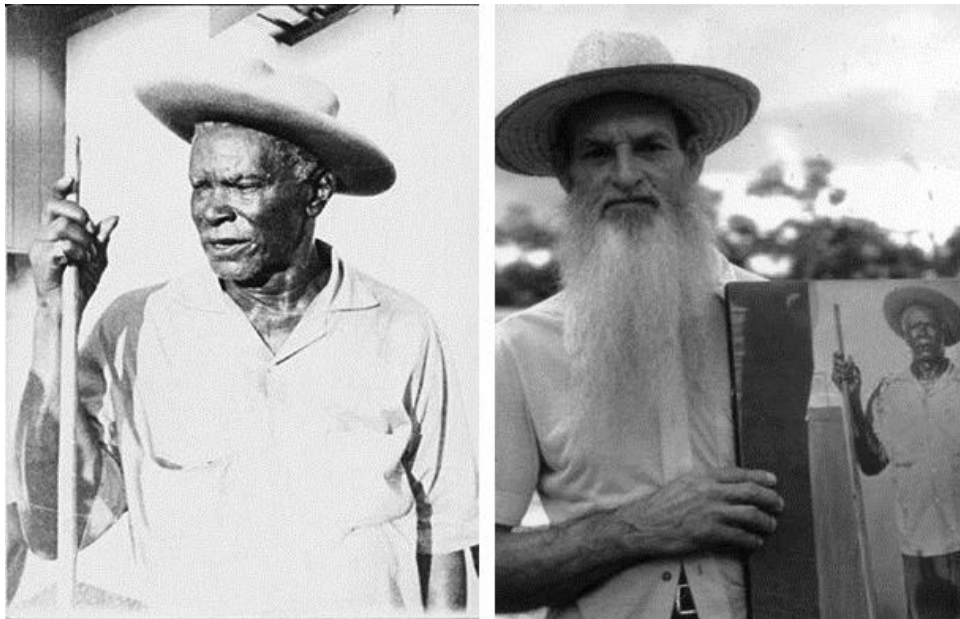


Image 7: Sebastião Mota de Melo holding a photo of Raimundo Irineu Serra, Photographer unknown⁵⁶

2. *Instituto de Desenvolvimento Ambiental Raimundo Irineu Serra (IDA/CEFLURIS)* is a community organization whose mission is to "create, promote, administer, and stimulate community initiatives that aim at the protection of the local environment, self-sufficient development, preservation of community identity, and the improvement of the standard of living for the population living in the area of the Purus National Forest."⁵⁷ This organization claims to have implemented a number of strategies toward achieving its objectives which includes the cooperation with various governmental and non-governmental organization in and outside of Brazil, such as the World Wildlife Fund, to create plans of action consistent with their mission. I confirmed this claim through the sifting of hundreds of pages of official communication and other documentation made available to me by the president of the AMVCM. One of the most

elaborate projects the organization undertook was the *Agro Praia Floresta* project for food security completed in 2003 where general and specific objectives were outlined, followed by ways in realizing and evaluating the efforts toward realizing them. The report elaborates on how the proposed 20 hectares of beach head along the Mapia, Purus, and Jurua rivers are to be agriculturally developed, and how the R\$250,000 budget was to be allocated. A complementary review of the project and plan of action completed by the Universidade Federal de Viçosa Centro de Ciências Agrárias (CCO) was annexed to the original plan and it explores in further detail the development of sanitation and emergency response within the community, as well as how to raise socioeconomic standards for the residents of Céu do Mapiá.⁵⁸

3. *Associação de Moradores da Vila Céu do Mapiá (AMVCM)* which translates to the *Residents Association of the Village of Céu do Mapiá*, has as one of its primary objectives to address the many needs and obstacles of the residents of the community, and to unify their voice in important decisions affecting the whole by calling a general assembly and promoting local participation through voting. The AMVCM is also responsible for collecting census data, as well as overseeing the operations of a small hotel that can accommodate 40 guests in Boca do Acre. Other duties of the AMVCM is to serve as the starting point and greeting center for all visitors, and to help find lodging during their stay. There also is a telephone that can send and receive calls at a cost per minute basis to users. It has a president at the helm who is voted in by a periodic general assembly of the residents, and this role is not paid. The current president is a man named Oswaldo Guimarães Carvalho, a former journalist and current teacher at the local school, Escola Cruzeiro do Céu.⁵⁹

4. *The community school Escola Cruzeiro do Céu* was originally an informal space for learning created in 1986 with the first instructors being volunteers and parents coming from various backgrounds who felt capable of providing informal instruction to children as well as to teach basic literacy to adults. In 1994 an influx of financial support from the municipality as well as the Santo Daimé brotherhood enabled the construction of two large wooden buildings which house about 250 students between the ages of 4-70, up from 193 recorded in the 2009 census, and where classes are held on a daily basis for up to four hours per day by teaching professionals from within the community who have completed formal pedagogical training.⁶⁰ In August of 2001 the school's educational and administrative system adopted the official educational program of the Brazilian state of Amazonas. According to the official website of the ICEFLU organization the school has 15 classes, and 16 educators and other employees that receive their compensations from the state.⁶¹ It also offers public internet access and two computers, however the connection is extremely limited.



*Image 8: Community school Cruzeiro do Céu.*⁶²

5. *Cosinha Geral Comunitária* or *The Community Kitchen* is one of the oldest institutions in the community. It is represented by a large cafeteria located in the very center of the community which offers free meals every Monday during which residents get together for a few hours in the morning to clean and complete maintenance around the community. This work is voluntary and can involve anything from picking up trash to helping clear trails and open the new road that will lead to the Purus River at the São Sebastião farm where the Igarapé Mapiá joins the Purus. It was created to represent Sebastião Mota de Melo's ideal to "work and eat together", and originally it operated every day providing meals to residents from a communitarian pantry.⁶³ Today it also serves as the local distribution center of the popular federal program called *Programa Fome Zero* initiated by former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and which provides a stipend to working class Brazilian families as an incentive for keeping their children in school.

6. *Oficina Escola de Arte e Artesanato Jardim da Natureza - School of Art and Handycrafts Nature's Garden* provides training and space for local artisans who work with local natural materials such as seeds, fibers, and leaves to create various handicrafts such as jewelry and toys which are sold mostly to visitors. According to the official ICEFLU website the "Workshop School aims at better training through courses, and information exchanges addressing ecological planting techniques, fashion and contemporary design."⁶⁴ During my stay in Céu do Mapiá there no events took place at the space.

7. *Organização de Mulheres EMFLORES*, or the community's women's organization was created in 2007 aiming to address the needs of women in the community such as employment

and assistance with household chores by providing laundry, a project that is still in the works. The women I interviewed were hesitant to elaborate on the parts of life in the community that represent a particular challenge, however some of the more common concerns expressed were the lack of medical services pertaining to the needs of women in particular, and the lack of pediatric and dentist services for children. Some women choose to give birth in the community however most prefer to do so in Boca do Acre. Employment opportunities for women is very limited as will be elaborated in the chapter titled *On Gender Roles*.⁶⁵

8. *Santa Casa de Saude Padrinho Manoel Corrente* and *Centro de Saude de Saudi Vila Céu do Mapiá* represent the community's health centers which offer basic medical care. The care is very basic indeed depending solely on volunteers labor and donations, and mostly extends to providing indigenous medicines to treat symptoms such as rashes, stings from insect bites, and even malaria which is actively present in the region. During my visit I observed that the Centro de Saude appeared to have been closed indefinitely, with an old solitary wheel chair representing the humble buildings only furniture. The Santa Casa which is directly in front of the Casa da Saude does however attract regular traffic hosting various ceremonies, two of which I describe in subsequent chapters. However, any serious medical help requires a trip outside of the community; the most current patient requiring medical services outside of the community is Madrinha Rita herself, this year 91 years old, and in need of a specialist for which a helicopter was summoned to fly her out of the village.⁶⁶



Image 9: An herbal apothecary located inside the Santa Casa Manuel Corrente.⁶⁷

9. Hotels and Pousadas: Céu do Mapiá collectively owns and operates one hotel in the Boca do Acre, Hotel Floresta, in a non-for profit manner. The housing units in the village itself include Pousada São Miguel which can house 25 persons, Pousada 2000 that can accommodate up to 40 people, Pousada Sol, Lua, e Estela for up to 10 guests located deeper in the forest, and Pousadas Viva Santa Rita and Sao Jose each capable of housing up to six persons.⁶⁸ In my observation, although the AMVCM is chiefly responsible for finding accommodations for all the visitors, some pousadas, such as São Miguel operate not as a non-profit but rather as a personal source of income for the operator – at this time that operator happens to be one of Alfredo Mota de Melo’s sons, Alvino Mota de Melo who lives at the residence which he recently occupied. The price of the humble rooms with one or two twin size beds and mosquito nets was negotiated down from R\$80 to R\$50 per night, which was still higher than the price of a room in Hotel Floresta in the center of Boca do Acre with modern accommodations such as internet and air conditioning.



Image 10: The Village Céu do Mapiá photographed from above. Pousada São Miguel can be seen directly in the center of the photograph, facing the Bridge.⁶⁸

10. A few grocery and general goods markets operate within the community, in a competitive capitalist way, each providing in general the same array of basic food stuffs such as flour and sugar, and other, fairly new, products such as candies and coca cola products. The general store Comercial Nova Era, Sao Jose, Beira Rio, Sabor do Beija Flor, Da Ponte, along with the two bakeries Padaria Pão Nosso de Cada Dia, and the bakery Elizabeth operated daily within the community and also act as main points of gathering of the youth.⁷⁰

11. From a radio tower volunteers emit a radio program called Radio Jagube FM, with a reach of about 3km and operating daily between 6-9PM.⁷²

ON REACHING THE VILLAGE

Vila Céu do Mapiá is a very secluded village community isolated at least one full day canoe ride from the nearest urban center Boca do Acre in western Brazil. To reach the village one must first fly into Rio Branco, the capital city of the state of Acre. Rio Branco is a small city for Brazilian standards of about 300,000 thousand inhabitant from where a limited number of bus lines serve on the partly dirt road that leads to Boca do Acre, a dusty little town of 30,600 residents on the outer south-western frontier of the Brazilian Amazon Basin.⁷² A grueling six hour road journey cutting straight through the vast dusty pasture is in the wet season usually impossible to make due to the red dirt road turning into a muddy swamp that keeps swallowed vehicles disabled for weeks at a time. Even during my passage some parts of the road being repaired had such a thick layer of soft earth grated by tire tracks that it looked more like a plowed potato field barely fit for tractors than a road meant for passenger vehicles. Nonetheless this remains the only road that connects Boca do Acre with the rest of the Brazil. During the wet season the main way of land transportation between the two urban centers is the Acre River which assumes a much longer journey by boat.



*Image 11: Wet season on the BR317 between Rio Branco and Boca do Acre.*⁷³

The small town of Boca do Acre which translates to “Mouth of Acre” lies on top of 30 or so meter high bank overlooking the Purus River where the Acre River begins flowing south toward Rio Branco, offering the alternate connection during the wet season. The junction is wide, each river being 500-900 feet across. Both muddy rivers flow between 5-10 MPH at their center at the time of my visit.

There is a limited number of lodging option in Boca do Acre, with one hotel owned by the AMVCM, and any foreigner is easily identifiable if not from personal appearance than from mannerisms that are so out of place for this Brazilian version of the Wild West. The only two other foreigners that exited the bus at the conclusion of our trip happened to be a middle aged French man, and a younger French woman, both who were baptized Daimistas and active members in the Paris congregation. The man is a father, husband, and high school teacher, and the woman was between occupations and unmarried at the time. Their reason for being in Boca do Acre, like my own and probably any other foreigner’s in this corner of the world, was to visit Céu do Mapiá. Both individuals spoke fluent Portuguese with a heavy French accent and only the man had previously visited Céu do Mapiá once, a decade earlier. Both had been involved with Santo Daime for over a decade, having been first exposed to it in France from where they picked up the Portuguese language in order to better follow the hymnals sung during processions.

The locals in Boca do Acre seemed to be quite familiar with Céu do Mapiá, many of whom lived in the community at some point in the past, or have relatives there. Transporting goods and people to and from the community is a daily necessity, and a task with which many

young men are involved as their main source of income. The navigator we contracted for the journey the next day was a young man of 22 who was born in Céu do Mapiá and shared residence between the town and the community as work demanded. Once we agreed on a price and organized the details for the following day's voyage, the young man returned to ask for R\$50 in advance for preparing the aluminum raft and purchasing the gasoline. The three of us foreigners slept in the same hotel our first night in Boca do Acre waking up early the next day eager to set off for Céu do Mapiá. However, it would be two more hours of waiting for our navigator to show before the journey began.



Image 12: Screenshot taken from Google Earth of Purus River and Céu do Mapiá village visible in the upper left corner.⁷⁴

ON GENDER ROLES

Gender roles in Céu do Mapiá are well defined. A familiar Brazilian rural social structure vis-a-vis gender roles takes shape in Mapiá as well. Men conduct the more physically demanding labor associated with life in a rural community, while women are expected to primarily tend the principle house chores of meal preparation, cleaning, and child rearing. Some women also work in commercial undertakings which include running a grocery store or bakery or producing handicrafts and official Santo Daime uniforms for sale. Other women have more unorthodox ways of making an income in the village providing spiritual or medicinal services often working for a donation which is expected and sometimes solicited. Many such services take place either in the persons own home, in the Casa da Saude which resembles an apothecary with shelves full of little brown hand labeled glass bottles, or the Santa Casa which often hosts many special ceremonies that attract mostly a female pool of participants, and looks more like an afro Brazilian Umbanda ceremony than a typical Santo Daime mass. I witnessed two particular ceremonies of this peculiar nature, the first taking place during the day where six elderly women and only one man performed a healing ritual over three fellow participants laying on neatly ordered leaves on the ground and covered in a white linen shroud. The leader of the ceremony was the same woman who gave me an informal interview in a whispering voice while we sat at the central kitchen one day picking through a pile of beans, waiting for the elderly woman who runs the kitchen and sells meals at R\$15 to prepare our lunch. During the ceremony her voice changed drastically, becoming more hoarse and high pitched, and she often fell into convulsions and vocalized unintelligible sounds what I could only conclude was glossolalia. Glossolalia is defined as "the phenomenon of (apparently) speaking in an unknown language, especially in

religious worship", also known as speaking in tongues.⁷⁵ Her whole attitude and physical movements intensified to be at times rather peculiar. Other women present participated by blowing smoke into the three "patients" laying on the ground and performing their own convulsions which sometimes escalated to exaggerated flaring of the arms or bending of the body, and uttering unintelligible noises which at times intensified to agonizing sounding shrieks. I carefully chose to use the verb "performing" because I left unconvinced that such behavior was as uncontrollable as the exhibitors attempted to portray. My doubts were amplified by the second seated ceremony at the Casa da Saude which took place at night and included no men at the center table. The convulsions and shrieks witnessed at this ceremony were immeasurably more intense than any other I have witnessed thus far, however I still remained unconvinced of their sincerity. One elderly woman who was particularly active would frequently raise from her chair, flail her arms, twist her body, and throw her head back so violently that on one occasion her glasses slipped off her face - her automatic reaction prompted her to pause the seemingly uncontrollable exhibitions and snatch them before the glasses hit the ground quickly placing them on the table in front and immediately continued the previous behavior. I observed intently, her and most of the other women present exhibiting much of the same peculiar behavior almost as though there was a competition of sorts as to who could attract most attention. Some women even dropped to the floor in hysteria to which others would rush in aid and a short glass of Daime which would, like magic, immediately bring an end to the exhibition. By the end of the ceremony well into the night I came to the conclusion that this queer behavior might be some sort of a way in which a woman can reach a position of power by creating the sense that she is the unique chosen medium through which an outside spirit or spirits communicate. This was the role of the other women mentioned previously who led the other peculiar day ceremony

described previously. This same woman was also the one I would unexpectedly encounter checking in a hotel I spent the night at in Boca do Acre after leaving the Céu do Mapiá. If a woman who otherwise has no special standing in the church itself and no particular way of changing that fact can make herself appear as the special one to exhibit the most severe behaviors during the ceremonies, perhaps her role as a shaman or a medium can be more readily accepted by others thus allowing her to reach a special level of respect and influence that she otherwise would not have been able to attain.

Although this critical assessment might, after more astute future observer's corrections, prove to be entirely unfair and erroneous, it is necessary to add that there seems to be another more direct and perhaps appealing way that women in the community might not only get to reach a level of influence that rival the most respected of the elders, but also in the process enable a woman from the community to travel the world and have her name be immortalized in Santo Daime circles. This rewarding opportunity is reserved to those women, typically young women, who have an exceptional, almost superhuman ability to memorize and recite musically the thousands of Santo Daime hymnals. These women called "Puxadoras" occupy what I argue is the most important role during Santo Daime ceremonies, setting the tone and leading the charge so to speak, and a subsequent chapter titled *On Sound and Movement* is devoted to their remarkable talent.

As for the males in the community, as mentioned previously most men are expected to contribute by performing varying forms of physical labor that life in the village necessitates. I have observed that navigating the rivers, here being the principle means of locomotion to and

from the nearest resupply center, is exclusively left to the male population. The navigators for transport of cargo and people tend to be young, able bodied males between the late teens and mid-thirties. Older navigators are also common, but they tend largely to their own smaller crafts and most commonly for personal needs such as fishing. One of the most striking things about the journey itself is how physically grueling the trip is. Being seated for up to 11 hours under the blistering tropical sun takes a serious toll on the body. As exciting as the novelty of the experience had been in the first hour of the trip, every minute after started to feel like an eternity, slowly transforming the excitement into a simple objective to endure through it. Looking back at the young navigator I first wondered why he had two layers of long sleeved shirts on, using a third to completely cover his face leaving only his eyes visible. The sun beating from above and reflecting from the water gave no respite, and neither did the insects that attacked anytime we moved slowly enough for them to make a landing and sting exposed skin. The brown water which splashes onboard from time to time with the motion of the raft or with surprisingly massive fish breaching regularly next to the raft seemed like a wise thing to avoid getting in the mouth or eyes, a fact later confirmed by our young navigator.

The duties of the navigator are many and leave no room for error. The navigator must remain absolutely vigilant and painstakingly observant for the duration of the entire trip; this was likely the reason he politely refused my offer to lend him my sunglasses. On the wide river Purus, which in places swelled to 1500 feet across, this task seems easier to achieve due to the ability to see obstacles and steer clear of them in a timely manner. However the main and most serious obstacle during the approximately five hour voyage on the big river is the complete and constant exposure to the tropical sun and the heat.

The nature of the work itself is demanding, to put it lightly, or grueling to be more precise. Navigating from Boca do Acre to in Céu do Mapiá, the canoer must leave early in the day, not merely to allow for enough time to arrive at Mapiá before nightfall, for a night spent entirely exposed to the Amazon jungle is universally unappealing and navigating safely in the dark is all but impossible, but to likewise shorten the amount of time the canoes are exposed to the unforgiving equatorial mid-day sun. With the river Purus being so expansive, the sun beats directly down upon any unfortunate floating thing, and taking advantage of the river's current, the navigator rides the middle of it where the current is strongest on straightaways. That is, of course, until the boat is no longer in the middle of the river, i.e., when navigating a curve, the fastest flow is on the outside corner. However even when navigating close to the banks shade remains elusive, for the navigator seldom can approach close enough to take advantage of the sparse shade of the trees desperately clinging to the ever changing banks that will swallow them in just a few rains when the sandy soil gets saturated and the river swells and eats away at its banks.

The critical importance of shade in these lands is quickly realized even for a urbanite such as myself simply by observing my own navigator as well as the other ones we would pass along the trip. Each local we saw on the river, transporting or fishing, was covered from head to toe with no exposed skin other than the face and hands. Our own navigator wore two layers of long sleeved shirts, and a third short sleeved shirt which he pulled over his head and, tying the sleeves in the rear, used it as a sort of a balaclava. I wondered why this young but experienced river navigator didn't use a hat, but my query was partly answered the first time a strong breeze

blew my hat off, forcing a frantic attempt to catch it in the air before losing it to the river. Not having some sort of a shield from the sun would be nothing short of torturous in such unforgiving tropical conditions. Using the shirt in such a way to completely cover the face leaving just an opening for the eyes also protects the rest of the face from the hot breeze, as well as preventing the muddy waters from splashing into the mouth which sometimes happens as surprisingly large fish over a meter in length leap up occasionally alongside the raft. In the later hours when navigating the smaller Mapiá River, I realized that a wide brimmed hat would be impractical considering the flora that must be dodged or ducked under every few minutes as the long canoe fights the opposing current in such a narrow passageway overcome with brushes and fallen trees.

Another factor that illustrates the importance of shade is the frequent encounter of a simple shaded shelter on the beach banks of the Purus. Some of the beach banks are hundreds of meters long and similarly very wide up until the tree line, thus they provide not merely an opportunity to dock, but some are also used as farming ground. It is not an uncommon sight to observe neat rows of what appears to be soy plants in the gently ascending part of the beach closest to the rainforest. Near these beaches inside the tree line some wooden structure is often visible, however often times the only sign of life is a simple frame structure made from a few sticks stretching a plastic tarp to create shade. On occasion one would see a woman bathing her kids in the river banks shaded by the makeshift sun screen, or a man cleaning fish or washing clothes, or dishes. It would not be outrageous to imagine that such shelters are perhaps also intended for emergency use.



Image 13: My own photograph of the northward journey on the Purus River.⁷⁶

A word or two about the noise is similarly necessary. Purus is a very large river, compared to Mapiá which is narrow, overcome by flora, and often extremely shallow, so shallow in fact that during some of the driest seasons it becomes extremely difficult to navigate. The flow of the two rivers on any given voyage to and from Boca do Acre will always be opposing, for Igarapé Mapiá flows away from the community to feed the great Purus, which in turn flows away from Boca do Acre to feed the greater Amazon. Thus a voyage to the community starts with traveling down current, and ends with struggling up against it once the Igarapé is reached. At the point of confluence of the two rivers the topography is particularly challenging because there is a bottleneck through which the current of the Igarapé Mapiá flows much stronger. The aggressive joining constantly beats and changes the muddy banks which raise straight up from the water in menacing formations so much so that the hostile sight created such a panic in me that I felt it was suddenly very wise to put on my orange life vest which I had been using as a seat cushion. In a short while the river journey would turn peaceful again, however my

introduction to the Igarapé Mapiá was an exciting and memorable one. The rest of the five-hour journey along the Mapiá was characterized by more peaceful currents and more enclosed canopies which were often so dense that the sky was blocked out entirely. At times the river journey represented an obstacle course with fallen logs and washed out vegetation coupled with sharp switchbacks and the occasional need to pass other canoes going in the opposite direction. What struck me personally was the exactness with which the young navigator memorized the river, at times slowing down for no apparent reason which immediately revealed itself as the canoe scraped a fallen log or another submerged obstacle undetectable to an untrained eye. What also struck me was his impressive stamina to remain attentive and standing the entire journey, taking only the necessary few brakes to change the engine and mend the propeller mechanism which bends from inevitable contacts with the sandy floor of the shallow river.

Similarly, a return voyage to Boca do Acre is composed of two distinct challenges for the navigator, each one of which requires absolute mastery; following the *down* flow of the Igarapé Mapiá, and then fighting *up* the stronger flowing Purus. Flowing down the Igarapé is a task more dangerous than it might seem considering the sharp bends and narrow passageways through the flora combined with the constant push from the current make maneuvering a task best left to true experts. In my own experience, the long and heavy wooden canoe made out of a single dugout tree trunk about 4 feet wide 18 feet long was quite a challenge to maneuver through the tight and shallow Igarapé - a fitting analogy would be descending the Gotthard Pass in a 1967 Chevrolet Impala, without much for brakes. At one point we caught up to a smaller craft and were forced to pass it, at the first opportunity which doesn't show itself too often in these waters. However, minutes after this a 110-degree curve which the long and heavy canoe was simply unable to

make in one turn forced the bow to overcompensate as the stern got pushed by the current behind it, thus simply closing the narrow passage like a big log as the water started to seep in from the port side. This in turn forced the navigator behind us that we had recently passed to ride straight into the overgrown bank, so as not to hit us directly. I immediately sprung out of my canoe, the bow of which had dug hard into the muddy inside bank, and pushed hard with my feet against it so that the raft would be dislodged, while the other navigator worked frantically to free his canoe from the tangled branches as the strong current threatened to overtake his light aluminum canoe. This was the first of three exciting but involuntary embankments for us that day.

Navigating up rather than down the Purus is a more challenging task due to the strong counter flow of the mighty river. Wishing to conserve fuel by riding against the weaker current, the navigator maneuvers all over the big river searching for the inside of bends. And thus the little craft is constantly crisscrossing the big river whenever an opposing bend is reached. This is also the preferred spot for fisherman who string their nets in the calmer waters, thus frequent circumnavigation is required, all of which add considerable time to the return journey which in my case ended a few hours after the sun had set and the dark night had fallen.



Image 14: Navigating down the Igarapé Mapiá at times resembles a dangerous obstacle course.⁷⁷

Two Engines

A mention of another factor regarding the river voyage is necessary now to shed light on what I found to be a very interesting and significant social dynamic of the region. For each visit to and from the community, four very distinct challenges vis-a-vis navigating the two rivers must be overcome. For this reason the navigators typically use two different engines - a larger, heavier, stronger one that can counteract the forces of a down flowing Purus current, and a smaller, lighter, weaker one that will allow the canoes to navigate through the shallow Igarapé Mapiá. The first engine can either be a typical familiar small marine engine whose throttle is operated by hand and whose turning is directed by the orientation of the entire engine block, or it can be a modified small bore non marine engine. The smaller version however is a modified single piston, 11 horsepower Honda engine that has an 8-10 foot pivoting metal shaft through which a smooth wooden drive shaft connected to the single lead propeller rotates.⁷⁸ This shaft is able to pivot vertically by hand so that propulsion can accommodate the shallow waters of the

Igarapé Mapiá, thus the navigator has the ability to raise the propeller entirely out of the water. The long drive shaft also effects the turning dynamics of the water craft allowing it to be turned much more aggressively than if the propeller was directly underneath the stern. This is necessary to be able to navigate the tight turns of the Igarapé Mapiá.

The small single piston engine such as the one most commonly used for the purposes of navigating the Igarapé is a modified and repurposed tool which has certain deficiencies; the heavy and cumbersome wooden drive shaft rotating inside the metal cylinder is lubricated by motor oil applied by hand at every stop, inevitably leeching into the waterway and often leaving visible streaks of iridescent pollution on the water's surface. Also, the engine muffler tends to rust and vibrate off soon after the engine is put to use on the river. And so the noise that the small Honda thumpers make riding up the rivers is truly painfully deafening. The effects are amplified throughout the Igarapé Mapiá where the sound is contained by the overpowering jungle canopy that tunnels the decibels from which there is no respite for the duration of the entire voyage.

A splitting migraine and continued buzzing in the ears is the unavoidable consequence of enduring a day of this vulgar mechanical screaming. Premature deafness is the consequence for most river navigators as one revealed to me in a subsequent interview.⁷⁹ At a certain point I realized my navigator did not use any hearing protection, so I offered a spare set of foam ear plugs intended for precisely this purpose, however this was politely rejected. The reason given was the simple fact that the navigator needs to listen to the engine for any signs of trouble, for this engine is his primary source of livelihood and transportation. And thus, as I was desperately trying to drown out the painful sound with my professional-grade 32dB earplugs, my teenage

navigator was proactively listening to it in the engine's immediate vicinity in order to pick up on any changes of the machine's operation. I did not have the means to calculate the decibels this engine produced, however suffice it to say that if I, sitting just a few feet away from my navigator, were to yell at the top of my lungs, neither of us would be able to hear a word of it.

Another important challenge for a river navigator is the fact that something needs to be done with the large and heavy first engine used for the Purus once the shallow Igarapé is reached. Namely, the navigator must relieve his water craft from such a heavy item for which he no longer has use. This is done on one particular beachhead of the Purus called the Sao Sebastião Farm located immediately to the south of the confluence with the Igarapé. On this sizable sandy beach there rested numerous other large marine Suzuki and Yamaha 40hp engines used to propel the six meter aluminum or wooden “Amazonboats”, each facing the same direction and each covered with a blue or black plastic tarp. This location, about five or so hours away from Boca do Acre, was our first stop, and I understood it to be a stop intended for a quick rest or toilet break. The navigator never took a single deep breath however, immediately getting to the laborious effort of removing the heavy engine, lifting it up from the canoes, and replacing this one with the smaller Honda engine, never asking for help. There on that lonely beach swarming with thousands of beautiful butterflies of the most brilliant maze and light blues was a young boy, perhaps seven or so, wearing ragged shorts and a t-shirt, and pulling a small wooden canoe model about two feet in length artfully dug out of from a single log. Something told me that it was safe to assume that this was likely the little boy's most prized toy, and the solitary game consisted of simply pulling this thing along the beach.



Image 15: Navigating up the Igarapé Mapiá poses its own challenges on a regular interval.⁸⁰

Upon embankment our navigator greeted the young boy and asked if his parents were home, the home itself nowhere to be seen. The boy said yes and our navigator ran toward the jungle some 120 or so meters away and disappeared for a few minutes, presumably to ask permission to leave his engine on the beach for however long it will take him to make the return journey. The significance of this act cannot be overestimated - it seems that in this region of river folk there is a system of mutual respect in which a man is able to leave his most prized possession and one immediately connected to the procurement of his livelihood, unattended on a lonely beach at least half a day away, and can remain fairly confident that the engine will be there waiting for him upon his eventual return. I find this practice to be striking, for an engine such as this, in this part of the world, is worth its weight in gold, and I don't presume it is too difficult to make it disappear, should one be so unfortunately inclined. Nonetheless, my young navigator left his prized possession there on that beach as did the four other navigators before us whose engines were also there for an unknown amount of time waiting to be reclaimed by their

rightful owners. He quickly installed the small engine, called us in, and immediately after leaving the beach took a strong left turn and headed towards the jungle - it took me a minute or so to spot the narrow confluence of the Igarapé Mapiá which we were to ride upstream for the remaining five or so hours of the journey.



Image 16: A small wooden house can be seen teetering on the edge of the crumbling banks of the River Purus.⁷⁶

ON DEMOGRAPHICS

The early demographic history of Santo Daime is not well documented especially from reputable outside sources, however according to numerous interviews conducted throughout Santo Daime communities, the congregation grew from the original collective of manual laborers of the impoverished Brazilian West, later to attract the more formally educated professionals of the urban interior and littoral zones of Brazil and other Latin American nations.⁸¹ This expanded group included everyone from intellectuals and dissidents, workers and professionals, artists, shamans, nomads and vagabonds: today those who call themselves Daimistas, or devotees of the Santo Daime doctrine, can be found in most corners of the world, with the number of officially recognized Santo Daime churches outside of Brazil having reached 50, matching the number of churches within Brazil.⁸¹

In 2004 a census of the FLONA Purus was completed by the Universidade Federal de Viçosa Centro de Ciências Agrárias (CCO), which identified 946 individual residents.⁸² In 2006 IBAMA concluded that 73% of the population was composed of Amazonian residents of local descent, 20% of Brazilians from other areas, and 7% of foreigners. The same IBAMA report also claims that "...the health and living conditions of the people settled in the community Céu do Mapiá is much higher than its neighbors of the margins of Purus and Juruá rivers and many others around the Amazon region, and even better than many urban areas in the south of Brazil".⁸³ The main demographic difference today is that in my experience, and according to my interviews and the rare literature I could reference on the topic, a large percentage of Brazilian Daimistas today tend to be predominantly "white", i.e., not of indigenous, mixed, or afro-

Brazilian origins, and likewise tend to be urban middle class professionals. Outside of Brazil these demographic tendencies tend to be even more exaggerated; for a foreigner to even be aware of the existence of the religion it requires extensive travel or, at the very least, extensive personal inquiry into such unfamiliar themes such as ayahuasca use and Amazonian shamanism that a certain elevated level of academic inquiry or extensive travel can safely be assumed. My own observations in Céu do Mapiá supported this assumption. In my experience, anyone I conversed with in greater detail about ayahuasca is similarly well versed in the writings of titans like Jung and Husserl, and is as ready to recite verses from the Rig Veda as the Torah. In numerous interviews it was stressed to me that ICEFLU does not engage in proselytization, and that it is not customary to invite or convince someone to participate in a ceremony unless the individual has first expressed a personal desire to do so. Santo Daime will thus welcome and include only those who specifically seek the experience themselves. Participant can and often do come from varying ethnic and religious backgrounds; as an example, in one recent ceremony conducted in the Los Angeles parish, one participant wearing the Kippah, Tallit, and Tefillin, engaged in the traditional Jewish prayer practice of swaying as he sang along to the Santo Daime hymnals. In this particular parish there is an initial process that all new participants must undergo which includes an interview to ensure his/her safety, however, the doors is open to all. Santo Daime doctrine discourages its members to invite outsiders for the purposes of conversion, but welcomes anyone who out of his/her own desire reaches out to the church and wishes to be involved.

Another fact that supports the claim that international Daimistas stem from a background of high education and means was revealed to me by the two French interviewees I shared the bus

journey to Boca do Acre with: Participating in ceremonies abroad requires substantial financial commitment, for ayahuasca's legal status and Santo Daime's small size and limited presence abroad often requires extensive travel to a larger city where appropriate space needs to be procured, usually under severe secrecy. There is also a large fee/donation collected prior to each gathering to offset the costs associated with managing the difficult and often illegal logistics of supplying the Daime, and to be sent to Céu do Mapiá as remittances. Thus, according to my two French sources I interviewed in Céu do Mapiá, the financial commitment of participating in just one ceremony can range anywhere between 200 to 500 Euros when one takes into account the costs of travel, room and board in Paris for the night, and the requested donation. The Santo Daime church in Los Angeles that I am personally familiar with hosts between 3 and 6 ceremonies each month, collecting a "suggested donation" of \$60-\$90, with special occasions when elders visit from Brazil ranging from \$100-\$160. The specific language used in communication to interested parties regarding the donation is as follows:

"It is our policy that no one is turned away from spiritual work based on money and it is extremely expensive to put on the works. Your donations not only cover the costs for holding the works but also supports our Elders in Brazil including Madrinha Rita and their mission to sustain our tradition. Putting these two sides together, we offer a sliding scale for those who need to adjust your donation based on your truthful and heart-centered evaluation of your own material reality as filtered through your gratitude."⁸⁴

And so, Santo Daime ceremonies attract typically those of financial means to be able to participate in the works which are often clandestine, infrequent, and typically located in major urban areas, thus requiring long distance travel and accommodation for most participants. In Céu do Mapiá however, the practice of collecting donations for Santo Daime ceremonies from local residents does not exist, with the exception for special smaller works as

described in previous chapters. This however was not the case in the Virgem da Luz church of Rio de Janeiro where a humble donation of R\$30 was solicited. The majority of donations collected abroad are intended to fund the construction of a large new church in Céu do Mapiá the work already being underway. The new church is intended to replace the current, smaller one that was partially completed in 1987 with a height of 13 meters and capacity of 600 participants. During my visit work on the reinforced cement frame pillars which are to hold the new 40 meter tall hexagonal dome, was already underway.



Image 17: At the time of my field research the cemented frame for the new church was already in place.⁸⁵

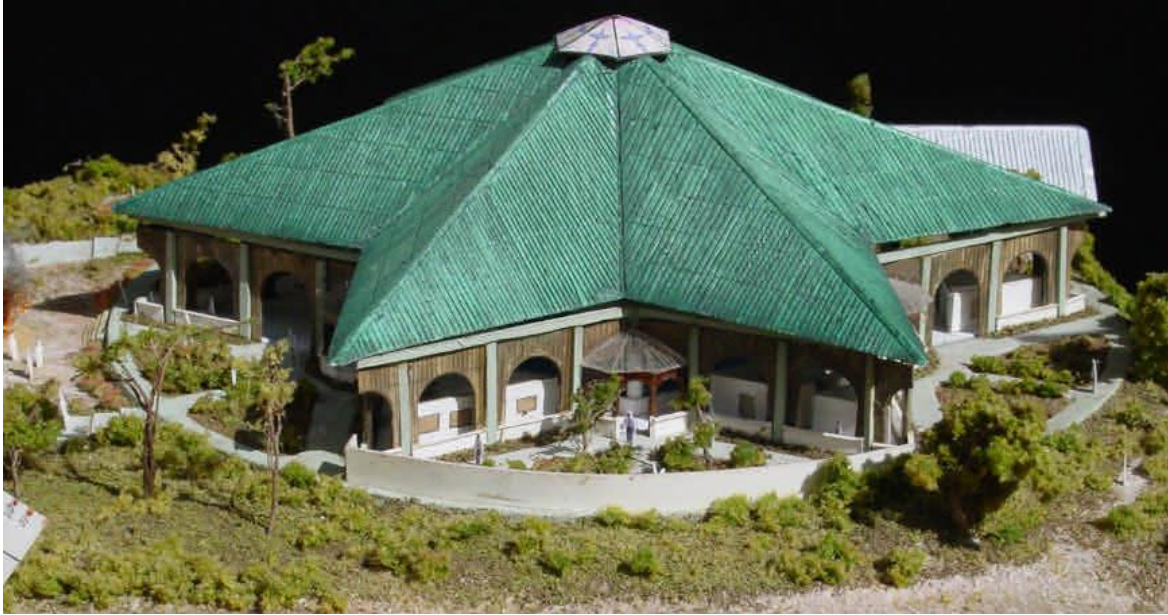


Image 18: A model of the proposed new church in Céu do Mapiá.⁸⁶

ON THE PHYSICAL SPACE AND CHURCH LAYOUT

A Santo Daime church represents the physical space where the majority of rituals take place. The church space incorporates a number of unique characteristics, the first being the shape of the structure itself; Santo Daime churches tend to be hexagonal buildings with waist high open walls on all but the far wall from where Daime is served located opposite of the main entrance. Although some churches do not have any surrounding walls, such as is the case in Céu do Mapiá, parishioners enter from all sides, however, next to the main entrance there typically is a large cross and bell. The walls of the church, if existing at all, are only waist-high which gives the space a very open feel. In Céu do Mapiá the front entrance is from the west although I am not convinced that the physical orientation of the church bears any particular significance, as is the custom in other Christian churches whose doors face west (and thus the altar on the opposite wall faces East towards Jerusalem, for those churches located in the western hemisphere). I conclude this based on the fact that the opposite is true for the Rio de Janeiro church, whose entrance is from the east. The ceiling can be made of various materials such as straw or awning, but is typically round or hexagonal, and cone shaped. The floor is demarcated with paint or tape in six equal triangular sections, three for the women's side always to the left of the main entrance, and three for the men's side. The three triangular sections on each side are next to each other and are themselves divided further in rows. Each row is reserved for participants according to various characteristics; the older members who are married will populate the smallest first row closest to the center table. The rows closer to the back are reserved for the visitors and non-*fardados*, or those not baptized in the Santo Daime tradition. Each of the three sections on either the male or the female side of the hall is also divided by seniority. The more senior members sit in the

section farthest to the right, and the youngest members are to the section to the left. The individual who monitor the space and serves the Daime is called "*Fiscal*", and they also have the duty of assigning members to their appropriate sections, and continue to do so throughout the night as more members typically join.

In the center of the hall there is always a table in the shape of a hexagonal star. In the center of the table there is typically a Cross of Caravacca, candles, cups of water for drinking, and framed icons of the founders and elders of Santo Daime. Around the table are six chairs reserved for three men and three women, typically elders of the congregation. Behind the elders on the male side sit the musicians, always including guitar players, while on the female side the front rows are reserved for the main female singers who begins each hymnal and sets the tone for the musicians. The singers maintain a very important and powerful role in the church and in their communities, so central that I devote to them their own chapter in following pages. The main singer is called the "*Puxadora*" (translating literally as the one that pulls), eluding to her role as the one who guides the tone and the energy of the mass. This is a role of great pride, honor, prestige, talent, and power, as will be described in the later chapter titled "*On Sound and Movement*" below.



Image 19: Virgem da Luz in Rio de Janeiro. The hexagonal table can be seen in the center.⁸⁷

To the side of the church opposite of the entrance is a small room resembling what can best be described as a kitchen counter, from where Daime is served, always by men who hold the important role of monitor (Fiscal). These men not only oversee the serving of Daime but also ensure order and safety of the members. They remain vigilant throughout the works to ensure that all present are safe, and that no one is absent from the procession for too long; recognizing that the intoxication due to the consumption of Daime typically leads to vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, profuse sweating, or alternately cold spells that manifest themselves in severe uncontrollable shivering, it is permissible to leave the group works to appropriately address any of these issues. However, the fiscals' duties are primarily to serve Daime, ensure safety and order, and maintain all members in the group processions as much as possible. This sometimes involves very direct insistence for the members dealing with any one or all of these uncomfortable conditions to excuse themselves and sit out only as long as it is absolutely necessary, but then promptly rejoin the group. The fiscal will also judge for himself, or be told

by individual members, how much Daime to pour into each individual's cup. The fiscal is not shy about suggesting one to consume more Daime if the observed effects are mild according to him. The fiscal is also there to help those members suffering the most severe side effects of ayahuasca: this can involve bringing a blanket, tending to those participants who are so taken by the ayahuasca that they yell and/or convulse, and ultimately making sure all present return to their starting spot and continue participating in the singing. The women have their own fiscal who does the same duties save for serving the Daime. The preferred vocabulary in Portuguese associated with the act of consumption of ayahuasca is to take (tomar) as opposed to drink (beber).

The walls and ceiling of the church are typically adorned with photographs and posters of various individuals associated with founding or guiding the Santo Daime church. A picture of Irineu Serra and his disciple Sebastião Mota Melo are always present in the church and typically are found on the main center table. The images of other influential individuals such as "Madrinha Rita", the wife of Sebastião Mota Melo, and "Padrinho Alfredo", one of the sons of Sebastião and Rita who resides in Céu do Mapiá from where he leads the ICEFLU organization. Alongside the walls of the church or directly behind the members are chairs or benches that allow for members enduring the hardest effects of the psychoactive brew to take a respite from the mass and regain their strength. There is also a water dispenser on each side of the church, as well as buckets placed all around the back walls. These buckets come in good use during the most disagreeable effects of Daime on the stomach which typically lead to severe nausea and vomiting. Vomiting during processions is expected and never stigmatized. In fact, vomiting some members find desirable in that it represents a purge, or cleansing from the inside, and is

thought of as a welcome sign that the Daime is having a strong effect on the body. The fiscals also tend to rinsing these bowls out in between uses, which they do with a great deal of understanding and compassion toward the nauseated members typically incapable of completing this task themselves.

In countries where the Santo Daime community is still numerically small, or where ayahuasca does not hold legal status, Santo Daime works are typically clandestine in nature and conducted in whatever locations the local congregation finds to be suitable. In Los Angeles, for example, the Santo Daime congregation has had a particularly challenge of finding a permanent physical location to hold their works in. Privacy, silence, and seclusion are the main traits of shared by all previously used locales; the list of places that meet this criteria for such vast "urban jungles" as Los Angeles is as unorthodox as it is small.

ON THE WORKS/PROCESSIONS

Daime is served a few times through the works, depending on the length and nature of the event. Typically the Daime is served at the very beginning of the procession after the main announcements are made from the center table and the work is initiated. The consequent servings of Daime are typically conducted after some time, usually around 90-120 minutes, although in some processions members simply walk over to the fiscal and ask for more. The manner in which Daime will be served is announced at the beginning of the ceremony to avoid confusion. If all are invited to take Daime together, a short pause will be announced and everyone will be quietly assembled according to seniority in two single file lines in front of the serving area, one for men and one for women. The elder members stand first with married men standing behind them followed by unmarried Daimistas, and finally visitors and children. The person will typically pause shortly or cross their bodies or foreheads in the familiar Catholic manner before downing the 2-5 ounces of the thick brown liquid and returning to their marked spot on the floor.



*Image 20: Two large wood burning ovens heat twelve 60-gallon cooking pots at the “feitio”.*⁸⁸

ON THE PRODUCTION OF DAIME

I was then introduced to the Casa de Feitio – the classroom sized shack in which Daime is produced. The production of Daime is a very important task that takes place multiple times throughout the year, as demand necessitates. The methods of preparation follow specific rituals sanctioned directly by the mother community of Céu do Mapiá. Each church typically has a stock of raw materials to produce enough Daime for its needs. However, considering that the two plants used in production are native only to the Amazon, Céu do Mapiá is an important center of production for domestic and global distribution. Although the two plants can successfully be grown in other areas of Brazil and the tropical world (Hawaii, for example), Daime is typically exported out of Céu do Mapiá in a highly concentrated gel form.

The process of production is very laborious and time consuming, involving most of the able bodied members. The labor is divided by gender; women pluck the healthy leaves of the *Psychotria Viridis* plant locally referred to as Rainha (Queen) which is considered the feminine part of Daime that is responsible for the visions (mirações). The leaves are collected in large sacks and later washed extensively to remove dust, spider webs, decay, or other impurities. The clean leaves are then delivered to the Casa de Feitio where only men are allowed to be present. The work typically takes place in silence, although hinarios are sung during certain parts. In Céu do Mapiá this work involved paid labor due to an increased need for Daime that volunteerism was not able to meet. The men are responsible for locating and cutting the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine locally referred to as Jagube, which is considered the male part of Daime responsible for the insights. After bringing the harvest back to the Casa de Feitio, the Jagube is cut in foot long

pieces, and then the vine is beaten with a wooden mallet in order to soften the fibers and extract the plant juices. During this phase the men typically sing hymnals , and all phases of production are characterized by the occasional consumption of Daime which itself seems to possess certain properties that enable one to commit to a stronger effort for longer periods of time with less fatigue.

In Céu do Mapiá however, the process of Daime production has been somewhat modernized. Due to an increasing global demand, the men that work at the Casa do Feitio are paid, typically around R\$100 per day (equaling about \$30 U.S. at the time of writing). The women typically in their teens who work in the kitchen preparing meals for the workers do not get paid. The production of Daime takes place numerous times of the year depending on supply and demand, but typically is regular in the summer months to accommodate the many hundreds of Brazilian and foreign visitors that make the pilgrimage to the village each year in June and July. The work begins at the break of dawn and typically lasts well into the night, consuming the labor of up to 12 men. Besides the collection of the two plants, there is an array of preparatory work that needs to be in order before the actual cooking begins. Enough fire wood has to be located in the forest, cut down, dragged by bulls to where they are split by axe into logs and laid in neat piles next to the two massive ovens that will consume up to 120 square feet of firewood in one week-long Feitio session. Then a fire must be started in each of the two 20-foot long ovens that burns sufficiently hot and long that twelve 60-gallon pots can be left cooking simultaneously for days on end. This step is particularly important, for the success of the entire batch depends on the man responsible for maintaining the fire. Also, a few hundred pounds of earth must be dug out of the ground and mixed with water to be made into workable clay which

is then used to fill the space between the pot and the oven so as to prevent heat loss. The pots are drained and replaced on the fire up to 9 times which makes for a more potent Daime, and this is all done manually. To meet the growing demand, Jagube is no longer beaten by hand in Céu do Mapiá; a grinding machine is used instead which grinds the plant matter into soft fluff that is placed between four or five layers of Rainha leaves, immersed in water, and then cooked. The work environment is extremely loud due to the constant screaming of the grinding machine, and accidents are frequent due to the nature of the job. I myself witnessed two serious injuries while volunteering at the Feitio; a severe cut to the hand of one man working with the Jagube vine, and a third degree burn to the hand of the man assigned a supervisory role over the production process.



Image 21: A still taken from a video depicting the tradition manner of the feitio.⁸⁹

The work is excruciatingly tiring and often involves men from outside of the community. The end result is liquid Daime ready for consumption, and gel blocks of highly concentrated Daime both of which can be maintained without refrigeration. Flying into Amsterdam where ayahuasca is legal is the main route of Daime into Europe. Other areas with tropical climates such as much of the Brazilian littoral and Hawaii where the two plants can grow successfully

produce their own Daime in similar ways. However, according to an interview I conducted with an American member of the Hawaiian parish, the Feitio process there differs in its attention to safer working conditions and cleanliness, as well as the use of modern mechanisms to run the ovens and to transport the massive pots to and from their oven nests, while still maintaining the main Feitio traditions of singing hymnals and the separation of labor by gender. According to my interviewee, special effort is shown to making the production process safe and clean so as not to attract any unnecessary attention from the State which is aware of the production of ayahuasca but has of yet not interfered in any way.



Image 22: Cattle are used to bring the harvested lumber to the feitio ovens.⁹⁰

The labor involved in the feitio process is incredibly strenuous and demanding, as much on the men who collect the firewood and materials, and run the ovens, as for the women who provide the meals and pick the leaves, and the livestock that pulls the harvested lumber from the hilly, thick forest.¹⁰¹ Mechanization of the faitio process is still in its crude stages, with the only machine being utilized to speed up the process is a wood chipper that grinds down the Caapi vine, replacing the traditional manner of beating it with a mallet.

ON THE UNIFORM - FARDA

Santo Daime processions require a particular uniform from those individuals that have undergone a specific ceremony called "*fardamento*" in which their relationship with the doctrine is officially recognized. The uniforms, or "*fardas*" as they are called, comes in two versions, the white and the blue, and the collective name for members wearing them is "*fardados/as*". The white farda is used in all major religious processions that are officially registered on the church calendar. These processions include all major Christian holidays, prominent members' birthdays, and special events such as weddings, baptisms, and those called *fardamentos* mentioned previously.



Image 23: Different uniforms are used depending on the particular procession types.⁹¹

Farda Branca (White Uniform)

The white uniform consists of an all-white suit for male members, a white dress shirt, black tie, and shoes which can range in style but more often than not serving comfort over style due to the amount of time spent standing. Pinned to the right side of the jacket is the official Santo Daime metal brooch. The emblem is in the shape of the hexagonal star with an eagle and a crescent moon. According to an interview I conducted in the Virgem da Luz parish, the symbols depicted are representative of an event described by Raimundo Irineu Serra in which, having spent a considerable amount of days in the jungle alone consuming ayahuasca, he witnessed an eagle flying toward the moon. The Portuguese words for eagle and moon are *Agia* and *Lua* respectively, however the word *Agia* resembles the phrase "A Guia" which means "a guide".⁹² Thus the conclusion reached by Raimundo Irineu Serra was that the symbolism represents the moon as being a guide.

The farda used by female members consists of an ankle-long green pleated skirt, white blouse, black bow tie, and a green sash draped from a particular shoulder to the waist, depending on the age and marital status of the individual member; if the woman is married, the sash drapes from the left shoulder down to the right side of the waist. The women also wear their hair down donning a silver colored tiara and the Santo Daime badge. The "why" as relating to the specifics of the fardas are largely arbitrary creations of one woman closely related to Raimundo Irineu Serra who is principally responsible for creating and standardizing the ritual space.⁹³

Farda Azul (The Blue Uniform)

The blue farda is the second type of recognized Santo Daime uniform which is used during concentration works that regularly take place twice per month, typically on the 15th and 30th, as well as for most special works that take place outside of the physical church space. It consists of navy blue pants and tie along with a white shirt without a coat for men, and a navy blue ankle skirt, white short-sleeved blouse and navy blue bow tie for women. The color black and red in attire are specifically forbidden the reasons for which was never adequately provided to me. Visitors who are not fardado members can wear what they please so long as it is appropriate and light in color. Body temperature fluctuates wildly due to the effects of ayahuasca, from profuse sweating to uncontrollable shivering, thus most participants will have a sweater or shall to cover up with which can be of any style, and there are always blankets located on the benches by the walls to be used by anyone who needs them. There were two special instances I observed regarding attire which have been previously mentioned: in one recent ceremony conducted in the Los Angeles parish, one Jewish man wore the traditional Kippah, Tallit, and Tefillin, and at the conclusion of a long ceremony in Céu do Mapiá, one of the village elders and a daughter of Sebastião Mota de Melo vehemently and in front of all present scolded a teenage boy, who was not a resident of the community, for wearing jeans and a t-shirt with an image of a scantily clad woman printed on the front, to which the young man reacted by promptly storming off into the night in anger and shame.

ON SOUND AND MOVEMENT

The sound and movement in Santo Daime processions play crucial roles in standardizing and regulating doctrine practice and use of physical space. By sound I am referring to music produced by various instruments, as well as the singing that typifies all Santo Daime processions to varying degrees. By movement I am referring to the dance-like steps taken by participants which typically accompany the singing of the hymnals provided that the physical space utilized allows for it. This chapter will be divided in two parts elucidating the significance of each of these respectively.

Although every procession is initiated by the ringing of a bell next to the church entrance, the sources of sound that overpower Santo Daime processions is typically composed of three distinct parts which occur in the following temporal order: The singing by the principle female vocalist that sits in the front center row, holding the esteemed title of the “*puxadora*” (the one who pulls); the accompaniment of musical instruments to the tune of the *puxadora*; and finally the singing of all other participants. The *puxadora* in particular occupies one of the most important and powerful positions in the entire procession, and thus in the whole Santo Daime experience. This vital role is always occupied by a woman, and her status is reflected by the immediate proximity to the center table in the middle of the three group spaces on the women’s side of the church (see chapter *On Physical Space*). The *puxadora* is typically a young, talented singer that not only is expected to be present at all processions regardless of frequency and length, but is also expected to know by memory every hymnal that will be recited, from the lyrics to tone as well as the melody. Thus, the *puxadora* is expected to lead the congregation by setting the tone which the

musicians are to play their instruments to, and all else are to accompany by singing along. Consequently, the puxadora undeniably has an astounding degree of power and control in Santo Daime church and community, and thus she and her family enjoy the rewards of this prestigious status; of this fact I was made keenly aware when one quiet mid-day I ran into an elderly lady that first introduced herself not by name but rather by identifying as the puxadora's mother. What is quite striking indeed is the amount of autonomy and authority with which the principle puxadora in Céu do Mapiá conducted her responsibilities; for example, when on occasion the musicians would fail to follow in tune due to their lack of knowledge of the particular hymnal, lack of experience, or sheer fatigue, the puxadora would in a very astringent way halt the procession and sharply correct the musician. She did this with complete and utter dominance of the space which, in those particular moments, she unequivocally and completely controlled without question.

Being the first to begin each and every hymnal, the puxadora is expected to lead the group, and this she does by attempting to maintain the loudest and most melodic tone of voice throughout the procession, no matter its length. I invite you to imagine the mental aptitude it must take to know the lyrics, melody, style, tone, and order of thousands of hymnals, and to simultaneously have the physical and psychological fortitude to sing these for hours on end, sometimes as often as every other day, even while under the influence of arguably the strongest psychoactive substance which is not infrequently also coupled with a heavy dose of cannabis. To say that this ability is merely extraordinary, stupendous, fantastic, or remarkable is, in my observation of the deed performed, a severe understatement. In my eyes that ability which is embodied and expressed by the puxadora is nothing less than prodigious. And I doubt it not that it is for these

reasons the puxadora retains a very special status within the church and thus within the community, which also allows her to travel so extensively with the various padrinhos as a vital part of their coveted “*comitiva*”, or musical entourage. Also, this role remains one of the few ways in which a woman in the community is able to earn a wage, as well as probably the only reasonable way in which she is able to leave the community and experience far corners of the world, although I was given conflicting information whether or not the puxadora is actually paid. Considering the lack of work opportunities for women in Céu do Mapiá outside of the household that don't include the main two of cooking and cleaning with the exception of teaching at the school, the role of the puxadora is as coveted as it is difficult to maintain. Without the padrinhos the procession still continues, but without the puxadora it is difficult to imagine how this could happen, thus, in my observations, the puxadora occupies one of the most important roles in the church, and thus in Céu do Mapiá, even though not once in my numerous participations has her contribution been publically recognized as is the case in all church processions where men yell out triumphantly "Viva!" followed by some respected individual's name regularly between hymnals.

The second important factor that relates to sound in the church is the musical accompaniment created by various musicians that encircle the central table. The instruments used always include one or more guitars, and typically include some percussion instruments, and on rare occasions even a flute or harmonica. Also, the use of maracas is universal and has an important role of keeping the beat, something that is very important especially during the deepest states of trance. In my experience the instrument playing was reserved to the male side of the church, save for the maracas which were found randomly throughout the ceremonial space. In

my opinion the music is exceptionally beautiful, with perhaps the most enchanting parts taking place in the recess during the middle of the ceremony when the musicians lightly play whatever soft tunes they desire. As one foreign Daimista told me in an interview in Céu do Mapiá, gleaming with joy after the conclusion of the singing of his favorite hymnal, *"When you fall in love with the music, you will fall in love with Santo Daime, and you will want to keep coming back to the jungle for more!"*⁹⁴ To some extent I can recognize the truth in this, for I do not think it is incorrect to identify Céu do Mapiá as a musical society first and foremost, and a religious one second.

Finally, accompanying the puxadora and musicians as the rest of the congregation each of whom is expected to participate in the singing. Each hymnal has a specific format regarding to how the lines are to be recited, and the puxadora's voice leads the others in this regard. What follows is a word about the hymnals which paints a clearer picture of the role of sound in Santo Daime processions.

ON THE HYMNALS - HINARIOS

The hymnals sung in Santo Daime works represent the doctrine of the belief system in its poetic, written form. The hymnals are collections of short verses that are recited, sung, and danced to during Santo Daime processions. The individual hymnals are typically between 3 and 8 stanzas of between three to six lines composing a verse. They are short, poetic in style, and often tend to rhyme. Most hymnals are repeated at least once, and the manner in which they are sung is represented by vertical lines alongside the opening verse. Each hymnal, like a song, has a name, and next to the name typically is one of three words in parentheses, *Valsa*, *Mazurka*, or *Marcha*, which instruct what beat and thus what movement is to accompany the singing. Next to the title of the hymnal is typically the name of its author, albeit in Santo Daime tradition it is believed that the individual is merely a messenger or medium through whom the higher power inspires the writing of the words. These receivers, men and women, are typically elders, former and current, and can have whole volumes of hymnals printed in a collection. The collection of hymnals is referred to as a *hinario*, the first of which is the *Lua Branca* followed by *O Cruzeiro*, by Raimundo Irineu Serra.⁹⁵ Considering the very first followers of Raimundo Irineu Serra were "extremely humble" majority black land laborers who were illiterate, the repetitious singing of simple hymns developed eventually to be accompanied by music.

Shortly after the introduction of collecting singing some of the founders started receiving hymns which, according to an interview I conducted in Céu do Mapiá, had to first be "approved and revised" by Raimundo Irineu Serra. He would later delegate the duties of hymn revision to

his caretaker, Percília Matos da Silva who also took charge of ritualizing the ceremonies and creating the first official uniform.⁹⁶

Although the hymnals are sold in Céu do Mapiá, they are printed and produced elsewhere, and their content is freely available online. The messages in these hymnals are those familiar to anyone with knowledge of the core concepts of any major religion; they are positive in nature, calling for self-improvement through strict adherence to the doctrine, respect of one's body and of one's neighbors, caution from the various cardinal sins that are adopted from Christian theology, love and respect for nature, sacrifice for the good of the collective, etc. etc. Overall the messages recited are overwhelmingly positive and, for a lack of a better word, passively descent, despite the presence of numerous seemingly contradictory messages which allude to the syncretic nature of Santo Daime doctrine itself. In a single hymnal one could find passages praising Jesus, Rainha da Floresta (queen of the forest), Mestre Irineu, Santa Maria, Lua Branca, (white moon), and Juramidam which refers to Irineu Serra in his initial solitary excursion to the rainforest and which translates into "God (jura) and his soldiers (midam)".⁹⁶

The one aspect of the hymns that struck me only after participating in numerous works is their order. In my experience, those hymnals of a simpler, slower nature are located somewhere in the middle, or just far enough from the beginning that their recitation appears at the periods when the strongest effects of ayahuasca are felt which blur vision and make singing and moving difficult. Interestingly enough the messages appearing in precisely these latter hymns are those encouraging the participants to push on and keep working through, urging for *força* (strength) & *Firmeza* (resolve). I believe that the fact about order of the hymns is not a simple coincidence.

ON THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF WORKS/PROCESSIONS

Concentração (Concentration) works typically twice per month with participants wearing the blue uniform and being seated quietly in retrospection for a prolonged period of time at the height of the effects of Daime. Silence becomes harder to handle for some, but for the most part all remain quietly seated.

Bailados are works in which the dancing takes place. The movements are encompassed in three types as described previously.

Trabalhos da Cura (Curing Works) taking place outside of the church space and typically at Casa da Saude or in a particular resident's home, are aimed to concentrating everyone's energy into the desire to have an ailed person cured of his/her illness.

Children's works typically take place in the Casa da Musica which is a small brick building in which smaller works take place. Here the children dance and sing hymnals for a short period throughout the day, as well as take a small dose of Daime.

White Table Works (Trabalhos da Mesa Branca) are very special works that are least common of all. The complete name for these types of works is "The table for esoteric and psychic studies". According to the official ICEFLU website, "as the name says, it was a work designed to develop the psychic apparatus and knowledge of the various lines and entities, as well as promote the spiritual and esoteric studies, as well as to serve as a prefix to ecumenical work and alliance with other spiritual lines".



Image 24: A simple table prepared for the serving of Daime.⁹⁷

ON THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL

The question “why does Céu do Mapiá exist” has a rather simple answer: the desire for a simple life in the forest, with harmony, unity, and spirituality”.⁹⁸ What is meant by “simple life” is one directly opposite of the urban life replete with its technological gadgetry, visceral distractions, and tempting “illusions”. A simple life for the founders of Céu do Mapiá meant an agricultural existence where the collective learned to live off the land, in relative seclusion which enabled them to focus on their spiritual personal development as proposed by the Santo Daime doctrine. Out of this goal for a “simple life” of a peasant farmer, itself a grave illusion, a strong sense of environmentalism has always been associated with Céu do Mapiá and Santo Daime, whether justified or not. Thus, residents of Vila Céu do Mapiá, in keeping with their religious tradition and Santo Daime doctrine, generally have a very strong, personal relationship with the natural environment. Ayahuasca tends to amplify the need to be outside, and a vast majority of Santo Daime hymns are dedicated to praising elements in the natural environment, sometimes sanctifying and elevating such elements as the sun, the moon, the stars, the forest, as appropriately of the divine. Albeit, it is necessary to repeat the unimpressive level of development as relating to sustainable agriculture and energy production, as described earlier, the community’s residents do typically have a very sincere and strong relationship with the natural environment, even more so than village life typically demands.

The community’s formal relationship with the natural environment, however, has been officially outlined in a collection of documents titled *Plano de Desenvolvimento Comunitario: uma Estrategia para a Gestão Participativa da FLONA Purus* released in May of 2004, which

translates to the Community Development Plan – a strategy for participatory management of the FLONA Purus. The main objective of this collection was to inform other partners such as the Brazilian IBAMA agency and NGO's such as WWF about the efforts undertaken or mostly in the plans.⁹⁹ In this plan three distinct fronts for concrete action were defined; agricultural production, forest management, and environmental protection/health. The report supplemented IBAMA mandated law # 9.985 that created regulations pertaining to the national system of conservation units of which the 560,000 hectares of FLONA Purus is a part.⁹⁸

Other partners included the Universidade Federal de Viçosa's Centro de Ciências Agrárias (CCO). Efforts mentioned include those as general as raising the community's awareness to the need to develop sustainable food and energy sources, to particulars such as the step-by-step guide as to how these two central goals are to be achieved. Since the completion of this report it is hard to witness any meaningful strides toward these two goals, for the community is largely dependent almost entirely on petrol generators for electricity, and regular "imports" of even the most basic food stuffs such as eggs, flour and drinking water from Boca do Acre. The reasons listed or often given to explain these failures cite the lack of "Community agricultural plan and a system for the organization of the production and its transport to market".⁹⁸

More specifically, the PDC report outlines how agricultural production suffered from low production due to the general poverty of the soil. To address the problem of the lack of agricultural production, in 87 two farms were purchased to produce but they ultimately failed due also to conflicts regarding the work assignments along with the introduction of outsiders and money. All of these dynamics together brought the decision in 1990 to end the collective

regimen of food sharing at the Community Kitchen in the center of the village, and switch to a system best described as “each for himself”. In 1995 privately owned grocery and dry goods stores started to spring up in Céu do Mapiá.¹⁰⁰

Another obstacle often cited is the lack of municipal support which is all but nonexistent even to provide the basic civil services such as sanitation and security despite collection of taxes, and the prohibitive distance from main centers of commerce such as Boca do Acre, although this latter challenge has very recently been somewhat ameliorated with the opening of a “road” connecting the village directly to the Purus River.¹⁰¹ Thus, the realization of Céu do Mapiá’s goals of self-sufficiency through agricultural production is complicated by problems that are equally of a systematic and of a physical nature.

The FLONA Purus itself was created by Federal Decree # 96.190 on 21/6/1968 identifying 256,000 ha of a total 500,000 ha of continuously protected land.¹⁰² The objective for the FLONA classification is “to promote the sustainable use of natural resources and scientific research, with a focus on methods for sustainable exploitation of native forests, and to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of the populations residing within the protected area, while respecting the autochthonous culture.”¹⁰³ To this end a detailed study of the FLONA Purus was conducted by IBAMA which compiled a Management Plan printed as a 662 page document in July of 2009.¹⁰²

ON THE PHISIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF AYAHUSCA

I do not consider myself sufficiently equipped with the tools necessary to adequately analyze the psychological and physiological effects of ayahuasca, so this chapter will be very brief. However substantial literature has been written on the topic by reputable sources such as UCLA's Dr. Charles Grob whom I spoke to personally prior to heading off to Brazil. He is a current Professor in the Departments of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences and Pediatrics, and the Director of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. Another prominent academic who has contributed substantially on the topic is Dr. Rick Strassman. Dr. Strassman was also the first researcher to conduct experiments with ayahuasca on human subjects. Their literary works described in the previous chapter on the state of the art are a great place to begin in understanding the physiological and psychological effect of ayahuasca. Many organizations that explore these questions in particular have sprung up recently; among them the most prominent ones are the Heffter Research Institute, Esalen Institute, Multidisciplinary Association for the Study of Psychedelics (MAPS), the Ethnobotanical Stewardship Council.(ESC), and the Cottonwood Research Foundation.



Image 25: Banisteriopsis Caapi vine cooked with the Psychotria Viridis leaf produces Ayahuasca¹⁰⁴

POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF RECONSIDERING OFFICIAL U.S. POLICY ON
AYAHUASCA

Since recorded history human beings have always had a close relationship with mind altering substances; to use the word “obsessions” would hardly be out of place. Evidence of this fact dates as far back as the earliest written records; one of the more prominent early religious texts dating back to 1500BCE, the Rigveda, frequently refers to a sacred elixir taken as sacrament which, although yet to be concretely identified, is commonly thought to refer to the hallucinogenic mushroom of the species *Amanita Muscaria*, the “magic” mushroom popularized in pop culture by figures like Santa Claus and the now iconic video game superstar Mario, an Italian plumber who maneuvers in a world full of dangers, and after consuming the famous red mushroom with white polka dots is endowed with extra life. Similarly, the Amazon basin is home to a substance with hallucinogenic properties used for millennia; an ancient brew called ayahuasca with powerful mind-altering qualities and even more mysterious origins. How precisely small indigenous cultures thousands of years ago became aware of the complex brewing process involving two unrelated plants in an environment as biologically diverse as the Amazon rainforest is a complete mystery. But the fact remains that consumption of ayahuasca tea in the Amazon basin is as much part of the region’s history as are the people inhabiting it. The remaining pages are devoted to introduce the reader to this powerful brew, and the practices and circumstances involving its production and consumption. The later part of this thesis will then evaluate some of the legal aspects associated with the use of ayahuasca which varies widely by country, and questions will be raised that seek to elucidate what goals future policies on ayahuasca could pursue, including questions of distribution, legality, production, and

consumption, finally exploring the possibility of policy reconsideration while offering a workable starting point.

To open this paper with such a strong claim that human beings have always had a close relationship, an obsession even, with mind altering substances is a bold statement that requires evidence if it is to be accepted as a valid starting point to the subsequent arguments made in the pages that follow. Luckily, evidence in its support abounds. An array of mind altering substances can be found in numerous cultures and corners of the world that have had little or no historical contact with one another; from opium throughout Asia, to ibogaine and khat in Africa and the Arabian peninsula, to peyote in Central America, and ayahuasca in the Amazon basin. The more recent find in a the El Mirón Cave in the Basque country where the elaborately adorned remains of a middle-aged female skeleton were found buried in the living quarters of the cave suggesting high status dates back to the Paleolithic age, i.e., 16,700 years ago, to be more precise. Upon closer analysis of the hardened plaque on her teeth to shed light on her diet, spores of several species of mushrooms were found, some of which were from the Fly Agaric mushroom also known as *Amanita Muscaria* introduced earlier.¹⁰⁵ Beside its frequent appearance in popular culture and children's cartoons such as *Alice in Wonderland* and the animated Disney movie *Fantasia*, many cultures throughout the world have developed a relationship with this hallucinogenic fungus, a characteristic that spans in the most remote corners of the globe such as with the reindeer herders of Siberia from whom it is said the popular story of Santa Claus derives as a covert homage to this special fungus. And it was Gordon Wasson, an American author, ethnomycologist, and vice president of J.P. Morgan and Co. who, after experiencing and popularizing the Mazatec rituals with hallucinogens in Oaxaca in the 1950's, posited the

argument that the entheogen Soma repeatedly mentioned in the ancient texts of the Rigveda was in fact the fly agaric.¹⁰⁶

Apart from the Red Lady of El Mirón Cave which represents the oldest evidence of human consumption of hallucinogenic mushrooms, the Iceman Ötzi living 3,300 years ago in south Tyrol was also discovered in possession of several types of dried fungi, and burial sites in Piedmont in the Italian Alps from the Neolithic period as well provide supporting evidence that hallucinogens played an important role in ancient cultures.¹⁰⁷ Some of these substances, due to the harsh physical consequences of their ingestion, require extraordinary devotion on the part of the user which guarantees that their use remains at the fringes of society, and very often a taboo. Some substances are notoriously difficult to ingest that they are often classified as ordeal rituals in which the participant has very realistic feeling of impending death, typically vomiting and squirming in pain. Thus is the process through which in ancient times a small group of such curious and courageous explorers of the mind formed, and either by their own will or by societal pressures were separated from the main social corpus to form a reclusive caste of shamans, healers, seers, and priests. What explains this universal curiosity other than the undeniable desire to push boundaries even at the cost of social stigmatization and personal physical harm?

This brief introduction to the historical and global proliferation of the use of psychoactive substances serves as perhaps one of the simplest yet strongest arguments that policies based on abstinence are too simple-minded to have merit, and will not have a legitimate chance of successful implementation. There has always been a group of individuals that have free-willingly chosen to partake in the consumption of mind-altering substances, and there is no evidence that

we can expect this curiosity and practice to stop based on information that the substances carry sometimes real but often exaggerated dangers for the health of body and mind of the user. Thus to make it clear from early on, this essay rejects any policy argument that is based on strict prohibition through abstinence, whether it be guided by informed free will, or imposed by the risk of penalty from the breaking of law or cultural norms. In conclusion, it is inadequate, largely immature, and unrealistic to argue for the complete banishment of mind-altering substances based on fear mongering, for the similar reasons it is inadequate, immature, and unrealistic to argue that the preferred method of choice to prevent unwanted pregnancies is a policy that promotes abstinence from sex and criminalizes any deviant behavior. “Just say no” might be a catchy slogan for a free t-shirt given to a child in grade school, but it does not reflect the reality of the curious nature of human beings desirous of the mysterious psychotropic experience that we today, with our Shakespeare, Beethoven, atom colliders and quantum physics are no closer to understanding than was the Red Lady of El Mirón or Ötzi the iceman of Tyrol.¹⁰⁸

Having briefly introduced the extensive historical and cultural background of the use of mind-altering substances, the time is ripe to now turn to the one of interest of this thesis; ayahuasca. As described in earlier chapters, ayahuasca is a natural brew with psychoactive properties used traditionally for millennia throughout the Amazon basin. This bitter brew is concocted from two plants: the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine is mashed up to release the liquid stored inside its core, which is then mixed with the *Psychotria viridis* and cooked in water to ultimately produce ayahuasca, which is also known by the names of *hoasca*, *vegetal*, *jage*, *natem*, *shori* and, in Santo Daime circles, *daime*. The name ayahuasca itself stems from the quechua roots of "aya" for spirit, and "waska" for woody vine, translating into "spirit vine" or

"the vine of the dead".¹⁰⁹ By many who consume it regularly whether it be in religious circles or special ayahuasca retreats that charge thousands of dollars per customer for participation in week-long ceremonies in the Peruvian jungle, ayahuasca is regarded as a strong tool for introspection and spirituality. In Academia it is considered a unique tool for understanding the mind-brain interface and mapping out how the brain works. It is not considered potentially addictive in any serious way because it is in fact an ordeal ritual; it upsets the stomach temporarily often inducing vomiting, initiates serious psychological inner working, and is not associated with recreational use for reasons elaborated further in the essay. Production and consumption of the tea is legal in Latin America and some European nations, however it is considered a schedule I drug in the US with exceptions for use by members of two Brazilian churches with active presence in the country, the Brazilian Churches of Santo Daime and União do Vegetal who went so far to take their case to the US Supreme Court arguing on the grounds of infringed religious freedom for their religious practices and the use of ayahuasca which they consider a holy sacrament central to their beliefs.

The active ingredient of ayahuasca is a chemical compound called N,N-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT) which is a psychedelic compound of the tryptamine family found in trace amounts in all organic matter. Why the human brain has receptors for this compound, yet the gut has evolved to eliminate the DMT during digestion is one of the questions researchers have been trying to understand. Dr. Rick Strassman, a medical doctor specializing in psychiatry from Los Angeles and founder of the Cottonwood Research Foundation on consciousness was the first person in the US to conduct research with psychedelic and hallucinogenic substances on human subjects. He published a book on his findings in 2001 titled *DMT: The Spirit Molecule: A*

*Doctor's Revolutionary Research into the Biology of Near-Death and Mystical Experiences.*¹¹⁰

One answer to the previous question as to why we have DMT receptors and what purpose this characteristic universal to all organic matter serve, is that DMT is a “resonant vehicle of communication, i.e., a common molecular language among all living things” according to Dr. Charles Grob, a psychiatrist at the Harbor-UCLA Cancer Research Center.¹¹¹

According to my interviewees, users typically report profound emotional experiences and often direct communication with a feminine entity/spirit/voice of what is presumed to be Gaian nature, which elucidates our unharmonious relationship to the environment so this is why the tea is associated with ecology and environmentalism. DMT is considered a “messenger molecule - plants use it to mediate their relationships with other organisms in the environment.”¹¹⁰ DMT is always present in trace amounts, and is particularly observed to flood the brain immediately preceding death, and to a lesser extent during meditation, chanting, fasting and other practices typically associated with mystical experience. Our stomach lining prevents its absorption; however the ayahuasca tea combines the DMT molecule present in a vine and an enzyme from a leaf of a plant in the coffee family which then makes it orally active. This combination is critical to its effectiveness and we do not know how this complex relationship was first discovered in the isolated corner of the Amazonian rainforest where the particular plants grow. The odds of accidentally stumbling upon this combination in a rainforest so rich with flora are incredible. The current political and intellectual climate offers new opportunities to reopen avenues of research that have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to pursue in the past within conventional frameworks. Most of the work with ayahuasca has stemmed from the medical field; however this

chapter will base its arguments about potential policy reconsideration by looking at the substance through a social lens.

Before continuing it is crucial to clarify why it is best to avoid using the word “drugs” in preference of using the expression “mind-altering substances” instead. The word “drug” carries with it certain connotations that would be best to separate from the subject of this essay - ayahuasca. Although a clear distinction exists between legal and illegal drugs, it seems most efficacious to, for the sake of clarity, avoid the necessity of having to continually clarify the distinction. In this way the unavoidable predispositions the reader might have towards “drugs” is hopefully avoided. This preamble is important for if the recognized definition of drugs is used, namely being “a medicine or other substance which has a physiological effect when ingested or otherwise introduced into the body”, this would include an exhausting list of substances ingested regularly.¹¹² One simple example would be sugar, the mass consumption of which has extremely negative consequences to the overall well-being of the individual, as well as to society; obesity and associated health problems are a clear detriment on the individual level, however social consequences of the public mass-consumption of sugar has led to more immiseration, oppression, conflict, slavery, violence, etc., than all the problems associated with individual use could ever amount to. Thus it is vital that the reader is clear on why here it is best to avoid using the term “drugs” while discussing ayahuasca.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, although the abuse of prescription drugs is a significant cause of death annually in the US and deserves its due attention, for the purposes of this paper I will refer only to illicit drugs, as defined by US legislation 42 U.S. Code § 12210 meaning “a controlled

substance, as defined in schedules I through V of section 202 of the Controlled Substances Act [21 U.S.C. 812].”¹¹³ Being that in the US ayahuasca holds the most severe classification belonging to first schedule of drugs while simultaneously always having been legal in the land of its origin, Brazil, should certainly raise questions as to why this is the case. According to the US Drug Enforcement Administration, Schedule I drugs, substances, or chemicals are defined as “drugs with no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse. Schedule I drugs are the most dangerous drugs of all the drug schedules with potentially severe psychological or physical dependence.”¹¹⁴ The notorious list is populated by substances such as heroin, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), marihuana (cannabis), 3,4methylenedioxymethamphetamine (ecstasy), methaqualone, and peyote. The scheduling itself is a system based on the Health Science and Criminology argument which claims that the drugs in this list cause the user severe harm, and that the good they might cause a user is offset by the social harm produced by the crime associated with the production, distribution, and consumption of these substances.¹¹⁵ This argument will be revisited further in the essay.

It is clear, however, that appealing to the long term use of ayahuasca and to its natural composition is not a sufficiently strong argument in support for its continued use. A good place to start would be to assess whether or not ayahuasca meets the criteria for the most severe schedule class in the US as defined previously. If we look at the first precondition for such a classification, i.e., that the substance in question has “no currently accepted medicinal use”, it becomes necessary to turn to some of the most recent research conducted by Dr. Charles Grob, a medical doctor and professor of psychiatry at UCLA who has been spearheading work with psychoactive substances such as psilocybin at the Harbor-UCLA Cancer Research Center.

Multilateral scientific research also involving the Heffter Research Institute of which Dr. Grob is a founding member has identified a strong potential of ayahuasca as a treatment for numerous psychological disorders such as autism, addiction, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, various food disorders and overwhelming anxiety for terminally ill patients close to death.¹¹⁶

In the more recent past, numerous ayahuasca retreats have been established around the Brazil-Peru border, of which the town of Iquitos stands out as the unofficial capital for this particular type of tourism. Numerous jungle lodges typically run by westerners claiming to be trained shamans offer week-long retreats that typically cost a few thousand dollars for curious "psychonauts", tourists, adventurers, as well as veterans with severe PTSD and other psychological problems for which this foreign, ancient "treatment" tends to be the last resort.¹¹⁷ The median lethal dose (LD50) which is defined as the amount of a substance which results in death of half of the tested population (of mice) is extremely high for ayahuasca, and is almost as high for psilocybin as for marijuana. For example, the ratio of lethal to effective dose for DMT is 50, as opposed to 10 for alcohol, 15 for cocaine and 1,000 for psilocybin, the active ingredient found in the *amanita muscaria* mushroom introduced earlier.¹¹⁹ No deaths have been recorded that are attributable directly and exclusively to ayahuasca although mixing MAO inhibitors with some anti-depressant medication can cause severe and even lethal reactions.¹¹⁸ Thus the argument that there is a lack of accepted safety for its use, especially with medical supervision doesn't seem to have much support and should be explored further. This represents the first potential counterarguments to ayahuasca's severe classification which deserves further

considerations considering the tea's potential in medical treatment as well as personal development.

The second precondition for the Schedule I classification requires that the substance have a high potential for abuse, which is defined as the use of a psychoactive substance in a non-intended way.¹¹⁴ Upon closer inspection of this logic it becomes clear that this is a circular argument, for by making a substance illegal automatically makes it abusable. Nonetheless, even if we ignore this inherent contradiction it is still doubtful that ayahuasca meets this condition. Ayahuasca is notoriously extremely unpalatable and difficult to ingest. The most common side effects are nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, extreme variations in body temperature, and fatigue; the most common way this tea is taken outside of the Santo Daime milieu is by laying in darkness with a bucket and towel handy. Over the next two hours the individual is thrust into a deep hallucinogenic state while often purging and squirming in discomfort. This purging characteristic of the experience is meant to signify the cleansing of the body of whatever is seen to be the root cause of the individual's psychological problems. In the meantime the shaman overseeing the entire session sings or whistles traditional songs called icaros, and periodically blows thick tobacco smoke directly into the face of the participant. As one might imagine, most participants are physically and emotionally exhausted the following day and the mere thought of the dark, bitter liquid, and the mental trace of its potent smell is enough to make one squeamish. One of my interviewees revealed that after a decade long relationship with Santo Daime, the individual was going through a phase of questioning further participation due to getting sick and tired, literally, of taking the sacrament. Dependence in the form of addiction is thus not considered a legitimate danger associated with the consumption of ayahuasca. Additionally, ayahuasca's very

particular method of preparation which involves elaborate processes passed down through oral traditions and prepared over a few days by a small number of individuals who hold this knowledge, as well as the geographical specificity of its two main plant ingredients, makes it an infrequently used substance by even the most ardent users. Considering all of these characteristics of the brew, the argument that ayahuasca does not have a high potential for abuse holds substantial weight and should be further explored, for if it is persuasively shown to be the case, then it would stand as yet another counter argument to classifying the tea in the most severe schedule of illicit substances.

Two nationally recognized Brazilian churches have emerged from the mid-20th century in which the use of ayahuasca is a central pillar of doctrine and practices. Both of these are somewhat reclusive and stress that they don't wish to be involved with proselytization. Both are syncretic and incorporate elements of Christian "spiritism" and parts of other Afro-Brazilian religions and indigenous traditions. Members of both of these participate in ritual, collective, universal, and regular consumption of ayahuasca in a group setting. Devotees typically come from urban middle-class environments throughout Brazil and the use of ayahuasca is universal throughout the denominations; newborns are baptized with it, pregnant women give birth while under the influence of it, and even children consume it during mass. Although in Brazil ayahuasca is legal, in the US the problem of legality was raised by local members of one of the two churches, União do Vegetal (UDV). Members of UDV participated in the first ever human study of a bio-medical nature conducted by UCLA's Dr. Charles Grob in 1993 in Brazil who concluded that the members of the study most of whom shared a history of psychological

problems were, as a result of ayahuasca consumption psychologically and physically healthier than their average compatriot.¹¹⁸

The second large Brazilian religion in which ayahuasca is consumed as the principal religious sacrament is Santo Daime. The US headquarters of Santo Daime is located in Santa Fe NM, and the right to consume and import ayahuasca reached the US Supreme Court in which Santo Daime representatives were successful in arguing, on religious freedom grounds, that the use of ayahuasca and its importation into the country must be made legal to the members of the Santo Daime community for their Christmas procession.¹¹⁹ The US Santo Daime churches operate freely with production of ayahuasca taking place in one of the sister churches in Hawaii where the two plants are able to grow due to the tropical climate.

Another very important characteristic of these ayahuasca religions is their emphasis on environmental awareness and the preservation of nature. Both are involved with large-scale reserve stewardship amounting to hundreds of thousands of acres of pristine rainforest in national nature reserves, often in cooperation with non-profit organizations and the Brazilian Environmental Protection Agency (IBAMA).¹²⁰ Some of the ways in which this preservation against logging and deforestation takes form is by shifting efforts toward activities such as agroforestry, permaculture, eco-tourism and the sustainable harvest of palm oil, natural latex, and Brazil nuts.¹²¹

Let us now turn to the questions of policy regarding ayahuasca as it relates to its consumption, production and distribution in the US and also in Brazil. As mentioned earlier

Ayahuasca is legal in Brazil yet illegal in much of the world, including the United States where it is classified as a Schedule I controlled substance albeit with special standing for three Brazilian churches, Santo Daime, União do Vegetal and A Barquinha that consider it a sacrament. Should official policy be reconsidered, what goals should be pursued, how it would be best to go about this goal, and where a good place to start is, are some of the questions addressed in the following pages.

Policy on mind-altering substances is a choice that reflects people's beliefs and preconceptions about these substances. If change is argued for, education and correction of misconceptions and illogical arguments are necessary which simultaneously must accommodate differences in values and priorities.¹²² All mind-altering substances carry inherent dangers due to their powerful effects on the mind and body which is the main reason for their use. And all policies on mind-altering substances carry positive and negative consequences, thus any policy reconsideration on ayahuasca should be subject to a stringent and exhaustively inclusive cost/benefit analysis. No policy is without certain shortfalls; thus, it is necessary to weigh reasonably predictable benefits against reasonably predictable costs incurred from the official policy. The chosen policy must address the number of problems associated with substances that have mind-altering capabilities; these include criminal, political, and economic consequences, as well as questions of ethics and public health.

It is understood that drug use is not synonymous with drug problems; indeed many users of what are considered to be "hard" drugs live quite regular lives with little to no observable negative effects on them personally. Similarly, most substance use does not lead to problems.

Abuse is a separate matter, but it can successfully be argued that almost any substance we consume carries with it the potential to be abused. Ayahuasca is not one of these substances that are associated with abuse, for a variety of reasons elaborated previously. One of the strongest arguments might allude to the fact that it is rather difficult to acquire in the US. However examining populated centers throughout Latin America where ayahuasca is freely available yields supporting conclusions, although cultural differences should not be ignored. So what are the factors that lead people to consume ayahuasca? For some, ayahuasca represents a "trip" to an unexplored horizon which is, to put it very simply, curiously tempting. For others, the long-term cultural significance of ayahuasca is one factor perceived as an invitation and a guarantee of its merit and general safety. For others still the natural composition and traditional preparation combined with the fact that its active chemical ingredient is always present in trace amounts in all organic matter is the deciding factor. These individuals often refer to the fact that smoking of DMT, the most direct way to experience its effects, leads to the most intense "high" within seconds of the hit but which lasts for only a few short minutes, ending as abruptly as it came on and leaving no trace (what with alcohol is called a hangover which can last for very long while after the last drink is consumed) For some users this abrupt journey to and back from an entirely different, indescribable state of mind where language bears no authority, without any after effects so soon after consumption is indicative of the miniscule level of toxicity as compared to other substances such as alcohol or marijuana. Yet for a growing number of foreigners in particular, ayahuasca represents an important tool not merely for self-exploration and development but more crucially for self-preservation. Some of the most common users of ayahuasca have been veterans suffering from severe psychological distress and in dire need of meaningful intervention. The ayahuasca resorts described earlier see a large number of their

customer base be composed of US veterans returning from conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere who feel like they have exhausted all avenues of assistance in the US and simply have to give this unorthodox method a chance. At a rate of 22 suicides daily, US veterans trying to return to civilian life are simply underserved by the current system of medical and psychological care, or the lack thereof, and many find that ayahuasca fills this void.¹²³

Other typical users tend to be artists who often contribute the composition of some of their work to the influences ayahuasca has on the visual cortex of the brain. The human brain under the influence of ayahuasca is affected in many curious ways about which we still know very little, for between its discoveries in 1956 until its prohibition in 1968 there passed only 12 years in which meaningful scientific research had only begun to occur. But as an example, one of the reported characteristics of an ayahuasca “trip” is the ability to visualize auditory stimuli. This is confirmed in sober stages where often the tune of the icaros sung or whistled by the shaman are discussed and critiqued in terms of color. Although it is difficult to discuss policy in these terms, it should not be taken for granted that phenomenology of the ayahuasca experience can offer valuable insights as a conceptual paradigm. Personal experience is, after all, the only valid experience available to each of us, with everything else being little more than mere rumor, thus why should it not be considered a legitimate factor for consideration in forming policy? But the main argument raised here is that the vast majority of ayahuasca users are not vulnerable users such as teenagers or residents of impoverished inner cities for whom the experience might open the gate to other harder substances which do carry recognized dangers. If responsible, informed adults representing the vast majority of ayahuasca users wish to engage in this type of inquiry,

the burden remains with the state to legitimate the logic of its prohibition and very severe penalization.

What are some of the policy options that could be implemented in regards to ayahuasca then? The first option and the status quo in the US is total prohibition. This option raises several problems as elaborated already up to this point. The second option is its opposite – legalization, which may come with or without constraints such as age limits, quotas, and limits of availability etc. This policy would likely result in a strong curtailing of ayahuasca tourism which for some parts of the rural Amazon region represent a significant economic input. However, domestic users would not need to go to a foreign land in unfamiliar circumstances where there is a very real lack of control of ayahuasca production and consumption. If the substance was legalized in the US, its use could be placed under control which might have a positive effect on its safe and responsible use. However being that there has, to date, yet to be offered credible proof that ayahuasca is dangerous to the individual's health, this alleged benefit might be negligible. Furthermore, harm attributed to chemical toxicity must be separated from harm due to behavioral toxicity. The negative consequences must also be acknowledged. If ayahuasca was legalized, it is reasonable to expect the demand for it would rise, at least in the period immediately following legalization. This might have severe negative consequences to the local sourcing areas that would be under pressure to provide the raw materials or finished product. Considering the lack of oversight in these underdeveloped regions, problems associated with the quality and safety of the substance would be unavoidable. Also, if the legalization didn't extend to all others countries that lie between the source and the market, land transportation could potentially result in illegal

trafficking of the good which brings with it associated violence as observed in current day Central America and Mexico.

A third policy option would focus more on harm reduction by providing the necessary resources to ameliorate problems associated with ayahuasca use, production, and distribution. These schemes for other substances have revolved around safer consumption environments, equipment, and techniques (in the case of heroin this came in the form of needle exchange programs and safer administration centers), as well as housing programs, education, substance composition testing, and health care services that are specifically tailored to help the users deal with associated problems or to quit using the substance. However it is hard to see how such schemes could be applied to ayahuasca, for it has no relatable problems associated with use of other hard substances although there have been a few recorded instances of rape of women during ayahuasca ceremonies in the jungles of Peru; this is one area which might benefit from harm reduction policies. Considering that newest research which identifies the very strong potential of ayahuasca to be used in treatment of serious psychological problems, it seems counterintuitive to speak of limiting its use in terms of harm reduction strategies. Ayahuasca seems to be the harm reducer and not a source of it. No less than four of my interviewees attributed ayahuasca to being directly responsible for helping them kick self-destructive habits pertaining to abuse of other hard drugs. Indeed, for its proponents ayahuasca is considered a medicine.

A fourth option is decriminalization of consumption which may or may not extend to decriminalization of production. However, considering the very localized sourcing of the raw

materials used to brew ayahuasca, production might not benefit from decriminalization due to the fact that it is already legal. Considering production can successfully be transferred to other regions with similar climatological and environmental conditions, such as Hawaii for example, new questions would have to be raised on what effects would that endeavor have on the new location, its flora and fauna, and its human inhabitants. Efforts to preserve tropical, medicinal and entheogenic flora have already been undertaken so it should not come as a surprise that the two plants used to make ayahuasca can be made to prosper elsewhere.¹²⁴ The key difference between prohibition and decriminalization is that with the latter, the behavior is still seen as undesirable and is condoned, however it is not punished as a serious felony.

The question then arises as to why not then choose to legalize the substance; however it is quickly answered by reminding that with decriminalization, the use of the substance still violates societal norms; however punitive action is seen as too harsh of a response for those choosing to engage in such behavior. Thus decriminalization of consumption indeed might prove to be the most utilitarian approach regarding ayahuasca, for in this way, local economies that source the good would largely remain as they are with perhaps a mild expansion due to a mild increase in demand. At the same time, the public that remains largely uninformed about the substance would remain fairly unaffected by its new classification and thus only those that have undergone the effort to inform themselves might then express an interest in experimentation with the brew. Considering the unpalatable nature of the brew and its many undesirable effects, the driver of use is not supply but rather demand, for which it would be difficult to argue that it would ever reach a level that might cause any considerable problems for society. Thus the consumption would be again limited to an informed minority that has by free choice decided to partake in the practice

without the threat of being caught and charged with a felony equivalent to that associated with the hardest and most dangerous substances available today. Considering the lack of concrete evidence to its harmful nature, it is difficult to argue that such a strict penalty as is imposed today on consumption of ayahuasca is legitimately defensible. Reason simply does not allow it. Also, considering decriminalization of consumption would seemingly maintain the separation between the source and the market, problems associated with the argument that it might be a gateway drug might well be avoided entirely. Decriminalization might also offer the added benefit of the possibility to shift resources to combating other, more dangerous substances. It would also offer a strong signal to both domestic and foreign audiences; the local population would still understand that use is officially discouraged, however that the state recognizes that it is not its sanctioned duty to regulate an individual's decision to alter his/her mind under the conditions that society as a whole is not negatively affected by such practices.¹²⁵

Whichever policy option is considered, The Psychoactive Substance Commodity System (PASCS) offers a way to conduct the necessary cost/benefit analysis. This system offers a way to analyze all the integrated phases of a structure that gets a product from the producer to the consumer, which helps describe how all the necessary steps for use to occur are related, namely production, distribution, consumption, and especially money laundering. Although this system describes how all the necessary steps for use to occur are related, it does not offer an explanation.¹²⁶ Any policy examination to be considered complete must take into account potential problems of trafficking, consumption, violence, corruption including money laundering, political instability, economic underdevelopment including human capital, infrastructure, tax base, and terrorism. To quote Mike McCarron writing in Royal Society for the

Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, the key to any policy will be to figure out “how to balance regulation and prohibition over the long term in order to reduce harm and make more effective use of current expenditure.”¹²⁷

The previous sections utilized rational choice theory as an analytical framework to discern between different policy options regarding ayahuasca. Rational choice theory stresses that individuals are egoistic rational agents who weigh options for their expected costs and benefits and then choose the one that is perceived to be most favorable. Individuals will have a preference between possible options and will choose accordingly, provided that the relevant information is available and taken into consideration before that choice is made. By making mind-altering substances illegal for use, whether it be for individual consumption or for scientific research, the public is never able to reach a sufficiently complete level of understanding about their effects, benefits, dangers, and overall nature. Thus the ability to make an informed decision that best serves the individual and society is severely handicapped. And as rational choice theory argues, a social behavior is an aggregate of individual behavior. Being that DMT, the active chemical of ayahuasca, is endogenous to the human body, the burden of proof remains on the state to show under what logic it claims to make the chemical illegal. The psychoactive properties of DMT were discovered in 1956, and by 1968 it was made illegal; this span of 12 years was simply too short of a period to be have been able to make any valid conclusions regarding the nature of the substance, and its potential dangers or benefits; Although I do not feel prepared to argue for a specific recommendation regarding ayahuasca policy, it has become clear that blanketed prohibition is not an adequate response. The opportunity to experiment with the substance, on a personal and at a scientific level, must be made possible, for until concrete proof

is provided that ayahuasca is inherently too dangerous to the individual or to society, or that a change in policy would create other negative consequences elucidated earlier such as trafficking, money laundering, corruption, etc., the burden remains with the state to legitimate its current prohibitive policy toward the substance. One fact remains clear; current US policy on ayahuasca is not based on valid arguments whose merit can be scientifically supported, and thus it remains intrusive on individual liberty to be free to choose what an informed adult deems to be in his/her best interest. This fact thus suggests that the state is overstepping its authority and the time is ripe that ayahuasca policy be reconsidered accordingly, if not for any other reason than perhaps for the medicinal potential of the brew which can only be more completely understood if it is scientifically examined.

One place to start is to examine existing samples where ayahuasca is being consumed. The secluded community which has been the subject of this thesis, Céu do Mapiá, provides a unique opportunity to study the social effects of this particular substance on a demographic sample whose isolation provides near-optimal conditions to reach valid and instrumental conclusions which might be used to bring into question current US policy on ayahuasca, respecting the various cultural and historical differences that need to be taken into account when undertaking such an endeavor.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter outlines some of the main conclusions about social organization and the role of ayahuasca that I reached after having spent time in Céu do Mapiá and a number of other Santo Daime communities, conducting interviews, participating in and observing village life. My naïve expectation of taking a lovely, exotic, river canoe trip up to a secluded, self-sustained utopian village in the middle of the wild Amazon rainforest was as false as it was foolish. In essence, Céu do Mapiá is very far from being self-sufficient in any real sense, although such aims do exist. Nonetheless, according to one of my interviewees Céu do Mapiá was the site of the very first experimental program in solar energy generation involving the donation of 20 solar panels. However the community still remains hopelessly dependent on generators for their electricity.¹²⁷ And even though the community attracts so much domestic and international attention from typically well-educated and well-traveled individuals of means loyal to its cause, the utter dependence on old, gasoline powered generators seems to be endemic. The mind numbing noise created by these generators that run from early morning until well into the night immediately shatter any preconceived notions of paradisiacal village life in the middle of the exotic tropical jungle. Along with the generators come the even louder single piston canoe engines which offer no respite and are entirely responsible for the decrease in large fish species in the Igarapé, due to the propellers constantly altering the shallow river bottom displacing the sand degrading the spawning habitat.

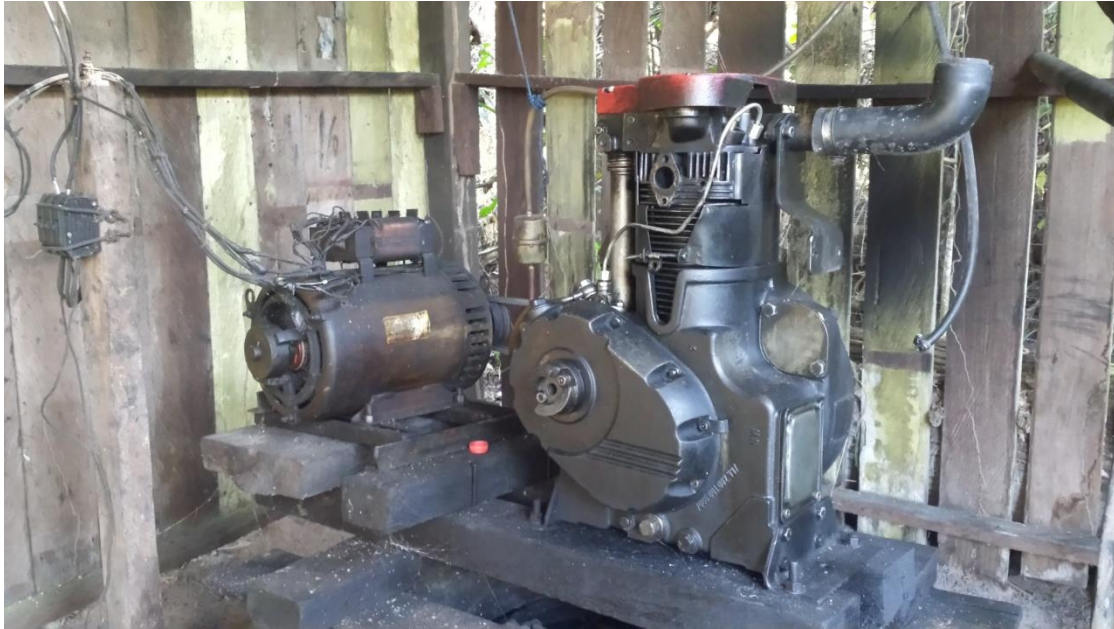


Image 26: Diesel generators are very common and contribute to the noise pollution of the area.¹²⁸

The community is equally far from self-sufficiency regarding its own food production. Most of the food consumed in Céu do Mapiá has to be regularly brought in from Boca do Acre. This includes practically everything from drinking water and cooking oil to salt and sugar. What I absolutely did not expect to see is the alarming rate of consumption of commercial food stuffs replete with artificial ingredients from producers infamous for their disregard of the natural environment, such as Coca Cola for example. According to my own observation Coca Cola and Fanta are the most popular drinks consumed in the village especially among the youth, and the negative environmental effects of this fact are evident with the very large barn that serves as a garbage dump at the far end of the village where only the most curious roamers would stumble upon. The community boasts of a collection recycling shed where plastic and aluminum waste is collected by the community youth, later to be turned into toys and other products. A visitor stepping off the canoe and seeing the overflowing trash containers would have no faith in this fact. There is a voluntary communal effort each Monday to collect the trash and beautify the village, as well as to open trails and conduct other maintenance work in the community. What

surprised me even more than the Coca Cola consumption, was the lack of local production of even some of the very basic food stuffs that one would reasonably expect to encounter in the community - such as eggs, for example. Eggs are imported from Boca do Acre for the simple reason of the residents not keeping enough hen to fulfill their needs. The reason for this was never properly revealed to me even though I posed the question on numerous occasions. Chicken are cheap to acquire and easy to keep, and so in such a community it seems expected that there would be enough hen to make the import of eggs and chicken meat unnecessary. However this is not the case, and the food that is consumed in the village is thus not of very high quality. For example, the breakfast provided to workers at the feitió when I was present was a plate of a few pieces of fried hot dogs mixed with farofa which is a simple toasted casava flour mixture that is dry, hard, and mostly tasteless. There are similarly very few cows in the village, all of private ownership, however this fact is attributable to the community's agreement with IBAMA in protecting the local national forest preserve within which the community finds itself. Similarly, the prohibition of hunting and fishing outlined in the land agreement titled *Regularização Fundiária das Comunidades na Flona do Purus* made available to me by the secretary general of AMVCM complicate food procurement in these ways. Thus without the ability to cut down trees to create pasture, cattle become impossible to keep on a large scale. However, keeping pigs seemed to be expected considering they don't need pasture and can digest almost anything they ingest thus making their keep fairly easy and rewarding. I saw none however, and predictably, without the ability to procure protein from locally sources fish, poultry, pork or beef, the meat that is imported is unavoidably of a lesser quality and of a higher price making it a sort of a luxury available to those who can afford it.

The few vegetable gardens I have seen in the village are too small and unvaried to provide for a decent meal, and this is largely due to the very poor soil quality in the area which is the typical fine yellow peach sand. The most common vegetables produced locally are casava, beans, and cucumber.

Considering food and electricity is not produced locally, the costs to procure them is sufficiently high which all but guarantees a difficult life for anyone incapable to pay. Before the passing of Sebastião Mota de Melo there was a communitarian effort to procure and share all market goods including foodstuffs among village residents thus ensuring everyone's immediate needs were met. After his passing, and with the introduction of private enterprise and the use of money, I have noticed that only those who have the means to develop a commercial relationship with tourists that visit the community are able to live more comfortably. The local businesses catering to the needs of tourists, particularly those offering room and board do quite well, while others who live at the edges of the community endure hardships trying to scrape by doing whatever odd jobs they can find in the community, which means that sometimes they even "go hungry" - one inn operated by one of Sebastião Mota de Melo's grandsons who lives on the ground floor with his young family even charges more per night than the most expensive hotel in Boca do Acre. Interestingly enough, this is one of the only homes that has internet access, albeit not available to guests. Upon my questioning whether making internet accessible to more members of the community was a future goal, the few interviewees who hold administrative roles made it clear that it was not, expressing concern of the social impacts internet access might have on the community. Hence the public internet office located in the school offering access via two old computers is predictably poor. In my experience, it was made clear that any outside

influence especially one directed toward the youth, whether it be social networking, music, fashion, etc., is not particularly welcome, and the interviews I conducted with the younger members in the community produced varying conclusions to the question of whether internet access in particular should be made more available.

Small community dynamics in Céu do Mapiá make it predictably difficult to maintain privacy in one's life, which also has an effect on productivity and efficiency. Neighbors often come to visit unannounced. There does not seem to be too many avenues for employment, and even with a large soccer pitch close to the village center, the youth spends most of their time sitting idly by the main bridge with not too many ways to keep busy. Even for young children school only lasts for about 3-4 hours and there is no regular after-school programs such as music or sports available to them in the community. According to one community official there is youth Capoeira group called Cipó de Ouro, however I could attain no other information from subsequent interviews regarding its general nature, prompting the conclusion that it is not a common avenue of extracurricular activity for the community's youth. This I could not confirm. After swimming against the current of the river and having myself quite of an exercise I was curious to see if any sorts of competitions or sporting events take place in the village. Much to my surprise there was no hint of any sort of competitive spirit whatsoever among the young I interviewed or observed. Although it is expected that everyone goes to church and participates in ceremonies, what I noticed was that only a small group of regulars do, never more than 70 in total, most of whom are older. Very few of the younger adult or teenage residents were present, and those that were tended to be women. However, this might have been the after effect of the particular time during which I visited, with the main religious festivals having recently come to a

conclusion and thus now prompting many residents to take a break. In fact the first time I observed the man who operated the hostel I lodged at, the grandson of Sebastião Mota de Melo and son of the current leader Alfredo Mota de Melo, present at a ceremony was during their visit to the Los Angeles parish as part of their annual international tour visiting Santo Daime churches abroad. This young man is part of the head padrinhos coveted musical entourage which has the privilege of touring the world with Alfredo Mota de Melo. Predictably these individuals represent the best musicians and puxadora that Céu do Mapiá has to show the world. Touring internationally has its benefits and sometimes these benefits are best observed in the material possessions of an individual, whether it be demonstrated by brand name clothes or by the newest motorcycle either of which is not attainable by the vast majority of residents in the community. The result of the remittances collected abroad from participation fees collected as donations at Santo Daime churches is visible in the community mainly with the construction of the new church which is to be a modern building of cement pillars 40 meters high capable of housing significantly more participants than the current church. But the main takeaway to be had is that in Céu do Mapiá there is a clear distinction of those that are living comfortable, and those who endure daily struggles to feed and clothe themselves. This divide seems to be directly related to the proximity to the Melo family, whether by blood or by association. To use one of my interviewee's own words, this community and the ICEFLU organization are in essence a "monarchical anarchy" - anarchy because individuals are led by their own conscience; there is no law although the current challenge is to develop internal rules and regulations. Rather "it's the daime that shows the way". No one has a contract nor an obligation. There are only 10 institutions having no presidents composed of volunteers, and a forum is called when an important decision needs to be made. And monarchical because there is a system of monarchical

rule; Madrinha Rita is the queen and Padrinho Alfredo is the king who governs over everything and has the final word.

Some of the main problems associated with living in the community include security, health care, garbage collection, and the lack of infrastructure. All of these problems are attributed to the inadequacies of state services which fail to serve the residents of Céu do Mapiá. This is largely due to the fact that the community is located on the very edge of Amazonas state and is only reachable after a multi-day canoe trip from its municipal capital of Pauini. Thus, according to multiple interviewees, any financial assistance that leaves Manaus, the capital city of Amazonas, is mostly gone by the time it reaches Pauini where the last coin is absorbed. To quote one of my interviewees, "this is a group of immiserated people in the state of Amazonas which is a well of misery, in the country of Brazil which is itself very poor." The majority of residents I interviewed consider this lack of state support the most pressing challenge for the community and also the most stressful one considering the community reportedly pays its share of taxes to the state. An example given was in the instance of crime committed in the community when police needs to be called in, or when a member needs to be seen by a medic, both services need to be brought from outside and paid for by the community. In the recent case of Madrinha Rita's need for a non-emergency medical attention, a helicopter was brought into the community to airlift her out. In response, the main reported goal of the community is to reach a level of autonomy in its organization and administration which, in my observations, it arguably has to a large degree just in virtue of its isolation. According to older members I interviewed who also were some of the founding members of the community, the main challenges faced by the community is the deviation of the younger residents from the doctrine and the introduction of

commercial enterprises. To the notion of self-sufficiency the response I received is that the concept is largely relative, and that the problem is mainly with the short term life of batteries and not necessarily with more efficient ways to generate electricity. To the point of low and unequal standard of living observed in the community the answer provided was that community residents overall enjoy a higher standard of living as compared to other river communities of the region. However, this argument suffers from the fact that the HDI in the region is one of the lowest in the entire nation thus making the comparison rather unconvincing; to quote one of my interviewees, the community lies in "the most impoverished area of a very poor country".¹³⁹



Image 27: Waste management remains one of the main problems for the growing community, as demonstrated by this open air collection hut on the outskirts of the village, in a low lying field.¹²⁸

As for the role of ayahuasca in Céu do Mapiá, it is my opinion after having spent time in the community participating in and observing village life that ayahuasca acts as a social glue without which the community would cease to exist. Ayahuasca as an extension of the Santo Daime doctrine provides the necessary connection between the original founders of the community and the younger generations who were born there or who recently made the village

their home. Due to psychoactive nature of ayahuasca promoting deep introspection and a sense of belonging to a group, it is quite difficult to imagine Santo Daime doctrine reaching an international following to such an extent with just the music and the message, for the two are fundamentally influenced by the sacrament. The daime also seems to be principally responsible for providing the extraordinary stamina necessary to accompany the works which are very long in nature and require active participation through singing and dancing. The fact that one eats nothing before the ceremony so as not to upset the stomach later when daime is introduced, takes the sacrament, and is able to stay standing for up to 12 hours at a time without feeling hungry after the conclusion is something best left to medical professionals to explain. However, the universal fact remains that members of the Santo Daime church regard their sacrament as not only a source of insight and guidance to lead a virtuous life following Christian principles, but that also acts as a medicine to cure the physical body. To quote the most commonly recited claim virtually all my interviewees made; "Sin Daime, nada" - "without Daime, nothing".¹²⁷

What shall be of the legal status of ayahuasca in the US is to be seen, however the fact remains that no argument can be given that could withstand scrutiny guided by reason to at least not reconsider the status of the substance. The benefits of ayahuasca are currently being evaluated by medical professionals around the globe and the trend seems in favor of easing the restrictions on scientific research. However, whatever conclusion about the physical and psychological effects of ayahuasca are made, this thesis has argued that at the current moment no viable argument proposing continued restriction in such a severe manner would stand up to reasonable scrutiny questioning if the state ought to engage in the restriction of its use by members of society who choose to engage in such behavior, for the sake of public safety. A few

countries offer reliable examples of consequences of legalization or decriminalization of ayahuasca, and the Santo Daime community in Brazil and abroad stands to directly contradict the notion that this is a dangerous narcotic that the state ought to control through punitive measures for its possession, production, distribution, or use. Having spent considerable amount of time with rational, kind, welcoming individuals whose main desire is to worship their God through a doctrine laid out by a peaceful, pacific religion, and to lead a life of conservative virtues, it would be wise to reconsider our aggressive and unreasonable prohibition of their sacrament, what in fact is an ancient Amazonian tea that has been used by the people of Latin America for millennia. It has been the goal of this thesis to first introduce the reader the community of Céu do Mapiá which acts as a religious headquarters of the Santo Daime religion, and finally to contribute to a much needed conversation about the US government's role in controlling ayahuasca. Any arguments based on esoteric experiences of spirituality and the inexplicable psychological journeys taken under the influence of mind-altering substances such as ayahuasca has been purposefully left out of this thesis, for it is the authors belief that only arguments based on objective rationality should be permitted to enter any debate pertaining to how best to organize our societies, including the way in which we live and relate to one another.



Image 28: A model of the proposed new church in Céu do Mapiá.¹²⁹

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