

IMAGES OF HEALING:
SPONTANEOUS MENTAL IMAGERY AND HEALING PROCESS
OF THE BARQUINHA, A BRAZILIAN AYAHUASCA RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

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by
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Approval of the Dissertation

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Doctor of Philosophy in Human Sciences

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigated the hypothesized interdependent nature of subjective and objective elements of conscious experience within a spiritual context. This was done by studying the spontaneous mental imagery (the *mirações*) of people under treatment in the *Centro Espírita Obras de Caridade Príncipe Espadarte* (the Center). The Center is a congregation of the *Barquinha*, a Brazilian syncretic religious system that uses the psychoactive beverage *Ayahuasca* (locally called *Daime*) as a sacrament.

The ethnographic method, involving experiential observation of the religious and symbolic universe of the Center, was used for investigating the Center's history, the healing techniques implemented during rituals, the concepts of healing and sickness among healers and patients, and the relationship between *mirações* and the healing process. Several narratives about *mirações* and healing experiences were collected on site, and five were analyzed more carefully.

The conjunction of ingestion of *Daime* and the participation in the ceremony appeared to reliably promote the occurrence of the *mirações*. These were considered by the participants as a process of inner perception, the moment when different entities (physical body, thoughts, feelings, culture, emotions, mind, soul, spiritual space, etc.)

become connected within their conscious awareness. The experience of *mirações* was considered to be the source of healing. At the Center, sickness is considered to have a spiritual source, being understood as an unbalance of forces. Healing is considered to be accomplished when one puts oneself into a hypothetical “current of healing energy” that is felt during the ceremonies.

Mirações mediated and made conscious a coherent and workable whole that encompassed the ritual, the Daime, the processes of self-transformation/knowledge/exploration, elements of the individual’s consciousness and physiological condition, and factors in a spiritual space. *Mirações* were believed to occur in a spiritual space, thought to be nonmaterial and multidimensional, nesting and informing the material world. This spiritual space is perceived as basic, generating dispositions, intentions, and meanings, and as containing within it the physical and psychological levels of existence. The exploration of that space during a ceremony was considered to accelerate one’s spiritual development.



To

Marileda (*in memoriam*),
For nourishing my dreams

And to my great friend
Mario Lopes Guimarães Junior (*in memoriam*)

May the Light of God keep guiding you through spiritual heights

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*As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and
Skill in all learning and wisdom:
And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.
Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in . . .
And the king communed with them;
And among them all was found none like Daniel . . .
And Daniel continued even unto the first year of the king.
(Daniel, 1:17-21)*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*There was everywhere manifest the confession
that human knowledge arrives at certain barriers
beyond which it cannot pass into the realm of genuine reality.
In opposition to all this stood in my case the fact,
inwardly experienced and known in experience,
that human thinking, when it reaches a sufficient depth,
lives within the reality of the world as a spiritual reality.*
(Steiner, 1968, p. xiv).

For many years, I have been considering a very old question: “How do consciousness and matter interact?” After thoroughly exploring (by thinking, reading, listening, feeling) this topic, I found that, instead of reaching an answer, I had formulated many other new questions. Are consciousness and matter separate realms? If it is so, how did that come to be? If not, does consciousness produce matter, or does matter produce consciousness? Further, are they coproduced? Of course, these are too broad as questions for a doctoral research project. I could work the rest of my life on such questions and possibly never reach a conclusive answer.

The first situation we encounter in such an investigation is the lack of a precise definition for the core concept of consciousness (see for example Farthing, 1992; Hunt, 1995; Laughlin, McManus, & d’Aquili, 1990, Metzner, 1989; Winkelman, 2000). A useful method for working with consciousness is to work with its contents and then make inferences about its activities. For this, I chose *mirações*, the spontaneous mental imagery experienced in trance, induced during various rituals, through the ingestion of the psychoactive Amazonian beverage *Ayahuasca*.

Another important aspect of consciousness is experience: the conjunction of subjective aspects of feelings, thoughts, and perceptions during a specific event. The

experience of *miração* (singular for of *mirações*), for example, would put in evidence primary aspects of consciousness.

This being said, I still had to find a suitable representative model for physical matter. I decided that the best “object” for representing the physical level among human beings is the human physical body. Yet, I needed something capable of undergoing change, for it would be too difficult to gain notable data from a physical body in a constant state, such as in a condition of health. I am aware that being healthy does not mean being immutable, but during sickness, the mutability would be more pronounced. Thus, I decided to work with sickness. Sickness, throughout the dissertation, is defined simply as an unbalanced and nonstasis physical health state, which results in the experience of pain or discomfort.

The choice to work with Ayahuasca was made due to its effects as a “psychointegrative” substance (Winkelman, 2000), as exemplified by the *miração*, making the movements in and of consciousness, and its contents, more evident.

Following this rationale, I was able to develop and finalize a workable question, “What is the nature of spontaneous mental imagery that people experience during their treatment with Ayahuasca?”

I pursued its answer by studying the religious and symbolic universe, as well as the history, of one center linked to the Barquinha religious system: the ritualistic healing techniques it employs, the essential concepts of sickness and healing held by its healers and patients, and finally the relationship between spontaneous mental imagery, the *mirações*, and the healing process.

Ayahuasca



Figure 2.
Banisteriopsis caapi vine and
Psychotria viridis leaves.

The use of Ayahuasca (Figures 2-7) is found throughout the Amazon: Venezuela to Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, and Brazil. It has been consumed by the indigenous people in this vast area for at least 4000 years (Naranjo, 1986).

The Amazonian beverage called, among other names, Ayahuasca¹ contains as its main active chemicals β -carboline alkaloids and dimethyltryptamine, all of them powerful psychoactive substances. N,N-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT) has a chemical structure very similar to the neurotransmitter serotonin, activating the receptors of that substance at the surface of the neurons (Winkelman, 1996). Furthermore, the β -carboline are inhibitors of monoaminoxidase, an enzyme responsible for controlling the levels of the neurotransmitters serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine (Luz, 1996).



Figure.3
Ayahuasca vine in the jungle

¹ I write the terms *Ayahuasca* and *Daime* with initial capitals out of respect for the cultural beliefs of the people I will be discussing.



Figure 4.
Getting the vine



Figure 5.
Cleaning the vine



Figure 6.
Cooking the brew.



Figure 7.
Ready!

Ayahuasca, called Daime or Santo Daime² at the place of the Barquinha, is obtained by boiling in water (hence the appellation *tea*) for many hours pieces of a vine called *jagube* (*Banisteriopsis sp.*, Malpighiaceae, but most commonly *Banisteriopsis caapi*), source of the β -carboline alkaloids, together with leaves of *chacrona* or *rainha*

² Santo Daime is the name of another distinct Brazilian religious group that also uses Ayahuasca as a sacramental substance. In terminology, there is the Santo Daime religious system and Santo Daime tea. To avoid confusion from now on, I will call the tea *Daime* and the religious system *Santo Daime*. Also, the most accepted meaning for this word (Daime) is that it is a contraction of the expression *dai-me*, “give me;” but see Monteiro da Silva (2004) for other hypothesis.

(*Psychotria viridis*, Rubiaceae), the source of DMT. It is possible to find many other different “recipes” throughout the Amazon (Dobkin de Rios, 1972, gives a list of 72 known plants that can be added to the brew), but the Barquinha and other similar Brazilian traditions have opted for the combination of only those two plants.

Neurochemicals, Emotions, and Causation

Prior to going into more details about the composition of Daime and its effects, I feel it is important to clarify something that I have come to believe in conducting this study. Though it is apparent that the chemicals present in Daime play a very important part in its effect, it is clear to me that Daime is only partially responsible for opening the doors of consciousness—using a famous expression (Huxley, 1990)—and perceptions. Daime does not by itself create the reality in which people perceive themselves immersed during the ritual (see also Mabit et al., 1986). The ceremony itself is an essential active element (see also Dobkin de Rios, 1972; Sena Araújo, 1999). This point becomes clearer throughout the dissertation.

Neurochemicals (neuropeptides as well as neurotransmitters) constitute, along with their receptors, a system that integrates emotions, body, mind, and the nervous system (Pert, 1990). Rossi (1986) classified neurochemicals as messenger molecules. He said that along with their receptors, they can easily assume the role of the main communicators between body and mind because they work “between and within all the regulatory systems of mind and body” (p. 159). This occurs principally during any kind of disturbance in the system, be it either a stressful situation or a result of sickness that causes modifications to a stable state.

Rossi (1986) continued on to say that neurochemicals work to modulate not only the central and peripheral nervous systems, but also the sense organs. His view was that neurochemicals “modulate neural communication in mental and behavioral states of emotion, pleasure, pain, stress, trauma, memory, learning, and behavior that are of central interest in virtually all approaches to mind-body healing” (p. 159).

Hormones are another source of neuropeptides. Insulin, for example, has a neuropeptide-like form (in fact, Pert said it is a neuropeptide), being produced in the body to act in the brain, more specifically in the hypothalamus and amygdala (Pert, 1990).

There are other neuropeptide receptors in many areas of the body where strong chemical activity is found. According to Pert (1990), “They are anatomically located at places that receive a lot of emotional modulation” (p. 151). For example, she pointed to the dorsal horn of the spinal cord as one of these places. The back of the spinal cord also is responsible for receiving the first synapses from touch-sensory information.

Neurotransmitters are used by the autonomic nervous system to improve communication between neighboring neurons. They act both in the sympathetic nervous system (enhancing performance and activity) and in the parasympathetic system (enhancing relaxation, creativity, and healing; Rossi, 1986). According to Rossi (1986), neurotransmitters act by attaching themselves to their receptors on the cellular membrane, and in doing so they change the permeability of the membrane to many ions such as sodium, potassium, and calcium, thus changing the cell activity. The other way that the neurotransmitters act is by promoting the production of adenosine triphosphate (ATP) and cyclic adenosine monophosphate (cAMP). These have a strong influence on the cell metabolism, making available large amounts of energetic molecules (Rossi 1986). Lloyd

(1990) suggested that there are anatomical, bioelectric, biochemical, and functional relationships among neuropeptides and neurotransmitters.

Neuropeptides are liberated after a stimulus (external or internal; Pert, 1990). This stimulus eventually causes a change in the chemical environment in the body including, of course, the brain, which reacts by producing neuropeptides. However the question then remains: Do emotions, for example, come before, after, or along with the neuropeptides? Does only the brain control behavior, emotions, and the mind? Further, what about consciousness? The chemical answer is that they would come after neuropeptide production. According to Pert (1990), “The striking pattern of neuropeptide receptor distribution in mood-regulating areas of the brain, as well as their role in mediating communication throughout the whole organism, makes neuropeptides the obvious candidates for the biochemical mediation of emotion” (p. 153). Even though Pert spoke about the role of neuropeptides as mediators, she used the expression *mood-regulating areas of the brain*. In doing so, it is very easy to think about mood being controlled by whatever is happening in these areas.

Following these thoughts, Pert (in Hooper & Teresi, 1986) said that, “Pain, sex, memory, mood states, and mental illness are all products of the interaction of chemicals and receptors” (p. 72). She also said that the brain decides where to direct the attention through the endorphin (a neuropeptide) system, and this would be genetically determined. The next step was to assert that the “brain is just a little box with emotions packed into it” (Pert, in Hooper & Teresi, 1986, p. 88).

When something happens outside of the organism, the environment has changed and the body reacts by producing neuropeptides; emotions then develop. This is the most

obvious way, because it is easy to display the action of the neuropeptide: if it is introduced artificially into the nervous system, there will follow an emotional response (Pert, 1990).

Pert (1990) wrote, “We’re starting to understand that emotions have biochemical correlates. When human beings engage in various activities, it seems that neurojuices [as she refers to the neuropeptides] are associated with either pain or pleasure. And the endorphins are very pleasurable” (p. 151). She went on to state that the limbic system, where the “emotions are seated,” has 40 times more opiate receptors than other areas of the brain, and these specific areas regulate sexual behavior, appetite, and water balance in the body.

According to this point of view, all animals (endorphin is found all the way from the unicellular amoebas to more complex beings like human beings; see Pert, 1990) would be locked into a Pavlovian cage, receiving rewards of endorphin. As such, we would be condemned to a frenzied search for situations where we would receive our dose of endorphin as our pleasurable reward. Here arises an inevitable question: Why do different people look for pleasure in different ways? This reward system needs a starting flash point. What is it? In another part in their paper, Hooper and Teresi (1986) related a situation when puppies stopped crying after receiving a dose of endorphin. Does mother’s milk contain it? Is the pleasurable touch of the mother’s breast producing it? In any case, are we eternal endorphin addicts?

Though there is not a definitive answer for those questions, I do try to point throughout this dissertation to the idea that there are moments when the mind would control the body. There is one particular situation where it is relatively easy to perceive

that neuropeptides are produced as a bodily reaction to emotion (read: the emotion caused a change on the body constitution). This is what happens in a healing process (as was proposed by Dubos, 1968) when we learn to generate an emotion, which produces in the nervous system the neuropeptide. This acts as a healing force throughout the body. Rossi (1986) gave us a lucid description of this sequence with his model of a three-stage process through which the mind acts via the autonomic nervous system on cells all over the body. Rossi (1986) observed,

Stage one consists of mind-generated thoughts and imagery (neural impulses) in the frontal cortex. In stage two these mind-generated impulses are filtered through the state-dependent memory, learning and emotional areas of the limbic-hypothalamic system, and transduced into the neurotransmitters that regulate the organs of the autonomic nervous system. The autonomic nervous system finally branches into the sympathetic (activating) and parasympathetic (relaxing) systems. The sympathetic system terminal nerve endings secrete the neurotransmitter norepinephrine (usually) to activate receptors on the cells of the organs they modulate (the heart, lungs, pancreas, intestines, etc.), while the parasympathetic system terminal nerve endings secrete acetylcholine. These neurotransmitters initiate the third stage in the process of information: transduction from the thoughts, images, and emotions of mind to the biochemical responses within the individual cells of the tissues and organs of the body. (pp. 163-164)

The chemical composition of Ayahuasca would enhance the activity at stage two of Rossi's model, promoting the regulation of the organs of the autonomic nervous system and also bringing to consciousness the activities of the state-dependent memory, learning and emotional areas of the limbic-hypothalamic system.

However, the ritual would regulate the material made available by the action of Ayahuasca over the limbic-hypothalamic system and other parts of nervous system by enhancing the activities at stage one of Rossi's model.

Neurophysiology of Ayahuasca

The interaction between psychoactive substances and the nervous system is not completely known (Winkelman, 2000), but parts of that process are starting to be better understood. The main chemicals present in Daime are the β -carboline alkaloids from the *B. caapi* vine and N,N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT) from the leaves of *P. viridis*. DMT, by itself, is not active when ingested orally because it is decomposed by monoaminoxidase (MAO), an enzyme present in the stomach and inside the neuron's axons. To be active, DMT needs to pass intact through the stomach, being absorbed at the duodena. β -carboline alkaloids are inhibitors of MAO's action, facilitating DMT's absorption (Britto, 2002).

According to Riba and Barbanoj (1998), "DMT interacts equally with serotonin 5-HT_{1a} and 5-HT_{2a/2c} receptor sites" (p. 13). The indole part of DMT shows high affinity for the serotonin sites in the human brain (Guthrie & Calvin, 2001), acting in the same way as LSD. This interaction happens because DMT belongs to the same chemical family of serotonin (5-hydroxytryptamine, shortly 5-HT), the tryptamines (Balick & Cox, nd).

Serotonin acts through all levels of the brain, from the brainstem to the frontal cortex. It works on postsynaptic activities, opening and closing gated ionic channels, controlling voltage-gated channels, activating secondary messenger systems, and serving as a neuromodulator in the central nervous system. It is also related to the control of moods, anxiety, fear, depression, and dysthymic disorders. It works as a modulatory neurotransmitter, managing the effect of other neurotransmitters (Winkelman, 2000, pp. 218-219).

MAO is also found inside the brain, and here, once again, the interaction between β -carbolines and DMT is very important, not only by helping to keep DMT intact, but also by enhancing the available amount of serotonin itself, for MAO acts to decompose serotonin as well. Inside the brain, DMT competes with serotonin at the receptor sites (Guthrie & Calvin, 2001).

According to Guthrie and Calvin (2001), the activation of the 5-HT_{2a} receptor by serotonin:

mediates an increase of excitatory postsynaptic potentials and currents in pyramidal neurons of the neocortex and transitional cortex, an effect most pronounced in the medial prefrontal cortex. . . . DMT activated the major intracellular signaling pathway (phosphoinositide hydrolysis) to an extent comparable to that produced by serotonin. . . . It has already been established that low doses of indoleamine hallucinogens (DMT) act preferentially upon presynaptic serotonin receptors to inhibit raphe neurons, thus releasing postsynaptic neurons from a tonic inhibitory serotonergic influence. Indole hallucinogens are also believed to stimulate plasma prolactin (PRL) secretion by a serotonergic agonist mechanism.

Problems such as depression are associated with an abnormal enhancement or presence of the number of both serotonin 5-HT₁ and 5-HT₂ receptors. The administration of MAO inhibitors reduces the number of those receptors in several parts of the brain, including the frontal and prefrontal cortex (Ögren & Fuxe, 1985).

Serotonin is also related to the organization of the development of the nervous system, a function that is mediated by the serotonin receptors on both neural and nonneuronal cells (Lauder, 1990). Also, according to Withaker-Azmitia et al. (1990),

The final consequence of receptor-mediated development is that psychotropic drugs may actually be neurotropic—which is to say that these drugs may not only alter neurochemistry but may also alter brain structure. This idea is more understandable when one considers that the mature brain is not static, but in fact shows quite dynamic characteristics, such as synaptic turnover. That is, new synapses are constantly being made while old ones are eliminated. If the same factors which regulate development are responsible for this as well, and it seems

probable that they are, then altering receptor function would also alter synaptic profiles in the mature brain. This would also explain the long onset for therapeutic response seen with psychoactive drugs. In summary we have described a new and exciting role for serotonin—the regulation of brain development. (p. 329)

So, putting the above assertions together, Ayahuasca can be perceived as a potentially successful tool in healing depression (along with ritual—see below). By changing the structure of the brain itself, the beverage probably plays an important role on the permanent change of behavior people claim to have *after* the intake of the substance. Again, it is important to note that the ritual is essential for influencing the *direction* in which that change will take place: the chemicals make the modification possible, but it is the ritual that builds the path for the person to pass through.

The human body produces DMT naturally, and it can be found in the lungs, brain, blood, liver, cerebrospinal fluid, and heart (Britto, 2002; McKenna & Towers, 1984). Guthrie and Calvin (2001) commented that the main production of endogenous DMT may take place in the pineal gland, along with the production of β -carbolines, which is also found in human plasma and platelets, and in the rat's whole brain, forebrain, arcuate nucleus and adrenal gland (McKenna & Towers, 1984).

Once inside the brain, DMT competes with serotonin at the latter's receptor sites (Winkelman, 2000). The β -carbolines present in Ayahuasca help to keep DMT intact, and enhance the available amount of serotonin itself. The result is a “flood” of serotonin in the nervous system: the receptor sites at the neurons' surface are occupied by the molecules of DMT, and action of MAO on serotonin is inhibited (Winkelman, 2000).

Winkelman (2000, pp. 131-132, 221-223) developed a provocative hypothesis concerning the whole process involving serotonin, psychoactive substances (which he called “psychointegrators”), and the nervous system. Winkelman (2000) suggested that

DMT-like substances block, by competition, the inhibitory action of serotonin at CA₃ hippocampal cells, producing synchronous slow-wave discharges across the hippocampal-septal-reticular-raphé circuit, and also within the temporal lobe limbic system, into the frontal cortex, replacing the normal fast-wave desynchronized brain activity, and facilitating the achievement of an emotional flooding, often described as a feeling of ecstasy.

This removal of the serotonin's regulatory action leaves the inner world dominant (Winkelman, 2000). Also, the hippocampal-septal region receives the "terminal projections from the somatic and the autonomic nervous systems, forming part of an extensive system of innervation connecting areas of the brain, in particular linking the frontal cortex and limbic system" (p. 132). This is the basic route of information from the bodily senses (reunited by the limbic system) to the frontal cortex.

The literature offers many articles concerning the neurophysiology of Ayahuasca, but I found none discussing the neurophysiology of the visionary effects related to the use of this beverage. There is related research on the neurophysiology of visions evoked by LSD, on some other altered states of experience such as meditation, and some sources on the neurophysiology of vision itself. According to Kosslyn (1994),

A visual image is a pattern of activation in the visual buffer [a set of topographically organized visual areas in the occipital lobe used to segregate figure from ground] that is not caused by immediate sensory input. . . . Once a pattern of activity is evoked in the visual buffer, it is processed in the same way, regardless of whether it was evoked by input from the eyes (perception) or from memory (imagery). (p. 74)

The main problem to address here would not be how the images are processed but to determine how they are generated. The images perceived during the condition induced by psychoactive substances have, apparently, no direct external source and they are not

based upon external perception. However, they would have mechanisms in common with those concerning perception at many different levels, from physical to psychological and spiritual. The external world makes its contribution to this process, but the visual process is much more closely related to how the person feels and how deeply she or he understands what is perceived—when it is external—than merely the perception of it. It would be the meeting of raw perception (from both external and internal worlds), and the feelings of the subject as related to those perceptions.

Kosslyn (1994) also observed that the occipital lobe communicates with the temporal lobe through the ventral system (“a set of brain areas that runs from the occipital lobe down to the inferior temporal lobe,” p. 70), and the dorsal system (“a set of brain areas that runs from the occipital lobe up to the parietal lobe,” p. 71). Winkelman (2000) proposed that the hypothesis that the temporal lobe would be under the influence of slow, rhythmic, and synchronous electrochemical waves when under the effect of psychoactive substances. As such, the occipital lobe would also be affected by those synchronous discharges.

The ventral system cells respond to such properties of objects as shapes, colors, and texture. The dorsal system is responsible for processing properties related to location and size. Both systems “come together as an associative memory (which appears to be implemented in part in the posterior, superior temporal lobes), where they are matched to stored information” (Kosslyn, 1994, p. 73). According to Kosslyn (1994), the associative memory contains both the associations between perceptual representations and other, more abstract information.

Reader (1994) added evidence from another link between the visual system and the limbic system (again, a system affected by the synchronous discharges). According to him, the impulse from the optic nerve passes first through the lateral geniculate bodies of the brain, which have many connections with the limbic system. After that the visual impulse goes through the temporal and parietal lobes, and finally to the occipital lobe.

Joseph (2001) gave better details about the parts of the limbic system that would be involved in imagery. He said that the “right hippocampus, the amygdala, and the right hemisphere can be related in the production of religious imagery.” Particularly, the activity within the amygdala “may trigger dreaming which is accompanied by pontine-geniculate-occipital (PGO) waves” (pp. 111-113). Winters (1975) added that “visual system activity induced by LSD starts in the retina and travels through a visual pathway up to the visual cortex. LSD does not induce hallucinations when administered to patients whose optic nerves had been severed” (p. 63).

Psychointegrators activate the paleomammalian brain (evoking and processing emotions and memories) and the reptilian complex (maintaining alertness and awareness). According to Winkelman (2000),

The reptilian and paleomammalian brains' information-processing modalities involve cognitive processes that are not based on language, but on forms of mental and social representation tied to primary processing and nonverbal communication. These structures lack linguistic representation; but they have awareness, intelligence, and consciousness; play a predominant role in managing emotional and social life. . . . One effect of psychointegrators is to shut down the habitual routines related to social behavioral displays. The psychointegrators apparently have the effect of forcing the frontal cortex to consciously process information that has been relegated or automatized by the R-complex and paleomammalian brain. (p. 222)

Visions experienced during the effect of psychoactive substances would be the result of this psychointegration of the nervous system. The integration is made visible by

neurophysiological alterations, but is guided by mental and social representations within consciousness.

Damasio (1996, pp. 102-104) noted that in primates serotonin is linked with the inhibition of aggressive behavior, facilitating better social behavior (see also Bloom & Lazerson, 1988, concerning behavior in mice). Primates presenting marked social behavior have more serotonin receptors in the frontal cortex, amygdala, and temporal cortex. Noncooperative primates do not have this pattern.

According to Winkelman (2000), “Bodily experience involves many levels but is necessarily social” (p. 209; see also Csordas, 1994, 2002). It is through emotions that the biological and cognitive levels interact (Damasio, 1996). Feelings are essential for the links between belief, physiology, bodily maintenance, reproduction, personal and group survival, and illness. The “nervous, endocrine, and immune systems communicate through *symbolically* mediated physiological interactions” (Winkelman, 2000, p. 209, emphasis in original). Sociability becomes a central aspect in this whole process, in the sense that contact among people is fundamentally based on feelings, and culture is the main provider of symbols. Winkelman (2000) also said that “human behavior requires the coordination of information with motivations and personal significance, a linking of emotions and the cognitive and rational faculties” (p. 222). This is exactly what DMT-like substance and rituals do.

Ritual promotes a strong feeling of participation in a group (see for example Winkelman, 2000). Daimic sessions promote a strong “link” among participants, facilitating social bonds. As well, the production and action of neurotransmitters are 2-way events, both influencing and being influenced by the outside environment. However,

what I want to emphasize here is that if serotonin facilitates social contacts, such contacts would also improve serotonin's production. It is not only the use of a substance that will change someone's worldview of bodily condition: it is human contact itself!

According to House, Lnadis, and Umberson (1988),

Social relationships and contacts, mediated through the amygdala, activate the anterior hypothalamic zone (stimulating release of human growth hormone) and inhibit the posterior hypothalamic zone (and hence secretion of adrenocorticotrophic hormone, cortisol, catecholamines, and associated sympathetic autonomic activity). These mechanisms are consistent with the impact of social relationships on mortality from a wide range of causes and with studies of the adverse effects of lack of adequate social relationships on the development of human and animal infants. (pp. 241-242)

Therefore, the use of Daime in a ritual setting would easily lead to a state of *wellness*. Sutter (1986) observed, "A holistic definition of wellness can be derived from . . . the simultaneous achievement of physiological homeostasis, psychological self-actualization, and behavioral competence" (p. 285). The physiological homeostasis would be facilitated by the use of Ayahuasca, the psychological self-actualization by ritual, resulting in behavioral competence.

Achterberg (1985) noted, "Since 1950, work has been reported showing that the brain, particularly the structures involved in emotion (the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland), could be artificially stimulated to increase or decrease the activity of the immune system" (p. 166). She continued, "When emotional growth ceases, malignancy, a new and deadly growth process, takes over. For some, it is a reversible consequence if energy is poured into a renewed creative effort" (Achterberg, 1985, p. 173). The achievement of social support through rituals gives direction and meaning to life, facilitating emotional growth. Daime has some side effects such as vomiting and diarrhea, and the chance of a

“bad trip” is always present. However, those infelicitous moments are immersed into a strong sense of meaningfulness, provided by the ritual.

Finally, I repeat here a quote from Pert (in Hooper and Teresi, 1986). According to her, she has “stopped seeing the brain as the end of the line. The brain is just a receiver, an amplifier, a little wet mini-receiver for collective reality” (p. 104).

Ayahuasca in Brazil

The traditional use of Ayahuasca in Brazilian territory has undergone a very peculiar transformation. Since the 1930s, three syncretic, Christian-based, and organized religious movements have evolved using this beverage as a sacrament. The first of these was the Santo Daime movement, founded during the 1930s by Raimundo Irineu Serra, called *Mestre Irineu*. The Barquinha movement emerged during the 1940s headed by Daniel Pereira de Mattos, known as *Frei Daniel*, and in 1960 the União do Vegetal movement, which was started by José Gabriel da Costa, the *Mestre Gabriel*.³

Santo Daime

Santo Daime is by far the most studied religious movement of this group. It is comprised of two primary groups, the *Alto Santo* lineage and the *Padrinho Sebastião* lineage. It has spread to many countries, including Spain, Holland, Italy, France, Argentina, Uruguay, Japan, Israel, the United States, and Canada.

³ More details can be found in English in Frenopoulo (2005); Groisman (2000), Groisman & Sell (1996); Krippner and Sulla (2000); MacRae (1998); Mercante (2004, 2006) and Soilbelman (1995). For texts in Portuguese see: Alverga (1984); Araújo (2005); Barbosa (2001); Bolsanelo (1995); Brissac (1999); Castilla (1995); Cemin (1998); Couto (1989); Cunha (1986); Da Silveira (2003); De Rose (2005); Dias Junior (1992); Figueiredo et al. (1996); Fróes (1983); Goulart (1996, 2004); Groisman (1996; 1999); Guimarães (1992); Labate and Sena Araújo (2002); Labigalini, Jr. (1998); Luna (1995); MacRae, (1992); Magalhães (2002); Mercante (2002); Monteiro da Silva (1981; 1985; 2004); Mortimer (2000); Paskoali (2002); Pelaez (1994); and Sena Araújo (1999).

Santo Daime combines Amazonian shamanistic elements and popular Christianity. Mestre Irineu “received” the “doctrine” of Santo Daime in a vision, after seven days of isolation in the forest, eating only unsalted yucca, and drinking water and Ayahuasca. One spirit, first identified as the *Rainha da Floresta* (literally: queen of the forest), and later as the *Virgem da Conceição* (Virgin of Conception), told him during a vision how he would develop the ritual of Santo Daime.

The rituals in Santo Daime involve the singing of a sequence of songs called *hinos* (hymns), which are said to be channeled by some of the outstanding members. Mestre Irineu channeled the first *Hinário*, a collection of hinos, and several others have since been “received”—as they call the process of channeling the hinos—by other persons. The ritual circumstances may vary, but the most common ones are the *Concentração* (concentration sessions) and *Bailados* (a synchronized and repetitive dancing).

In general, *Concentração* take place on the 15th and 30th day of each month. The participants stay seated most of the time. A sequence of hinos is chosen by the *Padrinho*—the leader of a Santo Daime center—to be sung, but a period of silence is also included. The session lasts from 4 to 6 hours.

The *Bailados* take place on festive days, such as the commemoration of a Catholic saints such as Saint Joseph, St. John, or The Virgin of Conception, as well as the holidays such as Christmas and New Year’s Eve, among others. This is a dancing ritual, and lasts 12 hours, through the night.

The common space where the rituals take place is the *Igreja* (church), which can be rectangular or hexagonal. At the center of the *Igreja* is the *mesa* (table), and an altar

set over a table where the *cruzeiro* (a 2-armed cross, called the Caravaca Cross) is positioned. The mesa can be, like the Igreja, rectangular or shaped like a 6-pointed star. The most spiritually strong people of the community sit at the table. At its head sits the Padrinho, the spiritual leader of the community. At his right side and behind him are the spaces reserved for women, and the left side and in front of him are spaces reserved for men.

Another important aspect of Santo Daime's organization is that, in general, members live in a community around the church, with most of the *daimistas* (what the Santo Daime members are called) housed on the land of the church. In Brazil, this situation varies slightly according to the place where the church is located. If it is in a rural area, there are more people living in the community, but in an urban area, there is fewer living on its land. It is important to note that even though there are Santo Daime temples in several cities in Brazil, including cities as large as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, rural areas are preferred by daimistas.

This preference has its roots in the origin of the religion, when Mestre Irineu constituted the first temple in the rural area of Rio Branco, the capital of Acre State, south of the Brazilian Amazon. However, these roots were strongly reinforced by Sebastião Mota de Melo, who acquired some land in the middle of the forest, where he and his followers survived on rubber taping, small-scale agriculture, and the collection of Brazil nuts. Sebastião envisioned that a communal-based living structure would make his group stronger. Padrinho Sebastião founded the *Mapiá* village, the "Mecca" of his lineage, from where the Santo Daime gained the World (for more details see also Mortimer, 2000).

União do Vegetal (UDV)

União do Vegetal (UDV) also exists in several different countries. Ayahuasca is called *Hoasca* or *Vegetal* by UDV members, and their ceremonies, called *sessões* (sessions, plural of *sessão*, session), normally occur on the first and third Saturday of the month. These sessions are sometimes open to nonmembers, but there are sessions designated for members only on different dates. The session is presided over by the *mestre* (master), and it is centered on conversations based upon a series of questions from the members and answers given by the mestre. Eventually, the mestre *faz uma chamada* (makes a call), which consists of singing special songs to call the *força* (the force). Some conventional music, not the special songs sung only at the sessions, played from a CD, may be played. These selections are chosen by the *mestre*, and come from a wide array sources.

The mestre sits under the *arco*, an arch upon which the words *Estrela Divina Universal* (Star Divine Universal) and UDV are read. This arch is positioned at the end of a table where some members sit.

The União do Vegetal is very hierarchical, and the teachings are given only orally during the sessions, according to the *grau de memória* (level of memory) or *grau espiritual* (spiritual level) of each member (Gentil & Gentil, 2002). These are the factors determining the ascension of a member through the UDV's internal gradations. *Grâu de Memória* explicitly means the "capacity to listen to, comprehend, and memorize" (Gentil & Gentil, 2002, p. 516) the teachings received under the effect of the Hoasca.

The "power of words" is highly esteemed by the UDV members. During the ceremonies, stories are sometimes told to the participants. These stories are considered

sacred, and they contain the essence of the spiritual teachings of the UDV. One of the myths tells the story of the biblical King Solomon, and how he was the first human being to brew the Hoasca.

The União do Vegetal is the most exclusive of the three religious movements, and participation at its ceremonies is permitted only by the mestre of each center.

Barquinha

The Barquinha movement receives primary attention throughout this dissertation. Briefly, it is a syncretic religious system based upon a deeply devotional Christianity, with the inclusion of mediumistic practices.

There are five centers belonging to the Barquinha religious system in Rio Branco, the capital of Acre state, south of the Brazilian Amazon. The first, the *Centro Espírita e Casa de Oração Jesus Fonte de Luz*, was started in 1945 by Daniel Pereira de Mattos (known as *Frei Daniel*). The second, founded in 1962 by Maria Baiana and Mestre Juarez, an ex-member of the original Barquinha, is the *Centro Espírita Fé, Luz, Amor e Caridade* (known also as the *Terreiro de Maria Baiana*). In 1980, Antonio Geraldo da Silva left the original center and founded the *Centro Espírita Daniel Pereira de Mattos*. Francisca Campos do Nascimento (also called *Madrinha Chica* or *Francisca Gabriel*) also decided to leave the original center in 1991, and founded the *Centro Espírita Obras de Caridade Príncipe Espadarte*, the Center that is the primary focus of this dissertation. The last center, the *Centro Espírita Santo Inácio de Loyola*, was founded in 1994, by Antônio Inácio da Conceição (Sena Araújo, 1999). All of the centers share many characteristics, and comprise the same religious movement, though the centers are ritualistically independent.

I have come to feel that it is inadequate to simply classify the Barquinha as a religion. I have explored and for expediency used such expressions as “religious movement” in referring to the Barquinha and Santo Daime but reveal the roots of why I feel this too must be updated. Some time ago, I gave a draft of a paper of mine to a member of Madrinha Francisca’s Barquinha to read. In that paper, I started by saying that there were three religions in Brazil using Ayahuasca as a sacrament (Mercante, 2004). That person told me that I was wrong, that, in fact, there are only *two* religions using Ayahuasca as a sacrament in Brazil, the Santo Daime and the UDV. He told me that if someone were to ask him his religion, he would say that he was *daimista* (meaning following the Santo Daime) and not *barquinhista*. He said that he drinks Daime and that the Barquinha was simply another lineage of the Santo Daime. According to him, Mestre Irineu gave authorization to Daniel Pereira de Mattos to start his own spiritual work because Mestre Irineu knew that Daniel had another mission to accomplish. This is probably the only peaceful break in Santo Daime history.

He told me that the consensus among the old members of the Barquinha was to see themselves as daimistas, and that the differentiation of Barquinha and Santo Daime as two independent religions started to be made by newcomers from the south of Brazil. Those newcomers did not know the story of the Barquinha and witnessed a ritual that was very different from that of Santo Daime. For him, the Barquinha was an extension of Santo Daime doctrine, the difference being that in the Barquinha they are dealing with spiritual aspects, such as mediumship, that are not incorporated into Santo Daime rituals. Among the lineages of Santo Daime, mediumship began to be explored by members of the Padrinho Sebastião lineage some years ago (see, for example, Guimarães, 1992), but

it is still a taboo in Alto Santo. Other services of the Barquinha, such as the *Doutrina de Almas* (indoctrination of souls; see Chapter 7), are not performed by Santo Daime.

Another member mentioned that, when he was visiting a different center of the Barquinha, he was asked about his religion before going to a consultation with a spiritual guide. He answered that the Barquinha was his religion. The asking person then wrote in his notebook: *espírita cristão daimista* (Spiritualist Christian Daimista) and not *barquinhista*.

According to Marcos, a former member of Santo Daime and now an active member of the Center, the Barquinha belongs to the “lineage of Saint Francis of Assisi, the line of charity, and of love, to heal the people and the brothers and sisters [of both religions] who are unbalanced. The Santo Daime belongs to the line of Saint John the Baptist, the line of justice, to correct the behavior of brothers and sisters.”

Daniel Pereira de Mattos, the founder of the Barquinha, first drank the beverage with Raimundo Irineu Serra, the founder of Santo Daime. When Daniel arrived at the Alto Santo church to participate in his first ritual, Mestre Irineu asked him why he was so late, because he had been expecting Daniel for a long time (Sena Araújo, 1999). Irineu was not talking about “being late” for that specific ritual but being late to approach the religion and the Daime. That event is understood by members of both religions as a proof that Irineu knew Daniel spiritually before he knew him physically, showing that their spiritual link is strong. Furthermore, the cultural contexts of both religions are very similar: both appeared in Acre and their members belonged, in the past, to almost the same social classes.

The spirit of the deceased Padrinho Sebastião, who died in 1990, chose, in 1998, a member of Madrinha Francisca's Barquinha to receive from him, through channeling, a Salmo, after which he transmitted two other Salmos, one of them to the Madrinha herself. The family of the Padrinho Sebastião came to the Center specifically to hear these Salmos being sung during a ceremony, and they agreed that the Salmos were truly from the deceased Padrinho Sebastião. I have heard on several occasions, reports of visions with Mestre Irineu and Padrinho Sebastião at the Center.

The Barquinha as a religious system has been developed around the ideas of devotion and charity. Charity unfolds in two complementary levels: toward the incarnated humans, and toward the assistance to the *almas*, the disincarnated souls of deceased people. Mediumship is the principal vehicle for practicing charity. These ideas are explored throughout the dissertation.

New Uses of Ayahuasca

It is important to mention that new groups are frequently appearing, which blend symbols, music, and ritualistic structure borrowed from these three original movements. There are as well, many nonreligious uses of Ayahuasca in Brazil, although all of them are related to some kind of ceremony or therapy. Ayahuasca has been used by groups of actors, in Vedanta meditations (from the east Indian Vedic tradition), in therapy for homeless people, by musicians, by practitioners in body therapies, psychotherapies, and group therapies, by African-Brazilian religions, by the so-called "neoshamanism" movement, and sometimes in combination with other psychoactive plants (see Labate, 2004). However, the study of these newer and various forms of employing Ayahuasca is only at its outset.

The Centro Espírita e Obras de Caridade Príncipe Espadarte⁴

Frei Daniel as I mentioned above, started the *Centro Espírita e Culto de Oração Jesus Fonte de Luz*, the first center of the Barquinha, in 1945. Before this time, Daniel was a bohemian, playing guitar at bars in Rio Branco. One night he fell down, drunk, on the banks of a river. There he had a vision of angels bringing him a blue book. After this event, he decided to stop drinking. However, Daniel became very sick with liver problems. Looking for help, he made a visit to Mestre Irineu, who gave him small increments of the Daime to drink—a spoonful daily—until Daniel was strong enough to drink a whole cup. Then, during spiritual work with Irineu, and under the effect of the Daime, Daniel again had the vision of angels giving him a blue book. Advised by Irineu, Daniel decided to create his own religious movement, using the Daime as a sacrament (Luna, 1995; Sena Araújo, 1999).



Figure 8.
Padrinho Francisco and Madrinha Francisca.



Figure 9.
Cruzeiro (first plane) and Igreja (in the back) at the *Centro Espírita Obras de Caridade Príncipe Espadarte*

⁴ I develop here a brief introduction of the *Centro Espírita Casa de Oração Príncipe Espadarte* center (Figures 8 and 9). The Barquinha's history as a whole is developed in Chapter 3, and the Center's history and actual profile are explored at length in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Madrinha Francisca, who worked with Frei Daniel and his successors at the Casa de Oração center for 39 years, first met Daniel in a very peculiar situation. Physicians diagnosed her, according to her words, as a terminal patient. She had tumors all over her body, and the physicians could not prescribe an effective treatment for her. She heard about Daniel and decided to engage a treatment with him. He said that she would be healed little by little. The entire process took seven years. After this success, she decided to join Daniel in his spiritual mission. Madrinha Francisca was one of the first mediums to work with Daniel, “receiving” the spirit called *Príncipe Dom Simeão*.

Dom Simeão receives this name when he is working through the *Mistério da Terra* (literally: mystery of land). In the *Mistério do Céu* (mystery of sky), he is called *Soldado Guerreiro Príncipe da Paz* (warrior soldier prince of peace), and in the *Mistério do Mar* (mystery of sea), his name is *Príncipe Espadarte* (prince swordfish; see also Luna, 1995). *Mistérios*, mystery, is the way the spiritual levels of existence are named in the Barquinha. They are the *Terra* (land), the *Céu* (sky), and the *Águas* (waters). Each *Mistério* has different characteristics, shared by its inhabitants. At the same time, some of the more illuminated beings have the ability of moving through more than one *Mistério*. In general, by doing so, they change their names as they change their characteristics. I explore this idea in more detail in Chapter 5.

The term *Barquinha* means “little boat,” because the tradition is considered to be a boat taking the “suffering spirits to the Light,” as well as bringing the “spirits from the Light” to help in the spiritual work. This entire religious system is based upon the idea of “charity, which leads us to the feet of God” (according to *Pai Benedito of Senzala*, a spirit working at the Center). Sena Araújo (1999) said that the metaphor of the boat has two

meanings: the religious mission that Daniel was called to initiate, and to which his followers subscribe, and to the history lived by each individual—the sailors: “The journey inside the big journey” (p. 76).

The phenomenon of incorporation, which is the possession by mediums of spirits of *Pretos-velhos*, *Caboclos*, and the *Encantados*, is another central characteristic of the Barquinha. The Pretos-velhos and Caboclos are spirits who are very common in Brazilian syncretic religions such as Umbanda, which combines a devotion to those Brazilian spirits with the legacy of the African Orixás (see Boyer, 1999; Ortiz, 1988; Pordeus, 2000).

The Encantados are considered as human beings who moved to the spiritual level *with* the physical body, without dying⁵. Sena Araújo (1999) related that the Encantados are very wise spirits and are very important in the development of the spiritual works in the Barquinha. Madrinha Francisca’s center has the name of an Encantado, the Príncipe Espadarte.

In addition to all the spirits described above, there is also the active presence of spirits of Roman Catholic priests and bishops: the Center is a “Franciscan Mission,” and the believers are “warriors of Jesus Christ’s armies.” These armies are present and active during the rituals, helping the participants achieve a state of harmony, principally in the case of sickness. It is interesting to note that Saint Francis of Assisi used to say that he was at the head of a great army devoted to Jesus (Englebert, 1979).

⁵ The Encantados appear in several religions in the North and the Northeast of Brazil (see also Ferreti, 2000; Maués, 1994; and Maués & Villacorta, 2001). Among the Manchineri (Mercante 2000a), it is said that the *Caboclinho do Mato* was an Indian transformed into an Encantado after drinking too much Ayahuasca. He is responsible for the care of the animals and for teaching whoever wants to work as a healer.

The ritualistic calendar of the Barquinha can be divided in three parts: the *Romarias* (pilgrimage), the *Festas* (parties), and the ordinary rituals or *Trabalhos* (works)⁶. The ordinary rituals are performed on every Wednesday, Saturday, and the 27th of each month, even when occurring during the *Romarias* and before the *Festas*. The *Romarias* are daily rituals performed for a certain number of days in honor of a specific Roman Catholic saint. There are *Romarias* for San Sebastian (January 1 to 20); Saint Joseph (March 1 to 19); Our Lady (May 1 to 31); Our Lady of Glory (August 1 to 15); and finally Saint Francis of Assisi (September 1 to October 4). Also, there are daily rituals during Lent.



Figure 10.
Salão de Festas.

Each Festa is performed in honor of a Roman Catholic saint. These rituals are performed outside the church, on the *Salão de Festas* (ballroom court; see Figure 10), to the

sound of drums, electric and acoustic guitars, and electric bass. There is too, always a Festa at the end of a Romaria. Each commemorated Catholic saint has a corresponding Orixá (the gods and goddesses whose origins trace to African religious traditions). This relationship was developed during the time of slavery. The slaves began to remake their

⁶ The notion of *Trabalho* needs a clarification here. It is said at the Center that the services are *trabalhos espirituais*, that is, spiritual works. The Daime “works” into everybody’s consciousness. During the time the person is in the service, that person is “working.” Interestingly, the notion of work as something religious and spiritual comes from the Greeks, mainly with Hesiodo (Pordeus, 2000).

ceremonies using images of Roman Catholic saints, instead of the habitual iron sculptures representing the Orixás, which were forbidden by their owners. The slaves arranged their altars with the statues of the Roman Catholic saints on top and underneath had the iron sculptures of the Orixás: this was the beginning of a syncretism that eventually correlated the Orixás to Roman Catholic saints (Krippner, 1999; Ortiz, 1988).

The rich schedule of the Festas throughout the year reveals their importance in the practice in the Barquinha, and their observation days are the same from year to year.

Following is an annual calendar of the Festas and those Saints and Holidays honored: The Three Magi Kings (January, 6); San Sebastian/Oxossi (end of his Romaria, January 20); Our Lady of Candles/Iemanjá (February 2); Saint Lazarus/Omulu (February 11); Saint George/Ogum (April 23); Our Lady of Fatima and Pretos-velhos⁷ (May 13); Madrinha's Francisca birthday (June 7); Saint Antony (June 13); Saint John Baptist/Xangô (June 24); Saint Peter and Saint Paul (June 29); Santa Ana/Nanã Buruquê (July 31); Saint Cosme and Saint Damian/Erê (September 27); Frei Daniel's death (September 8); All Saints Day (November 1); Day of the Dead (November 2); Prince Dom Simeão (November 23); Saint Barbara/Iansã (December 4); Our Lady of Conception/Oxum (December 8); Saint Luzia (December 13); Christmas (December 24)⁸; New Year's Eve (December 31).

7 The Pretos-velhos are not considered Orixás. So, there is no correspondence between Our Lady of Fátima and the Preto-velhos, as there is, for example, between Saint George and Ogum. However, May 13 is the commemorative day of abolition of slavery in Brazil, and as I said above, the Pretos-velhos are the spirits of old black slaves (both men and women), turning May 13 into a very important date.

8 According to the Brazilian tradition, Christmas commemoration begins on the night of December 24. Usually people have a meal at midnight, the supposed birthing time of Jesus. As such, the Barquinha is simply following the Brazilian custom.

Spontaneous Mental Imagery

Spontaneous visual imagery, called *mirações*⁹, experienced by the members of Santo Daime and the Barquinha, are transcendental moments for the participants and are accessed in the rituals promoted by the Brazilian Ayahuasca religions. They play a central role in the development of the participants on these spiritual paths. The *mirações* can be defined as spontaneous mental imagery. The intent throughout this dissertation is to explore the relationship between the spontaneous mental imagery experienced by sick people under treatment in the healing rituals of the Barquinha, lead by the Madrinha Francisca Gabriel, and their healing processes.

According to conceptual universe of the Barquinha the *miração* is related to the visionary experience during a ritual. A *miração* may involve other perceptual modalities, such as sounds, tastes, or odors. However, even when an experienced *miração* is not limited to its visionary aspect, the visual elements are most often its most intense aspect. The *miração* is, in general, a very emotional experience, and the most anticipated one; it is the moment when people receive the teachings of spiritual beings, a source of knowledge and of self-transformation. The *miração* is the highest moment in the ecstatic experience. It has a powerful introspective aspect and sometimes bears with it the power of a revelation, occupying a vital place in rituals. It is the transcendence medium par excellence.

People at the Center are accustomed to say that a *miração* comes to the person, or is *received*; it cannot be evoked at will. They understand the *miração* as a spontaneous

⁹ The word *miração* is related to the Spanish verb *mirar*, suggesting *to gaze, to behold, to look, and to see*, and not the Portuguese verb *mirar*, which can be also translated as *to look at, to stare at*, but mainly as *to aim at*. The suffix *-ão* denotes an action. This is probably a heritage from the Peruvian Ayahuasca tradition, much older than that of the Brazilian. *Mirações* is the plural of *miração*.

process, at least at its beginning. After the *miração* begins, the person can interact with the process, but again, they cannot initiate it (see Shannon, 2002). In my personal experience, during the trance induced by the combined use of Ayahuasca and participation in a ritual, a person can enter into a dream-like state, the emergence of *miração*. The difference here with common dream is that, unlike a common dream, the person is able to move by his or her own will in the vision.¹⁰ That is not a complete freedom, because the *miração* can change without voluntary control, and those experiencing them can find themselves suddenly immersed in another realm or reality, one that was not apparently of their choosing.

However, beyond transcendence there is “deservedness,” or merit. The person needs to be ready to receive a *miração*. Readiness and deservedness are two related states. People prepare themselves in this regard principally with self-knowledge and spiritual work. However, before the people are fully ready, they can have small “samples” of *mirações*, such as vision of colors, sounds, and faces. One of my informants said that these are the moments when the spiritual world is “opening” to the person, but he or she does not have the correct level of understanding to follow the *miração*, and it vanishes.

The visual experiences also integrate various aspects of consciousness (Farthing, 1992; Laughlin et al., 1990; Shannon, 1992; Taussig, 1987), and they seem to play the role of interconnection among perceptions, thoughts, and feelings (Alverga, 1984), principally after the psychointegration of the whole nervous system promoted by Ayahuasca and ritual (Winkelman, 2000). Such visions can play an important role during

¹⁰ However, this difference would not be so sharp when lucid dreams are taken in consideration. See Krippner, Bogzaron, and De Carvalho (2002).

processes of intense physical transformation, as do those ones experienced during episodes of sickness and healing.

I would like to add one more thought to the above-mentioned word “mental,” as employed in *spontaneous mental imagery*. Mental by no means indicates something that is exclusively intellectual or logical. Mental means that the people experiencing a *miração*, whether or not it is visual, experience it in the mind even when the experience is deeply rooted at the level of the body.

I have found some useful tools in Rudolf Steiner’s (1968, 1986) ideas concerning this topic. According to him, thought is, at the same time, both the thread that connects meaning among raw experiences, and another experience in itself. This means that thought is not something *produced* by our mind as that thread but that emerges from the experience as another experience explaining a group of experiences. Steiner (1968) noted that “the form in which thought enters into manifestation is the same as that of the rest of the experience” (p. 31).

However, although thoughts manifest themselves as another experience, Steiner distinguished two realms of this reality, the sphere of experience and the sphere of thought (Steiner, 1968, p. 63). It is with knowledge that this duality is perceptually brought back into unity. Knowledge is achieved by thinking. Though in this model people do not think thoughts. Rather, people perceive thoughts using the mind. According to Steiner (1968), “Our mind is not to be conceived as a receptacle for the ideal world, containing the thoughts within itself, but as a organ which perceives the thoughts” (p. 64).

Thinking, then, would be a subjective force allowing perceived thoughts to move inside the perceiver's mind. According to Steiner (1986), "Observation calls forth thinking, and this latter first shows me the way to join the single experience to another" (p. 48). Experience emerges within the person's consciousness, no matter whether the subject is manifest in the physical or in what people in the Barquinha call the astral (spiritual) plane of existence. (The parameter here is the person, but a person who is not restricted by the skin: a person experiencing a *miração* would describe the process using expressions like "I was there watching this and that happen").

Shanon (2002) was aligned with Steiner's ideas when he observed that cognition takes place in the "interface between the cognitive agent and the environment" (p. 306). Shanon's concept of "cognition" would be equivalent to that of Steiner's "thoughts." However, Steiner's "thinking" is the movement within the cognitive agents' consciousness that apprehends those thoughts in a reflexive way.

The Spiritual Space

One idea repeated itself consistently during my residence in the Barquinha: for the people there, spirituality was not something immaterial or evanescent; it was something concrete, solid, and 3-dimensional, although it did not exist in the same dimension as physical objects. It interacts, via mediums and *miração*, with the physical plane. For them, the spiritual dimension occupies a space. This idea was not something explicit or manifest but was present in their very way of living and believing.

The images used in their songs, in their description of *mirações*, and during the rituals are not just metaphors but memories of experienced events. "I was there" is a common expression when someone is describing a *miração*, as well as other sentences like "I flew," "I

swam,” “I walked.” These words imply movement through a nonphysical space. Distance is present in the spiritual space.

The spiritual space is an immaterial, multidimensional, and original place where powerful forces are at play generating dispositions, intentions, and meanings, as well as sensorial, emotional, and mental impressions.

The spiritual space is not one identified with the psychological or the physical side of life. However, the physical and psychological planes are contained within the spiritual space. The spiritual space comprises many dimensions, and the unfolding of those dimensions happens in accordance with the breadth of the awareness of the observer/participant in the spiritual space. The exploration of that space would be the process of spiritual development itself, and each dimension of life is contained in the spiritual space.

The physical space would be the manifest result of the relationships established among the many forces present at the spiritual space, and that is why I say that the spiritual space is original. For some time I struggled with the use of the words “emergent” or “original.” My first option was emergent (see Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1993), in the sense that the spiritual space would emerge out of relationships between individual and society, between individuals, between the individual and the universe, and between society and the universe. Relationships among those elements would create the spiritual space, even if the spiritual space latter enfolded and involved the very elements that created it. Here, spiritual space would have a very close relationship with the concept of culture (see Langdon, 1996).

However, my experience in the Barquinha showed me that the spiritual space is transcendent (in the Kantian meaning of this word, i.e., it will have an *a priori* characteristic.

see Kant, 1929). Culture, then, would be included in the spiritual space. Spirituality and culture have been essentially linked since the beginning of anthropology (see for example Durkheim, 1989). The French founding father of social science indicates that social morphology would dominate religion. However, Bastide (2001a) assumed in his book *O Candomblé da Bahia* precisely the opposite, that social morphology would follow the mystic and spiritual aspects of religion.

Cultures acts as a lens, focusing the attention of the participants on certain areas of the spiritual space, and thus, influencing the shape of ritual. However, the spiritual space is not be limited solely to that perceived area. Culture would be changed precisely by the perception of previously imperceptible or unconscious areas of the spiritual space¹¹.

The role of mediator between spiritual space, culture, and the individual is performed by the *mirações*. *Mirações* are, therefore, the result of a combination, in the individual's consciousness, of ritual, ingestion of Ayahuasca, processes of self-transformation/knowledge/exploration, and elements of the spiritual space. The *miração* can be influenced by culture, but what is seen during a *miração* would not be in an absolute way shaped by culture. Culture, as I said above, acts as lens, both directing the gaze toward certain events in the spiritual space and shaping the way in which a force *a priori* to an event or entity is perceived, but culture is not the generator of that force. That force resides within and emerge from the spiritual space. Thus, a *Caboclo* is regarded as a Native American, but the forces behind the manifested *Caboclo* are not created—although they are focused—by culture. Culture would have a strong influence on the way

¹¹ I am not making the naïve assumption here that *only* the spiritual space would have the power to change culture.

people describe what they experience in a *miração*, but many aspects of a *miração* are not mentioned during its description because people do not have words to describe them. These elements are there in the spiritual space, they show up in the *miração*, they are felt, they influence people's lives, and they are shared by those having similar experiences, although in a nonverbal way. People are always in the process of becoming conscious of this space. In this spiritual space the relationships between cause and effect are not aligned in a direct and strict way: for example, an event happening in the spiritual space can generate a consequence in the physical plane only after a long time, which makes very difficult for the person experiencing that consequence to trace back its causes. At the same time, a spiritual event can have different impacts over different people.

The idea of the existence of a “spiritual space” is developed in Chapter 5.

Notes on Terminology

I would like to add some notes here about the terminology that I have adopted for this dissertation. From this point forward, I in most cases refer to the Centro Espírita Obras de Caridade Príncipe Espadarte simply as “the Center,” with a capital C. Also, when I mention the Barquinha, I am talking about the religious movement as a whole, not referring to any of its many centers.

I am making an explicit choice to keep all the proper names, names of places, and important concepts like *miração*, *peia*, *romaria*, and some others, as well as name of places within the area of the Center, like *Salão de Baile*, *Congá*, *Igreja*, and so on, in Portuguese. At the first mention of one of these important words, I give a translation to English. These translations are naturally approximate, and as I believe that any translation cannot be

adequately precise, as well as for sake of style I am keeping these terms in Portuguese throughout the text. These words appear italicized only on their first appearance in the text.

As a further note, in Portuguese, the use of masculine plural forms, when talking about a group of people composed by members of both genders, is normal. Thus, when a Preto-velho says, “Jesus came for the salvation of all his sons,” all of the “daughters” are included in that group. At the same time, words such as *person* are feminine. Thus, in some narratives the interviewee can say, “When a person has a *miração* she is seeing the astral.” In that case, I will not write, “He or she is seeing the astral.” I maintain this rule when translating the narratives, hoping that readers understand that the bias is toward both the masculine and the feminine, with neither being dominant.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

My own firm belief is that there is no alternative to studying phenomenology from within. The experiences that Ayahuasca induces are extraordinary in the full sense of that term and many are ineffable. There is no way to really appreciate what they are without experiencing them firsthand

. . . Moreover, for a serious study of the Ayahuasca experience a cursory, explorative exposure to the brew is not sufficient. The spectrum of phenomena pertaining to the Ayahuasca experience is extremely broad and there is simply no way these can be captured in a small number of probes

. . . What happens to one under the Ayahuasca intoxication is determined not only by the brew itself but also by one's attitude and stance, and these, in turn, change over the course of time. In sum, then, any serious study of Ayahuasca requires not only firsthand experience, but also substantive, long-term familiarity—indeed, training.

(Shanon, 2002, p. 32)

Methodology

The *participant observation*, with its origins in Malinowski's work, differentiates anthropology from the other social sciences (Ellen, 1993). An extensive participation in the life of the studied people, learning and using the native language, in other words a complete immersion into the life of these people, generates a knowledge very different from that generated by other ways of observing the society. Malinowski, by utilizing this methodological approach, brought about a theoretical change in the discipline.

Malinowski (1978) wrote about three basic methodological points: (1) precise objectives and theoretical knowledge, (2) working conditions (living among the natives), and (3) specific techniques for collecting and registering data and evidence. These are still essential aspects of ethnographic investigation today.

Living full-time among the natives was Malinowski's contribution to the basic technique adopted by anthropologists. His intent was to drink directly from the source, avoiding secondary channels, such as Western missionaries or paid informants for example. This was the methodological way for achieving more clear and precise data. According to Malinowski (1978), trying not to be a stranger is essential for whoever wants to observe the reality of daily life, rather than theatrical performances specially constructed to enchant curious people. For Malinowski, it was essential to go deeply into the moral universe of the natives, into their sense of right and wrong, and their sense of good and bad, trying to understand their universe.

Theory played a fundamental role for Malinowski, but he felt that the anthropologist should avoid going into the field expecting to find specifically this or that. For Malinowski, the theoretical studies that the anthropologist had done before fieldwork should form a base for raising new questions, when juxtaposing these studies with the field observations. To perceive the totality of the native culture was his main goal, integrating its parts into a general picture. The last step in the systemic collection of cultural data for Malinowski is the gathering, using native explanations, of the motives, feelings, and reasons that lie behind their acts. These observations form a social skeleton, in the sense that these data would be conditioned by culture. However, the objective is to observe socially significant behaviors, not isolated individual acts. Malinowski was trying to discover the role of social feelings in daily life, making evident the influence of culture on social behavior.

The careful, nonjudgmental description of native life is very evident, principally concerning the practice of research and not the theory thereof. Malinowski took into

account native magic, feelings, and considerations of their techniques in showing, with a minimum of distortions, a picture about the studied people. He was also very careful not to translate into Western terms the native concepts, again attempting to avoid distortions or any sense of deprecation of native habit and technique.

With Malinowski's methodology, ethnography became a precise work, the result of the dynamic combination of the anthropologist complete immersion among the natives, their personal lives (the feelings related to situations such as being a long time far from home, the discomfort), and the theory previously learned.

Malinowski's data fostered a new paradigm in which the society is revealed as not given but constructed. Participation, more than mere observation, was stimulated in the data collection. The scientist no longer observes things but interprets meanings, and as such, participation became essential in this search for meanings. Malinowski's technique promoted the development of new and more precise methods and techniques.

Cardoso de Oliveira (1998) wrote that this is the initial point of the appearance of a hermeneutic proposal that seeks to permit the expression of the researcher's subjectivity, but above all placing on a conscious level the influence of this subjectivity. Anthropologically, our own culture frames what we perceive. So, the Cartesian method used by Durkheim (Rodrigues, 1981) became not obsolete but rather incomplete because it ignored its own weak side. The new paradigm of intersubjectivity is a source of data and knowledge.

There is now a dialog occurring between explanation (when it is used as a method) and comprehension (when the process of intersubjectivity becomes more

evident). Observer and observed complement each other and generate knowledge. Comprehension gives access to meaning and generates hypothesis filled by explanation.

Geertz (1995) concentrated his analysis on the development of American anthropology. This school had as one of its founders Boas, who was responsible for significant methodological innovations. Boas (1920) proposed that the internal forces of the society itself could explain the cultural changes experienced by a society over time. Before him (excluding Durkheim and Mauss), these forces were perceived as having their sources only from the phenomena of cultural diffusion and evolution. He also emphasized the individual action that influences these social changes. He prepared the ground for the growth of the Interpretivist American School. The method developed by Boas basically influenced the analysis, though not specifically the collection of data, emphasizing strongly native reports and narratives as a source of information—principally in their own language—about their culture.

Boas's method had the emic categories as its primary focus. A simple interpretation made by anthropologists about their "objects" would never, according to Boas, lead to good results. The first step for a successful research, according to him, begins with an efficient collection of data and emic categories. This was a method opposite to that of the French (with Durkheim and Mauss as main figures) and evolutionist schools. Both of those schools understood the "object" as an inanimate being, almost prehuman (considering the native and "primitive" people), who could not perceive, rationalize, and comprehend any of their actions. Boas was the first one to break with this posture, beginning a new school of anthropology.

Going back to the American academic context, symbolic anthropology—a criticism of all of anthropology—emerged in the writings of researchers such as Victor Turner and Mary Douglas. This was an attempt to turn anthropology into a hermeneutic enterprise, searching for how meanings were made and their influence over human behavior. This school recognizes also the impossibility of abandoning the anthropologist's own cultural background when studying the "other." However, theorizing about the "other" continues to be a colonialist act. The search for meanings, even using native thoughts, puts in evidence the roots of their representations, the basis of their actions, and the easiest way for domination to occur (Clifford, 1988; Marcus & Fischer, 1986).

Ellen (1993) stated that the ethnographic production is immersed in the political and social conditions of research, as well as in its historical development. Some knowledge of the organization and the structure of the process through which the research appears is necessary, as well as of the anthropologist's subjective experiences during the fieldwork. This has recently come to be considered extremely important for understanding the produced material. Researchers must be aware that they are not machines producing and gathering data but human beings trying to learn, comprehend, and transmit knowledge, using the elaboration of an answer to the relationship between the "I" and the "other." This is the ethnographic text in which all of the final data are manipulated and ordered, when all the experiences are "formatted" and "compacted," becoming accessible.

Concerning the meeting between the "I" (the anthropologist) and the "other" (the researched), there is another important point to consider. When anthropologists use

methods such as the “dense description” (Geertz, 1995) or the “participant observation” (Malinowski, 1978), they take into account the significant and supposedly unbreakable philosophical barrier between both these extremes positions: “I” and “other.” These theoretical and methodological definitions can have made us feel, while working with someone else, like eternal strangers.

The Experiential Observation

*How much can we know about consciousness
from direct experience—
that is, how much can we discover by looking at
our own mind through ‘introspection’?
. . . Introspection frequently fails as an accurate data source
precisely because the scientist is unskilled as a contemplative
(Laughlin et al. 1990, pp. 21, 24)*

Young and Goulet (1994) presented that participant observation would be a doorway to the culture under study and only the beginning of the experiential observation. Better than adopting the position of an objective (even participative) observer, the researcher who experiences the culture under focus would have a better comprehension of it. Researchers who observe the studied culture experientially—principally by being initiated into local mystical traditions—try to situate themselves in this culture, giving the researcher the chance to try, at least for some time, to see reality through the eyes of those being researched (D. E. Young, personal communication, 05/15/2000). The result is a more realistic ethnography.

Both the “dense description” proposed by Geertz and the classical “participant observation” fit very well as methodologies when the differences between the cultures of the researcher and researched are well marked. How does one separate both worlds when

the dividing line is not so distinct; for example, when anthropologists work in their own cultures or when they have already been initiated in the native traditions?

As we consider the research with Ayahuasca, we find that is precisely the case of many researchers: many of them are, or were formerly affiliated to an Ayahuasca tradition (see for example Couto, 1989; De Rose, 2005, and Labate, 2004). Only a correct ethical posture, assuming openly the fact that the researchers know their object of study from the inside, could constitute a safe practice concerning the production of a trustworthy and useful research.

Groisman (2004), who worked with Santo Daime groups in the Netherlands, indicated that ethnographic data are the result of a deep political, social, and psychological interaction of the researcher with the participants in the research. Like most of the Brazilian Ayahuasca researchers, Groisman decided to include the use of the psychoactive substances (in his case both Daime and *Cannabis sativa*) as a way to establish a better integration into his participants' lives (see also Soilbelman, 1995).

This, in fact, is not new. Silva (2000; see also Segato, 1995) discussed at length the initiation of anthropologists working with African religions in Brazil. Many of them were initiated before, and many during, the research period. The only difference is that many of those anthropologists do not discuss it openly in their writings, though sometimes in a separate paper after the thesis or dissertation is complete (Silva, 2000). The fact is that these anthropologists are talking from the "inside" about this or that temple of Candomblé or Umbanda, even if they do not admit it openly. Silva (2000) proposed that the experience of the initiated anthropologist should be more evident for the reader, and that these experiences should be, as Young and Goulet (1994) proposed,

an object of reflection. These observations can easily be extended to imply the researchers working with Ayahuasca.

Laughlin et al. (1990) asked a crucial question: “How much can we know about consciousness from direct experience—that is, how much can we discover by looking at our own mind through ‘introspection?’” (p. 21). They also gave the answer:

“Introspection frequently fails as an accurate data source precisely because the scientist is unskilled as a contemplative” (p. 24). Experiential observation can produce valid information only if the researcher has had some training in the spiritual tradition being researched. Also, according to Peters (1981),

The experiential [observation] method demands a combination of talents—scholar as well as disciple. The experiential method is not exclusively ‘emic’ or ‘etic’ but synthesizes elements of both. . . . Yet, it differs from other approaches in that it is always participatory and introspective, utilizing the experiences and self observations of the ethnographer as viable tools of research. (p. 39)

Blacking (1995b) had a similar thought concerning the study of possession and altered states of consciousness. According to him,

Above all, it would be encouraging if spirit possession and altered states of consciousness in general were more widely accepted not as signs of pathological or rare condition, but as part of the common heritage of the human species. Also we ought, perhaps, to insist that all who claim to write authoritatively on the character and consequences of such states in others have themselves been conscious of having similar, if not the same, experiences. (p. 175)

Jules-Rossete (1975) developed a research project among the participants of the Apostolic Church of John Maranke, in Nigeria. She was able to have the experience of doing fieldwork as an outsider and as a converted person. She said that the “conversion experience enabled me to share in the vision and realities of Apostolic ceremony” (p.15) and that her “membership provided a vehicle for description” (p. 15). According to her,

The difference between the scenes that I had witnessed as an outsider and the instruction received as a member was the very sense of spiritual purpose with which I was able to unravel them, not my learning of more intricate labels for them. Apostles did not withhold essential secret information from me during the learning process. My own perspective had initially blinded me to what they saw as the meaning of events. What I could not grasp as possible or practical as an outsider could only remain obscure. (pp. 249-250)

Maquet (1975), working with meditation practices in Sri Lanka, reported that the experiential approach means not only the participation in the meditation sessions for collecting data, but also “a personal commitment” (p. 181). Thus, he chose to participate for one month at a meditation retreat. After an initial period of frustration with the results obtained with the techniques indicated by his master, he decided to ask the master when he would have some results or when he would begin to meditate on the “Noble Truths.” The master just told him to keep meditating and that he would gain intuitive knowledge from direct perception of the discussed concepts. More specifically, the master told him that “meditation is not a discursive reasoning” (p. 191). This posture gave him the chance, first of understanding, and then only later discussing and writing about some of the root aspects of Buddhism.

Experience and Narrative

Anthropologists use etic terms when they create concepts to talk about a researched culture and emic concepts are those created and used by the “natives” to talk about and describe themselves. Braud and Anderson (1998, p. 6) stated the difference between emic and etic on another (and complementary) level. These authors used the idea of emic as the “inner descriptions . . . [the] private, first-person experiences and experiential accounts,” and etic as the “outer description . . . [the] third-person accounts

of what is publicly observable.” The anthropologist is the living bridge between both levels of understanding, making the connection(s) between the inner descriptions and the publicly observable.

The previous assertion flows in two directions. The first is concerned only with the subject of research. Following this first direction, the anthropologist studies the match between the inner world of the participant and the outside world, observing (and here the anthropologist can only observe) how subjectivity and culture are connected. The researchers’ job as such is to communicate their thoughts about their observations.

The second direction is concerned with the researcher’s inner world and how (and also when, why, and if) it is connected with the researched inner world. This connection is obtained by having the researched act as the observer of the researcher’s publicly observable actions and words (and here we have the observable result of thoughts and feelings). This is, in fact, a very common position. Human beings normally observe the other beings around them. Not only do they observe, but they also think, analyze, and feel. These practices are at the core of living culturally in society. The major difference here is that the researcher asks the participant’s opinion about the researcher’s subjective experiences. This practice is well documented in Young and Goulet’s (1994) book. This sharing of experiences promotes confidence on the part of the participants, especially as they understand that the researcher is taking them seriously.

Levy and Hollan (1998) spoke of two levels of interviews: the first considers the participant as informant, as a good and qualified (expert) witness “about some community procedure” (p. 336). In the above terms, informants become an etic describer of their own cultures. The second level regards participants as the center of the interview,

as an object of study in themselves. This second level includes questions such as how did you feel when X happens? Tell me about your experience during X; does X change your life? And if so, then in which ways? How do you feel and think about it now? These are the bases for constructing an emic research. Using both levels of inquiry, one can study two complementary worlds: the inner experience of participants and their personal perceptions of the outside world.

Anthropology has developed a long discussion concerning the connections between experience and its expression (Bruner, 1986). Bruner made clear that experience structures, and is structured by, its expression in a dialogical way. However, he distinguished between reality, experience, and expressions. According to him, “The critical distinction here is between reality (what is really out there, whatever that may be), experience (how that reality presents itself to consciousness), and expressions (how individual experience is framed and articulated)” (p. 6). He continued by saying that “There are inevitable gaps between reality, experience, and expressions, and the tension among them constitutes a key problematic in the anthropology of experience” (p. 7).

The problem resides in the definition of reality. Reality is not only what we have out there. Reality is as well what we have in here. Both experience and expression are essential parts of reality. What we live and how we describe this living fact cannot be taken separately from reality. Also, expression can be (or can become or generate) another experience. As Rosaldo (1989) said, “Narratives, once acted out, ‘make’ events and ‘make’ history. They contribute to the reality of their participants” (p. 129).

Langdon (2002) said that narratives occupy a very important place in the interpretation and transmission of experience. Langdon (2002) also said that narratives

about experiences with Ayahuasca form a cornerstone of a transdisciplinary study of Ayahuasca.

According to Bakhtin (1979),

The text, written or oral, is the primary datum of all to these disciplines [linguistics, philology, literary studies] and generally of human and philological sciences (including theological-philosophical at its origin). The text is the *immediate reality* (reality of thought and of experience). (as cited in Todorov, 1984, p. 17)

The text, as an expression, becomes part both of the experience and of reality.

Any apparent true and absolute separation between the experience and its expression thereof vanishes. Bakhtin (1979, in Todorov, 1984, p. 18) continues this line of reasoning, saying that:

The human act is a text *in potentia*. The spirit, mine as well as the other's, is not a given, like a thing (like the immediate object of the natural sciences); rather, it comes through expression in signs, a realization through "texts," which is of equal value to the self and to the other. (p. 284)

People access, by expressing themselves, at the same time, the other and their own self and the contact with the other can become the best way for knowing the self. Then, where is the great barrier between the other and me? Is the world of experience really closed? The expression of experience is an element of the very essence of the acquisition of consciousness about that experience.

This is exactly the position of Good (1994). According to him,

We can inquire directly and explicitly, but we often learn most about experience through stories people tell about things that have happened to them or around them. Narrative is a form in which experience is represented and recounted, in which events are described along with the experiences associated with them and the significance that lends them their sense for the persons involved. But experience always far exceeds its description or narrativization. New questions will always elicit new reflections on subjective experiences and any of us can always describe an event from a slightly different perspective, recasting the story to reveal new dimensions of the experience. Much experience is given little

significance: much of what we do and experience is not worth telling a story about, and only with close questioning are we able to recall fleeting aspects of our experience. In addition, experience is sensual and affective to the core and exceeds objectification in symbolic forms. (p. 139)

Good thus built a criticism on the phenomenologically Boasian-oriented argument that experience is essentially cultural, that language, symbols, and sociocultural practices organize the whole world. Boasian anthropology begins with culture—through the description of cultural or symbolic forms of culture—and only after that does it proceed to experience. Good (1994) pointed in the opposite direction: experience for him goes beyond culture. Much of the experience, according to him, is not framed by culture, and it is precisely during those unframed experiences that culture changes. For Good, narrative reveals both the culturally framed and the unframed aspects of experience.

Good (1994) forged a criticism on his own idea of “semantic network analysis,” a process centered on the analysis of illness as a “network of perspectives and a product of interconnections, as a form of synthesis that condenses multiple and often conflicting social and semantic domains to produce ‘the meaning’ of a complaint or an illness” (p. 172). He said that this process of finding a core symbol that synthesizes all of the meanings around sickness is not “mistaken” but partial and limited. Thus, according to him, “While core symbols in a medical lexicon may indeed condense or hold in tension a powerful network of meanings, the process of synthesis is not only semiotic, but social, dialogical, imaginative, and political” (p. 173). However, he indicated that his idea of illness as something attached to a semantic network changed the perception of illness from a “more or less accurate representation of disordered biology” (p. 174) to the understanding of sickness as the product of the interconnections of many different

factors. Narrative helps the sick person to synthesize the whole process of sickness and the researcher to analyze that process.

Personal reports (narratives) are situated at the core of experiential observation.

The “native point of view” is taken as seriously as possible, and narratives become the trail the researcher will follow to access the “native” reality and consciousness.

Concerning specifically the Center’s universe, narratives about the experienced *mirações* will be the field where consciousness, spontaneous mental imagery, bodily changes, and experiences will meet.

Going Up, Coming Down: The Directions of Consciousness Theories

*To understand the role of the shaman,
and to know anything of his genius in using plants,
one must be prepared to accept the possibility
that when he tells of moving into realms of the spirit,
he is not speaking in metaphor.
(Davis, 2001, p. 69)*

Consciousness is a central aspect of this dissertation. I work extensively with this process in Chapter 11. However, I would like to delimit at this point the area of action of this idea of consciousness throughout the dissertation, principally because I believe that the core concept of altered states of consciousness (Tart, 1969) is not useful for understanding the Center’s universe.

Tart’s (1969) definition of altered states of consciousness is considered seminal throughout the whole field of psychoactive substances. According to him, “An altered state of consciousness for a given individual is one in which he clearly feels a *qualitative* shift in his pattern of mental functioning, that is, he feels not just a quantitative shift . . .

but also that some quality or qualities of his mental process are *different*” (pp. 1-2; emphasis original).

In a broad sense, Ludwig (1969) stated as characteristics of the altered states of consciousness, “alterations in thinking, disturbed time sense, loss of control, change in emotional expression, body image change, perceptual distortions, change in meaning and significance, sense of ineffable, feelings of rejuvenation, hypersuggestibility” (pp. 13-14).

According to Farthing (1992),

An altered state of consciousness (ASC) may be defined as a temporary change in the overall pattern of subjective experience, such that the individual believes that his or her mental functioning is distinctly different from certain general norms for his or her normal waking state of consciousness. (p. 205)

Farthing did not depart significantly from Tart’s (1969) definition, but he expanded it on two points: first by including the experiential factor (in addition to Tart’s “pattern of mental functioning”). Tart stated that the mental process during an altered state of consciousness is different, although he did not say from what. Then, second, Farthing completed Tart’s thought by concluding that a normal state of consciousness is dependent on cultural factors, being produced by general social norms.

Both Ludwig’s collection of characteristics and the definitions of Tart (1969) and Farthing (1992) enhance the link between culture and the categorization of states of consciousness, and at the same time, they state two categories of states of consciousness: altered and normal.

According to Farthing (1992), ordinary states of consciousness are:

periods when you are awake, not asleep, and you have not done anything to produce an altered state in the usual sense. . . . The essence of a state of consciousness is the individual’s patterns of subjective experiences, not his or her overt behavior or physiological responses. (p. 206)

There are some important elements I would like to highlight in Farthing's (1992) definition. First, to be in an ordinary state of consciousness, one must "have not done anything to produce an altered state." He completed the thought with a cultural delimitation: "in the usual sense." Culture is an abstract social concept and becomes more so when the focus of study is a complex society. The researcher delimits the culture of a group and a person within that group can be member of different groups with different cultures.

Physiological measurements are sometimes used as arguments in evidence of the existence of ordinary (referred to as basal) and altered states of consciousness and used to distinguish them. However, this is still an arbitrary separation, as the measurements come only after defining what is normal.

Tart (1969) said that to keep a normal or ordinary state of consciousness, it is necessary to have several external stimuli, and in the absence of one of them, it is possible to experience an altered state. He said that we can experience an altered state only by disturbing the normal one.

A normal state of consciousness can be considered a resultant of living in a particular environment, both physical and psychosocial. Thus the normal state of consciousness for any individual is one that has adaptive value within his particular culture and environment. (p. 2)

So, as Farthing (1992, p. 206) explicitly said, the normal state is a "convenient fiction." I can further this by saying that the differentiation between an "altered" and an "ordinary" state of consciousness is also a convenient fiction. However, we have here a fact: people experience during their life different levels of existence.

William James (1902/1929, quoted in Combs & Krippner, 1998, p. 8) said that

Our normal consciousness . . . is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are all there in all their completeness. (p. 328)

Metzner's (1989) definition of a state of consciousness is "*the system, context, or field* within which the different aspects of the mind, the contents of consciousness, including thoughts, feelings, sensations, perceptions, images, memories, and so forth, function in patterned interrelationships" (p 331, emphasis original). Combs and Krippner (1998) proposed a very similar definition. However, Metzner equated "mind" and "consciousness," whereas Combs and Krippner (1998) opted for a psychological basis of consciousness:

States of consciousness can be understood as unique configurations of psychological functions such as thought, memory, emotion, body image, perception, and so on . . . These functions are in reality *processes* which interact in a mutually supportive fashion, so that each state of consciousness is a whole, self-organizing, event, (pp. 3-4)

There is also another argument against the use of term "altered" to refer to a other-than-normal state of consciousness. It regards the legal prohibition of the use of psychoactive substances. If we agree that these substances produce an alteration of consciousness, we endorse a particular normal state. This result in creating preconceptions about the use of these substances, principally because the normal state is supported culturally: this is the normal, the common, and finally, the correct state of consciousness. To alter consciousness, according to that way of thinking, would be to act wrongly.

There is an important clue here: this is a comparative task. Different states of what I call *consciousness* sustain each other. In the view of many (if not all) religions, the

transition back and forth between these states of consciousness helps to improve life as a whole. Someone can meditate, go to church to pray, or participate in a shamanistic or African-Brazilian ritual to experience the “other side of life,” or the “real world,” known by many names throughout the world. It is there, at this “other side,” that the person will receive the lessons and teachings from gods, spirits, and other super (or infra) natural beings. This knowledge must be applied at the daily personal level to be effective. In other words, after such experience, consciousness must be redirected to the physical level, so the person can learn how to use the subtle knowledge of the spiritual side.

According to Laughlin et al. (1990), “Reality is simultaneously composed of many levels, *none* of which is fundamental, and those levels are born of the analytical mind trying to make sense of an essentially undifferentiated field of systemically related processes” (p. 17, emphasis original). Reality, the field or system in which life is takes place, is a whole in itself. Knowledge about life as a whole is a process, which needs time to be fully completed, and it is completed through experience. Laughlin et al. (1990) avoided talking about “states” of consciousness. In fact, they preferred to talk about phases of experience.

According to Laughlin et al. (1990), “In a sense, consciousness does not evolve. . . . The crux of the matter may be put in two ways: (1) it is not consciousness, but rather the nervous system that has evolved; and (2) it is not consciousness per se, but rather the intentional organization of consciousness that has evolved” (p. 121). As such, consciousness could not be “altered.” Perception and experience might be altered through a process of expansion of consciousness. During a trance—no matter how it is caused—the perception of the internal and external world is changed, but we are still becoming

conscious of some of those perceptions. The process of being aware could change but not consciousness itself. People cannot be conscious in a different way: either they are conscious of something or not, even when experiencing pure consciousness without any content.

There is another (and less evident) side of the altered consciousness problem that I explore here. The concept of alteration of consciousness is rooted in a materialistic understanding of consciousness, even when cultural factors are seriously considered. The alteration of consciousness is regarded as a process giving access to more subtle levels of existence, and almost all of the theories concerning how these processes of alteration occur emphasize a physiological change in the nervous system brought about using different techniques, such as ritually ingesting psychoactive substances, meditation, breathing, concentration, among numerous others.

The natural implicit question here is, “What is the source of consciousness?” Clearly, I have no intent here to give a complete and exhaustive answer to this question. Instead, I describe what I am calling “upward vector” and “downward vector.” The upward vector is a materialistic point of view of studying consciousness. It includes biological researchers (such as Baars, 1997, and Laughlin et al., 1990), mentalists but not dualists (for example, Farthing, 1992; Hunt, 1995), and dualists (see Eccles, 1989; and also Popper and Eccles, 1985). Their basic assumption is that consciousness is a result of brain activity. They diverge when they attempt to discuss the properties of consciousness, principally whether it can or cannot “come back” to the brain, modifying both it and the nervous system.

Upward-vector theorists are beginning to study and discuss more subtle levels of reality (such as spirituality) that are not even considered by more conservative and/or biological researchers, though even these subtle levels are also regarded as having their sources in the human brain. The “upward” hypothetically could expand their theoretical exercises and explain God.

The upward position is very cautious, in the sense that it is easier to work with something that can (at least in theory) be better controlled—the physical nervous system—than trying to descend into metaphysical thought concerning, for example, life after death or consciousness without a body. This cautiousness, however, can result in unfriendly attitudes and blindness concerning new perspectives about the world.

In fact, there is one phenomenon that cannot easily fit into the upward theory: the kind of mediumistic activity in which the medium purportedly receives complete information about a dead person without previously having known anything about him or her (see for example the *Doutrinação de Almas* ceremony, Chapter 7). In this kind of mediumistic phenomenon, the medium embodies the consciousness of the dead person and can relate facts about that person’s existence before death. The medium receives another consciousness into his. There is another person talking through a body that he or she does not conventionally own. This is the only field I know of where there is a good chance of working scientifically with the hypothesis that consciousness could survive without a brain.

Wautischer (1989), working with the possible inclusion of trance in epistemology, explicitly said that “divinatory knowledge is a challenge to the materialistic world-view of the humanities, a challenge that is not expressed in the opposition of religion versus

science, but rather in the opposition of an energetic-wave world view, as opposed to a micro-physical world view” (p. 37).

Stephen (1989) concluded that the concept of altered states of consciousness “obscures two important processes: the imaginative construction produced by the person experiencing a possession or trance and the self-alien aspect of this experience” (p. 47). She continued by saying, “Altered consciousness implies, by contrast, a single, continuous self experiencing varying modes of consciousness, and hides the fact that some agency other than the conscious self produces the visionary narrative” (p. 48).

I chose to adopt a theoretical position that I call the downward vector—downward due to perceiving that consciousness comes from more subtle levels of existence down to the physical level, the body. These names, *downward* and *upward*, emerge from a common cultural perception of those subtle levels as something “out” and “above” the body. It would too be possible to use the terms “outward” and “inward” vector instead. This is simply a convention. Part of this perspective is what Niinluoto (1994, p. 38) called “emergent idealism,” the concept that the material body is a product of a subtle entity such as the mind, spirit or consciousness.

As Laughlin et al. (1990)—explicit “upward”—assumed,

In a very real sense, there is no “brain,” no “behavior,” and no “experience.” Rather, there are but three ways of conceptually breaking up views of the scope, assuring that we assume the broadest possible field of perception from which to draw our information. In science, as in everyday life, there is only perceptual and intentional activity relative to the world. (p. 14)

This is not a dualistic frame for consciousness here, and lengths have been taken to avoid a Platonic concept, the Realm of Ideas, because Plato’s (see for example *The Republic*) thought is dualistic. According to him, reality exists only in the realm of Ideas.

For him, the physical level is an illusion, the distorted reflection of this superior level. It does appear more clearly though that the physical level is not a reflection of reality; it is also reality.

The process of becoming conscious emerges in experience. According to Laughlin et al. (1990), “Experience (in whatever phase of consciousness it arises) is considered as symptomatic of changes of problems existing outside the range of consciousness. . . . Conversely, a sensorial system may produce a non-sensorial effect upon some other somatic system” (p. 193).

It is very common to read that “mind [and consciousness] is how the brain experiences its own functioning” (Laughlin et al., 1990, p. 13). This is the upward law. At the same time, the downward model would say that “the brain is how consciousness experiences the body.”

Finally, according to Stephen, (1989),

When I have a dream, I tell myself it is a purely mental event having no reality outside my own mind. But the nature of the phenomena is such that it appears to be an external reality I had no part in creating. Only my culture, not my experience, insists that this view is false. (p. 43).

Methods

*If one demands of a “strictly objective science”
that it takes its content only from observation,
one must demand at the same time that it renounce all thinking.
Because thinking by its very nature goes beyond what is observed.
(Steiner, 1986, p. 48)*

The ethnographic method, using experiential participation, is the basis for this research, more specifically for the research concerning the history of the Center, the description of ceremonies, and healing techniques.

On the other hand, the study of the relationship between spontaneous mental imagery, sickness and possible recovery processes is based upon narrative analysis. I had the opportunity to interview 8 people under treatment at the Center, but only with 2 of them was I able to follow their treatment fully and completely. When it could be arranged, the participants were asked to link the *mirações* with the processes of being sick and of possible recovering.

The interviews, reports, and narratives were digitally recorded and were transcribed by me to files on a computer. I am the only person with access both to the recorded material and to the computer files.

Techniques

- (1) Participation during 10 months (January to October of 2004), in the Madrinha Francisca Gabriel Barquinha's full calendar of activities, with special focus on the healing rituals, using the ethnographic method, through experiential observation;
- (2) A detailed diary was kept during that time;
- (3) A study of 9 cases of people participating in the Madrinha Francisca Gabriel Barquinha's healing rituals;
- (4) Collection of reports and narratives of *entidades* (spiritual guides incorporated by mediums) concerning the ritual process, spontaneous mental imagery, healing process, sickness, and the Madrinha Francisca Gabriel Barquinha's symbolic universe;
- (5) Conduct of open interviews with members, clients, and visitors of the Madrinha Francisca Gabriel Barquinha's about its healing system;

- (6) Collection of reports and narratives regarding spontaneous mental imagery experienced during the rituals by select patients;
- (7) Development of a questionnaire for all the interviews (see Appendix), which was used to initiate conversations with the participants. All the participants in the study answered this questionnaire;
- (8) Study of the contents of audiotapes, recorded by members of the Center containing lectures made by spiritual entities during the years between 1997 and 2003, inclusive; and
- (9) Use of interviews made in previous fieldwork developed by myself during the years 1999 and 2000.

Limitations and Delimitations: Some Words Concerning Methods and Techniques

I chose to work with experiential observation, so I kept a diary to record my own experiences concerning the entire period of fieldwork, including the description of powerful *mirações* that I experienced. These experiences appear variously throughout this dissertation. Here I concentrate my effort on the evaluation of the method itself.

When I left the United States to engage the fieldwork in Acre, I had some scant and lightly informed ideas about the Center: simply that it was a Christian-based religion very strongly influenced by a devotion to the Orixás (Yorubá deities “imported” during slavery). This, though, was all I knew of it at the time. I had developed contacts with some people at the Center, but these contacts proved, after I finally arrived at Rio Branco, to be very superficial, at least in comparison to communication within the Center.

Leaving Brazil to initiate my studies at Saybrook in 2001 was very risky. As I would be a long time away from Rio Branco, the people there would slowly simply forget who I was and already my most recent visit to Rio Branco had been in 1999. I participated in ceremonies with the (very small) group of Center members at Niterói in 2001 for three months. When I returned at the end of 2003 (on December 27) I shared a long conversation with both of the Pretos-velhos, with whom I had had contact previously (Vó Maria Clara and Vô Leôncio, incorporated by Cléia and Carlos Renato, respectively). Both of them offered advice concerning my arriving at the matrix of the Center at Rio Branco. They told me to be very patient and to observe carefully, everyone and everything before I began any kind of research. They expressed that people at the Center were very apprehensive about my research, both because they had little knowledge of how I intended to proceed and because they did not know what I was going to do with the material I would collect there.

With this instruction, by the time I left Niterói for Rio Branco, I was already becoming aware of the challenges that I would find there. As stated, there they were, waiting for me. The people at the Center when I first arrived were assuming they would have the same kind of problems with me as they had encountered with another researcher who had been in touch with them for some time prior to my visit. They initially found it difficult to trust me.

The very receptive behavior that I had experienced during the first visits was not absent but was more, shall I say, diluted. People were becoming aware that they would have someone there paying attention to all the details of their lives, and they did not like that very much. So I waited until the end of January (of 2004) to ask the Madrinha to sign

my research authorization, though I had already begun taking notes during that time and thinking about interviewing certain people, principally those under treatment.

I realized during my first conversations with the Madrinha that there was a standard speech ready to offer to researchers. For example, when I asked her about some topics such as her history at the Barquinha, she told me the same story she had told in 1999 during my first visit and the same narrative she had given Luna (1995). I understood that it would be not a simple task to encourage her to talk in detail about many topics. In fact, not during any of the fieldwork did I record any conversation with the Madrinha.

Yet at the same time, I was entering the Center's universe more deeply, which frightened me first because I was beginning to realize that this universe I had entered was more complex than I had imagined and second because it was becoming apparent that I would have to face myself deeply, and I was not sure I was ready for this.

The process of drinking Daimé is very demanding. It is like diving into a bottomless pool. Every time you think you have reached the bottom, you realize (during the next ceremony) that you can go deeper. The challenge is that sometimes you may want to return to the surface, but then you discoverer that there is no actual way to. It is a forward and deepening movement.

There was another challenge that I had initially considered would be only minor when I was writing the research proposal: I was very attracted by the African side of the Center, but I was not sure whether I could remain open to its Christian side. I had grown up with both a Roman Catholic influence, coming from my father, and a spiritist influence coming, from my mother. By the time I was in my 20s, I had developed a distaste for Christianity as it had been presented to me, principally Roman Catholicism.

Yet there I was, surrounded by images of Catholic saints and of Jesus crucified (also an image of Him laying down in an almost life-size statue, representing Him in his tomb). I resisted notably in the beginning, but as I will describe later, I succumbed, not without a lot of internal conflict, to a kind of Christianity that is still at this point forming inside of me.

I was initially thinking about becoming a *fardado* (member) as soon as possible, and with this in mind I went to speak with the Madrinha. Her answer was the typical answer that she gives to most of the people who decide to follow the Barquinha path: “Drink more Daime, my son, and later we will speak about that again.” I was ready to do it by the end of the *Romaria* to Saint Sebastian, but I decided to wait.

That turned out to be a wise decision. My inner dialogue was immersed in conflicts: Could I manage the strong emphasis on Christianity? Could I maintain a rigorous and solid anthropological study as a *fardado*? Would I really be able to enter their world? Was I ready to become a *fardado*? Every time I saw someone *fardando* (ritually becoming a *fardado*) I was certain that I was not ready.

I did make this step, overcoming my hesitations. By the end of the *Romaria* to the Virgin Mary (May 30, 2004), I was a “soldier of the Barquinha in the army of Jesus.” Yet still I was unsure whether I had done the right thing.

As I have already said, I will not describe my inner experiences in this section. Even having, by the end of fieldwork, very few of what I would classify as experiences that were powerful or important enough to be described in this dissertation, the fact that I became a *fardado*, assisted me to break down my own preconceptions and fears that could have blinded me toward the absolutely new universe I was entering. That I was

sincerely moving to immerse myself in the Center's world was very useful in the sense that it gave me a new perspective to which to cling, and that perspective influenced the way I have written this dissertation. The experiential observation was a valid option, and it is valid too that it is very difficult to thoroughly study Ayahuasca without drinking it.

It was only by the end of the Romaria for Saint Francis (October 4, 2004, the actual end of my fieldwork) that I felt that I was ready to begin active fieldwork. I spent, as is noted here, significant time ridding myself of all preconceptions and a rigidly framed worldview that required dissolution to allow me to enter completely into the Center's world. In fact, at points, I had begun to doubt whether I would ever be able to make the shifts necessary to enter completely into that world.

When I began this research, I had imagined how I would be accepted and perceived as a member of the Center. My intent was to minimize the image of the anthropologist trying to obtain information and develop an image of the brother becoming initiated. It is not surprising to me now that nothing like this happened.

In my pursuit of data, there were several tasks that I performed that were constantly classifying me as the researcher and not as a common brother. Some of the more obvious examples are that I was always interviewing people and recording their responses; I was always asking the most obvious things, things that no brother or sister would ask, such as: "Why do you burn a candle over that rock?" or "Why are you drawing a cross on that *ponto-riscado* (see Chapter 6)?"

Perhaps the most important consideration in gauging the limitations of my merger into the greater community was that most of the people there were simply living their lives, and the Center was an integrated part of this living. They had their jobs, they had

their family, they had their friends, and so on. My job was to study the church! I did not have the experience of going to work early in the morning after staying awake the whole night in a Festa in the church. I did not have the chance to investigate important questions such as, “How do they integrate their experience? Are they not tired?” I as well was missing primary aspects of the daily emotional and social experience of members of the Center, and my experience of the integrated Center/Home experience was very different from theirs. My wife and son were in the United States, and the rest of my family in Rio de Janeiro. I had no relatives in Rio Branco. Outside of the Center, I had no friends. The life I was experiencing was constantly limited to the Center.

A third major point was that I was at the Center for a limited time, a time after which I had no idea about when I would return. I remember one day when the Madrinha asked me precisely:

Madrinha: “When will you come here again?”

Marcelo: “I do not know, I’m not sure.”

Madrinha: “Now you will be a fardado, you cannot disappear. If you’re thinking not to return here again, do not become a fardado.”

Marcelo: “Madrinha, I am becoming a fardado also because I chose the Barquinha as my spiritual path, and not only because of the research; of course I will come back here.”

Madrinha: “And you have to bring your wife here, she has to know the place where you used to go!”

I found it difficult to demonstrate to them that I was choosing the Barquinha as my spiritual path and not only because of the research. However, in their eyes it appeared that the research always seemed to be my first objective, and many people thought that I was becoming a fardado only to make this end easier.

I never entertained the illusion that I would simply “become invisible” as a researcher by becoming a fardado. Though I did have the illusion that I could minimize

that image, and also that I would be able to see the Center from the inside. In the end, I found myself inquiring about what this “inside” meant. If I had been born in Rio Branco, would I have been considered an insider? Would I have had to live at the Center since I was a child? In fact, the main question was: How long it would take for me to be able to see the Center from the inside? In other words, how deep inside could I go during my fieldwork? Regardless the answer for these questions, of one thing I was sure: ten months were not enough to go very far in the scope of the Center, I knew that I was only scratching the surface.

After 10 months, I could see an entirely new universe unveiling in front of me. I was just beginning to be aware of the Barquinha’s complexity of symbols, meanings, teachings, and beings.

At the same time, another group of questions was arising inside me: If I had not become a fardado, would I be able to perceive that complexity? How far would I be able to go just watching from the outside? By the end of the fieldwork, people trusted me more; I was not only the researcher, I was the brother, too. How much would people speak about with me if I were not a fardado?

Despite all the questions and reflections, I am sure of one thing: I know that by becoming a fardado I was able to break my own pre-established worldview. Even if it offered only a glimpse of the Center member’s worldview, the process of becoming a fardado opened the Center’s universe to me and helped me break through the resistances that I had developed concerning many topics of that universe. It is clear to me as well that I would have been unable to formulate many of the above questions if I had not decided to have the experience of becoming a fardado.

I find a very similar reflection in Jules-Rosette (1975). For her, the first effect of conversion (it is important to mention here that mine was not a conversion in the strict sense) was the chance of, first of all, having access to, and then being able to perceive, the many pieces from which her self was composed. With this, she then engaged in a process of exploration of that self, offering the possibility of unifying it through the interpretation of “dogma and ceremony, through thought and action” (p. 249). However, the most important aspect of conversion for her was that

The difference between the scenes that I had witnessed as an outsider and the instruction received as a member was the very sense of spiritual purpose with which I was able to unravel them, not my learning of more intricate labels for them. Apostles did not withhold essential secret information from me during the learning process. My own perspective had initially blinded me to what they saw as the meaning of events. What I could not grasp as possible or practical as an outsider could only remain obscure. Nor was the conversion to religion so different from the affirmations of science to which I clung. In each case, a set of unifying themes performed a fundamental transformation, shaping reality for me. Making the inferences of science and religion involved return to reaffirm these themes as reality principles. (pp. 249-250)

In the following chapters, I keep the reader informed about my own experiences during the fieldwork. Also, I make clear the moments when these experiences influence the flow of my thoughts during the writing of the dissertation.

After my first visit to the Center in 1999, and considering the long and deep conversations that I shared with spiritual entities incorporated in their mediums, I decided to include these spiritual entities as possible participants in the research. The spirits of the Encantos, the Caboclos, and principally of the Pretos-velhos are the true healers at the Center. The mediums are by tradition not supposed to cause any interference in the healing process. I assumed throughout this dissertation, as a methodological tool, the

Center's perspective concerning these beings¹². The relationship between medium and spiritual entity have these characteristics: (1) medium and spiritual entity have an independent existence, (2) spiritual entities choose to work with their mediums, (3) spiritual entities can influence the medium's life, and (4) medium and spiritual entity are two completely different identities using the same physical body. Also, spiritual entities are responsible for the instruction of the members, transmitting knowledge, the source of which is in the spiritual level of existence. The spiritual entities are the main pillars of the Barquinha.

Having all these considerations in mind, I made a decision to interview these spiritual entities when and as they were incorporated in the medium. In the following chapters, more information is given regarding these spiritual entities and their qualities, but here it is important to make clear the distinction that what was being interviewed was not the mediums during their trance, but again, the spiritual entities. The interface between mediums and spiritual entities is extremely flexible, and there is no easy way to delineate those limits.

The interviews with both incarnated (people) and disincarnated (spiritual entities) participants, were conducted following a semi-open structure within which I had developed some guidelines (see questionnaire in the Appendix). Concerning the reports about the experience of the *mirações* (it is important to mention that I did not ask the spiritual entities about the experiences of *mirações*), the main guiding question was: "What did you see last night?" furthered by "What was your experience during the *miração*?"

12 Frenopoulo (2005) also assumed that same perspective concerning the spirits in the Barquinha: "I take for granted the possibility that they may exist exactly as informants conceive of them" (p. 16).

A book is kept at the Center with the register of every patient treated at the Center. I was offered access to that book and could know, before I spoke with the chosen patients, what kind of problem they had. There was a second part to this open interview, which obtained information about the treatment and its possible links with the *mirações*.

However, I avoided talking openly about the main topic of the research when I first approached the participants, the link between *mirações* and healing. This would have generated expectancy in them, and it would have influenced their reports about the *mirações*. They might have begun to experience *mirações* obviously related to the process of healing. I asked about the *mirações* and about the healing/sickness process, but I told the community (except the *Madrinha* and a few other central people) that I was studying only the *mirações*. Only later, after I had finished collecting the reports about the *mirações* from the participants, did I ask for the opinions of the participants concerning the links between the *mirações* and the sickness and possible recovery processes.

The fact that this dissertation is written in English immediately causes a bias over which I have only limited control, though I have taken all steps to minimize this. Most of the interviews and narratives were recorded in Portuguese, the native language of people at the Center (and also mine). For the purpose of writing this dissertation, I translated the interviews myself, which were then edited by a professional editor and checked again by myself. Nevertheless, this slight abstraction is enough for the narratives to be susceptible to having their essence diluted: whoever reads these narratives is reading secondhand material. It is for this reason that I decided not to develop an overly dense analysis of these narratives. Also, I use, most of the time, the anthropological present as a verb tense for narratives, describing people and events as they were during fieldwork.

There is finally one more main area concerning the adopted methods and techniques, which must be clarified concerning the processes of taking photographs and making notes during the ceremonies.

People at the Center are very sensitive to photographs, filming, audio recording, and videotaping, and there are some notable points that aid us in understanding this sensitivity.

The people in the Center have become increasingly concerned about what researchers will do with the material that they collect during their visits. Where will these pictures be shown? Where will their voices be heard? Who will hear them? Who will see them? Most principally: How will they be heard and seen? Some abuses had been committed in the past. I will not give here the details about these instances, but it can be understood that currently the people at the Center do everything they can to control any attempt to record anything there and try to determine the intention behind the act.

This circumstance was the terrain that I encountered when I arrived at the Center. Slowly, I developed enough trust with the community for them to allow me to take the pictures that I present in this dissertation. All of the pictures were shown to the people depicted, not only to Madrinha Francisca, and permission was asked to use their images. What has happened in the past is that the researchers ask the Madrinha to take pictures, naturally saying that the pictures will be used in a paper or a dissertation, but then they forget to ask the subjects of those pictures whether they want to have their image exposed by the researcher. The need for sensitivity to the participants seems very obvious, but as I said above, that was not the case in the behavior of researchers in the past.

No photographs were taken before obtaining the authorization of Madrinha Francisca, and after I had the first pictures developed, I began to give copies of them to a member of the community responsible for the maintenance of a collection of material from and about the church. Many of those pictures were requested by members of the community: by the end of the fieldwork, people were coming to me asking me to take their picture or I was requested to take pictures of an event.

Throughout the many years of my experience drinking Ayahuasca, I had developed and maintained the habit of taking notes during Ayahuasca ceremonies. This is a very demanding situation and not very easy to perform. I have seen other people doing it, but this practice of note taking is not something common. Even if a person is very familiar with the experience, there comes a time during the ceremony when the effect of the Daime is very intense, and it is impossible to take any coherent notes; the thoughts are simply much faster than the hands.

However, this aside, I made many notes during the ceremonies. I experienced many insights and ideas under the effect of the Daime, insights and ideas that proved to be useful tracks to follow later. One of the main ideas guiding this dissertation—the idea of spiritual space—is a good example of an insight I experience during a ceremony.

I did all that I could not to disturb other people when I was writing in a notebook that was always at hand. Mostly this was not a problem at all because people were concentrating on the music and/or whatever was going on within their minds and bodies. Sometimes I had someone looking over my shoulders or asking me what I was writing, but their attitude was much more strongly motivated by the strange situation of having someone writing during the ceremony than by any attempt to control what I was writing

or protect the ceremony. My efforts in this were successful, as no person came to me claiming that I was disturbing the service.

Finally, it is very important to mention that, beside the authorization to work at the Center signed by Madrinha Francisca, I asked no other person to sign any document. In accord with Saybrook Institutional Review Board determination, it is customary to ask all of the interviewed people to sign a document stating that the interviewee was aware that the recorded interview would be used in a dissertation. In the context, particularly the sensitivity of the situation, the request of signatures felt to me to be an aggressive action, something very formal, substitutable, which could have possibly compromised the already tenuous perception of me by the community. With much consideration, I determined that the best way to accommodate the situation was to explain to those people about the research and how I would use their interviews, and I always asked whether they would agree with that. This includes the interviews with Pretos-velhos, when I explained first to the medium, and then to the spiritual entity, the purpose of the interview. Also, to take all levels of an unusual situation into account, I always asked the permission of the spiritual entity before recording anything, even if the medium had agreed with me beforehand. This appeared to be the most polite attitude, in accord with the member's worldview, and brought myself as a researcher to a more open field of perception, ushering me to forego my biases. After I had held my first interviews, I decided to record this agreement conversation, but this was not a rigid rule.

In the next chapter, I introduce an historical overview, both of Acre State—the last one to be incorporated to the Brazilian territory—and of the Barquinha itself. Acre is a state with a high concentration of Indigenous people. The various Indigenous groups

have many differences amongst themselves, but they notably share one characteristic: they all drink Ayahuasca. The intense contact between those Indigenous people and the Brazilians during and after the rubber-boom of the 19th century was the cornerstone for the later appearance of the Barquinha.

CHAPTER 3
HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Acre

History

When visiting, for the second time, the land that later would be named Haiti, Columbus was presented with a very strange resin of a tree: rubber, known by the natives of Central and South America for millennia (Tocantins, 2001, p. 117). In 1745, a French scientist by the name of La Condamine announced to the French Academy the discovery of,

cautchu resin, in Quito province. The Quito *cautchu* is as resistant as the resin from the trees at the margins of the Marañón. When it is fresh one can give to it the form one desires. It is impermeable, but what is most remarkable is its elasticity. People make bottles that are not fragile, boots, balls. The Portuguese at the Brazilian province of Pará learned to make syringes that have no embolus. (Tocantins, 2001, p. 116)

Rubber has had many modern uses, principally after both Thomas Hancock, in England, and Charles Goodyear, in the United States, independently developed the process of vulcanization, resulting in an increase in the rubber price (Tocantins, 2001). Brazil began to sell rubber-shoes to the United States in 1820. In 1823, a pair of those shoes were sold in Boston for five dollars, and the newspaper announced that 25,000 pairs were sold that city alone (Tocantins, 2001, p. 120). The Brazilian State of Pará, between 1836 and 1856, exported 4,534,772 pairs of rubber-shoes, and 20,669,482 pounds (10,600 tons) of rubber. By that time, the world market for rubber included cities such as Antwerp, Boston, Bremen, Hamburg, Lisbon, Liverpool, London,

New York, and Salem (MA; Tocantins, 2001, p. 122). In 1867 Brazil exported 5,826 tons of rubber to the United States alone (Tocantins, 2001).

Carriages, in their original construction with wooden wheels, were very jarring for passengers; beginning in 1845, there were attempts to create rubber tires to increase comfort. Finally, in 1888, John Boyd Dunlop successfully created and patented the first tire made with a double layer of rubber, with the internal one filled of air. At the end of the 19th century with the appearance of cars, the market for rubber expanded exponentially (Tocantins, 2001). By 1895, the United States had 150,000 people working in rubber-related industries. That year, 18,646 tons of rubber was produced, at a value of more than \$ 75,000,000.00 (Tocantins, 2001, pp. 166-167).

During that period, the Amazon was the primary source of rubber, due to its abundance of rubber trees. Rubber has been exploited for at least 200 years throughout the entire Amazon and for at least 100 years in Acre area (Gonçalves, 1991). Due to this growth of industry, even the deepest areas of the Amazonian forest began to be prospected. The natives, the *índios*, were suddenly faced with the *correrias*, a tactic developed by those who were in the business of capturing natives. They were being captured for use as slaves or simply to punish them, as was common in that time. During a *correria*, a village was invaded on one side, forcing the inhabitants to flee through another side, where a group of white and other natives, enemies of those under attack, were waiting for the purpose of capturing them (Gonçalves, 1991; Mercante, 2000; Taussig, 1987).

To explore the Acre area, which was rich in rubber trees, two routes were used: one which passed from Peru to Brazil and another from the Brazilian state of Amazonas

to Bolivia and Peru. Both routes were used by rubber-tappers (Gonçalves, 1991). Acre, where those routes ended, was an area of many conflicts: whites (from Peru and Bolivia) against whites (from Brazil); whites against natives; natives against natives. Prior to the rubber boom, this area had been largely ignored. After the boom, Brazil, Bolivia and Peru were fighting for the trees.

People from many Brazilian states: Ceará, Paraíba, Alagoas, Piauí, Sergipe, Maranhão, Pernambuco, (areas in the Northeast¹³ region of Brazil), as well as Pará and Amazonas (in the North region), began occupying Acre while it was still controlled by Peru and Bolivia. In 1852, the first house was registered at the Purus River, belonging to Manoel Nicolau de Melo of Pernambuco. In 1857, 40 families from Maranhão and Ceará, in response to an 1854 drought, situated themselves close to the mouth of the Purus (Reis, 1954, as cited in Tocantins, 2001, p. 175). After 1877, this migration away from Northeast Brazil accelerated. Pantoja (2004) indicated the drought as a primary reason for this migration, in addition to crisis within the cotton and cattle industry. According to Pantoja (2004) between 25,000 and 50,000 people migrated to the Amazon between the years of 1880 and 1910 to become rubber-tappers.

Of those groups, the migrant from the Northeast faced an entirely new environment. They were not accustomed to the tropical forest, and adaptation was extremely difficult (see Oliveira, 2002; Pantoja, 2004). They were subjected to quasi-slavery, being fixed to the land by a system of credits to the *patrão*, the owner of the *seringal*—a naturally occurring area of densely growing rubber trees. The *patrão* forbade them to grow any kind of crop or even to hunt, with the intent to limit their focus to tapping the rubber trees. In a similar measure, women were forbidden in the area. Many

¹³ Brazil is divided in five administrative regions: North, Northeast, Southeast, South, and Central-west.

of the rubber-tappers, when they came to the Amazon, left their families in the Northeast. Often it occurred that they returned home indebted to the patrão, as the price of the rubber had not been enough to buy all the goods they needed for basic survival, and which could only be purchased at the store owned by the patrão.

Tocantins (2001) said that the first cycle of exploration of the Purus, Acre, and Juruá rivers was concluded in 1866. In that same year, the British naturalist William Chandless, working at the Purus River relates that the area was occupied by many people with Portuguese names (which indicated Brazilians). In 1877, there were 10,000 people living at the seringal Flor de Ouro, 360km from the mouth of the Acre River. That seringal was producing, by that time, 500 tons of rubber per year (Tocantins, 2001, p. 177).

It is important to note that this whole area was part of Peru or part of Boliva. Only after many conflicts, both diplomatic and armed, was the state of Acre officially incorporated as Brazilian territory, after agreements were signed with Bolivia (1903) and Peru (1907). Tocantins (2001, p. 31) cited that neither Peru nor Bolivia had its people living on the litigated area, a territory mainly occupied by natives and Brazilians.

The rubber dream in the Amazon was short-lived though. According to Wagley (1988, p. 70), some years before 1912, Henry Wickham Steed “stole” seeds of *Hevea braziliensis* for the Kew Gardens, in London. From those seedlings were born the large rubber plantations in Ceylon and Malaysia. In these Eastern plantations, a more productive variety of *Hevea* was developed and a larger and cheaper labor force was available. In 1910, the Eastern plantation produced only 9% of the world production of rubber; however, by 1913, it had equaled the Amazonian production both in quantity and

in price. In the years that would follow, the trend continued, and they began to produce a cheaper rubber and in larger quantities (Wagley, 1988).

After 1912, the entire economic structure in the Amazon began to deteriorate. Many of the stores in Belém and Manaus bankrupted, and the cities, well developed with a European lifestyle, rapidly became more impoverished. The rural merchants were also affected, as well as the *patrões* (plural form of *patrão*). The rubber-tappers received authorization to leave the seringais, and thus began returning to the states from which they had come. Those who remained began to export brazil nuts, which brought a better price in the international market. Many of the small cities had their population diminished and houses were abandoned, as well as fields and rubber roads. Little by little, the Amazon valley became isolated (Wagley, 1988). By 1925, Acre had an area of 140,800km², 454 seringais, and a population of only 30,000 people (Gonçalves, 1991, p. 36).

Early Christianity

The following information was retrieved mostly from Oliveira (2002), who developed a very interesting research concerning the emergence and dispersion of the Christianity in Acre. My intent here is to inform the reader about the two different kinds of Christianity found in Acre during the first half of the 20th century—the popular and the Roman Catholic—and their influences on the emergence of the Barquinha.

Until 1890, Brazilian Christianity had been characterized primarily by lay organizations lead by charismatic leaders and by various brotherhoods (see Wagley, 1988). The traditional religious orders (Jesuits, Franciscans, Benedictines, Carmelites) were facing many internal problems, and the chief of the Brazilian Church was not the

Pope but the Brazilian Emperor. This environment allowed different traditions to be interwoven easily in an open and frank syncretism of Christian, Indigenous, and African, practices, beliefs, and deities.

The lay brotherhoods, until 1890, had built and administrated the churches, promoted the *festas* and festivities of those churches, honored their saints, paid the priests, and led the prayers and novenas. At the same time, many of the leaders of the brotherhoods were linked to liberal thought movements such as the Masons.

According to Oliveira (2002), that era was the time when pilgrimages began to occur in Brazil, principally to holy places sanctified by hermits or pious men. The creation of *capelinhas de estrada* (literally: road-chapels) was very common where local people would gather for prayers and festas to honor their saints. The “priest” was a layperson, holding however the entire confidence of the local people, living close to and taking care of the chapel. That lay priest was also responsible for performing marriages, baptisms, confession, and other ceremonies. Oliveira classifies the “road-chapels” as the root of a movement of resistance against the “Romanization” of Brazilian Christianity.

Interestingly, MacRae (1991) indicated the existence of two different places for religious festivities: the *capela* (chapel) and the *ramada*. The ramada is where the festa takes place after the prayers in the capela. However, in some instances, both the capela and the ramada can be combined. In those cases, a curtain covers the altar: the curtain remained open during the prayers, and closed during the festa. At the Barquinha, a curtain also separates the altar from the main room within the church, remaining open during the service.

The so-called “Reformer Bishops” started a strong movement to transform the aforementioned traditions, which might be dubbed “folk-Catholicism.” Their first acts included bringing from Europe new orders, such as French Capuchins, Redentorists, Dominicans, and Jesuits, among others, as well as establishing seminaries for the formation of future priests. Oliveira (2002) called this movement the “Romanization” of Brazilian Catholicism. Finally, on January 7, 1890, the State and Church separated, bringing more power to the Reformers and to the Romanization movement.

The Bishops were trying to substitute the rosary (conducted by the lay priests) with the mass (conducted by the seminary-trained priests): they had imposed a movement for reducing the power of the brotherhoods and charismatic leaders. The lay people were being moved to the position of “listening, and no longer of directing” (Oliveira, 2002, p. 24). Pilgrimages began to be extremely restricted, as priests chosen by the bishops were in charge of promoting the pilgrimages, which they did only exceptionally. The common people were no longer in charge of their own religion and spirituality.

The Italian religious order *Servos de Maria* was representing the reform movement in Acre. However, according to Oliveira (2002), the order did not interfere with the spontaneous manifestations of the Acrean religiosity. This religiosity had been brought with the Northeastern migrants, and it was based upon the pilgrimage, the novena, and the rosary.

A bishop linked to the *Servos de Maria* was in charge of traveling throughout the seringais with the duty of performing marriages, communion, baptisms, and confessions. There were many restrictions on the giving of the sacraments: marriages were performed only if the couple was baptized, and for the baptism, both parents and godparents must

have been baptized and married (Oliveira, 2002). Nevertheless, when the bishop had gone, it would be a long time before he returned. The community, then, instead of being immobilized by the absence of the priest, tended to revert to their system of organizing their religious life by themselves.

It is interesting to note that in modern times, on November 15, 1971, a priest of the Servos de Maria order visited the Casa de Oração during a ceremony. Later, this priest, named Pacífico described the *Missão* (literally: mission) to his superiors, and surprisingly declared that Daniel was a prophet, and that the mission was an important center for helping the people in need (Oliveira, 2002). This declaration was a sign that a huge change on the position of the Brazilian Roman Catholic Church was happening. They decided to work *with* the people, following a decision taken at the Vatican II Council (1962-1965; see Ortiz, 1988), helping them through social actions. Finally, on October 4, 1972 the Bishop of Rio Branco visited the Casa de Oração (Oliveira, 2002).

However, the preconception of the Barquinha was still alive. Various local priests refused to baptize the sons and daughters of the Barquinha's members, and the president of the center (Manoel Araújo) decided to perform the baptisms himself. The bishop was informed of this, but he did not actively retaliate against it.

A very simple act that can be witnessed at the Center, which reinforces the independence that the Barquinha has achieved, is the blessing of water and candles used later in other ceremonies. Cravalho (1993) described a village near the mouth of the Amazon River where the people wait until the priest comes: during the celebration of the mass the villagers have water and candles blessed by the priest. At the Center, they themselves perform themselves this act of preparing holy water and consecrated candles.

These materials are put on the altar during ceremonies when a *Missionário* (see Chapter 6) comes to perform the consecration of the church (see Chapter 7).

The fact is that a complete Romanization of Amazonian Catholicism has been shown to be an unrealizable utopia. Galvão (1955) pointed to the fact that the fusion of religious and cultural elements from Christianity and Indigenous belief systems was not subject only to the contact between both systems but was under the influence of the Amazonian environment itself. The local religious and cultural systems were strongly influenced by the adoption of new techniques for exploring that environment. According to Galvão (1955),

Compared to the religious manifestations of the South American people under the Spanish influence, we cannot observe within the [Brazilian] “caboclo religion” an intimate integration between Catholic and indigenous practices. In the Amazon valley [again, considering only the Brazilian part] the “pajé” [kind of mestizo shaman] is a good Catholic, but he does not mix his practices with those of the Church. The “pajelança” [the practices of a pajé] and the cult to the saints are distinct, and can be used in different situations. . . . Even if Catholic and indigenous religious beliefs and institutions are focusing on different objectives, they complement each other as parts of the same religious system. (pp. 6-7)

Parker (1985) partially agreed with Galvão (1955). According to Parker (1985), before the rubber boom,

The admixture of Amerindian, Portuguese, and African populations was not one of equal measures and the product, caboclo culture, did not, and does not, constitute a balanced mixture of the three “ingredients.” The rainforest-riverine environment of Amazonia was the crucible within which the Portuguese and African factors were subordinate to the logic of Amerindian adaptive strategies. (p. xxi)

The Santo Daime is a good example of the subordination of the Northeastern migrant to the Amerindian adaptive strategies. Cemin (1998, p. 84) indicated that the Santo Daime is the result of the submission of the “Northeastern religious culture” (according to Cemin, the “elements of beliefs and practices relative to the Northeasterns

who had migrated to Acre since the end of the 19th century,” p. 84), to the “culture of the forest” (in one primary respect, the “indigenous knowledge about the intake of Ayahuasca,” p. 84).

On the other hand, Parker (1985) said that after the concentration of *nordestinos* (people from the Northeast) became larger, the environment no longer had the same weight of influence as before. Due their larger number, the *nordestinos* were able to sustain their original culture and techniques with more strength and for more time. The Barquinha is a good example of this different manifestation of the intercultural relationship: in the Barquinha the culture of the forest submitted itself to the Northeastern culture.

Actual Social and Economic Parameters



Figure 11.
Rio Branco: View of the Acre River.

The following information was retrieved from a report elaborated by the Brazilian Institute of Geography (IBGE) after the Census made in the year of 2000 (see IBGE, 2002). The state of Acre has 557,526 residents, and 253,059 of those live in Rio Branco (see Figure 11). Rio

Branco has 226,298 of its residents living in its urban area, and 26,761 live in rural areas.

The literacy index is relatively high: 87.1% (168,224) of the 193,088 residents who are at least 10 years old know at least how to sign their names. That same index for

the whole Acre is 76.9%. Rio Branco has 49 registered *favelas*¹⁴, with 5353 houses on those. Tables 1-4 provide additional demographic information.

Table 1. Average Income per Household per Month

Area	Income
Brazil	R\$ 769.00
Acre	R\$ 526.00
Rio Branco	R\$ 680.00

Table 2. Average Years Spent in School

Year	Total		Male		Female	
	1991	2000	1991	2000	1991	2000
Brazil	4.7	5.7	4.8	5.7	4.3	5.5
Acre	3.5	4.4	3.4	4.2	4.0	5.1
Rio Branco	5.0	5.8	5.1	5.7	4.8	5.8

Table 3. Available Beds in Hospitals (2002)

	Total	Public	Private
Brazil	471.171	146.319	324.852
Acre	1.602	1.145	457
Rio Branco	935	566	369

Table 4. Number of Graduated (College and Higher) Health Professionals (2002)

	Total	Doctors	Dentists
Brazil	729.746	466.111	56.995
Acre	1.658	822	154
Rio Branco	1.293	631	99

¹⁴ Favelas are concentration of very poor people living together, without even the minimal conditions of sanitation, energy, water.

Barquinha

This section addresses two interwoven histories: the Barquinha as a religious movement and the Centro Espírita Obras de Caridade Príncipe Espadarte as a manifestation of that movement. The former has a longer history, naturally: the Barquinha has 60 years of registered activity. The Center, in comparison, is in its 15th year (in 2006) of existence.

The bulk of the material used here for composing a historical background for the Barquinha was obtained from the increasing available anthropological literature on it.¹⁵ However, information concerning the Center is very scarce. A good source of information for this is the work of Goulart (2004), and, though more limited, Luna (1995).

The founder of the Barquinha, Daniel Pereira de Mattos, was born in the city of Vargem Grande (Maranhão State), on the July 13, 1888.¹⁶ The son of slaves, he came to Rio Branco for the first time in 1905 as a sailor in the Brazilian Navy (Oliveira, 2002; Sena Araújo, 1999). His boat left for an training voyage to Europe and Jerusalem. He would return to Rio Branco on April 7, 1907 (Oliveira, 2002), after finishing his duties with the Navy, probably as a Sergeant (Sena Araújo, 1999).

Daniel was a musician, playing violin (probably the *rabeca*, a kind of fiddle very popular in rural areas in Brazil), trumpet, guitar, and clarinet. Daniel worked also as tailor, carpenter, and shoemaker. From all this though, it was as a barber that Daniel established himself in Rio Branco. He owned a barbershop in the Papoco neighborhood, a

15 About the Centro Espírita Daniel Pereira de Mattos (the *Barquinha do Antônio Geraldo*) see: Figueiredo et al., (1996), Paskoali (2002); about the Centro Espírita e Culto de Oração Casa de Jesus Fonte de Luz (the name the *Capelinha* received after the death of Mestre Daniel, known nowadays as the *Barquinha do Manoel Araújo*—the oldest Barquinha) see: Oliveira (2002), Sena Araújo (1999).

16 Slavery was abolished in Brazil on May 13, 1888.

very Bohemian area, where Daniel was also well known for his musical gifts and animating the nightlife among the local prostitutes and their clients (Sena Araújo, 1999). In the environment of the Papoco, the over-consumption of alcohol finally made him sick, resulting in liver problems (Sena Araújo, 1999), and prompted him to make an about-face with his life. As was mentioned in the Introduction, Daniel experienced his first revelation while he was lying down intoxicated on the banks of the Acre River.

Mestre Irineu, the founder of Santo Daime, was Daniel's customer at the barbershop. Many authors discuss the possibility that Daniel and Irineu had been friends since their times in Maranhão State (Goulart, 2004; Oliveira, 2002; Sena Araújo, 1999). Regardless, the fact is that they were friends in Rio Branco. When Irineu knew that Daniel was very sick, he invited Daniel to stay in the Alto Santo¹⁷ with him for a treatment. Daniel drank Daime for the first time in 1936 (Sena Araújo, 1999) or 1937 (Oliveira, 2002). When Daniel regained his health, he stopped the treatment, again returning to his bohemian life. In due time, he got sick again, and once more was brought to the Alto Santo for treatment.

During one ceremony with Daime, Daniel again experienced the same vision as his first, with the angels bringing him a blue book¹⁸. Some time after this Irineu told Daniel to start his own mission. Daniel moved to the land of Manuel Julião de Souza in Vila Ivonete neighborhood, and there he built his "road-chapel," the *Capelinha*. The land

17 Alto Santo is the name of Irineu's land. Goulart (2004) indicated that Daniel was the only person invited by Irineu to come to the Alto Santo to receive a treatment.

18 Interestingly, Scholem (1969) presented the idea explored by some Kabbalistic sects of Judaism that the written form of the Jewish Torah is only an interpretation of another Torah, the oral one, of which only God knows the actual content. Those Kabbalists believe that there is a hidden (from the eyes of normal human beings) book, and that only the prophets have access to that book, according to God's will (God decided to whom He will reveal His words).

was officially owned by the *Casa de Oração Jesus Fonte de Luz*¹⁹ during the 1970s (Oliveira, 2002). For the sacrament, Irineu provided Daniel with Daime until the time when he was able to prepare it himself.

Daniel began living more the life of a hermit, alone, in a very simple hut immersed in the forest, where there was an old seringal. In modern times, this area is within the urban area of Rio Branco. Daniel received hunters and other people who passed by his home. He became known as a *rezador* (literally: prayer, praying person), someone who “pray over” sick people. As time passed, increasing number of people were coming to see him, and Daniel began to give the Daime and play guitar for them (Oliveira, 2002; Sena Araújo, 1999). He subsisted on the goods brought to him in exchange for his services. Slowly the community formed around him.

Daniel was married three times. His first wife left him due to his problems with alcohol and returned to Maranhão. He then remarried, divorcing some years later, but his second wife never accepted their separation. Later, when he was around 50 years old, he married a third time, this time to a 16-year-old woman. After his second divorce, the initial signs of a carcinoma appeared on his neck (Oliveira, 2002).

Some in the community say that the cancer appeared as the result of sorcery from his second wife; other people say that Daniel admitted that he made a mistake by getting married to a woman so young, and that this was the cause of his sickness (Sena Araújo, 1999).

Regardless of all this, Daniel lived 12 years in his hut, never again returning to the city of Rio Branco. In July of 1958, Daniel started a penitence of 90 days and began to tell the people around him that at the end of that penitence he would travel. Many in the

¹⁹ That name was adopted only after Daniel's death (1958), in 1959.

community assumed that he was planning a trip to Maranhão. Daniel died on the morning of September 8, 1958, at the age of 70, when he was cooking Daime (Sena Araújo, 1999).

Antônio Geraldo, one of the prominent members of the brotherhood, was appointed as his successor (see Goulart, 2004; Paskoali, 2002; and Sena Araújo, 1999, for more details). Antônio Geraldo introduced a number of elements into the Barquinha such as the *farda* (literally: uniform, the uniform worn after the person becomes a *fardado*) and the *bailado*. Antônio Geraldo also created the denomination of Barquinha. The name *Barquinha* came to him after a *miração* in which he saw a little boat sailing on the sea (Goulart, 2004). In 1980, Manuel Hipólito de Araújo, also a member of the Barquinha since Daniel's time, took Antonio Geraldo's place as leader of the Barquinha. Antônio Geraldo had gone, after many years, to visit some relatives in the state of Rio Grande do Norte. When he returned to Rio Branco, Manuel Hipólito, who had been left in charge of the Casa de Oração center during Antônio Geraldo's trip, did not allow Antônio Geraldo to reassume his position at the head of the center (see Goulart, 2004; Paskoali, 2002; Sena Araújo, 1999). Antônio Geraldo subsequently left the Casa de Oração and founded another center of the Barquinha, the *Centro Espítira Daniel Pereira de Mattos*.

Madrinha Francisca Gabriel, the actual leader of the Center, was born Francisca Pereira dos Santos on June 7, 1934 in Antimari, close to Boca do Acre, near the northeastern border of Acre and Amazonas States. When she was four years of age, her mother died. Some weeks later her brothers died and then her father passed away as well. According to Alcimar, they were all victims of malaria or yellow fever. Her godfather, Manoel Balbino, a *marreteiro*—an owner of a boat that sells goods traveling through the rivers—adopted her, staying with her until she was 10 or 11 years old. After this time

Madrinha Francisca began working as babysitter, most likely moving out of her godfather's house. She studied through the third grade of elementary school.

Madrinha Francisca was Catholic. She was a member of the *Irmandade de Nossa Senhora das Dores* (Fraternity of Our Lady of Pain). She said that this fraternity was created by the local Catholic Church, having more practical than spiritual function, in that it was responsible for organizing processions and pilgrimages. Another formative event during her childhood, was when her family visited Xapuri, a city around 100km west from Rio Branco, where they discovered a school directed by nuns. The scenario enchanted Madrinha Francisca, who asked to stay there. There was no vacancy for her at the time.

Padrinho Francisco (Francisco Campos do Nascimento) was born on July 3, 1914, in Brejo da Cruz, Rio Grande do Norte. In 1942, when he was 28 years old, he left Brejo da Cruz with his parents and 10 other siblings seeking respite from the drought. Padrinho Francisco spent some time working at Pará, at the mouth of the Amazon River, and afterwards went to Manaus (Amazonas State) to work in the production of fish flour, which was sent to the United States during the Second World War. His entire family arrived at Acre in 1945. He, too, worked for some time as a rubber-taper in a seringal.

Padrinho Francisco met Madrinha Francisca in 1952. They were working at the same place, the house of the owner of a bakery in Rio Branco, and in 1953, they were married. Today Padrinho Francisco very rarely drinks Daime and no longer attends the services. He stays in his bedroom (behind the church) praying. He had turned 90 by the time that I was doing fieldwork, though he was very active and strong. He is still engaged as a rezador, and many people visit him, looking for his spiritual services and for help in

minor health problems like headaches, wounds, or some other kind of minor pain or sicknesses. Padrinho Francisco's main clients are children. One can very easily find him at the *Salão de Festas* by the end of the afternoon. People just walk in, ask for his blessing, sit down, engage in a conversation—Padrinho Francisco is a very good partner for long and interesting conversations—and ask him to pray over them. “Pray over,” is meant here in the literal sense. Padrinho Francisco stands up, gets some leaves from jasmine or *rainha* (*Psychotria viridis*), and begins praying, touching the affected part of the body or the top of the head in case of children. He silently prays one Our Father, one Hail Mary, one Hail Holy Queen, and the Creed. Then, he offers his prayers to God and asks Him to heal the person. In our conversations, he mentioned that with “faith that the person will be fine.”

Padrinho Francisco met Daniel when he (the Padrinho) was hosted at the house of a friend. One night his friend went visiting Daniel, and Padrinho Francisco went along with him. He knew that Daniel was working with Daime, and in 1956 or 1957, when Madrinha Francisca got sick, he decided to take her to Daniel, after which Padrinho Francisco became a member of the Barquinha. He alternated with Madrinha to go to the services, as they had many children (10), and someone needed to stay home to care for them.

Prior to her meeting with Daniel, Madrinha Francisca was very sick, and the doctors had sent her home to die, as they could find neither the cause nor the cure for her problem (Goulart, 2004; Luna, 1995; Mercante, 2002). Her entire body was covered with wounds. Padrinho Francisco told her that he knew an *espírita* (spiritualist, that is, Daniel) living in Vila Ivonete, and that had the capacity to heal people. Then, Padrinho Francisco

asked her whether she would agree to go to Vila Ivonete to see him (it is important to note that as a Catholic, the visit to a non-Catholic healer would go against Madrinha's spiritual guidelines). Madrinha Francisca agreed to visit Daniel, primarily because she was desperate.

She was the mother of three daughters by the time of her visit to Daniel, and the youngest one was seven months old. Madrinha had stopped nursing her because she thought that her problem could be contagious, and similarly, other people avoided any kind of contact with her.

When she arrived at Daniel's the first time, she said that she felt very comforted. Daniel told her to sit down and gave her some water to drink (both gestures were highly appreciated by her, as other people were afraid of her, as mentioned above). Then, Daniel began talking with the present members of the Barquinha, saying that what the Madrinha had was not contagious, that no one needed to be afraid. Her sickness, according to Daniel, was *um mal feito só para ela* (literally: an evil made only for her). He also told her to continue nursing her daughter.

I asked Alcimar (Madrinha's son) whether Padrinho Francisco had drunk Daime before their visit to Daniel.

No. He [Padrinho Francisco] was seeking help for my mother. When she was pregnant with their third daughter, she came down with an sickness that medical science could not identify, which was becoming worse and worse. She gave birth; though by the seventh month she had stopped nursing, fearing that whatever she had could be contagious. My father had spent all of his money and had sold all the animals and crops. He could no longer work because he needed to take care of her and of his daughters. He asked her if she would agree to visit a spiritualist center. Though she was Catholic, she agreed that there was no other way, and that if this were coming from God it would be welcome. He said that he knew a man who was living at Vila Ivonete neighborhood who was a healer and that he was healing many people. My father came first and talked with Daniel, who asked if my father could bring her to him; otherwise he [Daniel] was willing to go to see her. My

father confirmed that she would come to Daniel. She arrived around 10 a.m., and Daniel asked her to sit down and gave water to her. Then, he told her to go to the [old] church, because a service was going on. He started talking with the brothers and sisters of the community, telling them that a person with a very ugly sickness had arrived and that they were not to be afraid of her, because that sickness was not contagious. He explained that her problem was spiritual, caused by someone that was not in their right mind, who was using black magic knowing not how to use it. Daniel said that my mother was sick because she was not prepared to handle that kind of energy. Daniel also told the brothers and sisters that her problem was worse because she was very depressed due to a lack of support from the people around her that could otherwise have prayed with her, without being afraid of being contaminated by her sickness. This was the way she was received at Daniel's house, by all the brothers and sisters, and from that day onward she began to get better. On the first day, Daniel told her to drink some Daime, and said that the medicine that he used at his house for healing people was the Santo Daime. She accepted. He told her to go home, to take a shower, to eat, and to nurse her daughter. And so she did. My sister, who was that baby, now is beside her working [at her spiritual mission]. After that, my mother had seven other children. The six months the doctor told that she would live became 47 years.

She had asked God to be healed of that unknown sickness, and her main concern was for her daughters. Madrinha was an orphan, and as was said before, she lost her parents when she was very young. She did not want even to think about the chance of her daughters having the same destiny. She said that if God would grant permission for her to be healed, she would follow the mission, the doctrine taught by Daniel. In her view, she has stated that the fact that she had started her own church does not mean that she had broken with the mission; in fact, she says that this was a necessary and natural movement, and she was following precisely the spiritual guidance of Daniel to do it.

The best account of Madrinha's story about her sickness was given to Figueiredo et al. (1996, pp. 42-43):

I was desperate. Then, Daniel asked me if I believed in Saint Francis of the Wounds. He repeated the question three times, and I answered the same thing: "I do." Then, Daniel said:

"Dona Chiquinha, in the same way you believe that Saint Francis of the Wounds exists, you can believe that you will be healed. But it will be slowly."

He said that the more Daime I could drink, the better. But, in the beginning Daniel gave me Daime in small amounts. He gave me a bottle with the instructions of taking a spoonful in the morning, another one at noon, and another at night. Also, he guided me to take a spoonful before going to the church for services. Daniel said that I was too weak to manage a large dose of Daime initially.

I followed that regimen for many months. After some time, Daniel started to give a little bit more Daime. But, he gave me a glassful of Daime only one time. It was in a 15th of August [I have no information about the year, but probably 1957 or 1958]. He gave me the larger dose of Daime for me to go deeper within [the doctrine] and for me to know the mysteries [*para eu me aprofundar e conhecer também os mistérios*], the spiritual entities with whom I was contracted to work along with. That is to say, the spiritual entities who belonged to me.

He gave me that Daime, in order to give me the chance to receive a work, to receive a preparation at the bottom of the sea. Daniel said:

“Dona Chiquinha, tonight you will receive your preparation at a rock at the bottom of the ocean. You will go to the bottom of the sea; you will receive there all the preparations you have to receive.

He said that there was a spiritual entity that was to wash my crown at the bottom of the sea. And in fact, I worked spiritually very intensely during this opportunity.

Her “preparation” (*o preparo*), in her own words, was a necessary step toward the acquisition of more firmness, faith, love, comprehension, calmness, patience, all of the qualities that she needed for the continuation of her spiritual life, principally having in mind the future engagement with the Barquinha. Her illness was the first step toward the position she occupies today as the head of the Center. Madrinha Francisca sees that illness as a tool, which God used for guiding her into her proper mission for this life. Daniel occupies the role of the person, as well as a tool in God’s hand, who gave her the chance to find that proper mission. She has a profound contract with Daniel: he was the one who gave her life back to her. Madrinha Francisca believes that “there is no evil that does not bring something good.”

Madrinha Francisca lived under Daniel's spiritual guidance for only two years. During this time, she was prepared to become a medium for Daniel's spirit after his death. Daniel had made a request to the *Rainha do Mar* (literally: Queen of the Sea) to send him someone for working as a medium. He recognized Madrinha Francisca as the person sent by the Rainha do Mar for this role. According to Padrinho Francisco, Daniel promised Madrinha Francisca that he would ask to the Rainha do Mar to allow her (the Madrinha's) spiritual guides to come closer to her. The first spiritual entity she received was the *Bispo* (literally: bishop) *Dom Nelson*, who could make the consecration of the church. Before she began working with the Bispo, the consecration was instead made spiritually during the singing of a Salmo.

One night, during the service, Daniel asked someone to *fazer a chamada* (literally: to make the call) of Dom Nelson, that is, to sing the music that would bring Dom Nelson to this world through Madrinha's body, but something different happened: according to Madrinha, Daniel had previously prepared an altar with two white candles over a white cloth and two cigars, made by Daniel with a very strong tobacco. After the call was made, to Madrinha's surprise, she did not "receive" Dom Nelson but another spirit. This unexpected spiritual entity was unceasingly whistling, loudly. One person present at the ceremony said to Daniel that that spiritual entity was not Dom Nelson but the *Príncipe Espadarte*. Daniel said to that person that he knew this already and that he had been waiting for that spirit to manifest in Madrinha's body. Daniel saluted the new spiritual guide and gave him one of the cigars to smoke. Then, he asked the future *Dom Simeão*—he was manifesting himself that time as the *Prince Espadarte*—to take care of a woman who was in need.

The presence of the cigars is notable here. Madrinha Francisca smokes tobacco, but she mentioned that that cigar was made with a different and stronger tobacco than her own. These cigars are likely a version of the *tauari* cigars smoked in *pajelança*²⁰ in the states of Pará and Maranhão (see Galvão, 1955; Maués & Villacorta, 2001). So, Frei Daniel himself first used tobacco spiritually in the Barquinha. This is a clue that Daniel likely had some kind of contact with the caboclo/African religions in his native state, probably *Catimbó* (see Assunção, 1999; Bastide, 2001b) or *pajelança*.

Galvão (1955), for example, cited that the local shamans (the *pajés*) would prepare an altar called *mesa*, which they covered with a white cloth and where they placed their ritualistic paraphernalia, including *tauari* cigars. Assunção (1999) indicated the presence in *Catimbó* of the *reinos encantados*, the “enchanted kingdoms” where spiritual entities live. These enchanted kingdoms are divided in many cities, with rivers, mountains, forests, and so on. The *reinos encantados* are one of the essential elements of the Barquinha’s cosmology (see Chapter 6). Another corollary between these two traditions is that in *Catimbó*, the person responsible for the organization of the ceremony and the owner of the place where the ritual takes place is known as *mestre* (literally: master), a title given to Daniel during his life.

Madrinha Francisca mentioned that Daniel had contact with the African religions in Maranhão. I could not obtain any details concerning which in particular, though she had said, “He came from Maranhão, right? Everybody there work with those things!” She

20 Maués and Villacorta (2001, p. 11) defined *pajelança* as a “certain kind of shamanism when the shaman—the *pajé*—is possessed by spirits known as *encantados* or *caruanas*.” The borderline between the *pajelança* and the *catimbó* is very tenuous. Possession is also present at the *catimbó*, however, the *mestre*—the master of the ritual—can be possessed by *caboclos* also. It is very important to note the presence of the *jurema* in *catimbó*. *Jurema* is a drink prepared with the bark around the roots of many species but mainly *Mimosa tenuiflora* (ex *hostilis*), richer in DMT than the leaves of *Psychotria viridis* used to prepare Daime, and which also helps he or she who drinks it to have visions of the spiritual world (again, see Assunção, 1999; Bastide, 2001a; Brandão & Rios, 2001).

completed the sentence saying that, however, within “the Light of the Daime there was everything, one need only to search for it,” which opens the possibility for believing that Daniel had received that knowledge from the Daime itself.

Daniel introduced the use of the *espada* (literally: sword—see Chapter 7), a piece of cloth used by the spiritual entities when incorporated in their mediums. He decided to make one for Dom Simeão, asking him what color it would be. Dom Simeão chose a green one. After this event, other spiritual entities began to use espadas as well. The idea of espada is another evidence of the contact of Daniel and the caboclo/African religions in Maranhão. Pai Francelino de Shapanan, the spiritual leader of a Tambor de Mina temple (an African Brazilian religion brought by the slaves from the old kingdom of Dahomey—the modern Benin), in the city of São Paulo shared in our communication that in the Tambor de Mina the spiritual entities use two different cloths: the *toalha de Richilieu*, an embroidered cloth worn around the waist, and the *espada*, over the shoulder. Francelino de Shapanan (2001) in an article said explicitly that the *Encantados* in the Tambor de Mina use a towel (in the article he does not use the term *espada*) where sometimes they have painted their *ponto*—a symbolic drawing representing the spiritual entity. According to Ferreti (2000), in the Tambor de Mina the use of a white towel folded and hanging from the shoulder is a sign that a spirit is incorporated in the medium. Ferreti (1995) said that in the *tambor da mata* (a Tambor de Mina’s ceremony) the towel is replaced by a piece of cloth that they hold in the hand, which they call *pana*.

Returning to Dom Simeão, he was the first spiritual entity to whistle when arriving in the body of his medium, as he did when he first entered as Príncipe Espadarte through Madrinha Francisca. Daniel told Madrinha Francisca that this was a sign that he

(Dom Simeão) belonged to *linha do mar* (literally: the lineage of the sea). The other spiritual entities began performing the whistle/whoosh only after Don Simeão did it. It became clear that in the context of the Barquinha the whistling/whooshing of the spiritual entities at the Center is a sign of fidelity to Dom Simeão. We can consider as well the practical effect of the whistling/whooshing, always used in the Center during the cleansing process of clients and spaces.

Goulart (2004) indicated that mediums in other centers of the Barquinha receive Dom Simeão as well, although she did not say which mediums or where. Madrinha Francisca has said in conversation that this fact was unknown to her and that she doubts it. Dom Simeão has a very important role in the Barquinha. He is its the main “guardian,” protecting all the centers during the ceremonies. Sena Araújo (1999, p. 168) said that Dom Simeão is responsible for bringing the pagan spirits to receive baptism. Dom Simeão also is known to capture the entities without spiritual light, taking them to the “fields of light” for being indoctrinated (see Chapter 7). Madrinha Francisca mentioned that Frei Daniel developed the system of interrogating the spiritual entities captured during the process of the cleansing of the client, and also the *entrega*—the process of giving the spirits to the higher entities (most commonly Dom Simeão) after the interrogation. When the spiritual entity is captured, that is, is “held” in the body of a medium, another person asks a number of questions: the name of the entity and how many other spiritual entities are working with it, what is the reason that this spiritual entity is accompanying the affected person, and whether black magic has been used against that person. Following these questions, the spiritual entity is “given” to Dom Simeão to be taken to the fields of light.

When Madrinha Francisca was a member of the *Centro Espírita e Culto de Oração Casa de Jesus Fonte de Luz*, Dom Simeão was responsible for opening the Festas (Sena Araújo, 1999). Dom Simeão (incorporated in Madrinha Francisca), used to work *fazendo ronda*, that is, walking both inside and outside the church during the services helping people.

Madrinha mentioned that she received *Mãe Joana* once, the deceased carnal mother of Dom Simeão when he was incarnated. Madrinha, talking about her experience, said that she saw her body (she is a dark-skinned, thin woman) changing toward *Mãe Joana's* appearance, with fat and white arms.

Dona Chiquita was a fardada both in Daniel's and Mestre Irineu's lineages. When I interviewed Dona Chiquita, she was 74 years of age. She died this year (2006—being 76 years old), and she had been drinking Daime for more than 40 years. Originally from the Northeastern state of Rio Grande do Norte, she left when she was 14, was married at Manaus, and later came to Acre. She contrasts very much with the typical population of Acre because of her very white skin and blue eyes. She was a very gentle and happy lady and extremely communicative. We had a long conversation at her home, drinking coconut water. She has a very good memory, and she is a living memory of the Daime history itself, not only of the Barquinha. Dona Chiquita is a fardada at the *Centro Espírita e Casa de Oração Jesus Fonte de Luz*, but she is a very frequent visitor at Príncipe Espadarte Festas. When we spoke of how she had arrived at the Barquinha, she told a story full of details of the initial Barquinha.

One day my husband said that there was an old man who 'knew about the things' at Vila Ivonete. This man was doing some [spiritual] works and he was drinking a tea. We went there, and we decided to stay with Daniel. I was around 30 years old. I was pregnant when I went there. Some people cannot understand how a

person who is a medium can adapt so easily to those places. Everything was going really well for me there, and I was going every Sunday and Wednesday. Daniel already had some *aparelhos* [literally: apparatus, referring to the mediums], and he was working at an adobe house—very poor, with some rustic wooden stools. Everything was very poor. He already had something like five *aparelhos* receiving the spiritual guides, [including] Dona Inês, [and] Dona Chica [Madrinha Francisca]. Very quickly the master [Frei Daniel] “made me receive” a spiritual guide. They gave him the name of Antônio da Luz, but he [a caboclo] gave the name of Arranca-Toco. All the spiritual guides, when they first arrive to receive the baptism, receive the name of *fulano da luz* [literally, someone of the light, *da luz* being a sort of surname].

This was the very beginning of the Barquinha. Daniel was still alive, and the baptism of pagans, one of the cornerstone rituals of the Barquinha, was being performed. At the Príncipe Espadarte Center, when a spirit does not have a Christian name, he or she receives one. However, that name is not “physically” given. It comes intuitively to the medium/spirit during the 10 minutes when the medium/spirit kneels to receive the baptism (see Chapter 7). *Arranca-Toco* would mean something like “remove-stump.” This is the name of a very forceful Caboclo who received the surname of Da Luz, denoting his relationship to the Barquinha’s family. Dona Chiquita continued,

After two years, the old man [Daniel] became sick and disincarnated. Before he died, he made a spiritual test with Dona Inês, Dona Chica [Madrinha Francisca], and myself to see who we could see with the *aparelhos* [in other words: what spiritual guides were incorporated in the mediums]. I saw [in a *miração*] when a prince on a horse came to Antônio Geraldo. Antônio Geraldo was moving his [physical] body in the same way as the guide was moving in my *miração*. Then, Antônio Geraldo started singing a hymn. And I was there [in the spiritual plane, through the *miração*], watching. The prince was there [in the spiritual plane] on a horse, trotting all the time. When he finished singing, I told this to Mestre Daniel.

This passage is very interesting, both in that Daniel was testing the medium’s capacities and in how he was verifying his own intuitions. She continued,

I was there when the master died, when he sung the hymns of the romaria, calling us to carry the *andor*²¹, when he was getting ready to die. He was laying down on

21 I could not find a proper translation for that term. *Andor* is a profusely decorated (with flowers, rock crystals, etc.) wooden platform carried by four people on the last day of the *Romaria*, when all the people

a hammock between the old church and the feitio's house. We put his body within the church, which was being built. We had the romarias, but it was not too frequent. When he was still alive I had a *miração* where I saw the *farda*.

As mentioned previously in less detail, Daniel died during a ritual at the beginning of the Saint Francis Romaria, when Daime was being cooked. The main church, later inaugurated by Antônio Geraldo, was being built. Dona Chiquita said that she had seen a *farda* (the uniform used by the members) in a *miração*. After following Antônio Geraldo for some time, and before the *farda* was adopted, she left the Casa de Jesus center and became a member of Mestre Irineu's center, the Santo Daime church of the Alto Santo. Years later, when she returned to the Casa de Jesus center, she was extremely surprised to find them using the same uniform she had seen in her *miração*: it was later introduced by Antônio Geraldo, after he too had a *miração* showing the *farda*.

Padrinho Francisco mentioned in our conversation that Daniel died with a problem of the larynx. According to the Padrinho, during a service on the night of Saint Peter's day, Daniel invited all the brothers and sisters to surround the fire that was burning outside the church. Daniel stood up and said, "All those present must surround the fire, and those who do not surround it will die." Padrinho said that Daniel himself did not go close to the fire. Saint Peter's day is on the 29th of June. Later that same year, in September, Daniel passed away.

Madrinha Francisca had decided to leave the Casa de Jesus when Antônio Geraldo left, however, when Manoel Araújo—the new leader—asked Dom Simeão to remain for helping him during the services, she chose to stay longer. As the time passed, she felt herself more constrained during the services, and eventually she had to give up

go on procession to the streets around the Center. A statue of the commemorated saint is positioned on top of that platform.

singing the Salmos because Manoel Araújo decided that his son would do it. She had actually wanted her sons and daughter to have a more active participation in the services and told me that she had decided to leave the Casa de Jesus center because she wanted a place where her physical sons and daughters would be completely accepted.

One of her sons, Toinho, is cited in the literature as having a central role in the sequence of events of her leaving the Casa de Jesus. Goulart (2004) cited an interview with Francisco Hipólito, the actual president of the Casa de Jesus center, when he mentioned that because of Toinho's influence over Madrinha's work, Manoel Araújo, (Francisco's father), asked her to leave the Casa de Jesus center.

When Madrinha was pregnant with Toinho, Daniel told her that this son would not follow her spiritual path, that he *pertencia a outra linha* (literally: belonged to another spiritual lineage), but that he would be very helpful to her. In fact, Toinho tended toward the African religions, being initiated in Candomblé and Umbanda. Francisco Hipólito's discourse in Goulart (2004) mentioned that because of Toinho Madrinha Francisca was introducing Umbanda practices, such as the habit of some spiritual entities (mainly the Pretos-velhos) to smoke pipes.

As we could see above, Daniel himself introduced of the use of tobacco. From Madrinha perspective, it was not Manoel Araújo that asked her to leave but rather was her decision to do so with a group of followers.

Some of the spiritual guides of Toinho were baptized. The Caboclo Roxo, his main spiritual entity, has an espada, even if Toinho himself is not a member of the Center. Toinho rarely drinks Daime, but the Caboclo Roxo does. There is a clear affiliation of the Caboclo Roxo with the Center (although Toinho is not a fardado).

Toinho had received two Salmos and there is an interesting story around one of them. Toinho was very worried because there were no Salmos to perform the commemoration of first Easter at the Center. Madrinha Francisca says that he asked to the spirit of Frei Daniel, during a service, for someone to receive at least one Easter Salmo. After this request, before Easter, Toinho himself receive a Salmo that has been sung during all Easter commemorations since then.

We can see an interesting separation of lineage here. On one side, Manoel Araújo, a Freemason, was attempting to follow a “westernized” spirituality. He was clearly trying to “clean” the Barquinha from African influences. We can see in the anthropological literature that the Barquinha is qualified, most of the time, by the strong influence of Kardecism (Goulart, 2004; Oliveria, 2002; Paskoali, 2002; Sena Araújo, 1999). When I first visited the Center this influence was not so apparent. In fieldwork, however, I became aware that this influence is present, principally among those older members who came from the Casa de Jesus with Madrinha Francisca.

Kardecism sometimes classifies the Umbanda spiritual entities such as Pretos-velhos and Caboclo as less-evolved spiritual entities (Exús are often included in that same category—see Ortiz, 1988). In the Casa de Jesus, however, even the Pretos-velhos do not belong to those lower categories; they are considered more evolved precisely because they no longer smoke pipes.

On the other hand, there is the approach of the not-so-well-educated (in terms of school experience) Madrinha Francisca to allow the spiritual entities to work freely. She has a distinctly different method of working spiritually. Things are changing at the Center: in the beginning, the spiritual entities were smoking all the time. Now there are

specific moments for doing so, and they are forbidden from smoking using the *farda* (see my description of the *Prestação de Contas* ritual in Mercante, 2002, where I say that the Pretos-velhos were smoking pipes when they were performing the healing). At that time, there were no *farda* at the Center. Now they do wear it, principally during the *Prestação de Contas* service. Those same Pretos-velhos no longer smoke pipes during that ceremony.

At the Center, they do classify spirits according to their perceived evolution. The Pretos-velhos do smoke pipes, and they are not included as belonging to the lower-ranking spirits. In fact, some of the Pretos-velhos there are considered as high as the Missionários.

Madrinha Francisca has only two influences on her spiritual career: Roman Catholicism and Daniel Pereira de Mattos. Madrinha Francisca said that she discovered that her mission since leaving the Casa de Jesus center has been to enlarge the Barquinha's horizons. During an informal conversation shared with a member of the Center, this member mentioned that it is not the way of the Barquinha to remain static. The world is changing, and the Barquinha's working system will have to change too.

During the ceremony commemorating Antônio Geraldo's death (July 28, 2004) at the Daniel Pereira de Mattos center, Francisco Hipólito said that Frei Daniel had left the working system of the Barquinha ready, and that the different Barquinha centers must keep the tradition. Madrinha said in our conversations that her mission was to receive new people and to create a broader working space. Two of the ceremonies she introduced, the prayer of the rosary every Sunday and the prayer of 1,000 Hail Marys, is part of her strategy to accomplish these aims. As well, she has undertaken the

enlargement of the number of spiritual entities working directly with the public (there are only seven at the Casa de Jesus, contrasting with the 13 of every Saturday plus many others performing minor consultations at the Center). I asked her why she had decided to give more people the opportunity to develop their mediumship. She told me that by doing so, these people would grow spiritually stronger, acquiring more experience and ability to handle their own negative energies (*de receber sua própria carga*, literally, to receive their own charge).

Madrinha Francisca also changed the way of performing the Bailado at the Center, with men and women dancing in separate rows. Sometimes men and women form one single ring; other times, when the number of people dancing is excessive, men form an external ring and women form an internal one. She explained that Dom Simeão and the spirit of Frei Daniel asked her to initiate this change. In the other centers, there is no separation between men and women.

We are leaving now the Barquinha's general universe and entering into the Center's particular life. In the next chapter, the history and actual social characteristics of the Center are explored in more detail.

CHAPTER 4

THE BARQUINHA OF MADRINHA CHICA

*And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.
 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea,
 Insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: But he was asleep.
 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.
 And he sayeth unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?
 Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; And there was a great calm.
 But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this,
 that even the sea and the winds obey him?
 (Mat, 8:23-27)*



Figure 12.

Madrinha Francisca (incorporated with Dom Simeão) at the Casa de Oração center. *Note.* From “Quem não toma o chá não tem alucinações: Epidemiologia de religiões alucinógenas no Brasil” [“Who during the tea does not have hallucinations: Epidemiology of hallucinogenic religions in Brazil”], by H. Nakamaki, 1994, *Senri Ethnological Reports*, 1, p. 80. Copyright 1994 by H. Nakamaki. Reprinted with permission.

In 1980, Antônio Geraldo broke with the Casa de Oração Jesus Fonte de Luz (see Paskoali, 2002).

Madrinha Francisca (see Figure 12) stated that it was also her desire to leave the Casa de Jesus with Antônio Geraldo, though she did not mention whether she would join Antônio Geraldo’s new center, or whether she would create something by herself.

Madrinha Francisca said that by that time Manoel

Araújo, in a conversation with Príncipe Dom Simeão, asked Príncipe Dom Simeão to stay—along with Madrinha Francisca—and help him at the Casa de Oração. Madrinha Francisca decided to stay.

Things were slowly changing at the Casa de Jesus, and by the end of 1990, Madrinha Francisca decided to stop attending altogether. She received “superior orders” from the spiritual realm saying that now she could leave the Casa de Jesus, and that now she was ready to start working on a “new mystery,” as was said by one of the main spiritual guides of the Center during a lecture.

Alcimar gave his version concerning the leaving of Madrinha in an interview inside the Casinha.

My mother was the last person Daniel talked with before he passed away. He gave her the final recommendations. He asked her to be perseverant in praying to the Virgin Mother, because she can carry our prayers to our Eternal Fa-ther. Daniel asked her to keep praying the rosary at every time she could, because, in our doctrine, this is a shield for the protection of all brothers and sis-ters, and it is through the rosary that we ask God for our benefit and for the benefit of the entire humanity. This is what he [Daniel] taught us. As the time passed, after 34 years, other people started to do things differently from Daniel teachings. When she could no longer tolerate that, she tried to organize a meeting to have an open conversation with all the brothers and sisters of the mission, in which she was not understood correctly. She became very frustrated, but she decided not to leave [the Casa de Oração], but rather she came home, to think a little. The people at the Casa de Oração demonstrated that they did not want her to stay there. They started saying that we were doing wrong things, things that we were not doing. Then she made a work at the Casinha with six brothers and sisters. The last time she went to the Casa de Oração was the 23rd of November, 1990. I had left by the 19th of January, 1991. At the end of Romaria to San Sebastian she was here [at the Casinha]. She was here, with these six other people, performing the *entrega* [the act of offering or giving the ceremony just performed to God; this is done at the end of the service through a special prayer] of the Romaria, I had dressed up to go to the Casa de Oração. I thought that if she was there with only six brothers and sisters I would go there to be the seventh, because she was in need of that support. She did not ask any of her sons or daughters to leave the Casa de Oração. Then, after we finished the Romaria, we told her that we would put the Casinha in order, for her to stay there with the people. She accepted. Up until this day, she did not say that she would no return to the Casa de Oração, she rather said that she

would wait a little to see how things would develop. I believe that God wanted the things like that, because the house of God is only One, and we cannot flee from His house if we want to follow Him. She is now continuing with the same work she was doing at the Casa de Oração. Little by little, more people started to arrive, people who knew her work and came here looking for her, and we became in need of more people to attend to the arriving *clientes*. She started to prepare more mediums to work with the spiritual entities. In the beginning, the mediums worked at the terreiro outside the Casinha. We use to have a table in the middle [of the Casinha] and she would put four candles at the four corners of the terreiro for the four angels. When she started here, only Carlos Renato was an *aparelho*, a medium. He was the first to work with her. Then came Neide [Madrinha's youngest daughter], who was not a fardada there. Then came Hita, José Carlos, Conceição and her husband, and Andreлина.²²

Madrinha Francisca was also nurturing a desire to have her sons and daughters participate more actively in the ceremonies. According to Madrinha Francisca, this was becoming increasingly difficult at the Casa de Oração, as mentioned before. She began to perform some ceremonies at her house, in a place today called as *A Casinha* (the little house), with a group of brothers and sisters who had left the Casa de Oração with her. She also mentioned in our conversation that she never had the intention of founding another center of the Barquinha.

The Casinha is a 15ft by 12ft room with wooden walls, with a normal table at the center, a chair for Madrinha and another for João Batista, his youngest son, the guitar player and main singer at the Center. The other people simply crowded around the table sitting on stools, and those who could not find a place inside, sat outside the little hut.

Beside the Casinha, where the Salão de Baile is today, was Madrinha's old wooden house. Toinho, her oldest son, had his house at the place where today stands the

22 On the 8th of September, 2005—the commemoration of Frei Daniel's death—a service was held at the Casa de Oração center. For the first time since Antônio Geraldo and Madrinha Francisca had left the Casa de Oração, the three centers gathered together for the commemoration. After 15 years Madrinha Francisca had returned to the center she helped to built. On the next night, a huge Festa was held at the Center, and again, the three centers participated in the ceremony. During that Festa, another barrier had been broken: I had heard one time previously Francisco Hipólito openly saying that he would never go to Madrinha's Center. After this, the relationship among these three centers changed completely, becoming more cordial and peaceful.

Cruzeiro. Madrinha's old house was demolished, and a new one, made of bricks, was built some meters from the old one, leaving the space open for the Terreiro, which is now the Salão de Festas. Toinho's old house was also demolished, and moved to the back of the church. Alcimar described the Casinha in an interview.

My brother who worked with Candomblé [Toinho] had a *tenda* [a small room] here, where he used to receive his spiritual guides to give consultations. There were here some statues of those guides, but they were not the *assentamento* [literally: "seatment"] for those beings. Until he decided to leave the Candomblé, and *despachar* [dispense of] them in running waters the statues remained here. When my mother decided to stay here she asked him to dispense of those statues in a forest or in running waters. Some of the spiritual beings working with Toinho were indoctrinated and baptized here. He [Toinho] was the son Daniel told Madrinha, while she was pregnant, that he would not work [spiritually] at her [spiritual] lineage, but he would help her when it was necessary.

The first Romaria they followed at the Casinha was the Romaria for Saint Sebastian (January 1 to 20), in 1991. Many of the members of that starting community were not developed mediums at the Casa de Oração, simply because there were no space for them to work there. The group of mediums working at the Casa de Oração is restricted only to those working at the Obras de Caridade ceremonies. In the new Center, there was a new opening for the opportunity for many more of the community to have their mediumship developed.



In 1993, they began to build the actual church, and in May of 1996, it was inaugurated. After this, they built the *Congá* (see Figure 13), the place where today the mediums with their spiritual guides give consultations.

Figure 13.
Congá.

Before that, the consultations with the spiritual guides were made on the Terreiro, and when they had rain, they would be held inside the constructing church, but no spiritual guide could smoke inside the church.

The farda was implemented on December 8, 2000. At that time, Madrinha Francisca, João Batista, and Carlos Renato became fardados masked on this new date. However, Madrinha Francisca never surrendered her old farda.

The terreiro was one of the first spaces to be used at the Center, along with the Casinha. After the church was built, they stopped using the Casinha. Then came the Congá, after which the terreiro was left mainly as a space for Festas. The Center was the only Barquinha with a “terreiro” or, in other words, a place for Festas with a floor made of dirt. All the other Barquinhas have a paved and organized space for Festas, and the bailado is made dancing clockwise; at the Center people danced counterclockwise, so long as they retained the dirt floor, as will be explained shortly. At the center of the terreiro, a stone, called *Pedra de Xangô* (*Xangô's stone*) was positioned. Xangô is the Orixá related to the thunder, the rocks, and to justice. During the bailados the spiritual guides would draw the *pontos-riscados* on the dirt floor.

In the beginning of May of 2004, that picture started changing. The members of the Center managed to put some money together, mainly from donations, and the Salão de Baile began to be built. Knee-high walls were built all around the area of the “old” terreiro. The floor was paved and finally a 6-pointed blue star with a circle surrounding it was painted at the place where in the past the Pedra de Xangô was positioned. On May 31, 2004, the Salão de Baile was finally inaugurated. When everybody was entering the Salão de Baile, with the rows of men and women moving to dance counterclockwise,

Dom Simeão incorporated in Madrinha Francisca told the fardados orchestrating the bailado to turn around and dance clockwise, and that from that date onward, the bailado should be in that direction.

How the Brotherhood Was Formed

During this fieldwork, I became interested in not only the factors influencing people to join the Center but also in the reasons that were keeping them there. Rather than explore this topic at length here, it will be sufficient for the moment to give an overview, in the form of a few examples, of why people were motivated to come and to remain at the Center. In Chapter 7 there are further examples investigating this, although from people under treatment at the healing ceremonies.

Alcimar



Figure 14.

Alcimar praying in the Igreja.

The first example is Alcimar (see Figure 14), an informant mentioned previously. He is one of the Madrinha Fransica's sons. Alcimar was born in 1961, and was born and raised, as he said, "into the doctrine." He was the second sibling to become a "fardado," when he was 16 years old; Chaguinha was the first. Alcimar received his farda in 1977 at the hands of

Manoel Araújo at the Casa de Oração at the end of the Romaria to San Sebastian (January 20). At the Casa de

Oração they have two different fardas: one white, for important dates, and another blue, for the ordinary ceremonies (this is very similar to the

Santo Daime, where people use a white farda for commemorative days and the blue one for ordinary rituals). Alcimar became a fardado with the blue farda, because though this was unusual, according to him, he was experiencing an urge to become a fardado. His family did not have the money to buy the white fabric, and his blue farda was ready, so Manoel Araújo asked the whole community to wear the blue farda.

Alcimar said that he became a fardado because he wanted to gain a better and deeper understanding of the Barquinha doctrine: “I thought that was better to become a fardado, because for you to know the spiritual work is better to be a fardado.” As mentioned above, by the end of the Romaria to San Sebastian of 1991, he left the Casa de Oração to join the Center, saying that he wanted to help his mother with her forming group. By the end of the Romaria to Saint Joseph, in 2001 (March 19), he became a fardado of the Center.

What keeps him at the Center is the desire to “preserve all [the spiritual teachings] I have been learning; things that I have been using in my practical life. I know what is good for me, for my body, for my spirit, and I try to preserve those teachings, and those are the things keeping me in the doctrine.”

Roberto

Roberto was born in 1974. I asked him, during an informal conversation, what prompted him to look for the Barquinha. He said that the mother of one of his friends was to come to the Casa de Oração center, and she invited him. At that time, Madrinha Francisca was still working at the Casa de Oração.

He became an assiduous participant of the ceremonies at the Casa de Oração for two years, working as assistant of a spiritual guide for one year, before he followed Madrinha Francisca to start the Center.

He was a “junkie” before coming to the Barquinha, drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana, and sniffing cocaine. After he started to drink Daime, he slowly stopped using those substances. However, at the time he could not stop completely. Then he received what he called the “three warnings.”

The first was after he had been for sometime at the Casa de Oração. He said that he heard the Daime telling him that he must stop to use alcohol, cocaine, and marijuana. One of his friends came to his house with very pure cocaine, after Roberto’s 19th birthday. He partook, and the effect was extremely strong, raising his heart rate up to the point that he believed he would die. He never again sniffed cocaine.

The second warning came when, with a group of friends, someone offered him one cigarette of marijuana. He said to himself, “Well, this is not cocaine, it’s only hemp, and I think there is no problem.” He inhaled only one time and started feeling sick. His friends took him to the hospital with very low blood pressure. He said that when he was in the hospital he asked for a bible, which he laid open over his chest.

The third and definitive warning came when some friends invited him to a party. However, that party would be at the same time a ceremony was to be held at the Casa de Oração. His friends insisted and he agreed to go. Before he left his home to meet his friends, a member of the Casa de Oração came to his house to bring him to the ceremony. He told that person that he was going off to a party. The person said, “No, you are going to the Casa de Oração.” Under pressure, Roberto finally went to the ceremony. When the

ceremony was over and he was coming back home, he saw a car accident: it was his friends. The driver was drunk and had crashed the car into a truck. One person died, and another had permanent injuries. He was clear the choice had kept him from being in that car.

José

José started participating at the Center as the result of the influence of his girlfriend. His brother died sometime before that, and possibly for solace, she invited him to visit the Center with her. He did not know the Center was a “Daime church.” He had drunk Daime before, but not at a church, and he did not know that there were churches where people could drink Daime. This was 12 years ago. He came to the Center at the “time of the Casinha,” and very soon he started to assist a Preta-Velha (Carlos Renato’s Preta-Velha), a job he liked very much.

He said that the Center had changed his life, principally by changing his way of looking at the world, and at the people in the world.

You can see people more clearly, how people really are, you become also more responsible. It helped me to grow spiritually and materially, in my head, in my thoughts, in the way I see and act in the world, how I behave with people, trying to find the spiritual side of everything, to find God. And it is God who makes me stay here. Here at the Center I find my inner peace, I am working for having a good life after death.

These three examples give a good picture of some of the motives leading people to the Center. It is worth mentioning that of course these are not the only reasons moving people toward any religious or spiritual movement.

Alcimar was born within the Barquinha, and to join this movement actively was a natural step. The life of his family circled (and still circles) around the Barquinha. It is a

familiar environment and worldview for him. Like Alcimar, there are many other people, not only in the Barquinha, for whom drinking Daime is a very normal procedure.

This was not the case with Roberto. He belongs to an upper middle class, quite distant from these popular religions. He was attracted by his curiosity concerning the effects of the Daime itself, and not by the religious element. He was simply looking for another drug. However, he found something that changed his entire life. His process of conversion was gradual: his whole worldview had changed. Roberto is a very influential person at the Center.

José was moved by the death of his brother; José was searching for some comfort for his internal struggles concerning that loss. Like Roberto, he had never heard about the Ayahuasca religions either.

The Brotherhood Today

The community by the time of this fieldwork was composed of 119 members: 68 brothers and 51 sisters. The Center had by that time been in existence for 13 years. The average time of membership is 8.88 years, and 25 of the members have 13 years of membership, which means that this is the lowest approximate number of people who started with Madrinha Francisca (this figure is hard to estimate, as some people who started with her but are no longer members of the Center). The number of members increased consistently during its first eight years of existence and has been growing more gradually (although continuous) throughout the last five years.

However, this membership number does not correspond to the average number of people present at the services. Membership is not a strong request at the Center. In fact,

there are many people performing important tasks during the services (although not the main ones) that are not members. There are, as well, many nonmembers who are habitués of the Center and who participate in almost all of the ceremonies.

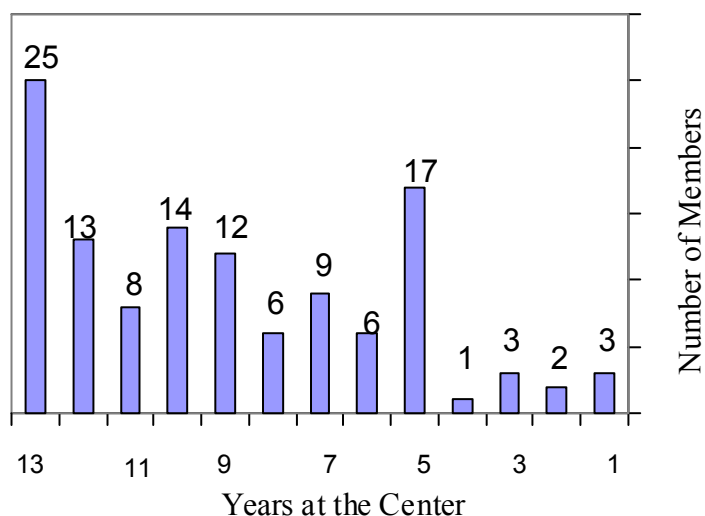


Figure 14a. Members by time of participation at the center.

The Center's community is very young. The average age of the members of the Center is 35.79 years. It is important to say that I worked mostly with the files of registered members, which does not include all the sons and daughters of those people. I made the choice not to collect the files of children under 17 years old for the study, because by the time of the fieldwork the law regulating the use of Ayahuasca in Brazil was in the process of changing concerning the use of the beverage by minors. The law is in processes of changing, and now the serving of Ayahuasca for minors is a decision to be taken by the parents (although there is a official recommendation to not serve Daime to minors).

The average age of men is 35.62 years, slightly smaller than the average for women, which is 36.02 years. Figure 14b below shows that there are only 11 members who are aged 51 or older.

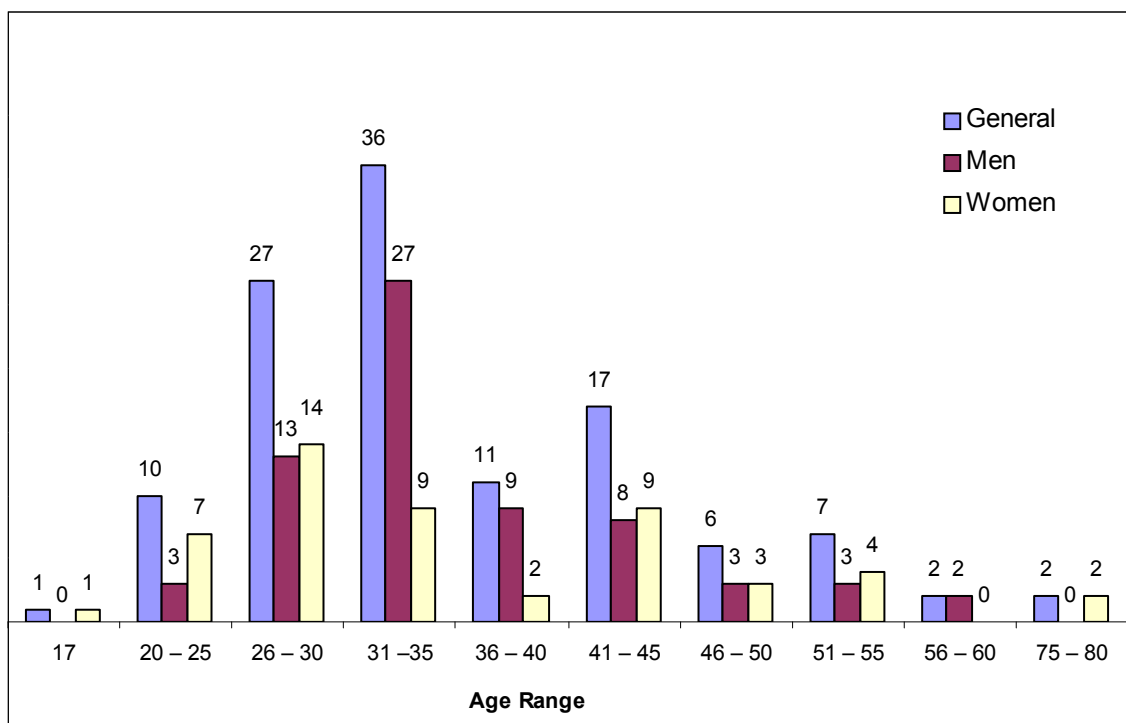


Figure 14b. Members by age and gender.

Another important characteristic of the members of the Center is that they are composed, in the majority, of people with a complete formal education at the elementary school level or lower. As there was no information on 6 of the members, the numbers shown in Figure 14c are based upon the information obtained on 113 members. The estimate is based upon the profession stated in the files of each member.

A total of 49 members (43.36%) were educated at the elementary school level or were not able to finish the high school: 29 men (46.03%) and 20 women (40.00%). The number who completed high school was 30 people (26.55%), 19 men (30.16%), and 11

women (22.00%). There were 18 (15.93%) who had completed an undergraduate program, of that there were 12 men (19.05%) and 6 women (12.00%). A total of 11 people (9.74%) were students (mostly of elementary school, but some of high school and/ or undergraduate studies), 3 men (4.76%) and 8 women (16.00%). Finally, a total of 5 women (4.42% of the total members, 10.00% of the women) stated that they were retired.

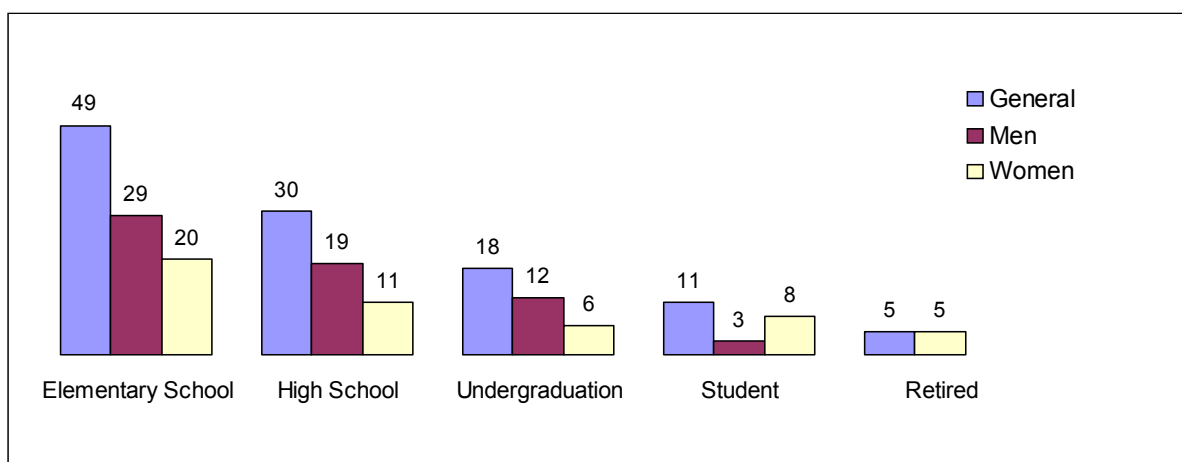


Figure 14c. Members by formal education level and gender.

The Area of Influence of the Center

The Center occupies a very important and strategic position among the Ayahuasca centers at Rio Branco. Although it has a very simple structure, people from all over the world stop at the Center. They come because they are attracted by the chance to drink Ayahuasca in a friendly environment. Ayahuasca—mostly through Santo Daime and União do Vegetal (UDV) groups—is present in many European countries, in Japan, United States, Israel, and Canada. In some of those countries, the use of Ayahuasca is

legal (for instance, Holland and Spain), and in some others it is in process of becoming legal, or at least it does not have an absolutely illegal status (Canada). In the United States, UDV has just won the right to use it during their ceremonies. It is good to mention that the United Nations (Dantas, 2004) decided to make a pronouncement in favor of the use of Ayahuasca.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, the Príncipe Espadarte Center has a very good relationship with Mapiá, the “Mecca” of the Padrinho Sebastião branch of the Santo Daime. The trip to Mapiá is made through Rio Branco, and often the people en route to Mapiá visit the Príncipe Espadarte Center, both because they have heard about the Center or because they have received a recommendation to do so. One of the participants in this research was a Canadian man, fardado in the Santo Daime. He needed to go to Rio Branco, and asked members of the community at Mapiá about a good place to find a healing tradition. They recommended Madrinha Francisca’s Barquinha (This Canadian man is mentioned further in Chapter 7). I saw, during my fieldwork, at least one person from Holland and one U.S. American receiving treatment at the Center. In the past, many other non-Brazilian people were in treatment at the Center for more than a month. I witnessed also visits of five Americans, one Egyptian, and one Uruguayan. A French man lived next door of the Center (participating actively on the ceremonies) for some years. Also, an Algerian woman became a fardada, although her French husband decided not to do so. A Japanese journalist was at the Center collecting information to write an article.

In Brazil, the influence of Madrinha Francisca's Barquinha is very large. There were visitors from São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, and Bahia states. These states are at least 1,500 miles away from Rio Branco.

In the local neighborhood, the influence of the Center is diminished by the fact that there are two other centers of the Barquinha within walking distance from the Center. However, many people visit all these Barquinhas without any problem. Sometimes, they leave a Festa at one of the Barquinhas to go to the Festa at another.

During the Obras de Caridade services on Saturdays, an average of 50 people attend to consult with the spiritual guides. It would be a very interesting research to investigate the exact the range of influence of the Center.

CHAPTER 5

THE SPIRITUAL SPACE

“Distance . . . their ability to express the fact of distance—that’s yet another reason why landscapes are the most genuinely religious pictures.”

“Because distance lends enchantment to the view?”

“No; because it lends reality. Distance reminds us that there’s a lot more to the universe than just people—that there’s even a lot more to people than just people.

It reminds us that there are mental spaces inside our skulls as enormous as the spaces out there.

The experience of distance, or inner distance and outer distance, of distance in time and distance in space—it’s the first and fundamental religious experience.”

(Huxley, 1962, p. 213)

This chapter proceeds with the mapping of the Center’s spiritual space. As stated in the Introduction, the spiritual space is an immaterial, multidimensional, and original place where powerful forces are at play, generating dispositions, intentions, and meanings as well as sensorial, emotional, and mental impressions. The spiritual space is not identical to the psychological or the physical aspects of existence, although the physical and psychological are immersed within the spiritual space. During spiritual development, one becomes conscious of the many different dimensions composing the spiritual space. The more developed spiritually the person, the broader their consciousness concerning the spiritual space.

In 1882, and based upon a careful study of Kantian ethics, the German philosopher Johannes Kreyenbuehl (1986) defined spiritual activity as the “capacity to begin a series of actions by itself by means of an original action which is not empirically or phenomenally conditioned” (p. 3). According to their cosmology, the Barquinha was not brought forth by the aggregation of people around Frei Daniel and thus emerging as a religious system. Rather, the Barquinha was revealed to and through Frei Daniel, and was

brought by the spiritual beings living in the spiritual plane or space. The Blue Book was given to Daniel, and he became conscious of his mission. The vision of the Blue Book has no phenomenal or empirical antecedents: Daniel had been living a very profane life and was lying on the ground by a river, deeply drunk. The Barquinha is constituted by many elements shaped by cultural forces, with the arrangement that these elements, with Daniel's influence, are new. As such, culture here does not provoke the emergence of a new system: culture itself is being transformed. According to Stephen and Herdt (1989),

Cultures cannot always attend to all stimuli or events; there is slippage, breakage, corruption in cultural tradition. As we need constantly to remind ourselves, moreover, the categories of a culture do not provide all the necessary vehicles for understanding and representing one's inner world. The cultural actor is in a constant struggle to communicate because of this: our experiences are in many ways opaque even to us. How then are we to relate them to others? It is in this gap between cultural representation, and subjective necessity and desire, that we find the impetus for creativity and innovation. Where culture fails to provide the categories for the communication of subjective experience and fails to satisfy deeply felt personal desires, then new categories and new avenues for expression will be sought, eventually to be found in the dreams and visions of prophets, old and new. (pp. 10-11)

Syncretic systems such as the Barquinha emerge under the influence of cultural matrixes. These matrixes act as lens for those experiencing the spiritual space: they influence the form assumed by the elements filling the spiritual space, yet these lenses do not determine the space or create the forces within that space. One of the Center's members came to me one day and, spontaneously, without being questioned, told me that the spiritual guides show themselves using forms that people can recognize them, but it does not mean that those guides would really have that form. A very similar idea was expressed by Stephen (1989) concerning her studies in New Guinea.

My arguments are based upon the assumption that a phenomenological world exists independently of the human mind, and that human cultures represent different beings, our mental functioning (sensory perception and information

processing) is sufficiently similar for us to be able to discern a phenomenological basis to our different cultural orderings. Culture thus undoubtedly shapes individual experience but does not totally determine it. (p. 43)

Stephen (1989) continued by saying that “sacred worlds are thus constructed from an interaction between a shared cultural symbolic world view and the products of the individual’s autonomous imagining” (p. 62). Here Stephen was limited in her view. From my experiences with the Barquinha, it is apparent to me that instead, sacred worlds construct and interact with shared cultural worlds and the products of the individual’s autonomous imagining.”

The question here is: how much can we, from the height of our “anthropological knowledge,” verify that a religion is the result of the combination of social and cultural factors, and not otherwise, as the believers of many religions tell us, that society and culture are the result of spiritual forces? The objective and accomplishment of this dissertation is not in developing a cross-cultural study concerning the effectiveness of spiritual forces or symbols but simply conceiving the Center’s cosmology as its members see, understand, and experience it.

That a spiritual plane of existence is ever-present is an idea found even in the initial forms of the earliest shamanism and is evident to have existed in earlier times (see Oubré, 1997). In the Western world, Plato developed it through philosophical ideas. In *Phaedon* he clearly stated that the soul exists before and after someone is born, and that same soul migrates from one body to another.

According to Schollem (1969), one Jewish Kabalistic school describes that the spiritual world was originated from/into/in a primordial space from which God withdrew

Himself, allowing things to be created. According to Schollem the universe was created because God decided to withdraw

into Himself. Instead of turning outward, He contracts His essence, which becomes more and more hidden. Without the [that movement] there would be no cosmic process, for it is God's withdrawal into Himself that first creates a pneumatic, primordial space . . . and makes possible the existence of something other than God and His pure essence (p. 110-111).

In the pleroma arise the archetypes of all beings. (p. 112)

The pleroma, the primordial vacuum left as God withdrew, would be filled by the archetypes of all beings, composing a spiritual reality par excellence. Huxley (1970), for example, said that a spiritual reality is the “the final end and purpose of consciousness to know” (p. 238). In *Heaven and Hell* Huxley (1990) also affirmed that

Like the giraffe and the duckbilled platypus, the creatures inhabiting these remoter regions of the mind are exceedingly improbable. Nevertheless, they exist, they are facts of observation; and as such, they cannot be ignored by anyone who is honestly trying to understand the world in which he lives. (p. 84)

The Barquinha's cosmology is circumscribed by its spiritual space. Space assumes a double connotation: it has an outer-sense aspect (the physical space) and an inner-senses aspect (the spiritual space). Bachelard (1964) made a comparison between the inside and the outside space: “The two kinds of space, intimate space and exterior space, keep encouraging each other, as it were, in their growth” (p. 201). Outside and inside are both linked through the fact that imagination plays, from the inside, with objects from the outside. However, the Bachelardian daydreamer during his process of imagination moves the objects from the outside to the inner “space of *elsewhere*” (p. 184). It is the existence in that “elsewhere,” which maintains the existence here, in the exterior space (p. 208).

Casey (1991) went in the same direction when he said that images manifest themselves using two different routes. One of them is phenomena (the outside): they become activity by the human “being in the world” (p. xix). The other is through archetypes but principally in the manifestation of a transcendental and collective world. Images belong to both the archetypal and the phenomenological structures.

In the Barquinha, people are led to fuse that division of inside and outside. The images of *mirações* are not experienced inside the head/brain but “out there,” in the astral world, which is perceived inside the person’s mind. The inside generates the outside, and the limits become much more flexible and fluid. According to Bachelard (1964), “This coexistence of things in a space to which we add consciousness of our own existence, is a very concrete thing” (p. 184).

Casey (1991) worked with the idea that space brings outside what time had previously brought inside. For him “archetypal and phenomenological structures are not only or altogether temporal, nor are they timely or timelike; they are . . . omnitemporal, panchronic” and so, “they require specification in terms of space . . . spaces qua [as] place locates: it furnishes outward abode in world. Space specifies” (p. xx). Casey continued, “Images also serves to specify” (p. xx), and because of this characteristic, images “occupy places in psyche; they *are* places of psyche” (p. xx).

Casey (1991) further developed the idea of place and space. According to Casey, after Descartes and Newton, “place” has begun to be considered as a “three-dimensional co-ordinate system” (p. 292), it became “space.” Space then became the “intrinsic place,” no longer “the place of a particular thing.” It became “an infinite container of things having absolute, and not merely relative positions within its unlimited embrace

[entailing] infinite space—which, as we know, means no place at all” (p. 292). He continued, “By the Enlightenment, therefore . . . place has been dissipated in space defined as an infinite order of co-existence, that is, the way in which things (insofar as there still can *be* things without place) find themselves merely side-by-side in space” (p. 292).

From Descartes, Newton, and the Enlightenment, Casey moved to the Greeks, to whom “place” had a completely different status. According to Casey (1991), Archytas and Aristotle situated place as the “first of the things” (p. 293). It is considered the first because

existent beings must be somewhere and because the somewhere is best determined as a container of movable bodies . . . place is essential to the very existence of movable bodies . . . it provides definition and limit, as well as enclosure and aegis, to these same bodies. Place has, further the remarkable property of situating things while being separable from them. (p. 293)

Casey continued, saying that “place is prior in Aristotelian cosmology [because] . . . *it exerts an active force* on the things it situates” (p. 293; emphasis added). According to Casey, “Aristotle was the first to take the bold step of suggesting that the regionalization of things is due to the inherent power of place itself, that *place itself places*, engenders, effects, makes a difference by itself alone” (p. 294).

Casey (1991) continued exploring Aristotle’s ideas. He said that the Greek philosopher established that “in the world, each direction [up, down, right, left, before, behind] is . . . independent of our position in relation to it” (p. 296). According to Casey, “the independence of the up and the down is then equated with the regionalization of the elements [primordial elements: fire, water, earth, and air] by virtue of their distinct potencies: fire and light are drawn up *by the up*” (p. 296; emphasis added).

Casey, then, moved from what he called the “physicalistic terms” (Casey, 1991, p. 297) toward the movements of imagination and the role of images: “When images and thoughts are aerial or fiery . . . naturally seek to soar; downward, when our ruminations are aqueous or tellurian and descend with their own psychical gravity” (p. 297).

The spiritual world in the Barquinha’s cosmology would be a place—in Aristotelian terms—enveloping all the entities within it: the beings (both spiritual and physical), the physical space of the Center, the images in the *mirações*, the music, the ceremony itself, and so on. Even if these things would assume a cultural form during their manifestation, the power behind them would belong to the spiritual space. That spiritual space would influence the cultural forces themselves, facilitating, then, changes on culture and society.

Casey (1991) also brought another level of the discussion, that is, the debate around time and space as the primordial and original category of human existence. Casey said that, after Kant, time became the most “authentic modality of all human existence,” principally because time is understood as a “form of *inner* sense and so more encompassing than the spatiality delivered by outer sense” (p. 292; emphasis added).

Durand (2001) removed time from its position as the “*a priori* of all phenomena” (p. 406), because the symbol is not present in time. Space, thus, would be where imagination is manifested. Durand (2001) said that the Kantian space is treated as a “psychological space,” it is “non-physical,” “non-objectively psychoanalyzed” (p. 407), and so, it would be not *a priori* to experience. For Durand, however, space would be the “*a priori* form of the euphemic power of thoughts, it is the place of figurations” (p. 407).

The transformation of the world would come precisely from that intrinsic euphemism of imagination, which would generate a reality promoting the “transformation of the world of death and of things into the world of assimilation to truth and life” (Durand, 2001, p. 404).

Durand (2001) distinguished between the perceptive space as objective and the representative space as subjective. Symbolic functions generate the representative space, but at the same time, the representative space would be “linked to action, because spatial representation is action brought to the inside [the inner space]” (Durand, 2001, p. 407). That space of the imaginary has three aspects: “Occularity, profundity, and ubiquity of image” (p. 409). With occularity, all sensation and perceptual outline would be transformed into visual themes: “Occularity illuminates all sensorial excitations and the concepts. . . . The contemplation of the world is the transformation of the object. Occularity is, so, the elementary quality of the *a priori* form of imagination” (Durand, 2001, p. 409).

Profundity has more of a psychic than a geometric aspect for Durand (2001). The tridimensionality of space is something imaginary for Durand, because when time is no longer attached to the space, distance would be transformed in the “simultaneity of dimensions” (p. 410). Time transforms profundity in distance. The image, the symbol, without time, is always the center, and space, homogeneous.

From Durand (2001),

The objective study of imagination, paradoxically, inverts the apologetic of the object and its falsely optimistic philosophic conclusions. Far from being the *a priori* form of material otherness, space is the *a priori* form of spiritual creativity and of the dominance of the spirit over the world. (p. 433)

Time and objectivity would transform our needs into a “laborious despair”

(Durand, 2001, p. 433), and the imaginary space would reconstitute the

horizon and hope of the Being on its perennial continuity. In fact, the imaginary appears as the supreme resource of consciousness, as the living heart of the soul, which diastoles and systoles constitute the authenticity of the *cogito*. While the ‘I think’ subtracts the euphemism of the insignificance of epiphenomena and of the despair of annihilation, the study of imagination gives it back. Any alienating and mortal objectivity can prevail against that euphemic power of imagination. (p. 433)

There would be a spiritual (or imaginary, in Durand’s terms) space where the Being would find resistance and endurance against the objectively external world, the world that is essentially linked to time and, so, to distance. In the Barquinha, this space is revealed during the ceremonies, in the *mirações*. The spiritual space becomes the source of the intention to see materialized, at the more at-hand levels of life (social, cultural, mental, emotional, and physical) the spiritual space itself. The achievement of that materialization cannot be accomplished without the use of elements provided by culture. Yet, the force moving the materialization would not be cultural. Disposition, intent, and meaning emanate from the spiritual space, and cannot be actualized without their translation through cultural elements. The spiritual space promotes the encounter of those elements. An attempt to find the proper elements for materializing those evanescent and subtle—although extremely strong and effective—forces of the spiritual space is discovered in the basis of the inclusion and exclusion of cultural elements in life. All individuals would be included and would have the source of their life forces at the spiritual space.

For Merleau-Ponty (1962), space is as a “relationative” field. According to him, space “is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means

whereby the position of things becomes possible” (p. 284). Space, thus, is the “universal power enabling [things] to be connected” (p. 284). For him, space connects things; this idea goes against the commonsense idea that space separate things. Merlau-Ponty (1962) stated that when someone knows the space between two things this person is uniting those things, no matter how distant they appear to be.

According to Merlau-Ponty (1962) the body is not a “thing in a objective space,” but a “system of possible actions, a virtual body with its phenomenal ‘place’ defined by its task and situation. My body is wherever there is something to be done” (p. 291). The body appears in space as a conscious action into that space, as the core of a group of relations among elements.

People having a *miração* are present in it with their bodies, inside the vision, not the physical body, but a body, anyway. During the *miração*, a conscious action is taking place, and the body of that person is there in the spiritual space.

Maturana (2002), for example, said that humans become humans not in the interior of their physical bodies, but through a relational dynamic, within which Maturana says that humans have psychic and spiritual experiences, both of these being relational phenomena happening within the “psychic space” (p. 107) in which humans live. According to him, all the relationships and interactions of an organism happen through a domain composed by psychic, mental, and spiritual dimensions.

Culture, for Maturana (2002), is essential for modulating all those dimensions principally because it is within culture that humans beings learn to talk, to have conversations. Language modulates and gives direction to what humans are. However, Maturana did not propose a rigid relational system in which culture would be the final

matrix that determines the nature of individuals. Like Durand (2001) above, for Maturana, “as human beings we are what we are saying [having conversations], but through reflection we can change our conversations and our being. This is our freedom, and our freedom belongs to our spiritual and psychic being” (p. 121).

Coming closer to the Barquinha’s reality, Dias Júnior (1992), working with the Santo Daime, described the *Astral* as the final aim to be achieved by the participants in their ceremonies. According to him, “The ‘astral’ is a ‘locus,’ a ‘domus’ supernatural—the Divine Realm—that can be visited during each *miração*, according to the deservedness of each devotee” (p. 120). The union of the brotherhood is “rooted in the spatial dimension of the sacred symbolized by the astral” (p. 121). Dias Júnior (1992) continued by saying that the astral gives shape to the habits that structure the community.

The intention in this section of the work is to bring forth the elements filling the Center’s spiritual space. As said above, yes, those elements do have a cultural shape and there is no way of having it otherwise. Any attempt to describe those forces emanating from the spiritual space is forced into the cultural bias of the describer (and both participants and researchers are included here). Through that description, I will try to clarify the movements of the forces in the spiritual space itself.

Again, it is important to note that this is not an emic concept, although it could be said that this is an emic idea. I intend to build in this Chapter the etic concept of spiritual space, giving form for an idea that pervades everything done at the Center (and I should say outside the Center too, by its members).

Forces in the Spiritual Space

When the physician prescribes a medicine, he is working through the material side of things. He will not say “take this medicine with faith that you will be healed.” He does not address the spirituality of that person. We spiritual entities, when we prescribe an herbal bath, for example, there is faith involved, there is love. There are all those good feelings the Father left for us, so we can give our hand for someone in need.

All of you, all of us are a universe. We believe in the things we have in our hearts. Why there are so many religions on Earth? Each person follows what his heart believes, and he or she becomes a globe where all the things that person does goes around, and for that person there is only this world. God, He penetrates into the heart of those seeking him.

Frequently people think that a spiritual guide is residing in the glories, in wonderland, that she is living in splendor, but reality is not like that. We [spiritual guides] have a duty to accomplish, we have battles to fight. We are all accomplishing a mission our Father told us to do. I am Vó Maria da Calunga Pequena, ordained by God, and for me, one day, to be able to be in His graces, I have to accomplish my mission, I need to know how to perform charity, I have to be a good daughter, a good sister. And this is the same with all other spiritual entities, like Príncipe Dom Simeão—he is accomplishing his mission—like Frei Daniel, and like many others. It is like you here on Earth, you have all your tasks here to do, so do we. We need to be very humble for the power of God penetrates our hearts.

God’s things are like that: no one can find a defect. He made everything with perfection, he created the sky, the earth, the sea, everything, one in need of the other, like the plant needs water, needs earth. Like the waves in the sea, which needs the earth, needs the sun, needs even the power of gravity for having all that beauty. Everything is a like a sacred allegiance, and we need to be very little to be able to absorb all the good things of God, and to be able to teach our brothers and sisters. Frei Daniel, he is a Franciscan missionary accomplishing that mission, and that mission God gave to his hands, and it was not only for him, it was for all those who want it, who need it. It is like God when he felt it was necessary to create more things and so he created us.

Our mission is a whole truth, of a beginning, middle, and an end. It represents our Father, because everything we look for we find here. It is like the mystery of the Salmo that opens the Culto Santo; there we have our allegiance with the Creator of all beings, that allegiance was formed here on Earth. Jesus Christ, he needed to be a child, he needed to be all we are for having the truth clarified. He, with his power, could have come not through Mary; he could simply come down on Earth, being among us, but, He was humble, and he came through our holy mother, Mary. He was a child for becoming in need of a mother, of a father, of someone for nursing Him, for bathing Him, and accomplishing all the functions of a father

and a mother. He grew up and accomplished His mission, affirming that allegiance for resolving all the doubts. This is how our mission is. Frei Daniel received it and he needed all the community, because union makes us stronger, and strength is God. That's why all of us need to be united. I cannot work only on my path, without worrying about other people, because when I arrive at God's feet He will send me back to check if my brothers and sisters are in need of help. So, this is the truth, this is the mission. We are working on our way, but God's love does not request conditions, we have to love our fellows with all his defects and errors, because He loves us with all our defects and errors. If we love each other, we are strengthening this sacred allegiance, this mystery of love. (Vó Maria da Calunga)

This quotation is from one of the last interviews that I made during the fieldwork at the Center, with Vó Maria da Calunga, the spiritual guide of Neide, Madrinha's youngest daughter. It is as well one of the most beautiful. I have a very special feeling related to this spiritual guide. When I first approached the Center, in 1999, I asked Madrinha Francisca to witness the ceremony of *Prestação de Contas* (literally: rendering report; this is the main healing ceremony of the Barquinha; see Chapter 7) inside of the Congá, which resulted on two articles of mine (Mercante, 2000b, 2002). During the ceremony, I was in a crowded room where a composition of tobacco-smoke, burning candles, incense, and no lights created a very special environment.

In the middle of this ceremony, I noticed Vó Maria da Calunga sitting alone, smoking her pipe, with a stool in front of her. As I came closer, asked for her blessings, and asked to sit, to which she consented. Then I started asking things about the Barquinha, about the ceremony, about healing in general. When she began to answer, she spoke for half an hour. I did not record that "interview" and cannot recall all the words, but I do remember the feelings I had: she went deep into my soul, making me remember who I am, where I am, and, above all, my connection with God, with that God everyone has inside. I remember the tears coming down my face, and a deep, very deep peace

invading me. After all her speech she became quite for some time (seconds? minutes? In my state it appeared as hours to me . . .), peacefully smoking her pipe. Then she looked at me and said, “Now you can ask whatever you want.” Though I tried as hard as I could, all my questions were gone. Finally, I remembered something that I would like to ask: “Vó, deep inside me I am missing something, something that I do not know what it is.” She chewed her pipe, exhaled the smoke, laughed, and said, “You’re missing God, my son!”²³

The narrative quoted above is very pertinent to this work. Many of the main elements of the spiritual space of the Center appear there. The whole system is based upon faith and love, constituting the background for charity, the guideline for the development of the Barquinha as a religious movement. Above all though, love, faith, and charity are not human creations: they are gifts from God to human beings. Thus, it is only by the grace of God, that the spiritual guides can perform their job.

At the same time, God comes to live inside every individual. There is an apparent paradox here. God would be not there originally: “He penetrates into the heart of those seeking him.” As people “believe in what they have inside their hearts,” so, the first contacts with God would not come from faith. Faith would have to be developed. The point here is that God must be found by the seeker. After this, God becomes the center of everything done by that person. Here enters the process of self-development and self-knowledge through drinking Daime: by knowing oneself, the seeker would be able to develop, and in that development the seeker would come closer and closer to God and to all the feelings He gave to humans: love, faith, and charity. So, the faith, in the Center’s system, is not a blind one: faith must be born into the heart, faith comes after *testificações*

23 Literally, in Portuguese: “Vó, eu tenho dentro uma saudade grande, uma saudade que eu não sei de que que é,” which she answered, “É saudade de Deus meu filho!”

(literally: “testimonies”), which means that the seekers need to see what they are looking for, see in *mirações*, see from happenings in their lives.

Testificação is a very commonly used word at the Center. People must have proofs of their intuitions, of their *mirações*. I heard several times the Madrinha or a spiritual guide, while preaching, say that people should not believe in their words, but that people should drink Daime and see by themselves what they—Madrinha or the guides—were saying.

Another element facilitating God to inhabit the heart of the seeker is humility, which also is at the core of self-knowledge and self-development. From self-knowledge, one is able to perceive the good and bad things one has done in life. Seekers would be able to recognize all of the elements that they would need to change within themselves to be able to come closer to God—to make God stronger within their hearts. The spiritual guides also are at the same seeking-movement as the incarnated humans: they have their tasks and missions to accomplish. They have to work hard, through charity, within themselves, to develop the power of God in their hearts.

God is perfection, and both incarnated and nonincarnated humans—most of the spiritual guides are human beings living in the spiritual world—are trying to achieve that perfection. God created not only the world but the whole universe, and this universe is in deep interdependence. Sky, sea, and earth, all depend upon the other to exist. Human beings are similarly in relation to all other human beings. By being “a good daughter,” both spiritual entities and incarnated humans come closer to God, and by being a “good sister” they come closer to their fellows. This is the foundation of the community.

The image of Saint Francis of Assisi is a perfect match for the Barquinha, as it embodies all its central elements: love, faith, charity, humbleness, and community. Thus being, Daniel could not hold any other title than the one of Frei, as a Franciscan friar working for the good of human beings, accomplishing a mission given by God Himself, the God Daniel living had inside his heart, a residence that was developed by drinking Daime, through self-knowledge and self-development.

However, being inside the heart, and hidden from profane eyes, God is a mystery. Humans need to work to find Him. God renewed his allegiance with humanity in the Barquinha. The Center is a place for self-development and deepening self-knowledge, but it is above all, a place for actually applying the elements discovered through this process. Self-knowledge becomes practice in the Barquinha, and it is this practice, which puts God in evidence to the eyes (both spiritual and physical), of the seekers.

Vó Maria da Calunga spoke of her incarnated life, of her practice and mission.

I came to the earthly plane to accomplish a mission determined by God. Like all of you who have sinned, failed, and have defects, I did commit mine also. By the grace of God my mission did not finish when I left that life to another. The hand of God guided me to this house, so I could comprehend better His teachings, so I could become a warrior, so I could become a daughter conscious of His truth. I arrived at this house to accomplish a mission, and that mission was to help the *Irmã de Caridade* [literally: sister of charity: the Madrinha], that she would have another soldier ready. I arrived with God in my heart, but today I can say that I have all of you into my heart. So, my son, when we have some difficulties in our life we understand that we are very little, that we need a staff to support us, for us to be able to bear thirst, hunger, and all those difficulties. God gave me a staff to help me, and for me to be able to prove Him my love for Him. When I came to this house I came naked, for him to cover and protect me with his sacred mantle, with the crown of the Virgin Mother, for him to nourish me, for me to be not an empty sack, without sustenance. He gave this sustenance and I was able to prove to Him my dedication, my loyalty, my love. Ordained by Him, a messenger of light came to me, to sweep out the bad things, and I could finally receive the blessed rosary of Holy Mary in my hands. Like all the blind, all the deaf, and all the dumb have curiosity, I had curiosity to discover what that present was. I searched in the blessed rosary of the Virgin Mother the force, the light, all I

needed to do my deeds. The great revelation is in the salutation of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, this is the mystery of Jesus coming to Earth, until he ascended to the glory of the sky, and those are the three mysteries [of the Rosary], representing Jesus life, His mission from Earth to His sacred kingdom, His home, the celestial paradise. Many times people want to know how the life of a Preto-velho was while they resided in the material plane, where I live, what is my nation, this or that. But those things are not important to me. They were, but they are not now. I am not attached to those things any longer; I am attached to God and to His good things. What makes me return to darkness, I do not want for me.

Her life before the mission is something to be forgotten. After the baptism and the conversion to Christianity, all other non-Christian elements are relegated to a past transformed into light by Jesus' mercy. Prayers—Catholic prayers—are the central elements of that conversion, and these same prayers are essential to the Barquinha's ritual, constituting its main source of healing force. At the same time, these prayers acquire an esoteric aspect: they are also the source of force and light, enlightening the shadows of life.

There is a serious risk of reification of Christianity here. Jesus Christ occupies the core of the Center's cosmology. However, their cosmos is larger than the one presented by Christianity, a result of adoption of practices and symbols from other cultural matrixes. More than a mere transposition of those non-Christian practices into a Christian universe, which would mean a transformation of those practices, the Center welcomes Jesus into the non-Christian universe, merging both, enfolding a Christian ethic into a previously pagan universe. Old practices are kept, but now they are guided by love, by charity, by humbleness; they are no longer supposed by selfish motives.

As I clarified in a previous work (see Mercante, 2002), charity is the redemption of the ego, of egoistic motives. Practitioners of charity no longer try to transform the world following their own patterns but allow God's power to guide their actions: those

people (here including the spiritual guides) surrender to a higher power and start working for/in the name of that power.

Those forces—surrendering to a higher power, love, humbleness, charity, and self-knowledge—are arranged in a way that its resulting practices give the Center its unique character. A Christian love permeates all these forces and practices throughout. The uniqueness of the arrangement of these forces in the spiritual world—guided by Christian love—is what helps to manifest the Center’s spiritual space, which, perceived through the lens of culture, gives birth both practices and the physical space.

The Spiritual Realm Itself

I will try now to describe the way in which the spiritual realm—or space—is perceived by the Center’s members. Humans perceive the spiritual realm through an incarnated human perspective: we are incarnated beings. For perceiving the spiritual space people need to enter that space, a space separated—at least initially—from the physical space.

According to José, the spiritual realm is

contacting God Himself. We work through our prayers, our romarias, to achieve a communion with God: we are working now for our life after death. The real spiritual work happens when you get your spirit free from matter. This is the moment when I navigate and find the spiritual world, its beings and entities, the spiritual battles, everything coming from God.

As such, the spiritual work is mainly ascendant. The matter—the body—belongs to the Earth, it is physical, it cannot go to the spiritual realm. The spirit, however, belongs to that place: when purified from its earthy elements through spiritual work, it naturally

ascends. It is “drawn up *by* the up” (Casey, 1991, p. 296; emphasis added), by the upness of the spiritual place.

Maria offered a good perspective concerning this movement of the spirit.

According to her, the spiritual realm is

a higher plane. We have the earthy plane, this one we are now, but to arrive at the spiritual realm we have to follow some stages. It is another life, but it is higher. The spirit is more elevated. The spirit is not the same thing as the soul, it is the essence of God, and the soul has its karmas, its own debts. When the person is in the spirit he or she has no debts. The soul still has debts, we know that because there is a place only for the souls, we have the indoctrination of the souls, but we also have the benevolent souls. Those souls are at a higher plane; they are almost at the spiritual level.

The more people purify their souls, the higher the souls will go through the spiritual space. Debts hold the person close to the Earth: the person would not be easily pulled by the spiritual realm to its more elevated regions. This is the mission of the Barquinha: to help such souls to climb the spiritual reality as high as possible. Those souls, during the service of *Doutrinação de Almas* (literally, “indoctrination of souls”—see Chapter 7), are brought to the Center, through the mediums, by the spiritual missionaries (the Missionários), to receive the doctrine. By merely arriving at the Center’s spiritual space those souls are rescued from the dark corners of the spiritual realm, they are influenced by the Center’s space, and so, they are saved.

For example, Beth (33, Madrinha’s granddaughter and nurse) told me that the spiritual realm is also a higher plane. However, she introduces another element with her speech. She says, “If a person is in a work, within the Daime, I believe that this person is in the spiritual [realm].” The spiritual work is made within the Daime. As the Daime is drunk, it “fulfills” (this a very normal expression among the Center’s members: “when the Daime fulfilled me”), and it pushes the spirit upward. Although physical—a liquid—

the Daime is the spiritual vehicle par excellence. It goes inside the physical body giving force to the spirit by purifying the material body. The Daime acts at many levels: by cleaning the physical body through vomiting and the soul by catharsis (see Peláez, 1994), it liberates the spirit more and more, propitiating it to engage in more elevated works, which will also purify that spirit. The Daime works, then, from the inside out, both physically (when purifying, for example, through vomiting) and spiritually (when it opens the inner world of a person, to be explored, and through this the person penetrates into the spiritual world, something outside that person, in a spiritual dimension). The Daime is the foundation of the Center's spiritual space.

Lisa expressed the same basic idea.

The spiritual realm is everything beyond matter. I understand that we have a hierarchy in the spiritual plane: God, Jesus, all the saints, the spiritual healers, the spiritual entities, as well as disincarnated people. They are all at different levels in the spiritual world. When we are working within the Daime, when you are elevated and see that you are not in the church, that you are in a different place, I understand that this is the moment that I am on a spiritual plane, that my spirit went there.

However, the idea that the Earth is included in the spiritual space is present within the Center's cosmology also. The Earth would simply be at lower—although not the lowest—level. From Alcimar, Madrinha's son,

We are in a spiritual plane, in reality, the Earth is a spiritual plane, a preparatory plane, where we find the spirits occupying a lower grade. Here we can purify ourselves, but we can too arrive at the most horrible possible place. God made the things like that for the spirit to be able to recognize everything He created. The Earth is a spiritual plane of a lesser degree of light. There is the astral, the superior astral, that's where the beings of light are, whose have no debts with the Creator, because they never incarnated in matter, they are there, adoring His work, and helping the people in need here on Earth and in other invisible planes. When we leave the Earth, if we are not totally prepared, we can be taken up to a certain level to a preparatory field. What is Aruanda? Aruanda²⁴ is a preparatory field

²⁴ Aruanda is a mythic place in the African-Brazilian religions where high spiritual beings live. The term is probably a verbal mutation of Luanda, Angola's capital.

where the beings, who are being prepared to be called to a superior level are. That's why they have to come to the physical level through the people here to work, to do charity, for benefiting humanity. This will help them in their preparation. They need not to incarnate because they are at a very elevated degree of light. When the person incarnates here on Earth they can both be elevated or fall down. But God never put a spirit in risk of falling.

The more light a spirit has, the less it needs to incarnate. The Earth is a place where people, through their deeds, can acquire more light—or lose it, falling. Charity is a force helping in the acquisition of light.

Light

*“Why do people speak of Mind in terms of Light?
Is it because they've seen the sunshine and found it so beautiful
that it seems only natural to identify the Buddha Nature
with the clearest of all possible Clear Lights?
Or do they find the sunshine beautiful because,
consciously or unconsciously, they've been having revelations of Mind
in the form of Light ever since they were born?
I was the first to answer,” said Susila, smiling to herself.
“And I'd just been reading something by some American behaviorist,
I did not stop to think—I just gave you the ‘scientific point of view.’
People equate Mind (whatever that may be) with hallucinations
of light, because they've looked at a lot of sunsets and found them very impressive.
But Robert and Dugald would have none of it.
The Clear Light, they insisted, comes first.
You go mad about sunsets because sunsets remind you of what's always been going on,
whether you knew it or not, inside your skull and outside space and time.
(Huxley, 1962, p. 300)*

Light has many meanings in the Center's cosmology. The Daime is referred to as the *Santa Luz*, the holy light. Light is also God, it comes from God. Light is the matter filling the spiritual space. As Dom Simeão said (on November 23, 2001), light, like God, “is present everywhere, and we move away from Him [and from light] with our bad thoughts, with evilness in our hearts.” People may not be able to see the light—due to

their spiritual development, their bad deeds and thoughts—but that does not mean that light is not present.

We can find the plurality of the idea of light at the Culto Santo, one of the most important Salmos in the Barquinha. It is the Salmo that opens the ceremonies: *São João preparou a Doutrina, e tudo testificou na luz. . . . Estou firme na verdade que representa essa luz* (“Saint John [the Baptist] prepared the doctrine, and he testified everything in the light . . . I am firm in the truth representing that light”).

So, the doctrine was prepared by John—as too, John prepared Jesus’ path—established by Jesus, and is now developed in the Barquinha, without breaking its continuity, not only in time, but of the doctrine itself, because it is established upon Light and Truth. The Daime, as the light, is a Divine instrument for keeping the doctrine on Earth.

The root of this plurality resides in the fact that the Daime is also considered as Jesus’ blood—some also say that Daime, and not wine, was served at the Holy Supper. When the doctrine was prepared and testified by John in the light, this also can mean that John did that through drinking Daime. The Light represents the truth, so, the Daime also represents the truth.

In the Salmo Santo Amor (Holy Love), it is said that: *Essa luz vem da verdade, ela é a luz do amor. A verdade, na verdade, é Jesus Deus salvador* (“That light comes from the truth, it is the light of love. The truth, in truth, is Jesus God the savior”). Here we have that light is love, a love coming from truth, which comes from Jesus. Then, again permuting light with Daime, we have that the Daime is love emanating from Jesus, the truth on Earth. The Príncipe das Águas Claras [literally: Prince of the Clear Waters], a

spiritual guide working at the Center, said in a speech on June 23, 2002, that “that light is the refuge and the fortress for all those who want to follow the doctrine of Jesus Christ the savior.” Here “light” is the Daime, something all the Christians should have so as to follow Jesus’ doctrine.

In a speech made on October 27, 1999, Rei Germano—a Missionário, who is the main spiritual guide of João Batista, Madrinha’s son, said:

We need to be united, interlaced in a powerful link representing the sacred light of our Savior Father. Each one of my sons and daughters represents a spark of light from the supreme power of the Father of creation. That spark that my brothers and sisters represent, it must shine, shine always and forever. So, my dear brothers and sisters, when you reach that sublime brightness, you will reach the light of forgiveness, because our Father is kind, He is loving.

The light that shines during the *miração* through the power conferred by drinking Daime also shines within each member of the Center. God, however, does not grant this illumination permanently without any effort of the individual; it needs to be worked out, and the spark, the inner spark everyone has, needs to be polished. God is waiting for each of the members to reach Him, and it is done not only by drinking Daime, but also in the prayers and the work of self-knowledge and self-development. When people achieve the stage of inner brightness, they achieve and receive the divine forgiveness for all of their sins. Those sins are precisely what had before taken the brightness way from the inner divine spark.

The process of achieving light—or of polishing the inner spark—is gradual. This being the case another virtue becomes of central importance: perseverance. Many are the speeches and Salmos speaking of the perseverance, which every person needs to keep walking on the path. Perseverance is necessary to increase one’s capacity to both take in and to bear increasing light. It is impossible to look directly into the light—or to be

completely immersed in that light—without being destroyed. For example, I asked Vó Maria da Calunga what light was.

My son, light is, for me, God. It is an all-encompassing truth which He created. It is a constant light, incessant. So, to comprehend what light is we need to know what darkness is. Light is like love, is like the sky we look at and we do not know why it is like that, and like many other things that we see and we cannot hold. For me everything is resumed in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is light for me, it is light because I found not single dark spot. So, light came to illuminate darkness, illuminate the sinners. The sun represents that light, and I will tell you why. Before the person arrives at the sun he is burnt away, it is too much light. Only God knows why it is like that. It is like love, that it is a feeling that we do not know how to describe, we can say one thing or another, we can feel, but you cannot touch.

Vó Maria da Calunga synthesized the way light is understood at the Center.

Alcimar, for example, said, “Light is everything illuminating a dark space. The light of the Daime illuminates within our consciousness our spiritual mentality.” From the above passage, we see that darkness is related to sins, to wrongdoings we commit during our life. The light of God coming through Daime, or the light of the Daime itself, as Alcimar said, “illuminates our consciousness for our spiritual life.” Alcimar continued, “Because of that we see a light, and through that light we hear some voices, we see spiritual beings, we receive some intuitions, it is a spiritual clarification within us.” When the person is integrated into that larger context, the spiritual life, that person starts to interact with spiritual beings who, little by little, teach and clarify how to have a better inner life. The previous style of inner life is, swept away, little by little burnt away: it is forgiven.

This process, as mentioned above, is gradual and goes as far as the spiritual development of the seeker can take it. Alcimar said that “the light of Daime becomes not manifest equally for everybody. It depends upon the degree of evolution. That’s why each person has a different spiritual work.” The closer to the sun, the more we see.

Lisa (a member of the Center—I will return to Lisa again in Chapter 9) expressed basically the same ideas. When asked what light was for her, she said that it was “the holy light. I understand it as clarity, cleanness, and perfection, something precisely clear, without contestation. That’s why we say: ‘the holy light, the light of truth,’ because it is so clear, so transparent, it can only be light.”

Maria (another member, see Chapter 9) agreed when she said that light was “understanding, love, harmony. Light is all the divine virtue of God. Darkness is the other side; it is like good and evil. In fact, darkness exists to be enlightened by light, and light exists to illuminate darkness.” Perfection is God, so, God is pure light. We are imperfect beings who, by our own blindness, create darkness. More than duality, Maria expresses the basic idea of self-knowledge and self-development by saying that light is for illuminating darkness. If we consider her speech along with Alcimar’s, we can perceive that darkness is the process of not being able to see or understand light in our own consciousness.

I had the opportunity to interview some non-Brazilians during the fieldwork. One of them was Rudolf (see Chapter 9), a Canadian visiting the Céu do Mapiá village. He had felt that he had to come to Rio Branco. The people in Mapiá indicated the Center as a good place for drinking Daime while in the city. He was also seeking treatment for health problems. It is valuable here to introduce his thoughts as a counterpoint. He said that light was “goodness, light is God. And when you have light, you have darkness, you cannot have light without darkness, you cannot have darkness without light. Light is what we are all seeking. Light is to me spiritual intelligence manifest in the world.” He holds essentially the same ideas as the native-Amazonians from the Center. Though there is one

which thing he introduced that was not—explicitly—in the other descriptions; that light is the “spiritual intelligence manifest in the world.”

However, we will find that same idea in some Salmos. In the Salmo *Tão Brilhante no Céu* (So Bright in the Sky), it appears:

So bright in the sky, I saw a little star, firm and in a sacred form, it is that little church. I saw it so perfect and illuminated, the lights are the prayers of all brotherhood. . . . I saw myself in a circle on the moon with all my brothers, adoring God Jesus. . . . I know I am on the Earth, I know I am in the sky, imprinted in God’s heart, by the faith of love, of the holy pilgrimages, and who imprinted us there was the Virgin Mary. In a moment, the little star, in a movement of light, became heavens, and we were all with Jesus. . . . Whoever makes good deeds and holy charity will be always with God, for all eternity. So we must unite as humble brothers, because God will give us light and salvation.

The duality here is gone. The star, a point of light in the sky, is also the church on the Earth. The star/church becomes heavens, mainly by the work of the community through prayers and other spiritual work, but also by the grace of the Virgin Mary. Earth and heavens are immersed in God’s heart, and divinity lives with the normal people at the Center: Jesus resides also in God’s heart. From spiritual work, people generate light. In other words, people achieve God’s light.

God used light to illuminate the world. In the Salmo *O Sol Brilhante* (the bright sun) it is said that “the solar light illuminates the earth and the sea, and its eternal brightness illuminates the astral world. And everything is the work of our celestial Father.” The same light that illuminates the physical world illuminates the spiritual world. We also find in the *O Poder Eterno* (the eternal power) Salmo that “He created the sky, the earth, and the sea with light and perfection.” God used light to create the world, but he also created the physical world with its own light. This Salmo opens another direction of implication as well. In the *Barquinha*, the spiritual world too is divided into

realms or “mysteries”: sky, earth, and sea. As such, the above cited “sky, earth, and sea” can be both physical and spiritual.

The Mysteries

*Science tells us that real life started in the sea;
the dreaming life begun within a kind of celestial ocean*
(Bachelard, 2001, p. 203)

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
And the earth was without form, and void;
And darkness was upon the face of the deep.
And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
And God said, Let there be light:
And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good:
And God divided the light from the darkness.
And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.
And the evening and the morning were the first day.
And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters,
And let it divide the waters from the waters.
And God made the firmament,
And divided the waters which were under the firmament from the
Waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.
And God called the firmament Heaven.
And the evening and the morning were the second day.
And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be
Gathered together under one place,
And let the dry land appear: and it was so.
And God called the dry land Earth;
And the gathering together of the waters called he Seas:
And God saw that it was good.
(Gen., 1:1-10)*

There are various levels of existence in the spiritual world of the Center: the earth, the sky, and the sea²⁵. These are called *Mistérios*, the “mysteries.” The word *mistério* is present in many different forms at the Center, and essentially reveals the Center’s esoteric character (Mercante, 2002). The mystery of these levels is as well manifest because every

²⁵ The Catimbó also divides the spiritual world in three different spaces: the *águas* (waters), the *matas* (woods), and the *astral* (Assunção, 1999).

participant in the ceremonies has their own revelations about those realms and the beings living there, according to their own spiritual development.

There is no teacher in the Barquinha other than Daime itself. As the light enlightening every consciousness, as the main element to contact God, as the main tool for self-knowledge and self-development, and, above all, as the light of God itself, the Daime cannot be completely explained. It can be felt but not fully explained. It can be understood, internally as an inner reality, an inner reality that spreads throughout the physical world. This idea belongs to the universe of the Ayahuasca itself. As we can see in the UDV, the Oaska (local denomination of Ayahuasca) was called by Mestre Gabriel as the *força estranha*, (strange force or power; see Brissac, 1999). The Ayahuasca is strange because it cannot be completely grasped.

The spiritual space, due to this mystery, is open for explorers, and each one brings back a piece of the truth behind the spiritual facts. The use of the word *mystery* to describe the spiritual realms puts in evidence the limited knowledge that humanity has of these realms. Humanity has been exploring them quite possibly since the first conscious human walked on Earth or maybe even before we became humans (see Oubré, 1997). Different people have made many descriptions of the spiritual space all over the world, but the understanding of the “rules” of operation of the spiritual world is not completely clear. It is, for sure, a source of knowledge, of wonder, and of impulses for creation and in evolution of the world (evolution here meaning simply change). As is the case with the universe and consciousness themselves, the spiritual world is a place not completely understood by humans. On the other hand, mysteries may denote, as in the case of light,

something that can be felt but cannot be put in words and explained. The spiritual world remains an inner reality.

Pai José de Angola, a spiritual guide working with Itah, a member with more than 15 years of experience in the Barquinha (he is a former fardado at the Casa de Oração who decided to work with Madrinha Francisca), described what the mysteries are.

The mysteries are three: Sky, Earth, and Sea, or, alternately, the Astral, the Forest, and the Sea. Within the Sea we have all the waters, because all the rivers and springs go to the sea. The Sea is a major reference because there are spiritual entities who work on the Earth as well as in the Sea, others in the Sea, Sky, and Earth, but all the spiritual beings at this house [The Center] work in the Sea. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, along with our Virgin Mother command the Astral, the entire Astral kingdom. The Queen of the Forest is responsible for the Earth, with all the holy entities forming her retinue, along with all the spirits guarding the forests, the plains, the mountains, the waterfalls, the quarries,²⁶ all the kingdoms pertaining to Earth. There are beings living in the Sea, both over the sea and at its depths, the sea has its inhabitants too. All those are sacred kingdoms our Father created, and He ordered them to be inhabited. There are entities of the winds and of the fire. There are inferior entities who work only in one mystery. On the Earth we have the Exús, and more pagan spirits, spirits that have no knowledge, that cannot cross the waters, who have no permission to go deeper, sometimes not even to enter the woods. And as they do not have permission to go into the Forest, they cannot go to the Astral. In general, those beings are enchanted on the Earth, they belong to Earth, they are animals existing on Earth. In the Astral the entities are enchanted in winged beings, birds, a dove, but also eagles, falcons, and many other birds. In the Sea they are enchanted as mermaids, as fish, and bigger snakes.²⁷ Every kingdom is divided following the will of our Divine Father, and the beings are created to inhabit a certain mystery for coordinating from that place the harmony between Sky, Earth, and Sea. However, all of them are called to evolution, to achieve the Astral. The Astral (Sky) is the highest mystery, the biggest one, from where come all the force, all the light. The sun is at the Astral, as are as well the moon and all the constellations, they all come from the Astral. The major sacred mystery of light is the Astral, the Sky, where all the stars are.

Spiritual beings working under God's orders are responsible not only for maintaining the kingdoms they are related to, but also for defending it. The Virgin Mary reigns at the Astral. To rule over the other two kingdoms, She assumes the form and the

²⁶ More related to rocky places than to places where stones are dug.

²⁷ Boas, in general: particularly the sucuri (*Boa*) and the jibóia (*Boa constrictor*).

name of the Queen of the Forest and Queen of the Sea. Interesting here is the fact that those spiritual beings are responsible not only for the spiritual realms but also for the physical realms. Physical and spiritual realities are intermingled. It is important to note that the idea that spiritual beings' zeal for physical places is present in many cultures (see Arhem, 1990; Prandi, 2001b; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1978; Viveiros de Castro, 1996). I inquired of Alcimar why the kingdoms were divided into Sky, Earth, and Sea.

We have the material counterpart, that we see everyday. We have also the spiritual counterpart. When God decided to populate a realm He understood that all the beings compromised with that realm would need to pass through a physical life. God needed to divide the invisible realm. So, He divided it into the Sea, the Sky, and the Earth. The Sky means elevation. Earth and Sea are fields of preparation. There are, in those spiritual realms, the good beings, performing God's work, and there are beings going against God's creation. When a being is working in a certain spiritual plane, performing God's work, he needs to protect himself from those negative forces. For this, they assume animal forms that the negative powers are afraid to come close to, because they mean total destruction for them. The wolf is very respected, the negative beings are very afraid of wolves, and so it is with eagles and fishes. The spirits use those forms as a protection against the negative current.

God works through the spiritual beings to act over the physical plane. When immersed in certain spiritual or physical levels, these higher beings are subject to attacks of evil beings living at that level. As such, these higher beings need to protect themselves to complete their task. For this they assume different shapes and forms.

Maria gave a more detailed explanation.

The Sky is the Astral. The Sky is related to everything Astral, to the saints, to the angels, all divine beings, enlightened beings. The Sea has many Encantos. The beings of the Sky do not work in the same way as the beings of Sea do. They have different missions, and the same happens with the beings of the Earth. I had some works when the spiritual entities came down from the Sky, going straight to the Earth, and from the Earth they went to the Sea; from the Sea, back to Sky. They come from the Astral to accomplish a task on Earth, and after the do it, they go to the Sea for taking away the [bad] things they got on the Earth.

The Sky is where the more spiritually powerful beings are. They come to Earth to help the people here, for charity. That mission involves working with the nonharmonic energies of those in need: in performing healing, taking away bad and disturbing spirits, and so on. As a result, those Sky-beings would end with some bad energy with them, energies that need to be dispatched in the Sea, the depository of all bad energies, due to its strong transformative power. It is for this, as Pai José said above, that all entities work at the Sea, in one way or another.

It becomes clear here why this religious movement has the name of Barquinha. The “little boat” assumes for the community the connotation of a mystical boat, linking Earth, Sea, and Sky. The boat departs from a dock, linked to the land, and navigates on the water but is not immersed in it. The boat itself is *in* the air, connected to the sky, floating *on* the waters, departing and returning *to* the land. The Barquinha helps to interconnect the different mysteries. Sena Araújo (1999) indicated that the members of the Casa de Oração perceive the Barquinha as the mission Frei Daniel left behind him, which the highest objective is to “travel throughout the three mysteries” (p. 79). Sena Araújo (1999) finally put the Daime and the Sea, the Sacred Sea, as synonymous.

Maria continued:

I received a message, nobody had told me a thing. I had received it already, and I showed it to Madrinha. It is talking about Frei Daniel. The message says that the mission [the Barquinha] was born much time ago, a very humble brother [Frei Daniel] received it from the hands of our Father. That humble person had in his heart true love. He asked and was granted, by the Father of Creation, to work along with holy beings and to start a mission. The beings were coming from the Sky, the Earth, and from the Sea. The doors of the mysteries were opened for all the brothers and sisters being able to work [spiritually]. Madrinha Francisca told that this was true, that he [Frei Daniel] had asked our Father permission to have spiritual beings working in the Barquinha. Some of those beings had already introduced themselves to him. Those are the beings within the light of Daime, and we have the opportunity to perceive, to feel them, these beings coming from the

Sky, the Sea, from the Earth, bringing the healing force, bringing solutions and evolution.

The doors of the Mysteries were open by God, after a request of Frei Daniel, creating the situation, which allows the people in the Barquinha to work spiritually. Those beings abiding in the Mysteries come “within the light of Daime.” It is important here to note through that these beings only come through the Daime because Daniel asked for it. In assuming a Christian ethic, the Ayahuasca path became open for all those who wish for it. Both Daniel and Mestre Irineu (the founder of Santo Daime) denied the acquisition of personal power. They were more concerned with the development of humanity, and so, they decided to develop a spiritual path open for all.

Another interesting aspect of the spiritual beings inhabiting the mysteries is their ability to move throughout and between those mysteries. Both Pai José and Alcimar mentioned this. As has been mentioned most of the time when these beings change “their mystery,” that is, change the spiritual place where they are working, they also change their names (as they change their form). I asked Pai José why this was so.

[It] depends upon God’s determination. The identification of certain beings depends upon the mystery he or she is developing, representing. Príncipe Dom Simeão has that name in the Mystery of the Earth. When he goes to the Sky he receives the name of Soldado Guerreiro Príncipe da Paz. In the Sea he is the Príncipe Espadarte. He receives those names according to God’s wishes.

I asked Beth whether she would be able to recognize when a spiritual entity was approaching her, from where that entity came.

Some people do not know. I am one of them. When one spiritual guide approaches me, and I do not know that guide, I have difficulty knowing the Mystery that entity is coming from. Only if he or she tells me, if I have a work with them. But some people know, they feel it, they go spiritually to the Sea with that entity, they have a certain preparation, a development, and they can go there.

Here we see that some entities come and tell the medium where they are coming from. However, sometimes individuals can go spiritually to a certain mystery and interact with the spiritual beings there. Pai José said that sometimes people (not mattering if it is an incarnated person or a spiritual guide) are transported to a realm, to a mystery. He said, “An eagle can carry me to the Sky, or a fish to the depths of the Sea.” That spiritual movement appears during the *mirações*, individuals see what is going on and know where they are.

Miração²⁸

*As long as a person grasps himself merely through self-perception,
he regards himself as this particular person;
as soon as he looks toward the world of ideas
lighting up in him and encompassing all particulars,
he sees the absolutely real light up living within him.*
(Steiner, 1986, p. 238).

I was somewhere, observing, and I saw with my eyes multicolored and somehow disconnected images. It was like a kind of windmill, it was a being, many beings . . . and those vanes irradiated a lot of light.

Suddenly I saw that I was within a huge ocean. Everything there was involved in a deep and dull blue, “veiled.” . . . I looked and I saw that I was in a place like a universe. And there were many and distinct beings. They were not beings that I could look and define them, but I knew that within that universe there were thousands of those beings. Mermaids, faces, light . . . but everything veiled.

And looking, I saw something approaching, with a neat sound. My ears, at that moment, were capturing many other sounds, some of them harmonious, some not. I recognized the first sound and I knew it was from a boat.

And there it was, covered in light!

28 Both *Miração* and the next topic, *Mediumship*, are not, technically, elements of the spiritual space. However, they are the most direct way people in the *Barquinha* have to experience those elements. The achievement of the spiritual word is made mainly through the *Miração* and *Mediumship*, which is why I decided to include them at this part of the dissertation. A more complete analysis of both *Miração* and *Mediumship* will be made in Chapter 7.

Yes, it was the sound of a boat! Not a simple boat, but a big boat! And looking at the horizon I saw the “Santa Fé boat.” And it was pure light!

I saw, like I was a spectator watching from a distant place, many little beams of light leaving the boat, flying into immensity. That ocean was something etheric, it was neither dense, nor diluted.

Those beams of light, in my comprehension—explained in the light of the Daime—were the spirits of the brothers and sisters throwing themselves at that immensity, as explorers of that world. The beams of light were ourselves. When we drink Daime our spirit flies or throws itself into that immensity of colors and enchanted spirits of nature, as an explorer, and the boat is our safe harbor.

Watching through other perspectives—my vision was moving as the perspective changed—I noted that from that boat was emanating something like colored electric charges projecting themselves above and below the vessel.

Spirits from nature were projecting themselves toward the boat while it was passing by, trying to achieve it, to touch it. I could see also another kind of beams of light, multicolored ones that were not detaching themselves from the boat though, as was happening with the other ones. Those were the spirits of great beings, leaving on a mission into that world: Missionários and other spiritual guides working.

Changing again my perspective I could observe that at the prow of the boat there was someone responsible for conducting the helm. This being was pure light. I could not see who he or she was, but I know that he or she was made of pure light. This was the maximum comprehension I could get from those facts.

Iban wrote this description of a *miração* during a ceremony held on August 2, 2004, immediately after it had occurred. I was sitting, my eyes closed, in a deep state of concentration, when Iban came to me and asked for my notebook. This was quite unusual, as Iban is one of the main musicians of the Center, and he had stopped playing. He did not mention why he wanted the notebook, but I gave it to him anyway. I closed my eyes again. Ten minutes later he tapped on my arm again, returning the notebook. He asked me not to read it during the ceremony, only at home. This is the only description of a *miração* I could get in “real time.” I endeavored to keep his own punctuation during the transcription.

Iban puts in evidence a very interesting aspect of *mirações*: many times you know that some of the elements of the *miração* are present, but you do not need to directly see them: you *know* that they are there. He was witnessing some of the beings, but he was aware of the presence of many other beings in the space where the *miração* was taking place. That space was filled with a deep—although dull—blue light, and the beings there were emanating light. As I said above, light is the element filling the spiritual space, being also the force helping the elements of the spiritual space to become manifest.

The spiritual side of all beings, both incarnated and disincarnated, is made of light. Kleymani (25 years old), one of the main musicians at the Center as well as a singer, gave a description of the first time he felt the effects of the Daime. He started drinking Daime when he was 8 years old, but only in small amounts, with his grand-mother, Dona Chiquita (74 years old; she had drunk Daime for 45 years). When he was around 10 years old he had the following experience at the Casa de Oração:

I used to drink Daime but I felt nothing. Then one day I felt its effect. I lost myself in time and space. It was the commemoration of Saint Francis. It was me and a friend of mine, Paulo who was acquainted with the effects of the Daime. On that day, I told him: “Paulo, let’s see who drinks more Daime!” There were three glasses of three sizes there: a little one, the *titio* [literally, uncle], another one a little bigger, the *boca de sino* [literally, bell’s mouth], and the biggest one, with many hearts drawn on it, the *coração* [heart]. When the ceremony started, we drank a *coração*. During the service, we drank another *coração*. We drank only *coração*. When the Festa started, we drank another one, another at the middle of the Festa, and then another one. And then the Daime caught me [*me pegou*]. It was on the occasion of the first time which Joca [João Batista, Madrinha’s youngest son] was singing a *ponto* he received. When he began singing, I started feeling that my body was different; there was a force within me. When he was singing I looked at the *bailado* and I could distinguish nobody, I could only see a lot of light dancing, as if everybody was leaving a track of light behind. All that light was going round and round. Then I said to Paulo: “I think I am within the Daime now!” And he told me to go dancing. When I stood up I was out of myself, I couldn’t walk straight. I went to the middle of the *bailado* and I watched everybody passing by me, all that light going around me, and I felt I was fainting. They called my grandmother, and I was carried to the Church. They called also

the Madrinha, and Dom Simeão prayed on me,²⁹ and the effect of the Daime disappeared completely.

Light here is not a metaphor but a concrete experience. The more advanced spiritually someone (or some being) is, the more light will be emanated from his or her being.

In his vision, Iban was witnessing the same ceremony that was taking place at the church but on a higher, or inner, level. The boat, the *Barquinha*, was there, and so were the beings participating in the ceremony: humans and nonhumans, incarnated and spiritual. The church, or the boat, is the “safe harbor” from which many beings depart and to which many others aspire. The Center appeared as a boat made of light.

Iban also gave a good description concerning the texture of the ocean where the boat was immersed (when interviewing him he told that boat was not floating over, but immersed in the sea): something neither dense, nor diluted, something etheric. He told me that the sea is like “an immensity, the sea is the spiritual world. What is the sea? The sea is a huge space covered with water. The sea must have been the first *miração* of Frei Daniel. It is very similar to the sea, you feel like you are within something that is not the air.”

When someone experiences the *miração*, they perceive the spiritual space. The spiritual space is a tangibly experienced space, filled with concrete elements, perceived from a special state of consciousness.

The Preta-velha Vó Maria Clara, during an interview taken in 2000, based her definition of *miração* also on its transcendent aspects. Cléia, the granddaughter of Madrinha Francisca, incorporates her.

29 The expression in Portuguese is *rezou em mim*. Literally, I would translate as “prayed *on* me,” and not *for* me. This is the common expression used when a spiritual guide lays hands over someone and performs the healing. It is very common to see the guide quiet, with the eyes closed, silently praying.

The *miração* is an astral world, an invisible world where there is a sacred source, the source of holy love, causing all that brightness, all that force, but only for those sons and daughters who deserve it. The *miração* is a personal fact, the result of all the person carries with him or her. There is *miração*, but not for all, because it is based upon faith, upon firmness, upon each one's path. It is something far beyond a vision; it is a chance the sons and daughters have to see a step above them, things that are above each one, which are not for all. This is why people say: "he or she is blind, do not know the Divine grace."

Beyond transcendence, according to Vó Maria Clara, there is deservedness. The person must be ready to receive a *miração*.³⁰ It comes from love, the Divine Love, which is the source of connection among all beings. While this readiness is still developing, the person can have small "samples" of what is on this other level of existence. There are, as such, different levels and kinds of *mirações*.

João Batista said in our interview in the year of 2000.

There are some *mirações* that are open. That kind of *miração* you are sure about what is going on. There is another kind of *miração*, in which the person cannot understand what he or she is seeing. Those are *mirações* when you see many lights, but you cannot comprehend what you are seeing. Those are the most common ones, it is like a play with lights, but this is a preparation, it is something opening for the person, until the time when the person will have a concrete *miração*. The person does not comprehend the *mirações*, though she enjoys the ritual, even as she is not sure of what she had seen, and know not why she is seeing in the way she is seeing, but this is a spiritual preparation, it is something that needs time, it is a game of patience, which can take years until finished.

As a whole, the *miração* is considered as being composed of many parts and levels. Time is essential to prepare for and be ready to have what is considered a "great *miração*." However, this time is not measured by days (or years) the person has been participating in the Barquinha's services but by that person's spiritual discovery. As mentioned in the Introduction, a *miração* cannot be evoked at the person's will. It comes to the person, or it is "received," as members of the Ayahuasca religions are accustomed

³⁰ It is interesting that Csordas (1994), working with Christian Charismatics, said that the patients can "receive" (p. 47) images either spontaneously or with guided imagery.

to say. The *miração* is completely spontaneous, at least at its earliest stage. After the *miração* begins, the person can interact with the vision, but one cannot make it happen.

The personal account of Marta gives a good example. She was born on 1959, in Acre. In her testimony in our interview, she talked about a time when she was following the Santo Daime, when she was a *farçada* at the church in Visconde de Mauá, a city in the Rio de Janeiro State. She works as a teacher at the Federal University of Acre.

The *miração* is a stage, a level, at the end of an apprenticeship, of knowledge, it is an instruction. After I had begun to drink Daime, I stayed for two years without receiving a *miração*. I did not have any *miração* in Mauá. I was desperate sometimes, because I wanted to have a *miração*. In the first *bailado* I participated in, the first instruction I received was that I was a soldier, and that my function was to stay dancing as a soldier, that I would have to learn to be a soldier. I wanted to have a *miração*, but the recollection of that instruction kept coming into my mind, and then I really wished to be a perfect soldier, and that feeling was gratifying, and at the same time I knew that the *miração* would come in its own time. But during this period of two years I received two very important *mirações*. The first one was at the Colônia Cinco Mil [close to Rio Branco, Acre], after I was living at Mauá for more than one year. That was in 1985. We were performing the hymns of Padrinho Sebastião, and my oldest daughter—she was only three months old—woke up, and I sat down to nurse her. I looked at the “salão” [the main space at the church, where people perform the *bailados*], the *bailado* was going on, and I saw the light modifying, at the center of the table was more clear and different. Immediately I perceived and said to myself: “I am having a *miração*!” At the same time, my rational side was saying: “it is the light of the candles, it is the light of the table.” I did not know for sure if I was having a *miração*, and I kept nursing. I looked at the wall of the church, old and not so well painted, and that wall became completely white, and a flower, a very different and big flower, something I had never saw before, begun to bloom on the wall, with white petals, so white, and the edge of the flower had many different colors: golden, green, yellow, all the colors. That moment lasted for an eternity, because I could perceive all the blooming of the flower, all the colors, I could perceive everything. When I looked back to the salão, the people had sung just two or three sentences of the hymn. I was inside eternity, I was inside the *miração*. That *miração* gave me strength to continue, principally concerning many difficulties I had later. As it is said in the hymns of the Master [Irineu], I received a flower.

I had another *miração* at Mauá when I saw a fabric, I saw the entire universe, and I saw a huge fabric made of knots, like tricot. In the *miração* two threads were coming and they made the first knot, a second knot, a third, fourth, and tchum, tchum, tchum, those two threads kept going until the fabric was all done. After

that, those two threads begun to untie all the knots, and I had, again, only the first knot. At the same I was listening to an instruction: “those two years here at Mauá were only the first knot.” Those two years that so many things had happened with me, I had given birth to two children, and those two years were only the first knot. . . . I was ready to say “how am I going to get to the end of the fabric, and immediately came a internal force saying that if those two years were the first knot, I had seen the whole fabric done. That was a very important *miração* I had, meaning that I was ready to construct my path. So, during these 15 years I learned that *miração* is different for each person.

There is too much to learn about being a soldier, about how to be during the spiritual works, to have discipline, to learn to drink Daime, to support those first stages when your spirit is opening for the spiritual world. This is the moment when we have to pass through death. Every time we drink Daime we die, because we are under a constant preparation to leave the material level. This is happening while you are incarnated and your spirit is opening for the spiritual world. This is hard, we are there, open, with the spirit vibrating, and we become unquiet, because that discipline is about how you are going to resist during that passage, that moment, while you disconnect from your vices, of ambition, egotism, vanity. The more you have of those things, during that moment of spiritual discipline, even if you have a glimpse of these other level of consciousness, those things block you. Then you feel physically bad, you agonize, you throw up, and you feel cold, hot, all of this comes strongly. The more you can, day-by-day to be disciplined, to discipline your character, changing your attitudes, those bad feelings become less intense. Then, we have all this preparation: for some it is pretty quick, and for others it is slower. There are moments during the spiritual work that you go beyond that confrontation, and that is what death is about. We check ourselves everyday, and each time you drink Daime you know where you are on your path, how much you freed yourself of all those feelings. You meet yourself, and you cannot hide anything, you cannot lie to God. And when you go, or keep going, beyond that you can penetrate deeper into that reality, your consciousness is ready to receive the teachings about another way of life, about another way of thinking, and then the *mirações* begin to come. The *miração* is the result of a preparation we do, and here in the Barquinha we receive those teachings from a very solid group of spiritual guides. They come, they talk with us, they guide us, and we learn to experience the *mirações* with our feet on the ground. The most impressive *mirações* are like that, like a flower you see on the wall, and lots of things people have seen.

Marta’s explanation is very complete. Alverga (1984) said that the *miração* is “synthesis among affective comprehension, reason, and the feeling of the image” (p. 324). He continued by saying that it is an experience “based upon powerful ethics” that makes the people transform their internal and external worlds.

The *miração* is considered, as Marta stated above, a stage, a level, the end of an apprenticeship level, of knowledge acquisition: it is an instruction.³¹ As Marta said, every time one drinks Daime, one dies, because everybody is under constant preparation to leave the material level. According to her, this happens while people feel that their spirits are leaving for the spiritual world. They feel physically bad, agonize, throw up; people feel cold, hot, all at the same time. Day-by-day, the more people succeed in being more disciplined, in having their character more disciplined, and in changing their attitudes those bad feelings become less intense.

Vó Maria da Calunga also expressed that same point of view.

[When someone is] within the Daime, having a *miração*. [To have a *miração*] is to leave matter and see something supernatural, something you do not know, and [you understand] the reasons that you are seeing it. When the light of Daime opens the doors to the son or daughter to see something, the heart of that person blossoms, and at that moment the person has a direction, he or she is seeing, is having a *miração*. It is like a veil covering a face, and suddenly that veil opens and you see something, you get interested in that thing, and you start developing yourself, you improve yourself. When we drink the Holy Light, the Daime, it goes through the veins, through the blood, and that light start showing both the good and the bad things. So, many times, the son or daughter has a *miração* for getting a better direction in life, for correcting himself or herself, for searching for something that can really help him or her.

Here the Daime crosses the border between a physical and a spiritual substance.

The Daime is the spiritual light turned into a physical substance. When someone drinks it, they enhance their own spirituality by gaining more light. The light of the Daime shows where the people need to improve their lives to gain in themselves more light, to make their spirits brighter. The process of self-knowledge and self-development provoked by the combination of Daime and ritual not only opens the space for that transformation, it also gives an impulse for it. As a spiritual substance transformed in a physical one,

31 The idea that the *miração* is the vehicle for instructions is present also at the Centro Espírita Daniel Pereira de Mattos, the *Barquinha do Antônio Geraldo* (Parkoali, 2002): it is a path for knowledge.

Daime acts at both the physical and the spiritual, causing any apparent duality between matter and spirit to disappear.

The body becomes very involved in the process of *miração* when it is coordinated along with mediumship. Beth, for example, said that the *miração* happens when someone “works in the Daime seeing.” She told me that it happens according to the kind of mediumship of the person, that for some people it is easier to see, referring to those having a higher degree of clairvoyance, and for others it is more difficult.

José has the same opinion. For him, there are some mediums that can feel but cannot see. Others have only intuition, whereas others can see the spiritual beings. The more Light someone has, the easier it will be for that person to experience a *miração* and to act as a medium. It is good to mention that mediumship does not always compromise the incorporation of spiritual guides.

Mediumship

I have had myself a very intense experience on the border of a *miração* and mediumship. During a service for indoctrination of souls (see Chapter 6, part 2) I saw an aquatic being, which transformed itself into a fish, and finally in a *boto* (a river dolphin). Suddenly and unexpectedly, I was that *boto*. I could see under the waters, and I could see other beings, such as snakes and alligators. That *boto* was responsible for conducting souls of people who drowned in rivers. When I had my eyes closed, I could feel myself as that *boto*. Interesting here is that I knew nothing about *botos* before that experience. Later, I came across two different descriptions of *botos* in the Amazonian belief system (Cravalho, 1993; Galvão, 1955). Both authors stated that there are two basic types of

boto: the red or pink one, considered dangerous, and the *tucuxi*. The *tucuxi* is smaller, and it is famous for helping people who are drowning.

As stated above, the *miração* can be understood as a special case of mediumship, in the sense that the *miração* most of the time is a vehicle for information between the spiritual and the physical space. When someone is a medium, this is exactly their function: to mediate between worlds.

Many beings live only in the spiritual space. Humans consciously live mostly in the physical space. For most people, perceiving the spiritual space and its beings is an exercise: it is necessary to develop a special sensibility for “detecting” (or become conscious of) those beings. Many times those beings contact the humans first to start a cooperative work.

This cooperation happens in many ways. For example, I witnessed a very interesting scene at the Congá. Dora was working, incorporated with her Preta-velha. She was alone; her last client had just gone. I saw when she (the Preta-velha) called Carlos close to her. Both started singing a *ponto* for Ogum, the Orixá of metals, the warrior. After this, the Preta-velha went to the closet owned by Vó Maria da Calunga, with a burning candle in her hand. She stopped in front of the closet, prayed, broke the candle into three pieces (a sign that she was breaking some negative energies), and went back to her place.

After this act, I went to the Cruzeiro. After awhile, Dora came to the Cruzeiro as well. Then, she told me that she (Dora) heard when her Preta-velha asked her to sing the *ponto* for Ogum. She was incorporated with the Preta-velha, yet she said, mentally, to the

Preta-velha, that the effect of the Daime was too strong for her to sing, that she would not be able to do so. Then, the Preta-velha called Carlos for helping her to sing for Ogum.

Frenopoulo (2005) divided mediumship in two different levels: the *incorporação* and the *irradiação* (incorporation and irradiation). Incorporation would be according to this author an irradiation acted out. Yet, though this can be, it is not always the case. For example, during the ceremony of *Prestação de Contas* (see Chapter 7), the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas are incorporated in their mediums. They perform many gestures during the time they are praying over the people who are under treatment. Why would they “act out” something for an audience having its eyes closed during the “representation”? The person being healed is concentrated on the effects of the Daime and not on what the Preto-velho is doing. The same occurs during a *passe* (the series of movements performed by the Preto-velho or Preta-velha with the espada for removing the bad energies of their clients and to give them good energies) during the consultations on the Obras de Caridade ceremony. The *Consagração* would be a special case, but there the audience also concentrates on the internal movements of consciousness and not on what the medium/spiritual entity is doing or performing. Frenopoulo could not give a satisfactory answer to that question, which is still open: what is the difference between *irradiação* and *incorporação*?

Another interesting case of *irradiação*, is when the Preto-velho or Preta-velha, already incorporated in his or her medium, is irradiated by another spiritual entity. This would be a case of “multiple mediumship.” Pai José once said that he was sometimes irradiated by the Príncipe das Águas Claras, the main spiritual entity working with Itah (his *guia de croa* or *coroa*, which literally means “crown guide” in reference to the

crown, the top of the head). It becomes evident here that mediums and spiritual entities work as a team: the medium gives the body (although he or she can be also heard by the spiritual entities), to the spiritual entity incorporate in him or her, and both of them receive information from other spiritual beings that are not incorporated. In this process charity can be understood as a 2-way path: from the medium to the spiritual entity, allowing that entity to occupy his or her body, and also from the spiritual entity to the medium and incarnated humans in a general way, when those spiritual entities agree to leave their spiritual heights for conferring counseling and healing.

Many times the spiritual guides act not through the body of the medium (as in a strict incorporation), but along with the body and consciousness of the medium in the case of *irradiação*. Sometimes the medium hears the spiritual guides telling them what to do, how and where to move, or what to say. Other times, the spiritual guide acts through the body of the medium, occupying totally his or her consciousness—although the medium is aware of what is going on and has the power to stop it any time, though the medium, during incorporation, is not starting the action. In the first case (*irradiação*) the medium listens to the recommendations, and only after this does he or she make the action. In the second case (*incorporação*), the medium assumes a parallel position to the momentum of action, but it is not initiated by the medium's will.

Mediumship can be, and sometimes is, a voluntary process, as Frenopoulo (2005, p. 119) pointed out. However, his determination are incongruous with my findings, when he said that “voluntarity” (meaning one is a medium because they want to be) is the major trait of the Barquinha's mediumship. There are many people who go to the Center looking for help with problems that are promptly diagnosed as “mediumship problems”:

people “receiving” spiritual entities without control, people with health problems caused by under-developed or mal-developed mediumship, and so on. (see also Goulart, 2004). Those people do have their mediumship developed, even if they are not official members of the Center, which, in these cases, offers a therapeutic path to developing their mediumship. The point, however, is that most of these people seeking help were involuntary mediums, without any control of that phenomenon, and sometimes even struggling against it. At the same time, I heard many mediums saying that they had never received any spirit before arriving at the Center and that they had never before expected to receive one. Only after some time (in some cases years) in the Center, they have begun to present unexpected signs of mediumship.

Frenopoulo (2005) also indicated that “the career of medium also seems to include a progressive accumulation of spirits. The higher-ranking mediums not only receive higher spirits, they also often receive more. Their mediumship usually encompasses several categories of spirits” (pp. 124). This is not the case for the Center. I could point out several high-ranking people who work only with one or two spiritual entities, people who had participated at the Center for at least 10 years. Beth, for example, works only with her Preta-velha.

In addressing the topic of this dissertation, I did not attempt to collect any personal accounts on the experience of mediumship. However, in 2000, João Batista (Madrinha’s son), during an interview, spoke about his own experience with his main spiritual guide (Rei Germano).

Rei Germano is the main spirit guiding me inside the church. I surrender completely to him, I identify myself with him, we became very harmonized, in a deep syntony. He gave me firmness, he taught me how to proceed, how to give lectures to our brothers and sisters. He gives his lectures, but I also do mine. All

my doings and words are directed not only by him, but by Frei Daniel also. When I have to make a decision or do something I try to listen to them. Rei Germano presented himself approximately six years ago. On my birthday, he brought a Salmo, and again during a ceremony held on a Holy Friday. After this, the Madrinha started to call him during the services. His [Rei Germano] first lecture was during my wedding, he performed the consecration of my marriage.

João Batista (see Figure 15) gave a very interesting account concerning the integration of medium and spiritual guide. They both have to achieve a “deep syntony” to work properly. Medium and spiritual guide need to work to find this syntony. They act together, but they are not the same person. The spiritual guide teaches João Batista but



Figure 15.
João Batista incorporated with Rei Germano.

not only him; Frei Daniel also teaches. The above-mentioned syntony has to be achieved by the whole community—which means not only by the beings who have a physical body, but also by those who do not.

The idea of *emanação* (literally: emanation) embodies that need of global syntony. The word *emanação* appears in many lectures and speeches given by incorporated spiritual guides. I asked José

about the meaning of *emanação* and he answered that it is “the whole community together, with only one

thought directed to God, together within love, union, peace, everybody praying and contrite, praising God in a single emanation.” Emanation, so, is the energy liberated by the brotherhood during the ceremonies. The more united the brotherhood (again, which includes here both spiritual guides and the incarnated people), the better the quality of that energy.

The more clearly and potently this energy is emanated, the better it is received from God. This was expressed by Maria when I asked her about the meaning of *emanação*. She said that *emanação* is the “irradiation of love, is everybody together emanating love, light, it is an union, the union of love, and it is love being distributed among all the people. Everybody in a single emanation of peace, the peace being distributed among all.”

Although the word *emanação* is not present, the union idea is expressed also in one of the Salmos. It says, “What I wish here at this house, for me and my brothers, is united our souls and our hearts” (Salmo *União*). Rei Germano, in a speech on October 1, 1999, said, “Our community needs more union, because union is force, and the force is God. If you are with God, you will go over all the obstacles. There is sacrifice, there is pain, this is so you can recognize the holy love. Be united, we are a family where everybody is brothers and sisters.”

Again, the achievement of this union is a personal task. Everybody needs to work internally to perform this union: “If everyone do his or her part there will be no defects within our brotherhood. Each one accomplishes with his or her part, taking care, being zealous, letting not that this precious stone that each one of you represents lose its brightness for the eyes of our Father” (Rei Germano, October 15, 1999).

Addressing specifically the personal work of the brothers and sisters, Frei Daniel, in a speech on October 1, 1999, said that “everyone need to work within a single emanation of love. Everybody needs to do charity, and to do charity you need to be prepared to do so.” Here enters the individual work of self-knowledge and self-development. When the medium is not ready to do charity, the incorporation is chaotic,

without control, and in general dominated by spiritual beings with lower levels of light. A prepared medium has the ability not exactly to control the incorporation but to have more awareness of what is going on within their body and consciousness.

On December 27, 1998, Dom Simeão made a speech addressing precisely that readiness that the mediums need to achieve by preparation.

No one can say that he or she is influenced by negative currents, by *zombeteiros* [literally: mockers, a kind of spiritual being interested only in mocking the medium, to put him or her in a delicate situation]. You have everything you need in your hands, you know how to defend yourselves, you are learned, you have, within that light, masters, teachers, all following superior orders, following one order, one power . . . you need to be more obedient, to pay more attention. If you are influenced by inferior beings, it is because you are not preparing yourselves properly.

For being uninfluenced by those inferior beings, the mediums³² need to devote themselves to an inner preparation not only with individual compromises (see next chapter), but also with dedication to the Barquinha's mission: "All the spiritual entities come here to testify the truth of our mission. We are accomplishing here a sacred duty. . . . Frei Daniel is at the head of that compromise, along with Saint Francis of Wounds, Saint Sebastian, and the sacred court assisting us in the mystery of this Holy Light" (Madrinha Francisca, January 10, 2001).

It is important to mention one more thing concerning the different qualities of spiritual beings working through mediumship at the Center. They can be divided into several spiritual currents. The first is the Christian current, where belongs the Missionários (bishops, friars, priests). The second is the African current, where the Orixás are the main representatives. In fact, I was told by different spiritual guides, that the Orixás themselves do

³² It is important to mention here that, potentially, everybody at the Barquinha is a medium: the difference is that some people incorporate the spirits and others do not.

not incorporate but send their knights to the mediums³³. The third current is of Nature Beings, the Amerindian current, where we find the Encantos (fish, mermaids, botos, alligators, snakes, eagles, fairies, etc., all receiving the titles of princes, princess, king, or queen). There are as well, two intermediary currents. Between the Christian and the African currents, we have the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas, and between the African and the Amerindian currents we have the Caboclos. In fact, the Pretos-velhos and Caboclos can migrate throughout all those currents. More will be shared concerning the spiritual being living in the spiritual space in the next chapter.

33 Assunção (1999) said that this same idea is present in the Catimbó.

CHAPTER 6

SPIRITUAL BEINGS

The Barquinha is an intense, syncretic religion (Sena Araújo, 1999). The idea of religious eclecticism,³⁴ as used by Sanchis (1995), is the basis that Sena Araújo (1999) used to create the notion of cosmology under construction: being “a group of religious practices held together to form a specific doctrine where there is high speed of the incorporation and withdrawal of symbolic elements in religious or philosophic practices that when combined constitute its cosmology” (Sena Araújo, 1999, p. 74). There the doctrine emerges out of the practices.

According to Sena Araújo (1999), this cosmology is constructed around a central axis made up of three elements: the prayer (from folk Catholicism), the *miração* (from the indigenous practices), and the possession (from Afro-Brazilian religions, see Figure 16). All practices and rituals are built around this axis. Sena Araújo further stated that these elements are perceived according to the position of each individual in a particular context, which



Figure 16.
Vó Maria Clara (Preta-velha).

confers a sense of movement to the Barquinha’s cosmology. However, that cosmology is solidly supported by a symbolic framework on one level and practical on another, both being the grounding bases to interpret, to shape, and to fit this cosmology into very well

³⁴ “The *bricolage* of religious elements with various origins. This process is basically the *eclectic* re-approach, overlapping, and re-fusion of cultural elements, sponsored by the geographical mobility of people and the availability of several cultural products” (Sanchis, 1995, p. 134).

defined parameters. The culturally formed symbolic elements are for Sena Araújo at the basis of the doctrine.

I would say that contrary to Sena Araújo's idea, the spiritual doctrine—emerging out of the spiritual space—is the source of practices. The doctrine manifests itself in ritual, where the practices become concrete. The spiritual space models Sena Araújo's central axis, fixing the limits for which cultural elements would become effective part of the Barquinha's cosmology.

We should take a closer look at the word “doctrine” here. Doctrine comes from the Latin *Doctrina*, meaning teaching, instruction, and that what is imparted in teaching, knowledge, and learning (Marchant & Charles, 1957). It forms the substance of a theoretical and intellectual system used as a tool to instruct the believer of a religion (Benton, 1979). In the Barquinha, however, there is no other system than the Salmos, which can receive any adjective but rational, in the sense that they are not thought but rather received spiritually. These Salmos are not subject to any exegesis: their understanding is purely subjective. So, the doctrine in the Barquinha is not explicit, objective, coming from the outside: it is subjective, emerging inside every individual consciousness by listening to the Salmos.

The doctrine was first revealed in Daniel's *miração* of the Blue Book, the revelatory foundational mark of the Barquinha. From this moment on, the basis for the practices were formed and then sustained by the Salmos. There is a nonphysical (spiritual) Blue Book in which all Salmos are contained, and a physical Blue Book in the church, where the channeled Salmos to be sung during the rituals can be found. The Salmos expresses the symbolic essence of the Barquinha's doctrine or, as the Barquinha's

members are used to saying, the Salmos “brings” the doctrine from the spiritual world. Of course, the physical book does not contain all the Salmos. The doctrine is able to handle outside elements from a very close position by interpreting and adapting these new elements within its requirements, incorporating them into existent practices.

At every ceremony, the spiritual space is accessed through prayers and Salmos, and it is finally revealed through the *miração*—the intimate moment where participants can intensely experience the ritual—and during the possession of mediums.

Charity is the main attitude permeating and guiding all the practices and ceremonies. It occurs following two distinct directions (Mercante, 2002). The first one is the mediums’ charities. They act as *aparelhos* (literally, apparatus) to the spirits, giving their body to be occupied by the spirits, that the spirits can manifest themselves at the physical level, thus facilitating and emphasizing their action. The medium annuls their personality in the process. The second direction of charity is spirits’ charity. They come from their place of “light and harmony” to work within Earth’s chaos as “missionaries,” for the accomplishment of their mission as Jesus Christ’s soldiers. This is how the physical and spiritual planes are united.

As something leading to the “feet of God,” charity assists in the remission of the ego, allowing the “I” to achieve a higher level of existence, the Whole. Society, contact with the other, and the process of helping the other are the pathways to personal salvation. By trying to improve social conditions, they take part in Divine Work. By saving and healing the other, they save themselves. Charity is to “do good without choosing whom to.” At the same time, to be charitable it is necessary to be tolerant and to comprehend both the others and the truths which those others have inside themselves.

According to Frenopoulo (2005), charity in the Barquinha is “an orientation to the world, not a predetermined list of acts” (p. 2).

Huxley (1970) indicated that in modern English, due to what he calls “one of the more subtle expressions of man’s deep-seated will to ignorance and spiritual darkness” (p. 82), charity has become almost a synonym of almsgiving. The word has lost its original sense, which for Huxley means, “the highest and most divine form of love” (p. 82). According to him, originally charity would have been understood to have two principal characteristics:

First, charity is disinterested, seeking no reward, nor allowing itself to be diminished by any return of evil for its good. God is to be loved for Himself, not for his gifts, and persons and things are to be loved for God’s sake, because they are temples of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, since charity is disinterested, it must of necessity be universal. . . . The second distinguishing mark of charity is that, unlike the lower forms of love, it is not an emotion. It begins as an act of the will and is consummated as a purely spiritual awareness, a unitive love-knowledge of the essence of its object. (pp. 84-85)

These are precisely the characteristics of the Center’s charity. As an act of will, charity is absolutely linked to the ideas of *sagrado compromisso* (literally: *sacred compromise*) and *santa obrigação* (literally: holy obligation) always present in speeches conferred by spiritual entities or even by Madrinha Francisca. Huxley (1970) continues:

The distinguishing marks of charity are disinterestedness, tranquility and humility. But where there is disinterestedness there is neither greed for personal advantage nor fear for personal loss or punishment; where there is tranquillity, there is neither craving nor aversion, but a steady will to conform to the divine Tao of Logos on every level of existence and a steady awareness of the divine Suchness and what should be one’s own relations to it; and where there is humility there is no censoriousness and no glorification of the ego or nay projected alter-ego at the expense of others, who are recognized as having the same weaknesses and faults, but also the same capacity for transcending them in the unitive knowledge of God, as tone has oneself. From all this it follows that charity is the root and substance of morality, and that where there is little charity there will be much avoidable evil. (p. 92)

Syncretism, thus, is the result of that exercise of tolerance and comprehension through charity. As I said in the previous chapter, there are three basic spiritual currents moving within the Center's spiritual space. The main one is Christianity, which works as a basis for the other two that I am naming, respectively, African and Amerindian. Those currents receive their names from a bias that I mentioned in the Introduction of this dissertation: they are named after the cultural matrixes to which they are related.

What is now a definable cultural matrix was, in the past, a ground where various cultural matrixes had intermingled with each other. Thus, a matrix is also syncretic. According to Sanchis (1995), syncretism is a common occurrence in religions such as Christianity, and it could be said that African and Amerindian spiritual system are also syncretic.

The main contribution of a matrix to a religious system is its ethical code. Under the influence of the spiritual space—and through practices and ceremonies—matrixes and their respective ethical codes are combined and recombined. The combination and recombination of the original Christian, African, and Amerindian matrixes within the Center's spiritual space is forming a new matrix for future religious systems: the Center is, right now, fusing three separate ethical codes into a single one.

This process of fusion is experienced as the flux of the spiritual currents within the Center's spiritual space. It is there that each ethical element is evaluated, incorporated, changed, or discharged. The process is taking place “within the light of Daime,” through the experience of the *mirações*, and under the guidance of the spiritual beings.

As I mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, there are different distinguishable categories of spiritual beings recognized at the Center. These categories are: the *Missionários*

(literally: missionaries), linked to the Christian matrix (they identify themselves as the spirits of bishops, friars, priests who once lived as incarnated human beings); the *Orixás*, linked to the African matrix; and finally, the *Encantos* (literally: the enchanted ones), linked to the Amerindian matrix (they are spirits of fishes, mermaids, dolphins, alligators, snakes, eagles, fairies, etc.) The *Pretos-velhos*, *Pretas-velhas*, and *Caboclos* mediate among these different beings, even though the *Pretos-velhos* and *Pretas-velhas* could be classified as emerging out of the African spiritual current, and the *Caboclos* from the Amerindian current.

Again, charity is the main force promoting the assimilation of the ethical code from one spiritual current by a being belonging to another spiritual current. With charity, a Missionário possesses a medium, and it is with charity that knights of *Orixás*, *Encantos*, *Pretos-velhos*, *Pretas-velhas*, and *Caboclos* are baptized. With charity, a Missionário becomes a nature being, and with charity a nature being assumes a human spiritual form. With charity, humans receive into their bodies other beings. With charity, the other is understood and perceived as a fellow, sharing the same physical and spiritual space, sharing ceremonies and practices.

The process of conversion—of physical and spiritual beings—is precisely the process of ceasing to perceive three separate spiritual currents; by starting to perceive the very peculiar aspects the Center assumes by the fusion of the three originally separate spiritual currents within a single space and spiritual current.

For example, the first thought for a visitor observing a Festa at the Center, or the ceremony of *Obras de Caridade* on Saturdays, is that they are practicing some kind of Umbanda. People at the Center usually say that, no, they are not practicing Umbanda; they are practicing the *Barquinha*. Certainly, elements from Umbanda are incorporated in the

practices of the Center, but those elements are resignified under the guidance of the Center's spiritual space.

Another very interesting aspect of the process of perceiving this single spiritual current of the Barquinha is related to the view that the Daime is a spiritual being incarnated in the beverage served during the ceremonies. This is a widespread idea among the Santo Daime churches (see, for example Araújo, 2005) as well as at the Center. According to some hymns of the Santo Daime church (see, for example, hymn number 6 of Padrinho Sebastião—*Eu vivo na floresta*) the Daime is a *divine being* living in the forest. In the Salmo of the Center *O Espírito do Santo Daime* it is said,

What is this spirit, taking us within that light, cleaning our hearts, bringing us to the feet of Jesus? From a vine and a leaf, the holy love glittered. When this spirit incarnated, it cleaned our hearts. The spirit of Santo Daime, in truth is the holy love that God Jesus sent to us, for us to praise the Creator. . . . This mystery is so profound, because it is a work of the Creator, it gives us the holy *miração*, and make us firm in love.

The Daime is a spiritual being that was able to incarnate through the junction of the vine and the leaves. Like a human being that needs a father and a mother, the beverage is not only the chemical sum of the combination, in water, of the chemical substances of the vine and of the leaves: the beverage Daime is born, physically during the process of *feitio* (preparation) with water and fire. The humans involved in the process of preparation of Daime become a kind of “midwife” for the Daime, and it is the Daime itself as a spiritual being that guides the humans during the process of preparation of the tea. Without spiritual authorization, the tea is merely a chemical substance, and the spirit of the Daime is not incarnated within the liquid.

This idea is not strange among the indigenous people of the Amazon (Cárdenas-Timóteo, 1989; Chaumeil, n.d.; Gil 1999; Langdon, 1994; Luna, 1984). Shamans spend years

learning how to cook Ayahuasca or Yagé, not because the cooking process is complicated but because they must learn how to obtain the spiritual secrets behind the mere cooking process.

Vó Maria Clara once said that the Daime from the Center should not be used in any other kind of ceremony because the effect of the Center's Daime was due the spiritual beings flowing through it. These beings would bring with them a certain structure for the ritual, and to obtain a full and beneficent effect of the Daime, one should follow their strict instructions when drinking the tea. However, these beings could manifest themselves only with the power of the major being, the Daime: the beings at the Center were brought to the Center by the Daime.

Christianity

*Jesus blood flowing
at three o'clock in the afternoon,
the saints in communion,
is the holy sacrament we partake
here at this session
(from the Salmo Espírito Santo de Deus)*

I had the chance to interview Pai José de Angola, a Preto-velho working with Hita. I observed his work during many Saturdays, during the Obras de Caridade. After the ceremonies, I had several chances to engage in informal conversations with him. I did not follow any questionnaire; neither had I in mind any topic to discuss with him. I just sat down and started talking about things that came to me during the ceremonies under the effect of the Daime. However, most of the conversation centered around Christianity. I was raised Catholic, but when I grew older, I discovered other religions and spiritual practices and also discovered many of the atrocities of the Roman Catholic Church. As a

result, it was very hard for me to accept the strict—almost orthodox—Christianity in the Barquinha.



Figure 17.
Cross-table in the Igreja, set for the “Leaves Sunday” (the Sunday before the HolyWeek).

Immersed in the smoke of his pipe, I had the chance to open my heart about my personal doubts concerning Christianity and the Christ himself. After the first conversation, I asked Pai José whether I could record his “lectures.” On other occasions, I had several other conversations, like those I had with Pai José, with other Pretos and Pretas-velhas, but they did not allow me to record those conversations. I keep them in my soul but hardly in my memory. I received, at this time, a very deep explanation concerning the Christian roots of the Center

(see, for example, the Figure 17). Our first recorded conversation occurred on February 5, 2004. I began by telling him that I was having the chance to face my inner resistance toward Catholicism. This was his answer:

I will tell you something, and you try to understand and comprehend what I will say. Jesus, he looked for the most wrong sons, those considered the biggest sinners toward the light of our divine Father. Jesus gave to them all the teachings since Moses and the Prophets, and they understood very little of his message. Jesus chose his apostles among blind sons, those who did not know how to follow God, to follow a shepherd. He had his apostles, and even when they were by his side, they kept making their mistakes, their faults, their injustices, for Jesus himself to correct them, showing the better way to act, to handle each situation, and each challenge; how to proceed to surpass each obstacle on their path. They before knew only the steel; everything was solved at the point of a sword. But Jesus came to prove to them that it was not only, and not even, by the sword that the sons would accomplish what the Father was expecting from them. After that, he formed his doctrine and gave his gospels into the hands of his apostles, in the hand of sons chosen to follow his teaching and to bring them to the entire world.

Pai José points out here, in his introduction, the duality of the divine Jesus and the mere human beings around him. Pai José is following the basic Christian argument that Jesus' words substituted Moses' "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth." He continued,

Catholicism could not be different. Human beings have a weak sense of justice. In that remote time, the sons held of themselves the power to judge their fellows. He who came to this world to save and to judge was the Christ, only he could condemn or absolve a son from an evil sentence. They also forgave the sins confessed to the priest; they would give to the sinners an obligation and would tell them that he was freed of their sins. However, if those sons kneeled not before a priest, not recognizing in that priest the power of the Father, his prayers would mean nothing.

Pai José here started pointing out the faults of Catholicism, principally that they were holding the power, a power that emanated from God, which was given to Jesus, not to humans.

Those who preached the name of Christ were still using the sword; they kept hurting their fellows, going against the laws they created themselves, committing madness in the name of God, in the name of Christ. But we should not judge the Christian doctrine by the mistakes of the past, as we should not judge Peter because he cut off the ear of that man trying to arrest Christ. Christ himself reproached Peter, showing to us his love and trust in the Eternal, leaving that example that we must forgive. Those who committed severe faults in the past cannot judge those today following the holy doctrines. We are living in another time, but the law is the same. He wants not the blood of any human spilled, he spilled his own blood at the cross to save all humanity, and so, this [the sword] was not the way to defend Christ, but through love, honoring his holy blood.

Christ himself did not give in when facing his mortal sentence. He forgave all his executioners, freeing them from their blindness and ignorance, and from all their sins. I am telling you that the Catholic Church is one of the closest to the true Christian principles, even with all the distortions that they have had from the pure truth of the Christ, because He wanted his Holy Mother Mary to be recognized. The spiritist doctrine comes from the Catholic doctrine. We work assisted by the Catholic prayers, by the Catholic principles. Bishops [spirits of] come to this house, along with the friars, the archbishops, the missionaries, all from the Catholic Church, all those who when living in matter accomplished with the holy accomplishment of the Catholic Church.

Pai José went on to say that the Catholic Church should not be judged by the errors of the past. Jesus taught forgiveness, and it must be applied in all cases.

Catholicism, finally, is appointed, due its devotion to the Virgin Mary, as the closest actual doctrine to Jesus' original teachings. The link between the Barquinha and Catholicism is confirmed by the presence of spirits of bishops, archbishops, friars, and missionaries.

Try to study it within the mysteries of the light. That light comes to refine the mysteries of other doctrines, it comes to purify them, to show clearly the truth about all that has existed, exists, and will exist. Because he [Jesus] is Time, and Time takes care of everything, to modify and transform everything in the earthy plan. All those spiritual schools are work of our divine Father.

There is an ambiguity at this part of his speech. Light can be understood, as I showed above, both as Jesus and as the Daime. In fact, there is a play between these different meanings.

Our doctrine testifies to the accomplishment of the Catholic Church, but the Catholic Church testifies not to our accomplishment, our mission, because they think they can limit the power of the divine Father, that the power of God would be, during its manifestation, limited to this or that. The Bible says that the power of our divine Father, his actions, is beyond everything on that earthy level. How many people condemn our doctrine? Do they know what they are talking about?

Again, the struggle between Catholicism and the Barquinha is stressed in this passage. On another occasion, I had the opportunity to continue to explore the topic with Pai José. Both his speeches are very representative of the role of Christianity at the Center. On April 26, he told me,

What did the prophecies say about the Messiah? That he would come to save, but how? Everybody was waiting for a messiah coming down from the heavens in a fire chariot, all illuminated, surrounded by angels, adorned with all the imaginable precious stones, mowing down all the enemies, pulling off all the heads, throwing fire here and there, showing his power. However, he came just as nobody was waiting for, simply and humbly, Jesus, the Nazarene, a poor Galilean. He came like this to show himself for his sons, for those who have humbleness and a

sincere and true love, recognizing his voice and the meaning of his sublime presence. Those who were suffering injustice, they received consolation, those who were faithfully waiting, believing he would come, saw him, and recognized him, those are on a glorified state. But there were those who sat down with him at the table and doubted. Do you think any apostle asked why Jesus had to die? They asked if our Father could not make it in another way. But God told his Son to come to the world, like a lamb, to be immolated as a proof of His maximum love, the same proof He asked Abraham to give. He came to this world and he permitted Himself, in the favor of everybody, to be sacrificed, be crucified. His spilled blood became that wine [the Daime].

Many of the values preached at the Center are present here, such as humility and faith. Throughout all of the above speeches, a path has been built to show that the connection between Christianity and the Barquinha is real and divine, it is spiritual. Here, finally the main argument shows up: the blood of the crucified Jesus became the Daime itself.

If you think that the secrets of God are profound, they are much more profound than you can have imagined. Not all the sons have the capacity to understand them. Only in the deep of the light, you can achieve that comprehension. When one day you find yourself within that light like a son being generated in the womb of that sacred Mother, Queen of Light, you will understand that this is the mystery: we are all being generated in the womb of that light. In being generated, we each must remove all the imperfections, all deficiencies, to be born with a perfect body; seeing well, hearing well, talking well, walking well, and so, by the grace of God, fully well. If one day you find those simple words, with this mystery I am affirming, you will see the insignificance of everything around you. If you immerse yourself completely, if you surrender to the firmness and security which that light is, you will see that nobody will be able to harm you beside yourself. There will be no devil, no *exú*, no *pomba-gira*, [spirits considered undeveloped, linked to darkness], there is no *egum* [spirits of the dead], no obsessor, nothing. All those spirits are the causes and the effects of your crimes, of your works in front of the supreme power. Humans are a resemblance of life, so, humans can give life, to the positive and to the negative, to fear or to hope, to a life, which you know that has a path.

Pai José continued linking the Barquinha to Christianity, but his speech became increasingly esoteric. Like Jesus who was generated in the womb of Maria, the followers of the Barquinha are generated in the womb of the light. Light here, again, assumes

multiple levels of significance: it is the Daime, it is the spiritual world, it is the womb of the divine Mother, the Virgin Mary. We should consider that, again, there is an ambiguity in his speech: he is not explicit about the fact that only people who drink Daime are being generated in the light. I would risk saying that all humans are, but the fact is that those who drink Daime, the Holy Light, have the chance to be “born” inside the light, that is, to be conscious of that process. So, when we become conscious of that fact, we become more responsible for our self-development: we assume the responsibility for our spiritual development, and we can choose our path: light (with hope, humility, faith) or darkness (with doubt, fear, egotism).

We need to immerse ourselves in those waters, in that knowledge, that divine wisdom. In the same way, we have the promise of salvation, we have the promise of the sacred plans of the Father and of our divine Mother. We need to look for safety: “where is my safety, my certainty?” If my faith is weak, because only now I am starting to walk, I have to confess with all my heart: “I do not believe completely in your existence, I am not convinced that you are the Lord, I do not understand Your plans, or Your ways of acting. Forgive me if I am imprudent, yet I supplicate you: have pity on me, for my bitterness. And by the love I have for your feet, discipline me, but abandon me not. Give me your love, show me the beauty of your being, that I shall pass not unseen by your face. That I shall recognize you here and there, everywhere, and find you inside myself, and that from myself I shall contemplate you.” Have a frank conversation. When I showed myself in the face of God, it was not as the king and lord of magic, it was like a nothing, because we feel ourselves insignificant in front of the majesty of the Father, we are like dust. But in front of His eyes everything has life, even sand dust. He knows how many He puts over there, how many drops there are in the sea. He keeps all of this with him; how many beings there are, and what is the variety of material and spiritual beings circulating in manifestation. He carries all of this, and he gives it slowly to all the sons and daughters, as soon as they have discernment. Those are noble things.

Pai José told me, “We need to immerse ourselves in those waters.” Waters here equate with knowledge, a knowledge that comes through hope, humility, and faith and a knowledge that irradiates and generates light. Again, the best symbol for those qualities is

Saint Francis of Wounds, as we can read in a speech proffered by the Príncipe das Águas Claras on October 10, 1999:

I make myself present today to transmit for you all, my dear brothers and sisters, a reinforcement of the sacred virtues of Saint Francis of Assisi. So as to make possible for all you, my brothers and sisters to fulfill your hearts with the healthy virtues of peace, happiness, forgiveness, humbleness, and tolerance, to be humble in your heart. Those cited mysteries are the sacred virtues brought by Saint Francis of Wounds. He represents on Earth our Lord Jesus Christ until the day of his sacred return to the earthy plane. That is why Saint Francis of the Wounds, converted by surrendering completely his body and soul to the divine master, denying promiscuity to follow God's path through the Gospels, transforming himself in that messenger of faith, of love, of Jesus our Lord and of the forever virgin Mary.



Figure 18.
Top of Rei Germano's *Gabinete* (personal altar
in the Congá).

Those qualities—peace, happiness, forgiveness, humbleness, tolerance—are cited here as mysteries. They are mysteries because they are not closed, or determined, but open to self-exploration: each person is responsible to find within himself or herself those qualities, to find a way to develop

those qualities, and by developing them, developing knowledge and light. On January 14, 2004, Rei Germano (his personal altar is on Figure 18) made a speech on this same topic.

The teachings are addressed to the conduct of each one in front of the sacred eyes of our Father. Everyone here has to be loyal and truthful in his acts. There is an open book at this house [the Center] for you to learn to protect yourselves, and devotion is the path for those who want to step firmly within this house. The influence of the enemy should be defeated with the weapons of devotion.

However, Rei Germano pointed out here that all the teachings—all the transmitted knowledge—should be transformed into something practical: the conduct of each person in front of God, which also means, how people act in relation to—but not exclusively

to—their brothers and sisters. The Christian ethic has thus a central role in the Barquinha, and devotion is the main tool for self-transformation. The enemy, the evil that moves the brothers and sisters away from God, becomes manifested through acts of selfishness, egotism, and other ego-centered qualities. Devotion implies surrendering to God, thus removing the ego from the center of the actions. According to Dom Simeão (on November 23, 2000),

God is present everywhere, but we move away from him through rebelliousness, through bad-thoughts, with evilness in the heart, by doing things not of His liking. Those who want to follow this holy doctrine, this holy compromise, have to surrender their heart, their soul and body to God. He must ask to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that he will have the force and resistance to leave the world of illusion. All the brothers and sisters must ask and beg to get loose of the traps of Satan. It is not enough to drink Daime only, one need to pray as well.

Dom Simeão brought forth something that I mentioned in the Introduction: the Daime alone does not accomplish healing. It is the combination of Daime and ceremony, Daime and prayers, and Daime and spirituality, that heals, that brings the *mirações*, and that reveal the spiritual space.

The Barquinha's spiritual space, as I have already indicated, works through a combination of forces and elements: it is a syncretic space. Any one of the foundational matrixes alone filters and shapes those forces and elements. It is solely the combination of Daime and prayers that save. Christianity—even being a very important matrix—does not work alone, as Pai José made explicit on February 5, 2004.

The Bible is just a primer from the Father, the divine shepherd, but it is not complete, it describes not everything. It describes the here and now, the past, the present, the future, but only up to a certain point. The life with God, of the souls, it describes not. It describes not clearly enough what happens with the sons and daughters after disincarnating, what kind of procedure will be made with the disincarnating souls; how each one of those souls receives their sentence—how they are absolved or condemned—and this is always a divine sentence. Our Father proves His eternal love by giving permission to the holy messengers of the

celestial court, the Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, and all the other angels, to go throughout the worlds rescuing lost souls, those who repented, because the one who will judge those alive and dead is coming.

Who is, in truth, the dead? Are they those who disincarnated? Many disincarnated are not dead, like me, I am alive, very alive. He [Jesus] is alive, he will always be, and he is the source of eternal life. The dead are those who have no faith, who love not their Father and sovereign Mother, and their fellows, and knows not to follow the teaching of their divine Father: Love God above all, and your fellow like yourself.



Figure 19.

From left to right (name of medium between parenthesis): Rei Germano (João Batista), Príncipe das Flores (Hita), Bispo Dom Nelson (Madrinha Francisca), during a Consagração (see Chapter 7).

Pai José mentioned the work of the Archangels, as well as that of other angels rescuing the “lost souls.” It is interesting, however, that he mentioned that they work “throughout the worlds.” Which are those worlds?

This is not clear. In the Barquinha, the rescuing of souls, however, can be done also by other spiritual entities, such as the Missionários (see Figure 19). The Missionários can be spirits of deceased friars, priests, bishops, and even archbishops. As it is a flexible system, other spiritual entities can

also receive the title of “Dom” or “Frei” [friar], showing that they have assumed a higher level in the spiritual hierarchy.

As examples of bishops, we have Dom Nelson, first spiritual entity received by Madrinha Francisca. The clearest example is of Frei Daniel, but also there are the examples of Frei José Joaquim and Frei Manoel. Frei Daniel is the title given to Daniel,

founder of the Barquinha. José Joaquim was one of the first members of the Barquinha, and he was responsible for the ritual of *Doutrinação de Almas* (literally: indoctrination of souls—see next chapter) during Daniel’s lifetime. José Joaquim disincarnated sometime before Daniel. People say that he died during a ceremony. Daniel called his spirit back, telling him to go to die at home, which he did: he came back into his body, said farewell to those present at the ceremony, and went home, laid down on his bed, and passed away. People say that he died before Daniel to prepare the path for Daniel’s death. Frei Manoel is the title given to the former president of the Casa de Oração center, Manoel Araújo. Hita once told me that all people who follow seriously the Barquinha’s doctrine receive the title of Frei after death.

Vó Maria Joana, a former Preta-velha, received the title of Missionária after some time working at the Center, and as it is sung in one of her Salmos, she is a “missioner in this house, because God ordained so.” She is the main guide of Carlos Renato, the first medium prepared by Madrinha Francisca at the Center. I heard once that Vó Maria da Calunga Pequena has also achieved the level of missioner, but she cannot assume that function because she is one of the main spirits responsible for the Obras de Caridade service on Saturdays. The difference between Vó Maria da Calunga Pequena and Vó Maria Joana is that the Vó Maria da Calunga Pequena, by not assuming her title, still smokes a pipe and walks barefoot, things that Vó Maria Joana no longer does. Vó Maria Joana also participates in the *Consagração* (literally: consecration) of the church during certain important ceremonies, something that the other Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas cannot do.

Another category of originally non-Christian spirits (like the Pretos-velhos—see next section) are the Encantos. Beings from nature, they have a very ambiguous situation, as I will show in the section dedicated to the native influences. Dom Simeão is a “Encantado,” an enchanted being. He assumes the form a swordfish and also has the title of Dom, clearly related to a position relative to the rank of a bishop or an archbishop. As well, we find in the Barquinha the *Sete Anjos da Paz* (literally: seven angels of the peace), clearly Encantos who have very important tasks. According to Alcimar they

are invisible beings working here in our doctrine, bringing the force of the Sete Anjos da Paz. In truth, the Sete Anjos da Paz is the celestial court. They represent justice, health, love, and perseverance. For each one there is a representative, because all those things are the faces of God being manifested within the force [of the Daime].

The Primordial Sete Anjos da Paz, according to Alcimar, are the seven spirits eternally in the presence of God, facing Him. They are the first manifestation of God in form, again according to Alcimar, of justice, health, love, perseverance, truth, and loyalty. God sent to the Center seven representatives of those Primordial angels of peace: Dom Simeão (peace), Príncipe Augusto da Paz (loyalty), Príncipe Águia Dourada (fraternity), Princesa Estrelina da Paz (humbleness), Princesa Janaína da Paz (love), Príncipe Germano da Paz (truth), Princesa Damiana (justice). These are the seven angels of peace as known at the Center. During the Festas, seven banners are positioned in the Salão de Festas representing these seven angels.

In the Book of Revelations (Chapter 1:12-13), the Apostle John described seven candlesticks in front of God’s throne, around the “Son of Man” with seven stars at his right side (1:16). The candlesticks are the seven churches (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia), and the seven stars are the seven angels of those

churches (1:20). In Chapter 4:5 of the same book, John described seven burning lamps in front of God’s throne, the seven spirits of God.

In the Salmo of the *Príncipe das Candeias* (literally: Prince of the Candles), it is said that there is a light illuminating and clarifying. This refers to the seven candlesticks of God’s home, related to the seven candles belonging to the Virgin Mary. These candles radiate seven rays, rays described as being sweet and of love. At the same time, these rays are identified by seven days, seven *espadas* (a reference to the Sete Anjos da Paz), seven flowers, and seven mysteries. These lights are also seven stars illuminating the seven planes of steps of the holy love, and they are the “seven felicities” emanating from the Father. These rays help the believers to illuminate, to teach, and also to get rid of Satan. Finally, these seven candles at the Temple of the Lord are referred to as the light representing the *Sete Estrelas* (literally, Seven Stars).

By the way that the expression “Sete Estrelas” is commonly built in the Portuguese language, we can understand that “the” Sete Estrelas is a spiritual power: it is written *o* Sete Estrelas. In Portuguese, *star* is a female word, so the commonly correct form would be to write *as* Sete (seven—plural) Estrelas (stars). However, there is the indication that Sete Estrelas is a male and singular substantive. That same sentence, “o Sete Estrelas” appears in the hymn to Dom Simeão (Figure 20), sung at the opening of the all the Festas, where we find Dom Simeão saying that the Sete Estrelas goes in front of him, guiding him at all the moments. My first thought was that the



Figure 20. Madrinha’s hand during a Consagração (she is incorporated with Dom Simeão).

Sete Estrelas would be a spiritual entity, like a Caboclo or an Encantado. I was trying to solve this mystery when a person at the church told me that the Sete Estrelas are the constellation of Pleiades. In another Salmo we find that the Sete Estrelas, during the month of May, ascends to the throne of the Virgin Mary. May is the month when the Pleiades are not seen in the Amazonian sky.

So, we have here an intricate system of powers and forces: the seven stars of the Pleiades, the seven spirits in front of the throne of God, being the seven primordial powers of God, the seven candles belonging to the Virgin Mary, and finally the Sete Anjos da Paz.

African

One of the Pretas-velhas (see Figures 21, 22) once told me that to understand the “mystery of *cura* [healing]” I would need to be very acquainted with the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas:



Figures 21 and 22.
Statues representing Pretos and Pretas-velhas.

they are the main healers at the Center. The spiritual entity in charge of the Congá during the ceremonies held on the 27th of every month (see Chapter 7)—where healing is taking place—is Vô Benedito das Almas, a Preto-velho.

The Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas are spirits of deceased slaves. At the Center, the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas wear a cloth called *Espada* (sword; see Figure 23)



Figure 22.

around their neck. This cloth is used by the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas in several ways. Each Espada is decorated with the symbols of each spiritual entity, also called the *mistérios* (mysteries) of that spirit. The main use of the Espada is to clean the

energy of the client. Sometimes they cover the head, or even the whole body, of the client with the Espada. They then pray, remove the cloth, then shake it strongly as if they wanted to take something out of it. They also place their hands over clients and pray. When working with the Pretos-velhos, the medium assumes the posture of an old person, a little bent down, and usually using canes. They wear a rosary with colored beads around their neck or around their chest over the right shoulder.



Figure 23.
Vó Maria do Rosário.

The Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas are spiritual entities that come from the pantheon of Umbanda, an essentially Brazilian religion, which has possession as one of its main characteristics (see, for example, Ortiz, 1988). The Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas (see Figures 24, 25), during their lifetimes, had their activities restricted by slavery; at the same time, they were the healers and sorcerers of their people. After physical death, they kept their activities. They receive the respectful title of Vó, Vô, Pai



Figures 24 and 25.
A Preta-velha (above) and a Preto-veho (on the right)
dancing during a Festa.

or Mãe (literally: Grandma, Grandpa, Father, or Mother). They are the elders who guide and counsel those in need.

I had the chance to interview Vó Maria Clara in July of 2000, when I was preparing the grant proposal before beginning the doctorate program. Vó Maria Clara told me that she started working at

the Obras de Caridade ceremonies after an opportunity given by Vó Maria da Calunga Pequena during a Romaria for San Sebastian. I asked her about her life when she was alive, when she was still a slave. In fact, I asked her if she had had a life as a human being. She answered that she previously

had a life within matter, a life among slaves, old black slaves, warriors, but slaves. I received from God my name Maria Clara. I was the daughter of a black woman, but the color I inherited was not the color of my mother, dark, and that's why I received the name of Maria Clara. I worked and I became a Vó as a black, through my mother, with whom I learned to do healing, to do charity. I was the daughter of an abuse, do you understand that my son? So I came, Maria Clara. I had, in a certain way, a protection, I was guided by the light of the full moon, and I had the chance [of living] many good things. I can blame no one. The troubles I had became light, force. Everything was transformed in light, all the evil-doings, all the offenses I suffered. I had the chance of studying, of acquiring some knowledge of the language, and also my knowledge as healer and midwife. It was the teachings of the black people that gave me that chance, with much humiliation, with much wickedness, much pain, but those teachings I have today with me as light, as force. So, why a Preta-velha? Because I accomplish with a mission, my mother's mission. All she taught me are my superior orders: to do charity within that house [the Center].

The main posture that the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas bring to the Center is humbleness. They learned this humbleness, which is deeply connected with wisdom, in their time as slaves. They are the image of the elders who could not run away with the young rebels to the *quilombos* (villages organized by fugitive slaves). It is important to not associate humbleness with submission. Their humbleness is connected with the patience and endurance acquired during long years of a silent fight for freedom.

I once had the chance to witness a person raising her voice and talking angrily to a Preta-velha. The Preta-velha remained calmly chewing her pipe, looking at the floor, and listening, until the person could empty all her anger, thus being finally able to listen to whatever counsels the Preta-velha had for that person. Humility is the perfect match to charity, and I believe that this is one of the reasons why the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas are the main healers at the Center.

Another category of spiritual entities present in the Center's pantheon is the *Exús* and their female counterparts, the *Pomba-giras*. The *Exús* and *Pomba-giras* have a very ambiguous situation. They are seen, on one hand, as spirits of darkness, evildoers, rebels against God's will. They are considered a source of many kinds of trouble, from sicknesses to emotional and financial problems. These views, though, refer to the nonindoctrinated *Exús* and *Pomba-giras*.

Many times, when a client is with a Preto-velho or any other spiritual guide, that spiritual guide performs the cleansing of that person. This is done, in general, with imposition of hands and the blowing of tobacco smoke or by removing the *Exús* and *Pombas-gira* that client has as companions. This is the process of capturing those *Exús* and *Pombas-giras*. I say more about this operation in the next chapter, but here I share that those *Exús* and *Pombas-*

giras are captured and sent to a field where they will receive their indoctrination, returning later to receive, formally, their baptism.

After the baptism, they continue working at the Center and are incorporated in the “Jesus Christ Army.” Some of them change their category. For example, the Erê (spirit of children), who works with one of the members of the Center was, before the baptism, an *Exú-mirim* (a child-Exú). After the baptism, he became an Erê. Others Exús and Pombas-giras do not change their category and work silently at the Center.

I say silently, in that there is no specific ceremony at the Center for Exús and Pombas-giras. The process of conversion to the Barquinha for the Exú(s) or Pomba(s)-gira(s) of a person is to first be captured and then, after some time, baptized. The baptized Exús and Pombas-giras are considered guardians and soldiers accomplishing a mission.

Beth once shared with me that the Exús and Pombas-gira would approach a medium more easily than a Caboclo or a Preto-velho, because the Exús and Pombas-giras are closer to the Earth than these other beings.

Finally, there are the Orixás. Vó Maria da Calunga Pequena explained to me the nature of an Orixá:

The Orixás are energies, they are light created by our Father. They have a spirit. The sea has a spirit, and so too does the sun, the moon, the stars, the entire nature. The Orixás, they are not souls, they are not beings who lived on this Earth. They were created by God within the mystery of a saint. For example, Saint George. We know that Ogum is an Orixá represented by Saint George. Why?, because Saint George freed Mary from the claws of a dragon. Up to the point I can understand, God created that Orixá to protect His sons. Within that light, within that force is the power of God. And so it is with Saint Barbara and other Orixás. You won't be able to find a mirror like Saint George, Saint Barbara, Saint Bartholomew, Saint John the Baptist and other saints. Some Orixás do have a representative, but that representative has not come to Earth yet.

The Orixás, at the Center, are beings from nature. The difference between an Orixá and an Encanto (see next section) is that the Orixá is not, for example, a being living in the

fire, Ogum is the fire itself. Iemanjá is not a being that lives in the sea; she is the sea itself. The Orixás have all other beings working for him or her. In the Barquinha, as in Umbanda (see Ortiz, 1988), each (but, as Vó Maria da Calunga Pequena has said, not all) Orixá has a related Saint. We can see, though, that there is an ambiguous situation in the Barquinha. Saint George is, at the same time, a representative of Ogum, and Ogum was created by God “within the mystery” of Saint George, as if both of these beings, Ogum and Saint George, hold the quality of a warrior who fights in the name of God. The difference is that Ogum was never a human being, and Saint George was. The Christian bias appears in her speech when she does not know where to put Saint George: above or below the Orixá.

Table 5 lists the Orixás worshiped in the Barquinha and their respective representatives. I decided to add a column with the gender of each Orixá also, for it will not be evident to the English-speaking reader.

Table 5. *Orixás*.

Orixá	Gender	Color	Element	Christian Saint
Oxalá	M	White	Sky	God/Jesus
Ogum	M	Dark Blue	Fire	Saint George
Xangô	M	Brown	Rocks	Saint John the Baptist
Oxossi	M	Green	Forests	Saint Sebastian
Omulu/Obaluaê	M	Brown	Earth	Saint Bartholomew
Ossain	M	Green and white	Leaves	
Logum-Edé	M/F		Forest	
Oxumaré	M/F	Rainbow	Rainbow	
Iemanjá	F	Light Blue	Sea/Oceans	Virgin Mary
Nanã Buruquê	F	Lavender	Earth	Santa Ana
Oxum	F	Yellow	Rivers/Waterfalls	Our Lady of Conception
Iansã	F	Red	Winds/storms	Santa Barbara

As I have said above, each Orixá has Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas, Caboclos, Exús, Erês, and Encantos working for him or for her. So, there are Caboclos *da linha de Ogum* (literally: from Ogum's lineage), from the lineage of Oxossi, and so on. These are each distinct spiritual entities.

Amerindian

*And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth,
He persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.
And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle,
That she might fly into the wilderness, into her place,
Where she is nourished for a time, and times,
And half a time, from the face of the serpent*
(Rev., 12:13-14)



Figure 26.
Statues representing Caboclos.

Another important category of spiritual beings present at the Center is the Caboclo (see Figure 26).

The Caboclos are beings related to the forests: they are considered the spirit of deceased Indians who are coming to help people through mediums. The Caboclo responsible for all the other Caboclos in the Barquinha is the *Caboclo Rei dos Índios*, and when, during a Festa, the people decide to sing to call the Caboclos they sing first for the *Rei dos Índios*³⁵.

There are, however, different kinds of Caboclos.

For example, there is a Caboclo called Arranca-Tôco. In one of the *pontos*³⁶ dedicated to him, it is said that he has *parte com Nagô*, literally, that he is acquainted with Nagô. Nagô is

³⁵ One of the participants in Assunção (1999) said that in Catimbó, the *Rei dos Índios* is the chief of all the legions of Caboclos. The *Rei dos Índios* is also present at the Tambor de Mina (Ferreti, 2000).

one of the African nations to which some of the slaves belonged (see Bastide, 2001a). So, there are Caboclos that are not necessarily Natives Indians.

I had a notably interesting experience with a Caboclo. During a Festa, I could feel the presence of a being close to me. The people were singing for Caboclos (see Figure 27). However, instead of the presence of a Native Indian, that time I could see that my hands were changing into huge black hands. I could feel that this being was young, so he was not a Preto-velho. For sure, he was a Caboclo, but was not a Native. Suddenly, I heard *Oranian, Caboclo Oranian*. After that, the Caboclo was gone.



Figure 27.
Caboclos dancing during
a Festa.

I had never heard this name before. The next day, I was reading the book organized by Prandi (2001b), a collection of myths about the Orixás, when I came upon the name Oranian. I had never in my life heard about this Orixá. He is not a very well known Orixá, and I was very surprised. At night, I asked one of the Pretas-velhas about this, and she told me that I had an experience with a Caboclo, not with the Orixá, and that this Caboclo of mine was related to Oranian.

At the Center, the Encantados or Encantos (literally: enchanted ones) are beings assuming the form of animals, natural elements, plants, and mythical beings (such as mermaids, fairies, and nymphs). They can change their identity, according to the mystery from where they are coming. This is very important for understanding the activities and capacities of those spirits working in the Barquinha. The

³⁶ The music used for calling spiritual entities during the Festas at the Salão de Festas are the *pontos*. The preponderant instrument at the pontos is the *atabaques*, the drums. The pontos are only sung at the Salão de Festas. There are pontos for Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas, pontos for Caboclos, pontos for Erês, pontos for Orixás, and pontos for Encantos. However, Encantos and Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas also have Salmos sung during ceremonies inside the Church.

word *mistério* (literally: mystery) appears in several moments during the ritual, enhancing its esoteric and occult characteristics: this is the moment when the meaning of words, symbols, and acts are not revealed openly but individually to each person present during the spiritual works. As I said in the last chapter, however, *mistério* means also the different levels of the spiritual world. Depending on the *mistério* that the spirit is coming from, one can expect a different behavior and symbolism.

In the words of Madrinha Francisca (as cited in Luna, 1995),

The Encantados are the mysteries of God, secret things that God created, and to understand them one needs to go deep in the mysteries of the light [the Daime]. God created everything (sky, land, and sea). In the sky there are great mysteries, and in the land and sea. These are the three mysteries where the encantados live. There are encantados that are transformed into fishes, mermaids, dolphins, rocks, dragons, etc. The encantados do not say how they are or what they were, but many times one knows that they are at the spiritual side of life, and that they won't return to the matter. They are in penitence, purifying until the day of the final judgment. (p. 16)

I have decided to classify the Encantos as beings included in the Amerindian spiritual current, as the idea of spiritual beings assuming animal-like shapes is widespread among many South American native groups (see, for example, Langdon, 1994 for the Siona; Mercante, 2000a, for the Manchineri; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1968, for the Tukano; see also Luna, 2002 and Viveiros de Castro, 1996, for a theoretical overview on the subject). The Encantos are present in many cosmological systems throughout the North and the Northeast regions of Brazil (see Cravalho, 1993; Galvão, 1955; Prandi, 2001a; Wagley, 1988). However, this idea is also present in European mythology and fairy tales (see Wagley, 1988), as well as among Muslims (Lambek, 1989³⁷). According to Wagley (1988),

37 Lambek (1989) cited the people living at Mayotte, at the Comores Islands. They speak both Shimaore (a Bantu dialect) and Kibushy (a Malagasy dialect). They believe in the *Patros*, "Creatures who live in

The Tupi people had a mortal fear of the “other world souls.” They believed that those souls transformed themselves in animals—frogs, birds, lizards—and walked during the night. . . . The missionaries decided to fight against those pagan beliefs by teaching the population the orthodox concepts of Catholicism. The names of the indigenous heroes disappeared, being substituted by the name of God, of the devil, and of the saints. However, the colonizers and missionaries of the 17th and 18th Centuries believed themselves in werewolves, sorcerers, and demons; their perspectives concerning a supernatural world were, in many aspects, similar to the natives. Once jungle demons and malefic spirits belonged to a strange and new world and were not directly contradictory to the orthodox ideology of Roman Catholicism, it was not difficult to the colonizers and missionaries to add those dangerous entities from the fearful jungle and rivers to their own magic belief system. The new demons and spirits, according to the native description, corresponded in a general way to those of the medieval Iberian beliefs. So, native and European universal points of view enhanced each other and became fused forming the general Amazonian popular culture. (p. 226)

In the Barquinha, there are many important spiritual beings that belong to the category of Encantos. The main example is Dom Simeão. He assumes the form of a swordfish when he works in the mystery of the Sea. He has a human form in the Earth. I do not know exactly his form in the Sky, but he receives the title of *Príncipe Guerreiro da Paz* (literally: Prince Warrior of Peace). Dom Simeão is the being responsible for the Festas in the Barquinha in general (Sena Araújo, 1999).

Another important Encanto is *Dom Tubarão Branco* (literally: Dom White Shark). He is responsible for all the children—incarnated and spiritual ones. The ponto for Dom Tubarão Branco is sung before any Festa for Erês at the Center. *Rei Jararé-Açú* (literally: King Big Aligator—*açú* is a suffix derived from the Tupi-guarani language meaning *big*) is a guardian of the Barquinha. Specifically at the Center, we find *Príncipe das Águas Claras* (literally: Prince of the Clear Waters), *Rei Germano* (King Germano—see Figure 28), *Rei Girassol* (King Sunflower), *Princesa Primavera* (a fairy—Pincess Spring).

underwater communities around the margins of the islands and whose names derive from books of Islamic astrology and relate lore” (p. 44).



Figure 28.
Príncipe das Águas Claras (Hita)
and Rei Germano (João Batista).

As stated above, the Encantos are present in many other cosmologies in the North and Northeast of Brazil (see Assunção, 1999; Maués & Villacorta, 2001).

Sometimes, there is a sharp contrast between the Encantos in the Barquinha and the Encantos in other cosmologies. For example, the Encantos in Cravalho (1993) are basically malevolent beings, and in Prandi

(2001a) they assume an ambiguous role. In the Barquinha they are healers, instructors, and guardians.

There are two other good examples. The first one is the *Sereias* (mermaids—see Figure 29). They are present in many European myths, as dangerous beings always ready to kill sailors. At the Center they are benevolent beings sometimes called in Festas. They come when people sing for Iemanjá and other Orixás from the water such as Oxum.



Figure 29.
Encanto from the *Povo D'água*
(people from the waters: Encantos
related to the water, like botos and
sereias) dancing during a Festa.

Another is the *botos* (dolphins; see Cravalho, 1993; Galvão, 1955; Wagley, 1988). Cravalho (1993) worked in a small village close to the mouth of the Amazonas. He cited two kinds of botos: the red or pink one (essentially malevolent), and the *tucuxi*. The *tucuxi* sometimes is held responsible for saving people from drowning. Even the *tucuxi*, however, is kept at a distance, because it can cause many health problems, including madness. According to Cravalho (1993), the botos can transform themselves into humans and go to parties, where they drink a lot without getting

drunk and try to seduce women, and any woman who has the misfortune of being seduced by and having sex with a boto falls very ill. At the Center, they also sing for the Botos, considered benevolent beings.

Cravalho (1993) described at length the death of Seu Mauro, who had the ability of mediumship and decided not to develop it. Because of that choice, he became possessed by his spiritual companions and ended by having a very strange death. His canoe was found floating alone, and none saw what had happened. People said that he was killed by two of his spiritual companions when he was crossing a lake. After his death, he became an *encantado*, transformed into a snake. There were actually several versions for his death. One of them was from Dona Socorro, a local shaman. She said, “Mauro saw a beautiful boat with full sails, a boat from Encante. He followed the boat and was enchanted by it, meaning he was in their charge. If it was not for the boat, he would not have died” (Cravalho, 1993, p. 152) The boat from the *encante* is a common belief in the village, in the same way it is in the Barquinha. As such, to say that the Barquinha has its name due the fact that Daniel was a sailor in the past is a very easy conclusion.

We find in Durand (2001) a good description of the voracious and dangerous aspects of animals as gods or symbols. Those animals have a destructive and transforming nature, and many of them have astral symbols associated with them to show their character and power. Those same animals are pacified in the Barquinha, becoming benevolent helpers, disciplinarians, counselors, and protectors. Mermaids no longer enchant and devour men: they heal people.

I can see that, behind all the movement of pacification, a power of not exactly Christian ethic—but rather a Franciscan ethic, the ethic of charity (see Boff, 2002). Saint Francis of Assisi was one of the most “natural” Christian saints—in the sense that he had a very close relationship with nature. Christianity as a whole made the opposite movement, from nature to the city, from acting with nature to controlling nature. With a Franciscan ethic, an allegiance builds between animal and human kingdoms. In example, baptized Encantos assume a Franciscan ethic and thus begin to donate themselves for serving their fellow human beings.

However, it is necessary a physical space for the spiritual beings to act. This space is opened during the ceremonies, described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

THE CEREMONIES

Daniel Pereira de Mattos started the Barquinha essentially alone. He had moved to a hut in the woods surrounding Rio Branco (which now is the neighborhood of Vila Ivonete), and there began to drink the Daime, which Mestre Irineu sent to him, until he was able to cook it himself. It was during that time that he started to develop the ceremonies for the future Barquinha.

Daniel brought with him some influences, principally from his homeland, the state of Maranhão. In Maranhão, he likely had contact with the Tambor de Mina or the Pajelança, although it is not apparent that he was involved with those spiritual practices. As a matter of fact, his first wife was a *Mãe-de-Santo* (mother of spirits), a person with full knowledge of the African religious tradition (Sena Araújo, 1999).

However, Daniel's mission had really started previously, at the moment when he received the Blue Book in a vision. This vision guided the whole structure, which he later developed for the Barquinha. The vision was the entrance point for the Barquinha's spiritual space. Daniel was chosen to manifest this space in the physical level, and so, by the guidance of the—by then—immanent force of this space he began to put together the elements that would compose the ceremonies of the Barquinha.

However, the main element used by Daniel at that time was music. Madrinha Francisca said once that Daniel formerly would serve the Daime and be in silence, doing a concentration work, similar the ones done at the Alto Santo by Mestre Irineu, but after the time of the concentration was over, he would serve more Daime, get his guitar, and play it for hours, until the service was over. Daniel was said to

be a very gifted musician, a quality that becomes very clear when we look at the musical structure of the Salmos he received. According to Oliveira (2002), Daniel built his interpretation of the knowledge of the bible in the form of songs—making them easier to memorize for his illiterate followers.

I do not have the knowledge to develop an analysis of the Salmos at the musical level, but it can be said that Daniel's music was the first element to manifest the Barquinha's spiritual space at the physical level, even before he had any ceremonial structure. This being the case, before I describe the ceremonies themselves, I provide a brief introduction about the role of music in the Center's ceremonies.

Music

*El yagé invita al canto y todos los hombres,
quienes ingieren yagé desde la puberdad, incian el canto.
Es inconcebible tomar yagé, penetrar en el mundo y quedar-se mudo.*³⁸
(Bellier, 1986, p. 131)

The Barquinha is an absolutely and thoroughly musical system. In fact, Ayahuasca can be qualified as a musical plant³⁹. Music is the guideline for everything happening inside the Church or the Salão de Festas, and, even if is not the main element in the Congá, it is certainly very important. There are two different kinds of music in the Barquinha: *Salmos* and *Pontos*. Magalhães (2002) stated that the basic difference between these two is that Salmos are related to the presentation of a spiritual entity: who is she or he, where she or he comes from, what are his or her qualities. On the other hand,

38 “The yagé invites all men to sing, those who ingest yagé since puberty start singing. It's impossible to drink yagé, penetrate the world, and stay silent” (my translation. Yagé is another name for Ayahuasca).

39 The use of Ayahuasca, no matter what the tradition, is always linked to music. For example, according to Siskind (1973), “For the Sharanahua, singing is closely bound to ayahuasca. Men chant when they take it and they claim that without singing only visions of snakes appear” (p. 32). See also the previously cited literature about the Santo Daimé and Amazonian indigenous people.

the Ponto is a calling: the spiritual entity is requested to become manifest in the physical plane through a medium.

The Salmos have a more complex structure, both in melody and in lyrics. They are sung almost exclusively during ceremonies within the Church, although eventually they can be sung at the Salão de Festas, during very special occasions. The spirit of Frei Daniel, through Madrinha Francisca said, on January 7, 2004, that the Salmos “represents the sacred Bible, because the teachings come through the Salmos.” Most of the time, a Salmo describes a sequence of events or qualities of a particular spiritual entity. They are rich in images, guiding the imagination of the participants of the ceremonies.



Figure 30.
Atabaques used during the Festas.

Pontos, on the other hand, are sung during parties at the Salão de Festas. They are based upon the rhythm imposed by the drums (see Figure 30), even if they are also played with guitar and bass. Salmos are sung only once, whereas Pontos are sung repeatedly for some time. One of reasons for this is that Pontos are in general very short; in the case of a longer Ponto, it is sung only once.

The other two Barquinhas that I had the chance to visit (the Casa de Oração Jesus Fonte de Luz and the Casa de Oração Daniel Pereira de Mattos) only sing Pontos belonging exclusively to Barquinha. At the Center, the situation is different, as they sing many Pontos, some of which are sung also at Umbanda centers. I asked one of the members of the Center why they sing Pontos from Umbanda, and he replied that after Madrinha Francisca left the Casa de Oração, the original group of people that started the Center decided not to sing any of the

Pontos that belonged to the Casa de Oração. As they did not have any music to be sung during the Festas, they started to use Umbanda Pontos that some of the people arriving at the recently founded Center knew already. After some time, the people at the Center started to receive new and exclusive Pontos. Today they sing both the received and the Umbanda Pontos at the Center.

Both Pontos and Salmos are said to be “received” or channeled and are not considered to have been composed by the people at the Center. In general a spiritual being is the “owner” of a Ponto or Salmo, and that being chooses a person at the Center to give his or her Ponto or Salmo. There are Salmos brought by Encantos, by Pretos-Velhos and Pretas-velhas, by the spirit of Frei Daniel, by the Missionários. The Salmos received by Daniel when he was alive are different: any inference of a spiritual entity is hardly made and their themes vary between natural/astral and between Saints, Jesus, God, or the Virgin Mary. It is important to note that the Umbanda Pontos have an unknown source, in the sense that people do not know whether they were composed or received by someone. There are Pontos for calling, and subsequently coming from, Caboclos, Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas, Encantos, Erês.

On January 20, 2001, Rei Germano gave a lecture addressing the importance of the music at the Center.

The mysteries that come to that house have a foundation, and within that foundation, there is a divine being responsible for the work and for the message the hymn⁴⁰ or the Salmo brings. The brothers and sisters in doubt about any of the hymns should analyze that hymn meditating on them in the presence of the sacred light of the divine Father.

40 Sometimes the word *hino* (hymn) is used for referring to Salmos, Pontos, or both.

That “meditation” is to be made during the execution of the hymn. This is a revelatory process, when the above-mentioned teachings are transmitted esoterically to the person in search of the knowledge hidden in the hymn. The light of the divine Father is the force of the Daime emanating directly from the God. As I said above, however, the hymns are brought by spiritual beings, they are given to the Center during a mediumistic process. However, those hymns come from the Blue Book and as such belong to the Doctrine, to the Center, and to the Barquinha.

Contrary to the Santo Daime—where the received hymn becomes a part of the *hinário* (a collection of hymns) of the person who received the hino—in the Barquinha there is no owner. The owner of the hymn is God, and the hymn is considered a message from God (or from a Saint, Jesus, or the Virgin Mary) brought by the divine beings in charge of the hymn.

There is no book to help the people to sing during ceremonies. All of the {physical} books that contain the received Pontos and Salmos are kept locked away in a safe place and are brought to the Church or the Salão de Festas only when needed. I myself never had one of those books on my hand. They are considered as a physical—and because of its physicality, limited—counterpart of the Blue Book received by Daniel.

As I said above, the hinos—Pontos and Salmos—are brought by spiritual entities responsible for the “works” of the hymn. The “work” of the hymn is the effect that hymn has on the consciousness of each of the persons who participate in the ceremony. The works are the journeys through the spiritual space, and the hymns are the force that impels that journey. The hymns do not determinate what kind of *miração* a person will have when a Salmo is sung: they influence but do not determinate. Their effect is very

esoteric and particular and reveals the teachings that God gives to every participant in a very specific and individual way.

A hino can be used also to call the spiritual entity linked to that Salmo or Ponto. When the main singer of the ceremony feels the necessity to call any spiritual entity, he or she sings the hymn related to that spiritual being. I have witnessed Madrinha Francisca many times requesting a specific hymn to be sung, either in the Church or during the Festas. As such, Salmos and Pontos are tools to be used during the ceremony, and in being so, they need to be carefully chosen. Rei Germano, on October 1, 1999, said that people have to be “very careful when executing any hymn. People have to know what to sing when in need, when in trouble.”

On July 30, 2000, I had a conversation with Iban about the music of the Barquinha, particularly its effects on the consciousness of the participants in the ceremonies. Iban is one of the main musicians who plays bass and sometimes electric or acoustic guitar.

People have musical spiritual guides. The musical tones have colors. The movement of the Earth, of the solar system, they produce a sound. The Earth has its own music, which has its own color. For example, C will produce a color, and the tempo influences the color of your *miração*. Lyrics and the musical tone influence the variation of colors in a *miração*. You can play a hino and you can see all blue with some variation around that blue. In general hinos with a slower tempo give you the chance of making a transition between tones or melody, and you can see a harmonic variation of the colors, as if you were seen a musical scale, with all the tones in front of you. Each variation is a nuance of color, and the conjunct of all the tones forms a color: to make a C you have to play [in the case of guitar] three strings, and those three strings will produce a color guiding the color of your *miração*. When you make an E minor, for example as during a discipline hino it produces a dark color, not darkness, but a heavy color. During the Semana Santa we play Salmos with most tones in minor, all the harmonic system is very slow, it is like a mantra taking you, and you start spinning around an axis, which is that cross, the table, and that spinning produces a color. We have during the Holy Friday the color of wounds, the color of mourning. But, the Sunday of Easter the hinos are more light, and the colors change toward a sky-

blue. The color is not linked to each tone specifically, even if each tone has its color, but it is linked to each hymn, each hymn produces a specific color, which guides the *miração*: it is its spiritual tone. I think each one of us have a color. Rei Germano is violet, when you listen to his Salmo you can feel the violet fulfilling. The Princesa Janaína, you can feel the sea, the color of the sea, of ocean. The Águia Dourada you can see a sky-blue. Dom Simeão is a strong blue. The Daime has that axis: color, sonority, plasticity. You have the sound, the color, and the plasticity, like in a picture that you can feel involving you. Also, your mood influences in the way you are playing, and so, in the color you are producing. Each instrument has a spiritual history. The person playing has another history, and so spiritual guides. When you put together the person playing, the instrument, and what he or she is playing, you have a harmony.

The experience of music is multidimensional, and Iban made very clear that music guides the ceremony, bearing strong influence on every individual experience. Dobking de Rios (1972, p. 118), for example, explicitly say that the rhythm of the song influences the quality of the vision: faster songs bring forth faster visions, whereas slower tempo songs cause more prolonged visions. The songs are the element linking the spiritual space and the physical space. If Daime is the opener of the doors of consciousness, the songs are the element that influences the direction that someone will walk after crossing the threshold of the gates of spiritual space. According to Blacking (1995a), music

refers to states in which people become keenly aware of the true nature of their being, of the “other self” within themselves and other human beings, and of their relationship with the world around them. Old age, death, grief, thirst, hunger, and the other afflictions of this world are seen as transitory events. There is freedom from the restrictions of actual time: we often experience greater intensity of living when our normal time values are upset, so that we appreciate the quality rather than the length of time spent doing something. (p. 34)

Music as such acts as an equalizer, blurring the edges of social and cultural differences of the participants in a ritual and homogenizing the group. This fits well with the idea that people have of music as the key element of the Doctrine itself. Music is the

axis-mundi of the ritual and of the religious system itself. However, that axis is much more spiritual than cultural. Blacking (1995c) continued by saying that people can

make connections between musical and non-musical experiences without specific cultural rules . . . chiefly because many cultural rules are made with the same modes of thought as music, and because the human brain's ability to relate different transformations of the same figure do not depend entirely on cultural experience—though indeed certain milestones of cognitive development need cultural practice for their full realization. (p. 233)

During ritual, with music and *mirações*, people are rebuilding culture, not only reproducing it. Blacking (1995c) advanced his ideas saying that some kind of musical intelligence, which depends not entirely on culture or conditioning, would be responsible for a process of “musical communication” (p. 239).

If the artist who expresses personal experience may in the end reach universal experience, it is because he or she has been able to live beyond culture, and not for culture . . . and to re-tune particular cultural conventions to the common experiences of human beings by using modes of thought that every individual possesses. When the grammar of music coincides with the grammar of a particular person's body, cognitive resonance can be felt and apprehended partly because of learned social experience. But when the grammar of music coincides with the “musical” bio-grammar of the human body, in the most general sense, cognitive resonance can be felt and apprehended regardless of specific social experiences. An “intuitive” grasp of music is possible because performers and listeners possess the same innate musical “competence,” or “intelligence,” as creators of music. When someone uses those very personal (but “universal”) human modes of thought and action to create new arrangements of culturally familiar musical symbols, there is a very good chance that some other human beings, in re-creating their sense as they hear them . . . will *feel* in their bodies what others felt in creating them. And since those feelings are an essential part of the workings of the human body, they will be accompanied by experiences of wholeness, fulfillment, and successful self-actualization. . . . But I want to reiterate two points: first, that the process of resonance need not depend on cultural conditioning: it can be a phenomenon of human non-verbal communication; and, second, that the primary feelings that people have in their bodies are experiences of different kinds of internal motion, rather than sensations of particular emotions or physical state: they may choose to interpret those feelings with contemporary languages of emotion and other culturally familiar metaphors, but we shall not arrive at a coherent theory of musical communication if we try to explain different musical systems as languages of emotion: “music” as

a human capability, is a cognitive and hence affective activity of the body. (pp. 240-241)

Music as a final product, as an audible sound, is an affective activity of the body. However, I would say that—following the Center’s worldview—the body is reacting to a spiritual force, recreating it physically, vibrating and thus producing the music. Music created as such will have later the capacity of attuning other bodies toward that same spiritual force.

Doutrinação de Almas



Figure 31.
Doutrinação de Almas.

The Barquinha as a religious movement is totally based upon the idea of charity, and as such, the aim of every ceremony is to help the other. Personal salvation or help always comes after the other is saved or helped.

This “other” can be either an incarnated or a disincarnated person. The ceremony of the *Doutrinação de Almas* (literally: indoctrination of souls; see

Figure 31) is dedicated essentially to the salvation of disincarnated people who have not enough light to save themselves. That “light” is accumulated throughout the

earthly life: the more good deeds that person has during life, the easier it would be for that person to find a good path after death. Those who are immersed in sins and faults need to be rescued from the dark and somber places of the spiritual world, to where they go due to their bad deeds during life. However, the rescue is directed by God’s will and a person’s deservedness. After purifying their faults and sins, they are ready to be rescued.

The prayers of those here on the physical plane have also an important role in helping to prepare those ready to be rescued.

The idea of hell is conspicuously present at the Center. After death, people are judged according to their deeds during life and then directed to a realm according to their deservedness and God's will. However, the idea of paradise is not as concrete. All of the souls—from humans to archangels and even God—work eternally to spread the good over the universe. The idea of paradise implies a place where there is no work to be done, and for the people at the Center after death, the good souls keep working for God and for the good.

Returning to the idea of hell, the Roman Catholic hell is a place from which there is no chance of escape. The hell of the Center's cosmology, however, is not locked and people can make their way out on their own account—or can be rescued. People say at the Center that, according to the Creed, after death by crucifixion Jesus Christ traveled down to hell. He did not go there because of his bad deeds but rather for opening a way for the souls locked there to get out: he gave them access to salvation too. Then, on the third day, Jesus resurrected.

The ceremony of Doutrinação de Almas has been performed since Frei Daniel was alive. Madrinha Francisca told me that when she saw for the first time Daniel performing the Doutrinação de Almas, she found the ceremony so beautiful that she wished, inside her heart, that one day she could be a medium for the souls. Thus it happened: Madrinha Francisca was, for many years, the only medium to receive souls during the ceremony of indoctrination.

The Doutrinação de Almas is in general performed at the end of every Romaria, though also on the Day of the Dead (November 2). However, it can happen anytime Madrinha deems it necessary. As I was about to witness my first ceremony of Doutrinação de Almas (January 15, 2004), Madrinha Francisca came and told me to drink Daimé without fear, that I would be able to see beyond what would be going on in the physical plane.

The air inside the Church was heavy. There was a deep and almost palpable silence surrounding all the people present at the ceremony. I had several short *mirações* in which there was a dark place where many people were gathering. At the head of the group, there were a few people who seemed to be controlling the crowd. In my *miração*, all of the people seemed to be very calm, and all of them were waiting for their time to be called. I could not see faces, but everybody was dressed in white, and the background of the *miração* was a deep black. Suddenly, one of those people controlling the crowd made a movement with his (or her) arm, as if he (or she) was allowing the crowd to move on. The *miração* was over, and I opened my eyes. From that moment on several people within the church started to “receive” the souls.

There is a sequence of Salmos to be sung during the ceremony. Those Salmos were varied in their subject matter: (1) the “holy blessed cross”; (2) Saint John the Baptist (this one has as a theme the baptism of souls, and the role of Saint John as a guide for Jesus); (3) the penitent souls asking God to forgive them; (4) the souls in need ask for light and ask that the Virgin Mother guide those souls to Jesus; and (5) the moment when the soul leaves the body and stays wandering in the “space of darkness,” or, on the

contrary, how it is that when that same soul is illuminated by the holy love it goes to the feet of our Celestial Mother and of Our Savior, Jesus.

When mediums start to receive the souls, a person comes with a notebook and, after touching with the fingers the front of the medium asks, in the name of God and Jesus Christ, the name of the soul. The person takes note of the name and then asks what was the cause of the death, what the soul wants, and how many other souls are accompanying the incorporated soul. The medium incorporates only one soul: this is the head of group of souls linked through an affinity, for example, the same kind of death. Thousands of souls can form a group. After some mediums are interrogated, another person holding a burning white candle comes and, again touching the front of the medium, conducts the medium to the altar. The medium in general walks stooped, as if supporting a great weight. The steps toward the altar are very slow; walking appears to be very difficult.

After a group of mediums are gathered at the altar, Madrinha Francisca goes there. She wears a green stole with a purple edge. A 5-pointed golden star and a golden cross is drawn on one side of the stole and a cross and a flame on the other. When she arrives at the altar, she becomes irradiated by Frei José Joaquim, the “shepherd of souls.”

Frei José Joaquim was a member of the Barquinha when alive. He was responsible for interrogating the souls during Daniel’s time. It is said that he received prior to each ceremony—from spiritual beings—a list of the souls that were supposed to be incorporated by the mediums, and when he was interrogating, he checked the list to see whether all of the souls were coming to the indoctrination. It is said also that Frei José Joaquim died during a ritual. Frei Daniel called him back to his body, and told him to go

home to die, which he promptly obeyed. He stood up, bid farewell to all those present and to his family, went home, and died again.

After being irradiated with Frei José Joaquim, Madrinha Francisca starts the process of “giving the holy doctrines” for the arriving souls. All of the mediums kneel in front of the Madrinha. She systematically blesses the head of the mediums, drawing a cross in the air above the top of their heads. Meanwhile, she makes a speech saying that those souls are there ready because they recognized that there is a light full of goodness and that all should love that light. She says at the end of the process, “Receive, my dear sisters souls⁴¹ that holy doctrine, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” Then, the souls are given to Jesus Christ, and she says, “Receive the mystery of the blessed cross.” At that moment, Madrinha Francisca touches the head of the mediums with both hands and asks to the souls to leave the mediums, who then stand up and return to their seats. After all the mediums have been touched, a Creed is prayed. Several groups of mediums can be directed to the altar in every ceremony.

I had a conversation with Barbara, who was 32 years old at the time, about the ceremony of Doutrinação de Almas. She has been participating at the Center for 13 years. While I was there, she was unemployed conventionally, devoting her time to the Center. I asked her what was the service of Doutrinação de Almas. She replied that it was a service done in benefit of the souls in need. Then I asked why those souls would need all this assistance.

When living in matter, those souls did not fulfill their holy compromise with God, they had no devotion, no faith, believing not in a God, the Father, Creator, owner of all lives. So, basically, those souls when living in the matter practiced large and heavy sins, and when they died they found themselves in a very difficult

⁴¹ Soul is a feminine word in Portuguese, so, no matter the sex of the medium or the incorporated spirit, the soul is always addressed as “she.”

place, a place without light, atrophied by inferior spirits. We here at this house [the Center] make penitence, we perform compromises in benefit of those souls, for God, in His infinite mercy, to be able, along with his armies, to rescue those sister souls from their exile, suffering the calamities of guilt, of rebellion and of ingratitude against God. We here perform compromises, penitence, supplications, and each one, according to their deservedness, are rescued by the beings, by the spiritual entities, by the shepherds of souls, protected by the holy archangels when they are searching for those souls. When we supplicate, we become involved in that search. Here, many of the brothers and sisters are medium, so, when God authorizes, we have the indoctrination. The souls come, after being cleansed, to receive their doctrine. After receiving that doctrine they go to another plane, with light, protected by beings of light, where they will do penitence, supplicating to God to save them, to receive another opportunity to receive salvation. Here no one thinks they are already saved. None of us knows where we will go after disincarnating. God will, along with the holy archangels such as Saint Michael, measure the weight of each of us. According to our works and deeds, with our devotion, our love for God, everything we do when we are alive, this will decide the direction our soul will take. If you plant flowers of light here, for sure you will harvest flowers of light in the invisible [after death]. Otherwise, you will only find the thorns without light, the exile, the suffering. We have to love God with all our heart in order to escape that destine, and we have to search with all our heart, even with some difficulties, because we are all sinners, sons and daughters, and we are subject to mistakes. We have to try to walk according to God's will, within Christian teachings, within the holy commandments. This is the way that we have to obtain light, not only for us, but also for helping other brothers and sisters, not only at this plane, but also in the invisible.

Each medium develops his or her own way of preparing for the ceremony of Doutrinação de Almas. They assume what they call *compromisso*, the compromise of performing certain prayers in benefit of the souls, during a certain amount of days or even weeks. This is a very individual procedure, and there is no rule governing this preparatory time. Even if the medium is not in a preparatory time, every Monday many people gather around the *Cruzeiro* to pray for the souls. Monday is considered the day of the souls, generally observed by prayer and the burning of white candles at the feet of the *Cruzeiro*.

I asked Barbara about her experience during the preparatory time, as well as during the ceremony itself.

It is very difficult to perform compromises for the souls. The more time the soul has been in exile, the heavier the weight the medium feels. You can feel headache, nausea, sleeplessness, and this can happen during the entire compromise, every day you are praying; you start to feel their *carrego*⁴². Certain compromises for certain souls are more difficult, and you have to make a better preparation to make your guardian angel stronger, to give you a better protection, so that when the souls come you feel not that bad. Even though, the medium actually feels really bad, even with a very good protection. The *carrego* is very strong. We become sleepless, though it is different for each medium. We are conscious mediums [they retain consciousness during the trance]. When that energy, the force of the soul arrives to you, you remain conscious, but your physical conditions become different, modified; your breath, your touch, everything becomes parallel to the material world, and you incorporate the soul, you feel the energy of another being. The energy of the work [the ceremony] becomes different.

Other people freely talked to me, independent of being asked about it, about the bad feelings mediums have when incorporating souls. Everything is very “heavy,” and that heaviness is transmitted in the way the mediums walk when incorporating those souls: always curved, with very slow steps, crying, moaning: they carry the world on their shoulders.

Batismo de Pagãos

Along with the *Doutrinação de Almas*, the *Batismo de Pagãos* (literally: baptism of pagans) is the main mission of the *Barquinha*, and like the *Doutrinação de Almas*, the baptism is performed near the end of every *Romaria*. It can also be performed when *Madrinha Francisca* feels the necessity.

The *Batismo de Pagãos* is the counterpart to both the *Doutrinação de Almas* and the *Obras de Caridade* work (see below). Very frequently, when someone arrives for the first time at the Center and goes to a consultation with a spiritual entity, the spiritual entity (in

⁴² *Carrego* is very difficult to translate to English. It is related to *carga*, load, burden, charge. *Carrego* is all the bad energy a soul can have with him or her, the bad energy of their guilt, of their sins: they become *pesada*, heavy.

general a Preto-velho or a Preta-velha) removes all of the bad energies around that person. Those bad energies are generally believed to be connected with inferior spirits accompanying that person. Those inferior spirits are captured during a very peculiar procedure. The Preto-velho or Preta-velha, when giving the consultation, and when they feel that they need to “clean” the client, can do two different things: they can call another medium to help them (when they feel that they need to be physically [incorporated in the medium] present at the process of capturing) or they can call their *cambone*, the assistant every Preto-velho and Preta-velha has when occupying the body of the medium.

When the Preto-velho or Preta-velha calls another medium, they seat the client and the medium side by side on stools. Then, they can put one hand on the head of the medium and another hand on the head of the client. Then they ask the always-present *cambone* to pray one Our Father and one Hail Mary. During the process of praying the medium starts shaking and assumes, in general, a very angry face and mode: the medium is receiving an *exú* (at the Center’s cosmology, a male spirit with a negative energy) or a *pomba-gira* (again, a female spirit of the same category). The spiritual entity in charge of the *passagem* (passage) removes the hand from the client’s head and puts the first finger on the front of the incorporated medium. The Preto-velho or Preta-velha asks the name of the *exú* or the *pomba-gira*, how many other spiritual beings are with that *exú* or *pomba-gira*, and what that negative being wants with the client. After those questions are sufficiently answered, the Preto-velho or Preta-velha performs a ritual speech in which he or she says that he or she delivers (in Portuguese: *entrega*) that spirit to Dom Simeão, who will take the spirit to a *Campo de Luz* (field of light), where that spirit will receive instructions and teachings. Those instructions and teachings are aimed, essentially, toward a moral transformation of the *exú* or *pomba-gira*.

When that captured spirit is completely transformed and ready, he or she returns to the Barquinha for receiving the baptism, entering definitively Jesus Christ's armies to fight for the good and the light.

The spirits present at the Baptism can be divided in two categories: those who are returning to receive the Baptism after having been captured and sent to the Campos de Luz for receiving the preparatory teachings, and those who are spiritual guides of participants (whether they are *fardados* or not) at the Center's ceremonies. The spiritual guides can also be divided further into two other subcategories: those receiving the baptism (previously pagan spirits, like *exús*, *pombas-giras*, *Pretos-velhos*, *Pretas-velhas*, *Caboclos*, *Encantos*) and those receiving the confirmation of the baptism (like *Missinários*).

The ceremony of baptism is very similar to the Indoctrination of Souls. In fact, someone at the Center for the first time would be unable to note the difference between the two. The first Salmo to be sung is the *Santa Cruz Bendita* [holy blessed cross]. Then comes *Quatro Estrelas Brilhantes* [four shining stars] and the Ponto of Dom Simeão. The Ponto announces that Dom Simeão is arriving—his presence is extremely necessary: he is the main guardian of the Center—and Madrinha Francisca incorporates him, but sometimes she can incorporate Frei Daniel or the Bispo Dom Nelson. Dom Simeão, while incorporated in Madrinha Francisca, holds a white rose on his right hand and a burning white candle on the left. The people in the Church pray one Our Father and one Hail Mary, and he soaks the rose in water and starts making the sign of the cross on the front of the mediums incorporating the spirits receiving the baptism, kneeling in front of him. Dom Simeão moves from the medium on his left side to the one on the right. He

repeats this movement for some time while speaking about the importance of that moment, of that act, explaining that the cross is the symbol of faith and about the importance of accepting Jesus. Near to the end of the baptism, Dom Simão touches the chest of each medium with a cross, saying that he is giving a cross to each spiritual entity present receiving the baptism. He says that each one of those spiritual entities must work for that cross and that they have to arrive at the feet of the Virgin Mary—to whom they have to render report of all their acts—with that cross. Dom Simeão then says that each spiritual entity receiving the baptism was brought by a spiritual Godmother and a Godfather, and that now, at that moment, they Godparent should give them a Christian name, and this is received only in such a case as they do not have one already. In an example of this naming ceremony, the Caboclo Arranca-Tôco, working with Dona Chiquita—see Chapter 6—received the name of *Antônio da Luz*. It is important to mention that those names are given “spiritually”: no name is said aloud in the Church. After this, the mediums—no longer incorporated—stand up, and the all the participants pray a Creed.

I asked Barbara about the Baptism of Pagans. Again, her answer is very important for understanding the centrality of that practice for the Barquinha as a whole.

Pagans. They are beings who did not receive the light of the baptism. The baptism is the first sacrament of all the sons and daughters of God, and they [the pagans] did not receive it. So, they have one more opportunity of evolution, because the process of evolution happens away from the Earth also, spiritually we are always evolving. Dom Simeão, supported by the archangels and all the spiritual entities that have already received the baptism, brings all those beings. We work here with neither pomba-gira nor exú. Those spiritual entities are under orders and they are brought to a field of light where, according to their deservedness—otherwise they go to other places—they will be prepared, they will be cleaned, and when it is authorized by God they return to receive the baptism. Then, they change their mystery, they will receive a Christian name, and they will work doing charity, doing the good without looking to whom. This isn't with pomba-gira and exú

only, but also with Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas who have not yet received the baptism. Within this house [the Center] they will work with the blessed cross and the rosary of our Virgin Mother, healing, doing charity. The Caboclos, the Encantos, the Indians, the Encantos of the sea, of the virgin forests, of the astral—in general those from the astral come only to receive the confirmation of their baptism because they are very evolved—these beings all will work within the light. Even if they had done some work before arriving here [and here she is talking about sorcery] they undo the evil they had done, and when it is authorized by God they come to receive the baptism, to receive new clothes, new light. Some of them are brought to be bound at the quarries of the Jordan River⁴³, those who are heavier, the rebellious ones that do not accept the prison. The being that is arresting those non-baptized beings knows what the necessity is, why they are doing it. They arrest them to clean them, and they [the nonbaptized] have to stay there until they leave their rebellion behind and learn to love God—all our works are toward that direction. This is something very constant in our lives. Sometimes a client comes here that needs to *fazer uma passagem* [literally: to “make a passage,” i.e., to have an evil or nonbaptized spirit passed from him or her to the medium, so it can be arrested], so, the spiritual entity working with us moves away [leaves the body of the medium] and we receive the soul or inferior entity that is disturbing the client. The spiritual entities coming to receive the baptism are lighter, they are not desperate like the souls [coming for indoctrination], because they come already after some preparation, they come protected by the angels; they are not so heavy.

Obras de Caridade

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity,
I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.
And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries,
and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove
mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.
And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,
and though I give my body to be burned,
and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.
Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not;
charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly
seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;
Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

43 During the procedure of *limpeza* (cleanse: see description below), the (evil) spirits are arrested and sent to the fields of light to be indoctrinated. The “rebels” or obstinate ones are sent to the quarries of the Jordan River, where they will be waiting until the day God orders them to be set free. On that day, they are sent to the one of the Barquinhas to receive the baptism. See a good similarity with Rev. 9:13-14: “And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.”

*Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies,
they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease;
whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.
For we know in part, and we prophesy in part
. . . And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three;
but the greatest of these is charity.
(I Cor., 13)*

Obras de Caridade, or “Charity Works,” is the most popular ceremony at the Center. This is the ceremony directed to the main purpose of the Barquinha: charity. However, the objective of this ceremony is not to assist disincarnated souls or pagan spirits but the community. People from many parts of Rio Branco, and even from other cities and states, come to the Center every Saturday. The ceremony is held from 7:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m., sometimes midnight. The average number of clients at every *Obras de Caridade* is 50 clients per night. However, the average number of people who participate at the service can easily reach 100. Some of the Pretos-velhos or Pretas-velhas have two or three clients, but the most popular Pretos-velhos or Pretas-velhas can have 7 to 10 clients every Saturday. Usually when the ceremony is finished inside the church, those Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas are still with their clients in the Congá.

People come to the Center for all possible and imaginable reasons, from sickness and family-related, to emotional and financial problems. They come seeking advice, solutions, and support.

Frei Daniel determined the basic structure of the *Obras de Caridade* ceremony when he was still alive. The ceremony starts around 7:15 p.m. with the ringing of a bell announcing that the Daime will be served. Two long lines, one of men and another of women, form in front of the table where the container with the Daime sits. The person who will serve the Daime starts to pray one Our Father and one Hail Mary as all the

people around him pray together. The Daime is generally served by a man, but it can at times be served also by a woman. That person serving the Daime stays the entire ceremony sitting at that table: they are responsible for the Daime, a very important function during rituals. It is important to say that only the fardados are required to drink Daime. The other participants drink it only if so they wish, and many people go to the consultation with the Preto-velho or Preta-velha without drinking Daime.

Around 7:30 p.m., the service begins inside the church. Frei Daniel left a sequence of Salmos to be preferentially sung during the Obras de Caridade, although variations can always happen, due to new Salmos have being received and being included freely in the ceremony. The Salmos are divided into three sections. The first section is always the same, and there is no variation. It starts with the *Culto Santo* [literally Holy Cult or Holy Ceremony]. The Culto Santo is considered by many people at the Center as the most important Salmo of the Barquinha: it is used to open all the main ceremonies in the Barquinha. It starts with the affirmation that “I am firm in the Culto Santo that I am devoted to, God bless my prayers, from the soul to the heart.” Further it entails a short description of the role of Saint John the Baptist for Christianity and the baptism of Jesus, and a supplication to Saint John to bless the ceremony that is starting. The Salmo finishes with the verses, “I am firm in the truth represented by that light, the holy cult of the doctrines of Jesus is open.”

Then come the *Soldado de Ordem* (literally: soldier of order), *Forças Armadas* [armed forces], *Reforços Invisíveis* (invisible reinforcements), and the Troco-troco (the onomatopoeia of the sounds of horses trotting). Those are Salmos intended to bring the forces of the light to protect the church and all the participants in the ceremony. After

those Salmos have been completed, Madrinha Francisca recites a ritual speech in which she officially opens the ceremony, asking people to not be afraid, and assures that everybody present is protected by God. Three more Salmos are then sung: Cruz Bendita (holy cross), Virgem Mãe da Caridade (virgin mother of charity), and Poder Curador (healing power). These are the Salmos calling the *curadores*, the healers, the spiritual entities who will perform charity and will work attending the clients.

Then Madrinha Francisca starts calling the spiritual guides—most of them Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas, but also one Encanto—to “receive their apparatus”: the medium. This is a very interesting moment, because Madrinha Francisca do not call the name of the medium, asking him or her to receive their spiritual guide: she calls the name of the spiritual guide asking him or her to receive the body of his or her medium. In general, 13 spiritual guides work each Saturday.

After a name of a spiritual guide is called there follows three or four seconds of complete silence. Then, the incorporated medium stands up, whistles (this is a characteristic sign that someone is incorporating a spiritual guide: the guides always emits a kind of whistle announcing his or her presence), and performs a ritualistic speech. This speech is always the same: “Blessed be our lord Jesus Christ,” to which people answer: “forever be blessed,” “Blessed be the forever Virgin Mary,” “forever be blessed,” and after this speech, the guide remains standing up. She calls one by one, and after they are all “on earth,” that is, incorporated, they move to the Congá.

After the mediums and their spiritual guides go to the Congá, there comes the second section of Salmos. This sequence is not fixed, and was not established by Frei Daniel. It is basically, again, for reinforcement and protection. The first sequence of

reinforcement was for the member of the Center, and this second sequence is for the outside people participating in the service. Most of the time, the sequence of Salmos is as follows: Deusa Diana (goddess Diana), Santo Anjo Gabriel (Holy angel Gabriel), Príncipe Juramidam (Prince Juramidam), and Santo Anjo da Guarda (holy guardian angel).

After those come the third sequence of Salmos, formed of Salmos left by Frei Daniel: Santa Luzia, Santa Terezinha, Santa Clara, *Poder Curador* (healing Power), *Luz da Caridade* (light of charity), and *Pão de Cada Dia* (everyday bread).

After this third sequence, Madrinha Francisca performs again a ritualistic speech “closing” the ceremony, giving all the works done to God. Another Salmo to the Archangel Gabriel is sung, and again the Culto Santo (this time, the final sentence of this Salmo is said “our holy cult is *closed*”). The service is over.

I have described here one part of the ceremony. However, the Obras de Caridade happens in two different areas: within the Church and in the Congá. Before the spiritual guides possess their mediums, the *cambones*—the helpers of each spiritual guide when incorporated—are at the Congá preparing everything for the mediums to arrive: opening the wardrobes of each spiritual guide, cleaning the space, putting the little stools where Pretos-velhos and clients will sit in order, and so on. Each spiritual entity has a wardrobe where they keep the material they use during the consultations: herbs, candles, Daime, pens and paper, *pemba* (colored and consecrated chalk for the *Pontos-riscados*). The wardrobe is also a personal altar of each of the spiritual guides, and it has always images of Catholic saints, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and sometimes of Pretos-velhos, Pretas-velhas,

and Caboclos. During the time in the ceremony when Madrinha Francisca calls the *curadores*, the cambones stand up, waiting for the guides to arrive at the Congá.

When they arrive, the spiritual guides go to the wardrobe, facing it, perform a quick and silent prayer, and sit on the small stool in front of the wardrobe. Beside the stool, on the floor, there is always a stone, upon which is another white candle lit by the spiritual guide. This is the *Ponto* of the spiritual guides, their connection with the Earth, represented by the rock. The candle burning in the small altar on top of the wardrobe, on the other hand, represents the connection of the spiritual guide with Heavens. After the spiritual guide sits, the cambone salutes the guide, asking for their blessings, to which the guide always answers, “God bless you.” After this, the cambone first puts the *espada* (sword)—a cloth drawn with the symbols of each entity, also called the mysteries of that spirit—around the medium’s neck, and then puts a rosary made of colored beads across the chest of the medium, generally hanging over the right shoulder, though sometimes hanging on the neck of the medium. Each spiritual guide has a rosary of distinctive colors, and those colors are linked to the mystery of each guide. When the spiritual guide is a Preto-velho or a Preta-velha, the cambones light his or her pipe and give this to the guide. Encantos, on the other hand, do not smoke.

The spiritual guide stays quiet for some time, smoking, as if concentrating on the work to be done. He or she may give some instructions to the cambone or may ask the cambone to call his or her first client. When the client arrives, if it is the first time this client is coming, the spiritual guide asks why the person is there and what she or he wants from the spiritual guide. After this initial conversation, the spiritual guide performs a *passe* on the client. The *passe* is made mostly using the *espada*. The main use of the

espada is to clean the energy of the client. Sometimes they cover the head or even the whole body of the client with the espada, pray, remove the cloth, then shake it strongly as if they want to take something out of it (see Figure 32). The spiritual guide also lays their



Figure 32.

Vó Maria do Rosario performing a passe on a client.

hands over the client and prays. The smoke of their pipes is also abundantly used over the head, hands, chest, and back of the clients.

The spiritual guide uses the passe to clean the client of all bad energies. However, the spiritual guide also make a connection with that client, and I could say that this is the moment when the spiritual guide opens himself or herself to the client and decides what to do and say.

According to Csordas (1994),

Laying on of hands is more than a simple transfer of divine power from healer to supplicant. The act bears . . . the polysemic symbolic properties of touch. To understand the way these properties are actualized in practice, we must understand the laying on of hands as an act that lies midway between a gesture and a fully elaborated “technique of the body.” As a gesture, its performative efficacy is inseparably linked with the prayer to which it is an accompaniment. It implicitly enacts two important psychocultural themes upon the afflicted person: it is a gesture of *intimacy* and protection as well as gesture of *control* and the application of power. (p. 51)

Csordas (1994) continued, describing the way Charismatic Christians use this gesture. It is very interesting to note that they perform the laying-on of hands in almost the same way as in the Barquinha. There are many variables:

a hand, or two, on top of the head; a hand on the forehead, sometimes touching with the fingertips only and sometimes such that a supplicant's face is virtually covered by the healer's palm; a single hand on the shoulder; a hand on the chest and one on the back, or on the forehead and behind the head such tha a virtual axis of divine empowerment runs through the supplicant's body; or a hand laid directly over an afflicted body part. (p. 51)

Continuing in their similarity with the Center, Csordas (1994) said that those gestures do not have their meanings very detailed. He said that it is a matter of “bodily *spontaneity* in contact between healer and patient” (p. 51).



Figure 33.
Vó Benedita performing a passe.

After the cleansing operation (see Figure 33), the spiritual guide talks with the client, advising him or her, prescribing the material the person will need to bring on the second visit to the Center. In general the spiritual guide also prescribes a bath of herbs to clean the energy of the client before he or

she comes again. On the second time that client returns to talk with that spiritual guide—in general on the next Thursday—the client brings the material asked. The material varies according to the client's problem, but most of the time it includes candles, honey, and different herbs. The passe is used again by the spiritual guide; however, instead of cleaning, this time the spiritual guide's intent is to energize the client.

A personal relationship is established here. It might be necessary, depending on the client's problem, for him or her to return more times. In case of sickness, the client

might be advised to attend the ceremony held on the 27th of the month (see below).

Otherwise, if the problem is solved, the client might decide to keep coming to the Center only to participate in the ceremonies, or, in the case that the client does not drink Daimé, he or she might decide not to return to the Center, unless it is necessary. Most clients, when they return for a second or third visit to the center, tend to see the same spiritual guide whom they had seen before.

The Obras de Caridade is probably (along with the Festas, I think—see below) the most “public” ceremony. It is completely held in benefit of the other, of the visitor, of those in need, not only at the physical level, but also at the spiritual level. Pai José once told me that the most important part of the Obras de Caridade was not the work done for the “alive” people, those living at the physical level, but to the souls and other kinds of spiritual beings in need. He told me that the people who were coming there seeking help would find it in one way or another, and that they could go to many other places to find what they need. However, the spiritual work done inside the church was much more important because much of the assistance given to the disincarnated spirits at the Center is unique and needs to be given only there. It is as if the Center is a “specialized” place for helping certain kind of spiritual beings or solving some kind of problems.

Instruções

The *Trabalho de Instrução* or *Instruções* (literally: work of instruction or instructions)⁴⁴ is dedicated to the spiritual development of the members, although anyone can participate. The number of participants is always reduced mostly to the fardados and frequent visitors, the people who follow very closely to the Center's calendar, and sometimes participating with more assiduity than many fardados.

There is no fixed structure for this ceremony, which is in general opened with the Troco-Troco Salmo. There are however, some Salmos that are considered "instruction Salmos," being preferentially sung. Those are Salmos with strong moral content, and participants are led through a deep exam of their own conscience. The spiritual development is made in a review of one's own life. The Daime brings the spiritual beings to the ceremony, and they help the participants to review their perspective about their own lives and about their participation in the world.

The general feeling during the ceremony is of intense concentration and seriousness. Peoples' faces reveal their inner struggles, part of the transformative process offered by the Daime to whoever drinks it.

I would like to emphasize here the perspective that it is the Daime that guides the ceremony. In the past, Madrinha Francisca would choose the Salmos to be sung during every ceremony. João Batista, her son and main singer, by that time was learning how to play guitar. He was also starting in the role of conducting ceremonies, and Madrinha Francisca had to decide beforehand the sequences of Salmos. However, as João Batista became more skilled in conducting rituals, Madrinha Francisca stopped choosing the Salmos, and João Batista assumed that job. However, sometimes Madrinha Francisca can interfere in the

⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that Daniel, in a letter to the Rep. José Guiomar dos Santos, mentioned that he performed an "instruction trip" (Oliveira, 2002, p. 66) to Europe and Jerusalem when he was a sailor.

ceremony, requesting a Salmo to be sung or even a sequence of Salmos, but most of the time, João Batista shapes the ceremony.

For example, after a particularly intense ceremony, one in which I experienced myself as being smashed by a roller (I did not understand why: I was just being guided by the Salmos into places in my soul, places that I was not really sure whether I was ready to visit). I asked Iban why João Batista decided to sing such a strong sequence of Salmos. Iban told me that João Batista probably did not choose it beforehand: that the Daime guided him through the Salmos. Iban explained that during some ceremonies João Batista was intuitively guided to execute this or that Salmo: his decisions concerning the Salmos were guided by spiritual directions from the Daime or from some other spiritual being. Here is evident the widespread and common idea that the Daime is a living being incarnated at the junction of the *jagube* and the *rainha*, the vine and leaves (see also Chapter 6).

The work of Intruções is also devoted to the instruction of the community as a group. When the force of the Daime is at its height, Madrinha Francisca calls forward one of the spiritual guides to give a talk. The spiritual guide and his or her medium stands up and talks about some topic relative to the spiritual development of each person and to the well-being and functioning of the Center. At the end of the ceremony, Madrinha Francisca also gives a talk. Her talk, however, is normally only devoted to the organization of the Center and has no “spiritual” content (I use quotation marks because any talk during a ceremony is considered to have spiritual content). This talk is the moment for organizing the Center as a community and as a social group of people who need to work together toward a common goal: charity.

On the 27th day of every month, participants celebrate in the Barquinha the ceremony of *Prestação de Contas* (literally: *rendering report*). During this ritual, all of the members of the Barquinha render reports of their acts and works preformed during the previous month to God. At the same time, Madrinha Francisca renders report about all the works done at the Center. This is done spiritually, in the spiritual space.

The ceremony of *Prestação de Contas* is the final climax of a monthly cycle, and as a climax, another very important task is preformed during that ritual: healing. From 27th to 27th, several minor healing ceremonies are preformed every Saturday and for those in need during the week, more frequently on Thursdays. When a Preto-velho or Preta-velha judges that one of his or her clients is more seriously sick, they indicate that person to participate in the ceremony of *Prestação de Contas* inside the Congá, where they receive a very special attention from the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas (and sometimes other spiritual entities) working there.

As such, the ceremony itself goes on in two different spaces: the Church and the Congá. Within the Church, the people who are not under treatment (re: those are in the Congá) sing Salmos. The ceremony starts in the same way as an Obras de Caridade work. The Daimé is served around 7:00 p.m., and the ceremony starts by 7:30 p.m. The first Salmo to be sung is the *Culto Santo*, followed by the *Soldado de Ordem*, *Forças Armadas*, *Reforços Invisíveis*, and the *Troco-Troco*. Again, after those Salmos someone recites a ritual speech that officially opens the ceremony, asking people to be not afraid and saying that everybody there is protected by God.

After this introduction, some other various Salmos are sung, but among those three must be included *Cruz Bendita*, the *Canto dos Curadores* (song of the healers, calling the

healers to work), and another one for those who are under treatment in the Congá, asking those people to put their hands over their hearts. After that sequence, they sing another Salmo for *conforto* (literally: comfort). The consolation is needed because many times the process of healing involves difficult moments when people can feel bad or just be confronted by their fears and inner problems: healing, as I show in Chapter 9, many times means facing feelings, memories, or thoughts that may be not so welcome. Salmo for the consolation is meant to bring comfort, peace, and healing.

After the Salmo for consolation, prayers are said, and the commemorative part of the ceremony begins, when happier and devotional Salmos are sung. Then follows the consecration of the church by Dom Simeão or another spiritual entity, most often Rei Germano.

After the consecration, the Salmo of rendering report is sung. This Salmo was written by Frei Daniel and describes the moment when he was taken by a Queen to the astral world, and there, into a Blue Castle, where he finds angels singing and praising God. In a room made of light, Daniel finds, over a crystal table, 12 blue books, where the 12 sciences and the 12 mysteries are kept. Then Daniel starts to render report to God and to the Virgin Mary about all that is said, sung, and done in the Barquinha in the name of God (at the Center, Madrinha Francisca does this job). After rendering report, Daniel received the above cited 12 books.

During this Salmo Dom Simeão (incorporated in Madrinha Francisca) leaves the Church and goes to the Congá for giving his blessings to the people under treatment there. Then, the ceremony is finally closed by singing again, as during the Obras de Caridade, the Culto Santo.

During all of that time, another part of that ceremony is going on in the Congá. The people under treatment start arriving at the Center by 7:00 p.m. There is no fixed number of people indicated to receive treatment in the ceremony, and any limit is fixed only by the availability of physical space in the Congá. They go straight to this room, put their mats on the floor, and cover them with white sheets. They wear white clothes, and when the Daime begins to be served, they drink a normal dose (around 50ml) of the tea. When they come back to their mats, they receive a red ribbon to put around the neck (for the men) or a triangular white piece of cloth with a red cross painted on it to pin on their clothes (for the women). Each client is indicated by the Preto-velho or Preta-velha with whom they made the consultation, to stay in the Congá during a certain number of ceremonies of Prestação de Contas (3, 5, 7, or more), according to the problem they have.

When the ceremony starts in the Church, every person lays down on his or her mat and the light in the Congá is turned off, with only the light of the burning candles illuminating the space. Only a few people have authorization to stay in the Congá other than those in treatment. A book is kept with the register of all the treatments dispensed since March 27, 1997. Slowly, the Congá becomes silent, and only the Salmos sung in the Church can be heard.

The fardados responsible for the Congá (generally two in number) and their helpers (that latter are the cambone of the incorporated Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas) also drink Daime at this time, and they try to achieve a deep state of concentration. That concentration remains until the end of the sequence of Salmos that opens the ceremony.

After Madrinha Francisca performs the speech officially opening the ritual, those two fardados receive their Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas. The spiritual guide responsible for the

Congá during the ceremonies of *Prestação de Contas*—which means, the spiritual guide responsible for the healing at the Center—is Pai Benedito das Almas.

During the ceremony, more *fardados* (those who are authorized to work as mediums during the *Obras de Caridade* and for that reason have clients in treatment on the 27th) can come to receive their spiritual guide and perform healing. All of the incorporated *Pretos-velhos* hold a bough of jasmine in one hand and a burning candle in the other. When I witnessed that ceremony for the first time (see Mercante, 2002), the *Pretos-velhos* and *Pretas-velhas* also smoked pipes. However, after the *farda* was adopted at the Center and began to be used during the ceremonies of *Prestação de Contas*, they stopped using tobacco. Other spiritual guides can come to perform healing—I had the chance to witness one *Erê* working—but the most common guides are the *Pretos-velhos* and *Pretas-velhas*.

The healers start moving from one mat to another, giving a *passe* to the people under treatment. There is no “recipe” or “formula” for that *passe*, but usually it consists of, first, using the *espada* for an initial cleansing, and then the blessing with the jasmine bough. This can be done with the medium on their knees, closer to the person on the mat, but most commonly, the *Preto-velho* or *Preta-velha* stays on his or her feet. During the blessing, the *Preto-velho* or *Preta-velha* moves the bough rhythmically making the sign of the cross over the client. When the healer feels the need to do so, he or she goes closer to the client and lays his or her hands on the client’s body.

The clients only leave the Congá to go to the bathroom. When they need to drink more *Daime*, the *cambone* serves them. When the *Pretos-velhos* and *Pretas-velhas* working at the Congá finish giving a *passe* on all the clients, they leave the body of their

medium. However, as I said above, there is no recipe or formula, and the spiritual guide might choose to remain embodied for a longer period of time.

After the consecration of the Church—and before the Salmo for the *Prestação de Contas* is sung—Dom Simeão goes to the Congá. He stays in the middle of the Congá and someone reads for him the names, ages, problems, and the name of the spiritual guide who indicated that person for treatment (all that information is on the cited notebook). After listening, Dom Simeão goes on giving a *passé* (see Figures 34, 35) on the clients. Sometimes he also makes a speech with recommendations for the clients.



Figures 34 and 35.
Client receiving a *passé*
during a treatment.

After Dom Simeão leaves the Congá, the clients slowly start to sit and to move. Most of them look like they are waking up from a dream. Some feel dizzy, and most of them say that the *Daime* was too strong. The fact that they spent the ceremony lying down influences that general feeling of enhanced power of the *Daime*. Finally, the lights are turned on.

José gave a good explanation concerning the ceremony of *Prestação de Contas*.

We have here the work on every 27th of the month. This is the day for rendering report and for the healing works. We sing the Salmos for the angels responsible for purifying the people, and also for the healers of the spiritual world. People drink Daime and go to the Congá. They lay down, and then the healing spirits come within the light, within the doctrine, they come to perform the cures. Sometimes the Daime makes that process inside you, it cleanses and heals you, not only the Daime, but your firmness, your faith in God, with the help of those spiritual healers who come within the light, like a spiritual hospital. I had proof of people who came here and could obtain the cure, in the light, within the Daime, during the compromise of the 27th. People have to come to three, five, or seven ceremonies of the 27th, according to their problem.

When I was in the Congá to observe the first *Prestação de Contas* of my fieldwork (January 27, 2004), I had a very interesting *miração*: I could see the Congá, and above it, floating in the air, a spiritual being, completely white, irradiating a light that was purely white. From that being, light was pouring down into the Congá, and the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas were moving through that veil of light, healing the people.

I asked Pai José de Angola about the vision. He explained that I had seen a healing angel. He said that the healing energy emanates, first, from the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. From this it comes then to the Virgin Mary, and from her to the angels and saints, like Saint Francis, Saint Luzia, and Saint Clara. Those are the saints opening the hall of healing in the spiritual world. Finally, this energy comes to the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas, who direct it to the clients. According to him, the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas act as a general clinician, making diagnosis and opening the path for the specialists, the spiritual doctors. The energy was always coming from that source, but each spiritual being can use it for a certain end.

The *Romarias* (literally: pilgrimage—see Figure 36) at the Center consist of daily rituals performed during a certain number of days, in honor of a specific Catholic saint. There are Romarias for San Sebastian (January 1 to 20); Saint Joseph (March 1 to 19); Virgin Mary (May 1 to 31); Our Lady of Glory (August 1 to 15); and finally Saint Francis of Assisi (September 1 to October 4).



Figure 36.
Romaria.

The other Barquinhas commemorate only three Romarias: Saint Sebastian, Virgin Mary, and Saint Francis. There are *penitências* (literally: penitence) for Saint Joseph and Our Lady of Glory. During the *penitências*, people perform daily prayers at home in honor of the saint, and during the Wednesday and Saturday ceremonies, they sing the Salmos dedicated to the saint. However, Madrinha Francisca decided to transform the *penitências* in Romarias, resulting in five Romarias every year.

The ceremonies of Romarias, due their daily characteristic, are shorter (something like one and a half hours). However, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, they are included in the normal ceremonies realized on those days.

The ceremony of Romaria starts with people gathering at the Salão de Festas—with one line, on the right side, for men, and another for women, on the left side. Everybody holds a lit white candle, and as they slowly moves toward the Cruzeiro—surrounding it—and to the Church, they sing a very slow hymn inviting all the brothers and sisters to sing and to accomplish the *Santas Romarias*. That hymn has a very

characteristic rhythm, very slow, and there is no other song at the Center with the same rhythm.

As they enter the church, all of the candles are extinguished. When everybody is in the temple, they perform a sequence of prayers, alternating Our Fathers with Hail Mary (normally 5 pairs, but 10 in the Romarias dedicated to the Virgin Mary), one Hail Holy Queen, and one Creed. Then, they sit down and everybody sings a sequence of Salmos dedicated to the commemorated saint. However, no matter the saint, the sequence of Salmos always finishes with the *Santo Amor* (holy love) and *Sinal de Paz* (sign of peace). The former has the affirmation “that light comes from the truth, this is the light of love, the truth, in truth, is Jesus our savior,” and the latter is dedicated to Our Lady of Peace.



Figure 37.
Andor prepared for the Romaria for Saint Francis of Assisi positioned on the cross-table.

On the first day of any Romaria, an image of the commemorated saint is positioned at the junction of both arms of the table inside the church. Near to the end of the Romaria, the image is removed to an andor⁴⁵, which is carefully decorated with flowers. The andor (see Figure 37) stays in another room until the last day of the Romaria, when four people put it on their shoulders and make a procession in the streets nearby the Center, with all the brotherhood following them singing the same

music that they sing every day when the Romaria is limited within the Center. This is a very festive moment, with fireworks flying through the air. The procession enters the church, and the andor is positioned at the junction of the arms of the table (it will remain

⁴⁵ See translation in Chapter 3, footnote 8.

there until the beginning of the next Romaria). Afterwards a commemorative ceremony starts in the Church, followed by a Festa to the sound of the drums, which takes place at the Salão de Festas.

On the day before the end of a Romaria, two Salmos must be sung: one for the *confissão* (literally: confession) and another for the *hóstia* (literally: host). The Salmo dedicated to the confession begins by saying that everybody is to kneel at the foot of the cross, saying that Jesus and the Virgin Mary are coming, through the light, to hear the confessions of the participants in the Romaria. It continues saying that the Guardian Angel of each person guides that person to the feet of Jesus for the confession. Jesus is then asked to send light and to save the souls of all the participants. The person is led to sing to God, asking his forgiveness for all the crimes he or she had committed, and that only God can forgive His sons and daughters. It says that from God nothing can be omitted and that it is precisely by admitting the sins that the forgiveness comes from God. A very important part of the Salmo says, “I cannot speak about my crimes, my confession only God can know.” The image of God at the Center is of an all-love, all-forgiveness, all-compassion God. Why would a God such as this need the confession of all of our sins, principally because He knows all of them? Because those sins are not *in* God but in the person confessing them. As such, that person can only find God’s forgiveness by admitting those sins, recognizing them: only then that person is able, not to receive God’s forgiveness, but to achieve it.

After the confession, the person is ready to receive the host. It also comes from a Salmo saying precisely that the participants now are ready, without evil thoughts, to receive the host. The host is the holy nourishment, and at the same time, it is Jesus and

his sacrifice and love. The host is also given by Jesus. That holy nourishment illuminates the soul of those receiving it; the host is the holy light. Again, through the Salmo, the interchange among the identity of Jesus, the light, the sacrament, and the Daime becomes concrete. Also, a vase containing edible hosts circulates after the Salmo among all the participants, and each one takes a host and eats it.

Both Salmos—*confissão e hóstia*—are the materialization of a ritualistic (but not spiritual) independence from the Roman Christian Church.

The normal idea of a pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place, sometimes associated with a saint or a holy person. This is a very common habit in many religions including Catholicism, and it is very common in many parts of Brazil. A normal pilgrimage is always a movement through physical space.

Frei Daniel created the Romaria when he was alive, and instead of a journey through a physical space, the Romarias in the Barquinha became a journey through the *spiritual* space. Daniel created the image of a boat—the Barquinha—on a journey throughout the *waters of the Sacred Sea*. The captain of that boat is the commemorated saint. As *sailors*, all of the brothers and sisters are inside of that boat on that spiritual journey. On the first day of the Romaria, the boat leaves the temple, sailing on those sacred waters. During the first half of the Romaria, the boat drives away from the temple. Then it turns back, so that during the second half of the Romaria, the boat returns to the temple. The end of the Romaria is a Festa: it means that the boat and its sailors are returning safely home. After all of those days drinking Daime and focused on the journey, the brothers and sisters are one step closer to God.

Lent and Semana Santa

The period of Lent starts at the end of Carnival, and the Holy Week (of which Easter is the last day) marks it end. Forty days separate Ash Wednesday and Easter. This is a very symbolic time for Christianity as a whole, and every day during Lent, a special Salmo is sung in observance. A very small amount of Daime is served when there is no other service going on at the Center; otherwise, that Salmo is sung in the end of the other services.

The Salmo begins by saying that Lent is a period of 40 days of penitence, which Jesus accomplished in order to fight against “the enemy”—Satan, who even offered bread to Jesus. It describes the struggle Jesus had in the desert with Satan and then his journey to the Jordan River to receive the baptism from the hands of John the Baptist. The Salmo then jumps to the Sunday before the Holy Week, when Jesus entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, walking through the streets covered with palm tree leaves. Finally, it describes the crucifixion and his resurrection and ascension. The Salmo affirms the role of savior of Jesus and is a picture of the Via Sacra. A Creed is prayed at the end of the Salmo.

Slowly, the consciousnesses of the participants in the Lent are guided through Jesus’ life. The person has the chance to experience deeply in himself or herself the meaning of the presence of Jesus on Earth. On the Sunday before the Holy Week, a complete service is held, beginning at 8:00 a.m. This is a festive service, and little crosses are made of palm leaves for distributing among the participants. However, the shadows of the crucifixion are on the horizon, and people begin to prepare for one of the most dense ceremonies at the Center. On that Sunday the curtains before the altar, normally

white (see next chapter) are changed to lavender ones, meaning the mourning for Jesus. Also, the back of the wooden chairs around the table are covered with a white cloth bearing a lavender cross. A small service is held on Wednesday when the 40 days of singing the Salmo of Lent are offered to God.

The Holy Week itself begins with the service held on Thursday night, called the Thursday of Darkness, and the moments at Getsemani are remembered here. The andor of Saint Joseph, residing at the center of the table since the end of his Romaria, is



Figure 38.
Life-sized statue of Jesus.

substituted by a life-sized statue of Jesus (see Figure 38) lying in his tomb. All of the fardados use a purple stole, a gift of Vó Jandira (a Preta-velha) to the brotherhood. On that night, the litany to Our Lady of Pain is prayed, describing all of the pains that the Virgin Mary suffered because

of Jesus' crucifixion. During that prayer, I felt myself extremely uncomfortable, and I had a *miração*, with my eyes open, in which I could see blood coming down from my head, covering my face, chest, arms and hands. Literally, all I wanted to do was run away from the church.

On Friday morning, a service is held—starting again at 8:00 a.m.—in which the Passion is the central theme. Those two services (Thursday and Friday) are very emotionally strong, and it is very common for people to cry in the church. The person is guided through Jesus' pain. That service is extended until 3:00 p.m.—the time that is believed that Jesus died, when a moment of silence is observed and prayers are said.

A service again is held on Saturday night. This is a moment of great expectation. On Sunday morning, Easter is commemorated; Jesus is resurrected, and the service is embedded in light and happiness. Finally, on Sunday night a Festa takes place at the Salão de Festas, for the saints Cosma and Damien. They are the saints of children, and the spirits of Erês—the spiritual children—are the owners of the Festa. That party is very important in the sense that those 40 days of Lent and the final sequence of ceremonies lead people into a very deep inward journey, and the Erês allow the participants to see a horizon—that before was so dense and dark—full of light and happiness.

Rosary

A rosary is prayed every Sunday at the Congá. That ceremony starts around 4:00 p.m., when a dose of Daime (50ml) is served, with the option for people to drink another dose at the middle of the rosary.

The rosary begins by praying one Our Father followed by a sequence of 10 Hail Marys. Every sequence (one Our Father plus 10 Hail Marys) corresponds to one passage of Jesus life. His life was divided originally into three mysteries. The enjoyable mysteries are: the Annunciation; the visit of Mary to her cousin, Izabel, who was pregnant with John the Baptist; Jesus' birth; Simeon the elder meets Jesus and his family; and Jesus discussion with the doctors of the law. The painful mysteries are: Jesus at Getsemani; Jesus is whipped at Pilatus' residence; Jesus receives a crown of thorns; Jesus carries the cross; Jesus is crucified. The glorious mysteries are: Jesus resurrects; Jesus' ascension; the apostles receive the Holy Ghost; the Virgin Mary ascends; The Virgin Mary is crowned in the Heavens. In 2002 the Pope John Paul II created a fourth sequence of mysteries, the luminous, which are: Jesus'

baptism, the transformation of water in wine, the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, Jesus' transfiguration, and the Holly Supper.

Couto (2003) said that the rosary probably started to be prayed among the Anchorites, solitary monks living in the desert. In general, those monks were illiterate, and they substituted the psalter of 150 Salmos read by the rich and literate Christians with the same number of Hail Marys, counted on little stones. During the 13th century, the rosary was revived as a method for praying, and Saint Domingo of Gusman used it for catechizing the Albingensis. In 1213, the Roman Catholics finally defeated the Albingensis, and they erected a chapel for Our Lady of the Rosary in Santiago of Muret. This was the first time that the Virgin Mary was celebrated under that title. Pope Clement XI created the Commemoration of the Rosary on the first Sunday of October after the Roman Catholics defeated the Turkish army in Lepanto in 1571. Later, Pope Pio X changed that commemoration to October 7, the exact day of their victory.

In 1999 Vô Vicentino, a Preto-velho working with Madrinha Francisca, asked for the brotherhood to start praying the rosary every Sunday as a preparation for the end of the Millennium. When that compromise was done, Madrinha Francisca decided to include that ceremony in the Center's calendar.

On May 2, 2004, I asked Pai José about the rosary.

We have the Pope living on Earth. On his shoulders, he has a cross as heavy as the entire humanity. He is a sacred column of Christ, a sacred column of the Father on Earth. He is receiving the messages, the teachings. We have here the rosary. How beautiful are the mysteries, the recited mysteries, the meditated mysteries! You meditated on each work, on each mystery, if you meditated on each mystery you will see such richness! Each mystery brings a message, and each message is more beautiful than the other.

The practice of praying the rosary every Sunday is something made only at the Center. The other Barquinhas do not include it in their calendars.

One Thousand Hail Marys



Figure 39.

Table prepared for the 1000 Hail Marys.

Another ceremony exclusively performed at the Center is the praying of 1,000 Hail Marys (see Figure 39). It is done near the end of the Romaria for the Virgin Mary (May), the end of the Romaria to Our Lady of Glory, and on the 7th and 8th of December (the 8th of December is the day of Our Lady of Conception). This ceremony is an inspired by the same kind of ceremony performed by the Roman Catholic church. The 1,000 Hail Marys are prayed inside the Church.

The ceremony is divided into two sequences of 500 Hail Marys. The first sequence starts around 12:30 p.m. The Culto Santo Salmo is sung, followed by a sequence of prayers (Our Fathers, Hail Marys, Hail Holy Queen, and a Creed). After those prayers, three more Salmos are sung, all dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Then the Hail Marys begin. The first 10 Hail Marys out of a sequence of 50 are prayed with every person standing up.

A statue of Our Lady is positioned on the table, a statue of Jesus on the right arm of table, and another of the Virgin Mary on the left arm. A larger statue of Our Lady of the Mystic Rose is positioned at the junction of the arms of the cross-table. Later, after 250 Hail Marys, that statue is crowned by a virgin girl. There are, at the feet of the statue

of Our Lady, three 7-day candles (larger candles that burns for seven days): one yellow (on the left, the women's side), one red (at the center), and one white (on the right, the men's side). Around each of those candles is a rosary in the same color, and in front of them three white saucers each with one normal-sized candle (one yellow, one red, one white) burning. On the left side of the table, on the floor, there is a bucket filled with yellow, red, and white roses. On the right side, on the table, there sits an empty vase. Every 50 Hail Marys, Madrinha Francisca reads one mystery from the rosary. Then, a man extinguishes the normal-size candle (starting with the yellow one—after another 50 Hail Marys, when the next man comes, he will extinguish the red one, and the next one the white, returning then to the yellow), substituting it by a new candle of the same color. At the same time, a woman removes a rose from the bucket and places it in the vase on the table, in the same sequence of color. Those colors are inspired by the colors of the rose positioned on the chest of Our Lady of the Mystic Rose. The last 50 Hail Marys of the first sequence of 500 are prayed with every person on their knees.

On the next day, at 9:00 a.m., everybody is back in the church to initiate the other 500 Hail Marys. After that final sequence, Madrinha Francisca receives Dom Simeão. One person arranges, on a white cloth on the floor at the foot of the cross-table, all of the roses that were in the vase, into the form of a cross. On the left-hand side of that rose-cross they put a yellow candle to burn and on the right a red one. Dom Simeão asks for six mediums (three women and three men), to receive their spiritual guides to do the consecration. Dom Simeão then goes to the altar, blessing both the altar and the people in the church. During the consecration, all the people are on their knees. Three more Salmos are sung, and finally the Culto Santo is sung for finishing the ceremony.

Commemorations

Commemorations, or *Festas*, are the festive ceremonies at the Center. They can occur, but not necessarily, after a ceremony in the church (sometimes there is no previous ceremony in the church, like someone's birthday). It is the counterpart of the formality of the rituals in the church.

The main *Festas* are for:

- The three Magi Kings (January 6),
- San Sebastian/Oxossi (the end of the Romaria dedicated to this saint, January 20),
- Our Lady of Candles/Iemanjá (February 2),
- Saint Lazarus/Omulu (February 11),
- Saint George (April 23),
- Our Lady of Fatima and Pretos-velhos (May 13),
- Madrinha Francisca's birthday (June 7),
- Saint Antony (June 13),
- Saint John the Evangelist (June 24),
- Saint Peter and Saint Paul (June 29),
- Padrinho Francisco's (Madrinha's husband) birthday (July 3),
- Nanã Buruquê (July 31),
- Death of Frei Daniel (September 8),
- Saint Cosma and Saint Damien (September 27);
- All Saints Day (November 1),
- Day of the Dead (November 2),
- Príncipe Dom Simeão (November 23),

- Saint Barbara/Iansã (December 4),
- Our Lady of Conception/Oxum (December 8);
- Saint Luzia (December 13),
- Christmas (December 24), and
- New Year's Eve (December 31).

Also, as I mentioned above, there are also Festas for some members of the Center.

Those Festas may not be preceded by a ceremony in the church.

The Festas take place at the *Salão de Festas* and are conducted to the sound of atabaques (drums), bass, and electric and acoustic guitars. All the Festas start with the *Ponto* (songs for Festas; they are only sung at the Salão de Festas) for Dom Simeão. He is called to protect the Salão de Festas during the ceremony. After his Ponto, a Hail Holy Queen is prayed. In general, there is a short break after the Ponto for Dom Simeão for people change the farda, dressing into more comfortable clothes. However, some Festas can be made while always wearing the farda, such as the Festa at the end of the Romaria for the Virgin Mary, when the Salão de Festas was inaugurated.

After changing clothes, everyone returns to the Salão de Festas, and a sequence of Pontos for Ogum is sung. Again, Ogum is the Orixá responsible for the protection of the initiating Festa. After singing for Ogum they can sing for *Povo d'Água*, which includes entities such as *Marinheiro* (literally “sailor”), *Sereias* (mermaids), *Botos* (dolphins), and Orixás such as Oxum and Iemanjá. Most of the time, they sing for Iansã for a certain transition to then begin calling spiritual entities such as the Caboclos, Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas, or Encantos. There is no rigid sequence (other than the Ponto for Dom Simeão and Ogum), and the decisions are made during the ceremony itself. They

can even start singing for Caboclo, change for Encantos or Povo d'Água, and then go back to Caboclo. The process of the Festa is very dynamic, and those in charge of conducting the Festa intuitively feel the needs of the participants and give the direction for the party.

In this area of Festas, something very peculiar, in the context of the Daime traditions, happens at the Center. In all the other Barquinhas they sing their own Pontos and hymns. At the Center, many Pontos coming from the Umbanda are sung as well. This posture had three main effects. The first one is that in the beginning, they were singing only Pontos for Pretos-velhos and Caboclos, and only later do they slowly started to sing for Encantos too, after people from the Center started to receive Pontos for those spiritual entities.

Second, along with the Pontos from the Umbanda, the Orixás were incorporated in the Center's pantheon. As far as I have been able to determine, the Orixás are not celebrated at the other Barquinhas. Singing for Ogum to start the Festa is done exclusively at the Center. The introduction of the Festa for Nanã was also important for the Center to become open for the Orixás.

The third effect of the fact that they decided to sing Pontos of Umbanda was an enhancement of the creativity at the Center: now there are many Pontos for Orixás, Caboclos, Pretos-velhos, and Encantos that are exclusive to the Center, all of them received by its members. Another factor contributing to this enhanced creativity is the fact that at the Center, everybody can receive Salmos, hymns, and Pontos. At the other Barquinhas, a few people (and in some cases only the leader of the center) have authorization to do so, and consequently there is little variation on both music and lyric.

However, to be sung, a Ponto or Salmo need to be approved by Madrinha Francisca, though she seldom forbade people to sing their newly received Salmo or Ponto (but sometimes she makes corrections to the receive Ponto or Salmo).

The Festa is the moment for the *bailado*. The bailado is a dance in a circle around a blue 6-pointed star at the center of the Salão de Festas. There is no rule about the movements one can make during the bailado—except that men and women dance separately (this is something exclusive of the Center: in all other Barquinhas, they dance together) and that everybody must go clockwise. As was mentioned earlier in this work, when the Festas initially began at the Center, people (contrary to all the other Barquinhas) danced counterclockwise. By that time, the Salão de Festa was of dirt (see Figure 40), and it was called *terreiro* (see Luna, 1995; Mercante, 2002): from *terra*, soil, dirt. When I first visited the Center in 1999, I thought that this dirt floor was on purpose, but later I learned there was a project to build a Salão de Festas, but there had been no money to do so.



Figure 40.
The floor of the old terreiro.

After 13 years, they finally gathered enough money to cover the terreiro. They built seats around it and cemented the floor, creating the Salão de Festas (see description in the next chapter), and during the Festa for the Virgin Mary of 2004,

the Salão was finally inaugurated. As was explained earlier, on that occasion, when the fardados entered the Salão (only the fardados can dance the Ponto for Dom Simeão), a

row of women entered through the left side of the Salão, and a row of men through the right, as was customary. When both rows met at the opposite side of the Salão, Dom Simeão, standing at its center, said that from point forward on the bailado would happen clockwise. This was a surprise for everybody.

The Festa, as mentioned above, is the space of the Orixás also. The Orixás were introduced during the Festa for Nanã. According to Kleymani, that Festa has happened since very early in the history of the Center. Madrinha Francisca is a *daughter* of Nanã, which means that this is her main Orixá, the one responsible for her *head* (see Prandi, 2001b; Segato, 1995). Nanã is considered at the Center as the grandmother of all the Orixás (and that is why she is syncretized with Santa Ana, mother of the Virgin Mary), and is celebrated on July 31.

In this celebration, as usual, they sang for Dom Simeão, and after changing their clothes and drinking Daime, they started to sing for Ogum. Sometime after the Pontos for

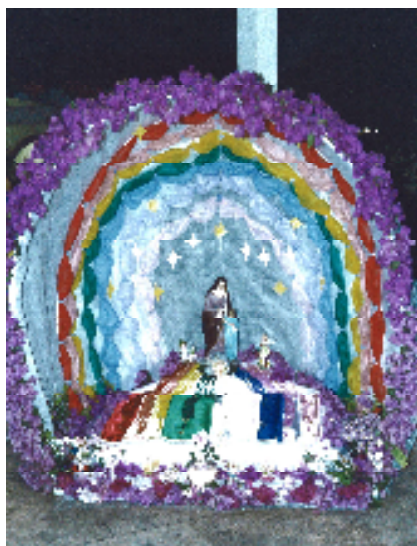


Figure 41.

Santa Ana statue and espadas.

Ogum, Madrinha Francisca appeared in the Salão de Festa incorporated with Nanã. She was dressed in a purple skirt and blouse, with a purple stole with drawings of a heart and the cross. A chair covered in purple was positioned at the Salão de Festas, and Madrinha Francisca sat there. Beside the chair there was a small arrangement with a statue of Santa Ana (see Figure 41) and eight *espadas* (of the colors red, orange, yellow, green, light blue, dark blue, purple, and white. According

to Dom Tubarão Branco, the seven colors represented the seven mysteries of Our Lady,

and white was the supreme power). A statue representing Nanã was at the center of the six-pointed star at the center of the Salão.

After Madrinha Francisca, incorporating Nanã, sat in her chair, the congregation started to sing one Ponto for each Orixá: Oxossi, Obaluaê, Ossain, Oxumaré, Logum Edé, Oxum, Iemanjá, and Iansã. During every Ponto someone incorporated the respective Orixá. That person was conducted to the chair where Madrinha Francisca/Nanã was sitting to allow the Orixá to salute Nanã. Then one Our Father and one Hail Mary were prayed, and four Pontos for Nanã were sung. During that Ponto, all of the participants stopped dancing, forming a circle (in fact, two circles due the number of people present) in the Salão. Nanã (incorporated in Madrinha Francisca; see Figures 42, 43) started to



Figures 42 and 43.

Madrinha Francisca incorporated with Nanã.

walk slowly within the circle, and two other women, also daughters of Nanã (and also incorporating that Orixá), each one holding one hand of the Nanã incorporated in Madrinha Francisca. Again, more Pontos for Orixás were sung: Xangô and finally Oxalá for saluting Nanã. One Our Father, one Hail Mary, one Hail Holy Queen, and one Creed ended the manifestation of the Orixás.

A short break followed the Pontos for the Orixás, and then the Salmo for Dom Tubarão Branco, an Encanto, was sung. He is the spiritual entity responsible for the Erês, which are childlike spiritual beings. The second part of the Festa was completely dedicated to the Erês. The mediums started to incorporate them, receiving, then, candies and chocolates.

Another important Festa, which occurred, although not belonging to the Center's regular calendar, happened July 10, 2004. It was the visiting of the people from the Cefli—Centro Espírita Flor do Lótus Iluminado, a Santo Daime church led by the Padrinho Luis Mendes. He and his community were invited for the “official” inauguration of the Salão de Festas. However, instead of a Festa in the Barquinha style, it was decided that they would sing Mestre Irineu's hymns. Mestre Irineu is the founder of the Santo Daime, and as I said in the Introduction, he was responsible for serving the first glass of Daime to Frei Daniel. Irineu's collection of hymns is considered the foundation stone of the entire Daime religious movement. This was the first time that a traditional Santo Daime bailado (see Figure 44) was performed at a center of the Barquinha. For the people present, this represented the deep allegiance that both religious movements have



Figure 44.
Bailado during the visit of the Cefli center.

always had: that allegiance was finally manifested during that Festa.

The first 98 hymns of Mestre Irineu were sung and danced, followed by an interval. During that interval, the *Diversões*, festive hymns also received by Mestre Irineu were sung. The Bailado of those hymns,

however, is different from the traditional *bailado*: men and women dance together, in different combinations of movements. After the interval, the last 33 hymns of Padrinho Luis Mendes were sung and danced. It is interesting to note that one of the *Salmos* of Padrinho Luis Mendes was called *Castelo Azulado*—Blue Castle—one of the main symbols of Daniel’s revelation. Finalizing the ceremony, the last sequence of hymns of Mestre Irineu, the *Cruzeirinho* were sung and danced. The Prayer of Saint Francis was also sung to conclude that party at 9:00 a.m.

Limpeza

Limpeza (literally: cleansing), or the *work of limpeza*, is a ceremony realized only when Madrinha Francisca, using spiritual intuition, feels it is necessary. Most of the time, it is not even a separate ceremony but a procedure inserted into another kind of ceremony (I participated in one work of *limpeza* during an *Instruções* ceremony).

Here it is important to clarify something about the *limpeza* before I go further in its explanation. I could say that there are two kinds of *limpezas*, that I will call here “minor” *limpeza* and “major” *limpeza*⁴⁶.

The minor *limpeza* occurs more often than the major kind, and it can be done in many different ways. It can happen every time a client is doing a consultation with a Preto-velho or Preta-velha and that spiritual entity feels the need to clean that client. It can be done using a *passe* with the *espada* and the blowing of tobacco smoke over the head, chest, hands, back of the client as well as always has this function. Sometimes the Preto-velho or Preta-velha moves a burning candle (mostly a white one, but not

⁴⁶ It is important to mention that the Center’s members do not use this separation into the minor and major kinds of *limpeza*.

necessarily so) around the body of the client, very close to it, and breaks the candle in three parts. In general, that act is repeated three times. In the end, the Preto-velho or Preta-velha leaves the three broken candles to burn on the floor. Pai José once said that they do that to break all of the barriers of bad energy around the person.

Also, as I mentioned on the Obras de Caridade section above, the Preto-velho or Preta-velha always asks the first-time client to take an herbal bath for cleansing before returning to the next consultation. Again, as I cited in the Obras de Caridade section, the processing of capturing exús and pombas-giras during a consultation is also a process of limpeza.

The major limpeza is simply the application of those techniques during a ceremony for all the participants. The major limpeza starts always with the Ponto of Dom Simeão, who is incorporated by Madrinha Francisca. Then, he leaves the church with four more mediums (and five assistants) to the Congá, where the limpeza will be done. The participants remain within the church, and groups of five people are called to go to the Congá at a time. Inside the church, people remain singing Salmos, first calling spiritual beings like Dom Simeão, Saint Sebastian, Santa Ana, Príncipe Juramidam, and the Virgin Mary, to protect the participants in the ceremony. Those Salmos, besides calling for protection, also put a strong emphasis on the correct conduct in life, implying that an ethical transformation and behavior is the best way for someone to stay clean. A final sequence of Salmos is centered on the *consolo*, the consolation after the battle against the evil spirits.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Curiously, Frenopoulo (2005, p. 43) cited that he participated in a *Limpeza* ceremony when Umbanda songs had been sung within the Igreja. Unfortunately Frenopoulo does not indicate in what Barquinha he developed his fieldwork. In all of the recorded material that I have from the ceremonies held at the Center, only Salmos were sung.

As mentioned above, groups of five people are called to the Congá during the ceremony. There they are directed toward one of the spiritual entities working there, and they will receive a passe. If it is necessary, the spiritual entity will remove the evil spirits that could be in the company of that person.

Consagração

The *Consagração* (literally: consecration) happens during all the *Prestação de Contas* ceremonies and on many commemorative dates, such as at the beginning and at the end of *Romarias*, always near to the end of the ceremony. The *Consagração* is a very special moment. It is done by one or more entities (I myself could see four of them doing it at the same time). The spiritual entity responsible for the *Consagração* incorporates in his or her medium, stands up, and leaves the place where that medium was sitting, walking slowly toward the altar, moving through the right side—men's side—of the church⁴⁸. Arriving at the altar, the spiritual entity salutes the statue of Jesus on the highest part of the altar by lifting the right arm, and opening the right hand with the palm facing Jesus' statue. Sometimes the spiritual entity is holding a cross, though the salutation gesture is essentially the same with the cross instead directed toward the statue. The gesture is long and slow, as if the spiritual entity would be trying to reach the real Jesus in Heaven. Normally the spiritual entity kneels and bends the head toward the statue, in a posture of submission, not in a pejorative way, but recognizing His superior power. After this, the spiritual entity turns the back to the altar and blesses the people in the church. Then, the spiritual entity returns to the foot of the table-

48 Even when the spiritual entity is incorporated by a feminine medium, she moves to the foot of the table-cross and starts walking to the altar by the right side.

cross, on the left side—the women’s side. The spiritual entity stops at the foot of the table-cross and often gives a speech to the participants in the ceremony.

Capoeira Works

A very different way of drinking Daime has occurred at the Center: along with the play of capoeira. Capoeira is a Brazilian martial art developed by the slaves, derived from African dances and other practices. It is much more similar to a dance—although a deadly dance—than to a fight, and this is how Capoeira survived the landlords: they thought that their slaves were dancing, not training to make mortal blows.

The play of capoeira is made to music played by a *berimbau* (a very peculiar percussion instrument, composed of a 4-5 foot long bow with a metal string and a gourd attached to the side, the string being struck with a wooden stick), tambourine, and atabaque (a kind of drum). Most of its movements are made using the legs, and acrobatic jumps are very common.

One of the members of the Center—Xandão—is a *mestre*, a master or teacher of capoeira. Sometime between 2001 and 2002 (he was not sure about the date), he performed one ceremony in his house, along with two other members at the Center, where they drank Daime and performed capoeira. In January of 2004, those same three people decided to make the same ceremony. I was invited to participate, along with some other of Xandão’s students. Xandão and another member of the Center had a conversation with Madrinha Francisca who authorized him to do the ceremony at his house (which is also the school for capoeira).

We prayed one Our Father, one Hail Mary, one Hail Holy Queen, and one Creed, drank the Daime, and began to listen to some CDs on which *ladainhas* of capoeira—the

traditional music for playing capoeira—were recorded. After one hour, we drank another glass of Daime. After another hour or so, Xandão stopped the CD player, and we got the instruments and we started playing them, singing the ladainhas. It is interesting to note that many of the ladainhas have reference to Orixás or other spiritual entities. As we began to play the instruments, slowly people started to play the capoeira.

When I spoke with Xandão later after that ceremony, he told me that by the first time he could feel the capoeira emerging out of him: he said that he was not playing the capoeira but that the capoeira was playing him.

We might think that a very strong concentration is needed to use a strong psychoactive substance like Daime in a practice that involves many fast and precise movements such as a martial art. However, the general opinion among the participants at that ceremony was that that was not so. Rather they felt that their capoeira (the players of capoeira always use the expression “my capoeira,” “his/her capoeira”) flowed much more. A synchrony among body and consciousness was achieved much more easily.

The capoeira works were repeated three more times during my fieldwork, and I know that they intend to perform one of these ceremonies at the Center for all the people there, incorporating it in the Center’s calendar. After many years of participation in the activities at the Center, Xandão finally became a Fardado this year (2006).

If the capoeira works would become really part of the official calendar of the Center, we would have the chance to see the influence of a ceremony over the physical space of the Center. In the next chapter, I describe the Center’s physical space, as the manifestation of the forces emanating from the spiritual space through the ceremonies.

CHAPTER 8

THE PHYSICAL SPACE

Two different forces influence the physical space of the Center: the spiritual and the practical, both of them limited by culture. The spiritual force (which emanates from the spiritual space) determines what spaces are needed for concretizing, on the physical plane the spiritual works, being the *Salão de Festas*, the *Cruzeiro*, the *Igreja*, the *Congá*, and the *Casa do Feitio*. The spiritual force also influences the way those spaces are “filled.” The physical structures tend to be built under spiritual guidelines (see also Frenopoulo, 2005).

Araújo (1999) gave an excellent description of the physical space of the Casa de Oração Jesus Fonte de Luz center, exposing its symbolism and how the main symbols used in the Barquinha shaped the space. The Casa de Oração could be understood as having completely and successfully realized in the physical level the “archetype” for the “perfect” Barquinha structure due the topography of its land: a flat and large area.

The topography of the Center’s land is very irregular: it is higher at its entrance, sloping downward as one walks toward the Igreja, the bathrooms, and the Casa de Feitio. Therefore, practical forces at the Center determine where and how the physical space is arranged. For example, the entrance of the Center is planned to be in front of the Cruzeiro. However, due the topography, it is through the Salão de Festas (see Figure 45).

In the beginning . . .

The land where today we find the Center was, in the past, the house of Madrinha Francisca and her husband, Francisco Gabriel. They lived in a wooden house in

the middle of their land. Beside their house, Madrinha Francisca had a small room (15 x 12ft) where she kept the many statues of spiritual entities that people have given to her. Madrinha Francisca used that small room for *rezar* (literally, to pray) over children and adults in need. When her oldest son, Toinho, got married, they built another small wooden house in her land, behind her house, where today is the Cruzeiro.

When people started gathering around Madrinha Francisca after she was no longer going to the Casa de Oração, they decided to perform the ceremonies in the small room cited above, now called *Casinha* (literally little house). After some time more as more people were coming to the ceremonies performed at the emerging Center, those who could not fit inside the small room would sit on stools outside.

The space for performing the Festas was too small for the growing number of people. So, people decided to demolish Madrinha Francisca's old wooden house, creating in its place the first Salão de Festa, which as was mentioned above, was called at that time the *terreiro*. People then built another house for Madrinha Francisca and her family, though this time made of bricks.

Finally, in 1993 people started to build the Igreja (completed in 1996). Toinho's house was then taken down, and in its place, the Cruzeiro was built. During that time, the Feitio's house was also built. In 2001, the old *terreiro* received a roof, and in 2004, it became the Salão de Festas. Also in 2001, the outside area for women was built (see Figure 45).

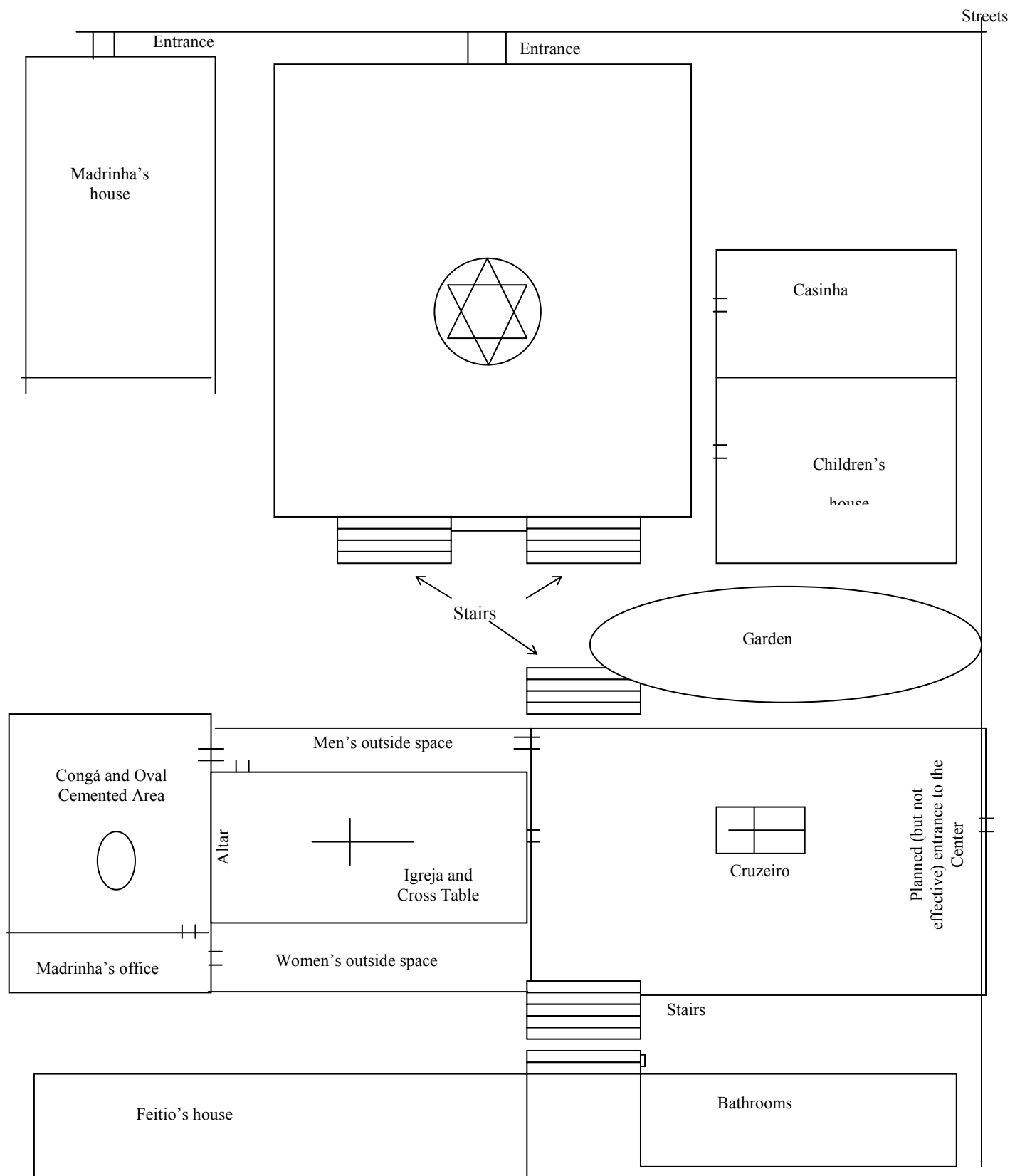


Figure 45. Diagram of the Center.

The Salão de Festas

The main entrance of the Center is at the *Salão de Festas*. The Salão de Festas is used for the *bailados* during Festas and commemorations. It is a rectangular area surrounded by a knee-high wall transformed into seats for the participants in the Festas. It has a 6-pointed star within a circle at its central area. Vó Maria Clara told me once that this symbol (the star within the circle) keeps away all negative energies. During the Festas the banners of the *Sete Anjos da Paz* are hung on the pillars around the Salão de Festas (see Chapter 6).

At the left side of the Salão de Festas, we find the Casinha. Madrinha Francisca asked to keep it intact: “This is the place where everything here began,” she said once.

Attached to the Casinha is the children’s house, where the sons and daughters of the participants will often be by the end of the ceremony, sleeping in hammocks attached to the walls.

The Igreja

Walking down from the Salão de Festas (which is on a higher level), one arrives at the Cruzeiro and the Igreja (both located at the same level, and lower than the Salão de Festas). Sena Araújo (1999) considered the Cruzeiro as the axis of the Barquinha, and it really occupies this position at the Casa de Oração landscape. However, that axis is “excentric” (not in a central position) at the Center, though it still occupies a central place in its cosmology.

The Cruzeiro is a 17ft tall cross, covered in white tiles. It is the point where all the spirits are gathered, waiting for the permission for entering the Igreja, and principally those waiting for receiving the indoctrination and baptism. The Cruzeiro is also the place

where people gather to do their *compromissos*, the prayers made to accomplish a compromise with a saint or spiritual entity. It is very common to find many people sitting around the Cruzeiro praying, with candles on their hands—or having placed them lit on the square area around the Cruzeiro designed to put candles on.

The entrance of the Igreja is aligned with the Cruzeiro, as is the cross-table inside the Igreja. No more than 80 people can be gathered inside the Igreja. Men sit at the right side and women at the left. The first thing one finds after entering the Igreja is two *fiscais* sitting at the entrance: one man on the right, one woman on the left. They are responsible for not only guarding the Igreja from people who wants to disturb the ceremony but also from spiritual beings with the same intent. In fact, this is their main occupation. In a conversation with *seu* José, the fiscal of the men's side, he told me that they have to “fight” during every ceremony, controlling and guarding the Igreja from evil spirits. They are the human counterparts of the spiritual guardians evoked during the beginning of every ceremony for protecting the participants.

Above the entrance, in a small niche, sits a small statue of Saint Michael. There is always a burning candle at this spot during the ceremonies. The cross-table occupies the central position at the nave of the Igreja. The foot of the cross is directed to the entrance of the Igreja and its head is toward the altar. Madrinha Francisca and her son, João Batista, sit at the foot of the table. It is interesting to consider that the *fiscais* are guarding their backs also.

Frei Daniel himself carved and built the first table in the form of a cross in the small room where the Barquinha started (see Oliveira, 2002; Sena Araújo, 1999). After he had completed the table, he said,

It is here! This is the contact of our table in the form of a cross. In the form of cross, why? Because we are sitting around this table that represents Jesus in his sacrifice for the love of the message of the Father and for the love of the ingrate sons and daughters who comprehended Him not. So, this is the mystery of the blessed table, because it represents the symbol of our salvation. Who is sitting [. . . here, is sitting . . .] with Jesus, as He sat with his apostles during the Holy Supper⁴⁹

Twenty people sit around the table: nine men and nine women, as well as Madrinha Francisca and João Batista. The table is the generator of spiritual energy for all the participants during the ceremony. Luna (1995) said that he had a very strong impression of energy sitting at the table during one ceremony at the Center. He said that he could feel the *força* (the force) of the Daime stronger at the table.

I had one particular experience in this regard that was very interesting. During the time that I was making this fieldwork there was one frequent visitor passing through a very difficult moment in his life. Consequently, anyone looking at his face (and it was not necessary to drink Daime to have that impression) could feel a very “heavy” energy around him. I was sitting at the table one night, with my eyes closed, while very focused, I could feel a shift in the “energy” circulating at the table. Something changed dramatically, and I could feel the energy “heavier” at that moment. I opened my eyes and I could see that that person had just sat in one of the vacant places at the table. Later I asked another participant for her impression during the ceremony, and she told me that everything was fine, but that after the cited man sat at the table the *work* became more difficult. Then I asked her if she could feel the energy heavier after he sat at the table, and she said, “Of course, but what can we do?”

49 I read this passage from the cover of one of the books containing the psalms. Later I found that same passage in Oliveira, 2002.

Ideally, all of the seats at the table should be occupied. If people need to leave the table during the ceremony, they have to call someone else to sit at their place. The only places that no one else can sit are the Madrinha's and João Batista's.

Madrinha Francisca keeps a habit that she told me was kept by Frei Daniel when he was alive. There are some ceremonies, in which the members of the Center do not wear the farda, the uniform. In general, the farda is worn only on commemorations and Prestação de Contas ceremonies—all the other days, including Saturdays and Wednesdays, everybody dresses in white, but do not wear the farda. That habit helps to make the distance between the members and non-members shorter. During those days, anyone dressed in white can sit at the table. That was probably Daniel's posture, as the farda was created by Antônio Geraldo after he became the leader of the Barquinha. Many people "fight" to have a place at the table; but at the same time, there are many people afraid of sitting at the table.

There are two other special seats inside the Igreja: they are located in the last rows of chairs against the wall, aligned with the side of the table. Those are the seats for the people who will open and close the curtains during important ceremonies such as Obras de Caridade, Prestação de Contas, and the end and the beginning of Romarias. During the ceremonies that the curtains are not opened or closed (like Wednesdays), those seats are occupied only by members of the Center. In total, there are 24 special seats, 12 for men and 12 women, within the Igreja.

There are small pictures of passages of Jesus' life hanging on the walls of the Igreja. This is very common in Roman Catholic churches in Brazil. Four large windows—two on each side—communicate the nave of the Igreja with the outside areas

on the men's and on the women's side. Those outside areas are for the people who cannot find a place inside the Igreja, also those waiting for a consultation at the Congá sit outside the Igreja.

The musicians—all men (but this is not a rule, if one day a woman decides to play an instrument that arrangement will have to be changed)—sit at João Batista's side. The first place on another side of the table is for another singer (there is always another main singer at the ceremonies taking turns with João Batista: most of the time this position is occupied by Kleymani). They play two or three acoustic guitars and a bass.

Curtains are positioned at the head of table, separating the altar from the nave of the Igreja. Important ceremonies begin with the curtains closed, and they are slowly opened during the Culto Santo Salmo (the first one to be sung). These curtains are closed, again, during the Culto Santo sung at the end of the ceremonies. They represent the opening and closing of the spiritual world during the ceremony. In general, these curtains are white. However, during the Holy Week and Corpus Chisti ceremonies they are substituted by lavender curtains.

The altar is also separated from the nave by an arch. Pictures of Madrinha Francisca (on the women's side) and Frei Daniel (on the men's side) hang on the wall of this arch. A cross is positioned at the center of the arch, directly over the table. On the right side of the arch, a picture of Jesus' sacred heart is positioned, and one of Mary's sacred heart is on the left side of the cross.

The altar is located at the end of the room, facing the door. A statue of Jesus is positioned at the top of the altar covered by a small roof. Other statues can occupy that same place with Jesus: the most common are of the Virgin Mary, Saint Sebastian,

Saint Joseph, and Saint Francis (those statues are not there all at the same time, and Jesus is always at the center with one statue on each side). They put several small statues under the roof also.

The altar has a second level (below the first one) where all the other statues are located: there are statues of different qualities of the Virgin Mary, Santa Ana, Saint Cosma and Saint Damian, Saint Lazarus, Saint Anthony, angels, archangels, and an overwhelming effusion of other statues and pictures. Two big pictures are on each side of the altar: one representing Saint Joseph (men's side), where a hand holding a glass with a brown liquid, in a gesture of offering, is shown. The other picture is of the Virgin Mary (on the women's side). Those pictures were painted by a member of the Center.

The Congá

The Congá is positioned behind the Igreja. It is a rectangular room where the spiritual entities and their mediums effectively work. The floor of the Congá is of dirt and is cemented around the edge of the room where cabinets are positioned. There is an oval form made of cement in the middle of the Congá, of about 9ft, where the spirits make drawings (the *pontos-riscados*) that they use during the session, in the benefit of their clients. In general, they burn candles on top of these drawings (see Figures 46-50). As Pai Benedito told me, those are “the *pontos riscados* with *pemba* (consecrated chalk), and it is used to confirm the intention of a request.” Clients might see these drawings or not. The drawings are a manifestation of the prayers sent to and from the spiritual world to help the client, so these drawings both send a message from the spiritual world and send a message to the spiritual world.



Figures 46-50.
Oval-cemented area in the middle
of the Congá and examples of
Pontos-riscados.

The above-mentioned cabinets belong to the spiritual entities: it is there that they keep herbs, consecrated water, candles, pomba, tobacco, and all the materials that they use during the consultations with their clients. The personal material of each spiritual

entity working with a medium is also kept in the cabinet, such as the espada, pipes, rosaries, special crosses, and so on. The cabinets also function as private altars for those spiritual entities. They are decorated in accordance with the directions given by the spiritual entities working with a medium. The main motifs for the decoration are statues of Roman Catholic saints, the Virgin Mary, Jesus, Orixás, but also Pretos-velhos, Pretas-velhas, Caboclos, mermaids, fairies, nymphs, and so on. The presence of crystals and other stones is very common also.



Figure 51.
Gabinete.

One cross, and one or two larger rocks, is positioned on the floor beside every cabinet (see Figure 51). It is very common to find the rosaries of the owners of the cabinets hanging from those crosses. When a medium is working with one spiritual entity at the Congá a burning candle (most commonly white, but this may vary) is set on the altar in the cabinet, and also over a rock in front of the cross on the floor. Those are the points of force and connection with the physical level for the spiritual entities. I asked Pai José de Angola why they burn the candles over the rocks. He told me that those rocks represent their *fimeza* (firmness), something concrete representing their presence on Earth, on the physical level. Also, he said that the rock is like an altar where they *assentam* (literally: “fix or seat”) their energy. Pai José has a round river rock, and beside his rock sits the rock for the Príncipe das Águas Claras (both spiritual entities working with Hita), a square, opaque quartz.

Casa do Feitio

The *Casa do Feitio* (literally: preparation) is at the lower level of the Center's land. The Daime is cooked there. It has a cemented area of approximately 35 by 13ft. The furnace—where three 60-liter pots for cooking Daime are put—is positioned at one of its sides, following the long edge of the Casa do Feitio. The Daime is cooked by burning wood, and the fire is a very important instrument of the art. If the people cooking the Daime allow the fire to alternate in intensity too much (being too low and then too high), it is said that the Daime will have the same variation in its effects.

The Feitio is extremely ritualized, involving a special prayer for both its start, and after all the Daime is cooked. It begins when a group of people goes to the forest to collect the vine and the leaves and finishes only after all that material is transformed into Daime. Silence and concentration is extremely important during the process of cooking the tea. Men and women do not have specific functions, being able to work on any job: cleaning the vines or the leaves, tending the fire, watching the pans, collecting the liquid, and so on.

The intent behind this spiritual caring for the preparation of the Daime is to obtain a tea of good quality, which, along with the power emanating from the spiritual space, through the ceremonies conducted within the physical space of the Center, will result in transformative experiences for those in treatment for healing in the Center. The experience of those people is described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9

THE EXPERIENCE OF TREATMENT

I intend to describe in this chapter the narratives concerning the experience of 5 participants in healing ceremonies at the Center. The first two (Maria and Lisa) and the last two participants (Rudolf and Julio) took part in healing ceremonies of *Prestação de Contas* (see Chapter 7), that is, they remained lying down on mats in the Congá during the service. However, the third participant (Caroline) was not present in a *Prestação de Contas* ceremony. My option to select her narrative to be exposed here is influenced by the fact that she visited the Center only because of its healing services. She had a special healing ceremony arranged exclusively for her.

Of the selected participants, 3 are Brazilian (Maria, Lisa, and Julio), 2 women and 1 man, and all active members of the Center. The other 2 are visitors, one Canadian man (Rudolf) and one American woman (Caroline): those 2 constitute a good counterpoint to the perspective presented by the 2 other “native” narratives. At the same time, the fact that they belong to very distinct cultures enhances the importance of the Center’s spiritual space on the treatment.

However, before I present the 5 cases, it is important to clarify how I am using the core idea of experience.

Experience

A complete review of the idea of experience is beyond the objective of that dissertation. Rather, my objective in this section is just to highlight what I have in mind when I talk about experience.

Victor Turner (1986), in his seminal *The Anthropology of Experience*, introduced Dilthey's distinction of a mere experience: "Simply the passive endurance and acceptance of events" (p. 35), and "an experience," which is like "a rock in a Zen sand garden, stands out from the evenness of passing hours and years" (p. 35). According to Turner (1986),

These experiences that erupt from or disrupt routinized, repetitive behavior begin with shocks of pain or pleasure. Such shocks are evocative: they summon up precedents and likenesses from the conscious or unconscious past—for the unusual has its traditions as well as the usual. Then the emotions of past experiences color the images and outlines revived by present shock. What happens next is an anxious need to find meaning in what has disconcerted us, whether by pain or pleasure, and converted mere experience into *an* experience. All this when we try to put past and present together. (pp. 35-36)

In the context of the Center, the shock would be a powerful *miração*, feeling, or intuition turned into certainty during the work. The shock, in that sense, would be a disruption in the flux of experience during the ritual, so it would be *an* experience in the frame of the ritual's experience. The next moment that Turner put in evidence, the "anxious need to find meaning in what has disconcerted us," would evolve during the subsequent and developing moments during—and most of the time, after—the ritual.

Bruner (1986), also following Dilthey's ideas, indicated that experience and meaning belong to the present, whereas memory belongs to the past (for him, future was "always open, linked to expectation and potentiality" p. 8). However, meaning is exactly what links experience and memory, the present experience and the past, being the life before the moment of the experience. However, for Bruner (1986), meaning would lie *within* experience, making the connection between experiences, and situating them in life.

The use of a psychoactive substance would put in evidence the whole of meaning within the process of experience: meaning, as Huxley (1990) indicated, would be

intrinsically linked to the objects generating (or involved in) the experience. Meaning, too, would sew together the flow of experiences (Turner, 1986). If it occurs that meaning is not found, it can generate an extremely anxious situation, when the experiences become disconnected from one another. The opposite, however, can be also true: that anxiety can completely disappear, meaning completely absorbing the object, and life is completely integrated in a perfect and meaningful whole.

It is interesting to note that the German philosopher and mystic Rudolf Steiner worked with a very similar perspective almost a century ago. Steiner (1968) questioned the differentiation between internal and external sources of experience. According to him, “our inner states also appear on the horizon of consciousness in the same form as do the things and facts of the external world. A feeling makes its impact upon me as does a sensation of light” (p. 16). However, of real significance here is his idea that experience is an “endless mass of single entities” (p. 18) *presented*—and not represented—to the person having the experience.

For Steiner (1968), the process of thinking is what links all of the single entities. Steiner’s “thinking” would have the same role as Turner’s meaning. Also, as Huxley (1990) indicated, thoughts (or meanings) belong not to the thinker but are immanent to the object of experience. According to Steiner (1968), “We do not at all produce a thought-content in such fashion that, in this production, we determine into what interconnections our thoughts shall enter. We merely provide the occasion through which the thought-content unfolds according to its own nature” (p. 36).

Steiner (1968) split reality in two: “the spheres of experience and thought” (p. 63). The totality of reality “must emerge in the form of experience” (p. 63), and

thoughts have to enter the field of mind's experience—which is in itself another experience. For Steiner, that duality of reality disappears under the action of knowledge, which is “cognition by means of thinking” (p. 64).

However, Steiner (1968) worked with an unusual notion of thinking. According to him, “Our mind is not to be conceived as a receptacle for the ideal world, containing the thoughts within itself, but as a organ which perceives the thoughts” (p. 64). Thinking, then, is an internal force allowing us to perceive thoughts—or meanings. I would say that thinking would be the active process of becoming conscious both of experience and of its meaning.

In the *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* (Steiner, 1986), Steiner said that concepts and ideas arise from thinking. He emphasized that both concepts and ideas cannot be circumscribed by words: “Words can only make the human being aware of the fact that he has concepts”(p. 46). Concepts are the “ideal counterpart”(p. 46) of a perceived object. He continued, “The more our consciousness broadens, the greater the sum of our concepts becomes. The concepts, however, by no means stand there isolated. They join themselves together into a lawful whole” (p. 46). This perception is very much alive during the Ayahuasca experience, when the mind is surmounted by meanings, ideas, and concepts.

The observation of an object evokes also, according to Steiner (1986), a mental picture of that object, which “corresponds, namely, to the perceptible change of my own state through the presence of the [object] within my field of vision. And indeed, this change does not refer to any ‘I-in-itself’ standing behind the perceiving subject, but rather the change of the perceptible subject himself” (p. 88).

Steiner (1986) then situated the mental picture as something that “stands therefore between perception and concept. . . . The sum of that about which I can form mental pictures I may call my experiences” (pp. 97-96). For Steiner, reality has a double face; it “presents itself” (p. 97) as both perception and concept. Both counterparts act by transforming the observer, who reacts by forming mental pictures, which links both counterparts, creating a single and meaningful whole. It is important to note that the reaction of the observer is not something conscious; it is, we can say, the output of the transformative power of the world. Those mental pictures—or experiences—will transform themselves into guidelines for the future action of that observer in the world.

Steiner’s (1968) next step is to say that with thinking, “We lift ourselves from perceiving reality as product to perceiving it as that which produces” (p. 72). Reality is no longer the product or result of interactions, but the cause, the ground, the essential ground of being. Finally, Steiner said, “The world is not merely known to us as it appears, but it appears as it is, although only to thinking contemplation” (p. 72). In thinking contemplation, which can be linked to the process of *miração*, the spiritual world presents itself to the observer. According to Steiner (1986),

Thinking leads all perceiving subjects to the common ideal oneness of all manifoldness. The oneness of the world of ideas expresses itself in them as in a multiplicity of individuals. As long as a person grasps himself merely through self-perception, he regards himself as this particular person; as soon as he looks toward the world of ideas lighting up in him and encompassing all particulars, he sees the absolutely real light up living within him. Dualism designates the divine primal being as that which permeates all men and lives in them all. Monism finds this universal divine life within reality itself. The ideal content of another person is also my own, and I see it as a different one only so long as I perceive; but no longer, however, as soon as I think. Every person encompasses with his thinking only as part of the total world of ideas, one to this extent individuals do also differ in the actual content of their thinking, but these contents exist in one self-contained whole which comprises the contents of thinking of all men. In his thinking, therefore, man grasps the universal primal being that permeates all men.

Filled with the content of thought, his life within reality is at the same time life in God. (pp. 237-238)

The Treatments⁵⁰

Maria

Maria was born in 1969, in Rio Branco. During the time of fieldwork, she was unemployed. She had worked before as a professional photographer. She is the single mother of a daughter (15 years old) and three sons (14, 12, and 10 years old). She has been at the Center since 1995. Before she arrived at the Center, she was a member, since 1986, of Colônia Cinco Mil, a Santo Daime center (on the lineage of Padrinho Sebastião) also in Rio Branco.

Maria was the only person that I could follow in relative completeness throughout the entire treatment. Vó Maria do Rosário prescribed her to stay for nine (from January to September 2004) works of *Prestação de Contas* within the Congá. My first interview with her was on March 28, 2004 (after two ceremonies of *Prestação de Contas*).

When I asked her the nature of her particular problem, she gave me a very long and complex explanation. According to her, she had a problem in her kidneys, which in turn stemmed from a severe problem with urinary incontinence during her childhood. Later on, she experienced the opposite: she would feel the urge to urinate and run to the bathroom, but once there, nothing would happen. When she was 16, she went to the hospital with a severe pain on her belly. The doctors suspected appendicitis. They

50 The word “treatment” is used in many different ways at the Center, and its meanings have to be intuited from the context of its use. People can talk about “treatment” when they want to talk about the whole sequence of services one has to attend as a recommendation of the Preto-velho, during the 27th of each month. At the same time, people say: “I am back there [at the Congá] *in the* treatment.” Also, each individual ceremony of the 27th attended is also referred to as “the treatment.” For example, I can ask someone, “How do you describe your treatment?” asking about the last ceremony of the 27th the person attended.

performed some examinations and decided to postpone the inevitable surgery. Finally, they administered some medicine (she did not know what) and the pain was over. She explained that they could not find out what the problem was. She remained for three days at the hospital. Later, after turning 22, she started having another urinary problem, a strong burning every time she urinated. Biomedical treatment could never provide a solution to her problem.

She mentioned that she had never initially thought about leaving the Colônia Cinco Mil center. As it happened, a friend of hers invited her to a ceremony at Madrinha Francisca's center (this was in 1995). Maria accepted, but she found the ceremony quite boring. However, one day, Maria started to reflect about her time on the Cinco Mil. She finally inquired to "God about what was wrong." In the service held on the night of December 7 (1995), dedicated to Our Lady of Conception, Maria said she had a very moving experience in the Cinco Mil. On the night of the 8th she visited the Center again. She said that this was the first time that she felt the effect of the Daime in a service at the Center.

It is interesting to note that Maria had been drinking Daime for nine years before she visited the Center, and only when she questioned her position at her original church that she started to feel the effects of the Daime served at the Center. According to Maria,

Something Divine happened with me. It was a service with a lot of light. There came a moment when I went out of the church to throw up. A friend of mine, who was with me, came and laid his hand on my back, on the middle of my back, and he started praying one Our Father, one Hail Mary, one Hail Holy Queen, and one Creed. During that time, everything was coming out, and the prayer was coming inside me. When he finished everything became pink, my sight became pink, wonderful.

Maria started to come more often to the Center. In May of 1996, she participated in the Romaria to the Virgin Mary. About the same time, she divorced from her husband. She decided to divorce after several “very instructive works” Maria had at the Cinco Mil center, revealing many things about her former husband. After that, she participated in the Romaria to Saint Francis. Little by little, the services at the Cinco Mil became a burden for her. In July of 1996, Maria received her first Salmo after she had left a ceremony at the Center. Maria told me that, as she was still a member of the Cinco Mil, she intentionally changed the rhythm of the received Salmo, trying to turn it into a hino, to fit the Santo Daime music style. The message in the Salmo (now a hino) was about devotion, about praying, and the necessity of drinking Daime along with prayers. She showed the “hino” to a member of the Cinco Mil, who said that the hino was not from the Santo Daime lineage, even with the new rhythm.

When Maria was participating in a Instruções service, Madrinha Francisca gave a lecture asking that whoever had received a “mystery from that house, to show it to her,” that is, whoever had received a Salmo belonging to the Center (see Chapter 6—the songs belong to the Barquinha, not the people receiving them), to show it to her. It was at that moment Maria realized that she had received a Salmo, not a hino. Then Maria decided to show the song to Madrinha Francisca. This was on the 5th of December, one day before the second occasion of the 1000 Hail Marys being prayed at the Center. Madrinha Francisca told Maria that she was to sing the Salmo in that service.

On December 7, Maria went to the service in the Cinco Mil center. She told me that there she had the most clear revelation that her time there was over, that that was her last service at the Cinco Mil. Maria said that she was extremely sad, that she felt like

departing home, but she was aware that she had to leave. She said that she went to the tomb of Mestre Irineu to pray, and asked him to show her how to proceed. On January 6, 1997, Maria had a problem, and she could not go to the service at the Cinco Mil church. Instead, she went to the center lead by Padrinho Luis Mendes at the Alto Santo. There, unexpectedly, she met Madrinha Francisca, who was participating in the same ceremony. The last time she wore the farda of the Santo Daime was in the service held on the 19th to the 20th of January, 1997.

Since then, Maria has been participating actively on the Center. However, she told me that only in 2004 did she feel that the Center was really the place she had to be, in that she felt herself “at home.” On the other hand, she also told me that in the beginning of 2004, she was experiencing what she called a “very difficult moment in [her] life.” Those problems reflected on her relationship with the Center’s community, and she strongly desired to leave the Center due to the feeling of what she classified as very heavy energies around her during one specific service. After the January 3 service, she went back home, crying, and she remained crying for a long time, until she started feeling a very strong headache. By 2:00 a.m., still crying, she called her father and asked him to bring some medicine for her. She told all the problems to Vó Maria do Rosário, who decided that Maria had to start the nine ceremonies sequence of treatments. Vó Maria do Rosário said to Maria that the treatment was both for her kidneys and her head and for her to acquire more balance in life. Her kidneys were still bothering her, and she was still having severe pain in her back sometimes.

She went on visiting biomedical doctors, who could not find any stones in her kidneys, just a minor inflammation. They prescribed remedies, which Maria decided not

to take. She can feel her bladder filling very quickly, which caused her to go to the bathroom very frequently. She said that during the service on the 27th of March (2004—her third service in treatment, and one day before my first interview) she went to the bathroom four times (in approximately five hours).

Before entering into the description of Maria's experience in the 27th of March service, she told me about an experience she had during the ceremony held at the end of the Romaria to Saint Joseph (March 19). Maria said that on the day before the ceremony she went on to sleep by 3:30 a.m. At 6:30, she woke up because there was to be a baptism at the Center, and she was chosen as the godmother of the child. Unfortunately, the ceremony of baptism did not happen, but as she had woken up, and was at the Center, there she stayed, helping people with the preparation for the Festa to be held at night. Also, she went on accomplishing many of the *compromissos* (compromises) she had to pray: a litany to the Holy Ghost, Saint Michael rosary, special prayers to her Guardian Angel, and another one for the Lent. Finally, by 4:00 p.m., she finished and went home.

There she took a shower and decided to take a nap until around 7:00 p.m., the time to return to the Center for the ceremony of the Romaria. She said that she done something very unusual that day: she turned off both the alarm and the cell phone. She also said that she was not fully aware that she had done so. She went on sleeping very deeply. She remembered that by nine at night she woke up, knowing not where she was, but not being able to stand up, and returned to sleep. A little after this, she said she heard a friend of hers from the Center calling her. Some people at the Center were worried that

she had not returned, and this person had decided to go to her house to call her. She said that she heard him calling, and she opened her eyes, but she was no longer in her room.

I was in a tent, full of candles, lying on a white bed, and there were seven beings there, working for me. I couldn't see them, but I knew they were there. I could see a very light blue seven-days candle in front of me, another yellow, and one pink. Beyond those, there was a white one, and the beings were telling me that they were working with me on the mystery of the triune flame. All that was fulfilling me, I could feel such a peace within my heart, a wonderful thing. I told my friend that was calling me that was fine, and that I was not going to the Center. I surrendered myself to what was going on, I did not even remember about the Romaria. After that, I became unconscious. Suddenly I heard Madrinha Francisca calling: "Maria, Maria!" I stood up. For me this was the moment Madrinha Francisca was calling me to sing the Salmo I had to present. It was 11:00 p.m.! I got dressed and came to the Center, I was fine, but a little sad, because I lost the Romaria. I think this is part of my healing process.

Interesting here is that, in fact, there came moment during that ceremony (which I attended) when Madrinha Francisca took the microphone and called Maria to sing. She called two times, and someone came to her saying that Maria was not there. I can remember that fact because it seemed to me to be very strange that she was not there to sing.

Going back to the 27th of March service, I asked Maria about her experience of the treatment. She said that the fact that she had to go to the bathroom four times during the ceremony was very unpleasant but that she could feel a "very good energy coming from all the entities that prayed on [her]." I asked her whether she had experienced any *miração*.

The best moment was when I went to the bathroom, and a few minutes later I had to go again. When I went the first time, I had trouble urinating. It was as if something was holding the urine. Then the spiritual guides [incorporated in the mediums] started praying on me. Vô Benedito prayed, his energy was really good, but I had to go to the bathroom one more time. I asked to leave, and on the second time I had no problem to urinate. I place, on every ceremony of the 27th, a candle and a glass with water and a rock crystal over my head. Vó Maria do Rosário came to me, took the crystal, and put it on my belly. I felt such a good energy, of

healing, from the crystal, of purification, I worked a lot. In fact, I saw many things that I cannot explain, and that I cannot describe, good things, and different things. There was a moment that I saw many skulls. I was very linked to the material, to problems, and I was fighting with that. I invoked the violet flame, and the green flame, saying: "I am a being from the green flame, I am the healing God wants, I am the remedy God wants, I am the health God wants." After that I invoked very intensively the violet flame. The work was very good and I comprehended many things. I could remember that when I was sixteen I interned in a hospital, I remembered that I had that problem since I was a child. In fact, the kidneys are linked to the karma, it is a process of purification that has to be done. When I receive that cure of my kidneys, I will receive a purification of my soul, and this was the comprehension I had tonight. I also thought about many problems I have in my life now. I want to bring my son and daughter to live with me again, they are not with me, and this is very bad. I do not have a job, I am still depending upon my parents, I am 35 now, and have to cut my umbilical cord.

I interviewed Maria again on July 13, 2004. She told me that the service was very calm and that nothing exceptional really happened. She felt very sleepy, and in fact, she slept a little. However, she assured me, "I am going through a very deep transformation in my life, and I believe that this has everything to do with the works on the 27th of the month." I asked her about how her life was going. She started telling me that her life was better now, that she could find an objective, an aim for her life, she was more aware about what she wanted for her life. She also mentioned that she was feeling closer to her parents now.

I am feeling as if my head is opening for many things, but has its problems too. Sometimes I feel like I do not want to be under treatment anymore. But it was a compromise they asked me to do, up to the ninth month, until September, but if give up now I think I won't be well, but sometimes I do not want it anymore. Maybe this is the negative side that do not want anymore, I do not know why I do not want to follow the treatment anymore. And so, I keep going comprehending many things. There are things within the mystery of the light that are very subtle, sometimes we receive a treatment within the light and in fact we do not even know that we are receiving the treatment. I have the comprehension that during the treatment, when I do not feel many things, I feel that somehow the beings are here helping me, they are accompanying me, I know that, but I do not feel them close to me all the time. Even with my Preta-velha, I believe that it is because the way my life is now, that I am more concerned with material things, I do not want to give myself for her very often, as I used to do in the past. I feel my Preta-velha

close to me sometimes, during the Festas, when she comes, but I am not feeling my spiritual guides very close. I have to see what will happen with me from now to the end of these nine months.

After this I asked how she was physically and whether her kidneys were working properly. She told me that she still had problems in her kidneys but no longer in her head. She related the problem in the kidneys to her diet, and she gave an example of some aliments she use to have that caused her to urinate more. She said that during the last treatment, the spiritual guides asked her to stop drinking soda, eating red meat, and some other restrictions. She said that she had intuitions about those prescriptions. However, the fact that she was accustomed to having her meals at the house of her parents was creating difficulties for her to follow the prescriptions.

Until that time, Maria was still unemployed. She had two projects (to work as a photographer and with recycled paper), but both of them had failed. After the treatment on the 27th of July, she decided to stop giving me interviews. She started questioning whether the Center was the right place for her to stay, because, as she told me once, she had many problems establishing good relationships with the people there. She was feeling that she was not accepted at the Center. I saw her during a very harsh conversation with a Preta-velha. The Preta-velha was very calm and was telling her that she could have more love within her heart and to surrender to the Doctrine. Maria started a treatment with Pai José also.

However, on September 30, after the last prescribed treatment (held on the 27th of September), she came to me and told me that she would like to finish our cycle of interviews, that she knew that this was important to me. She was transformed. It was so evident in her expression that she was another person, that I was very surprised, both by

her approaching and by her very apparent inner transformation. Our last interview occurred at dawn on October 5, after the Festa concluding the Romaria to Saint Francis of Assisi and two days before I left Rio Branco after finishing my fieldwork. I started asking her about her last treatment.

The last work was the strongest of all the treatments; the most complete one. I could open my heart within the mystery of the treatment. I cried all I had to cry, I received many graces, I could testify many things. For telling you about that end of the treatment I have to talk about its beginning. Vó Maria do Rosário put me, in January, on the treatment because my head was not working well. She told me that she would put me in treatment for nine months. I have that compromise with Saint Michael Archangel, from every 21st to 29th of the month, and she told me that my healing would happen within the mystery of the three archangels. She told me that many things would happen. When she said that, I got scared, but at the end of everything [during the last ceremony of the 27th] when she came praying on me, then I could testify to everything that happened. When she started praying they started to sing in the church the Salmo of the three archangels! So, she worked with me within the mystery of this Salmo, and when she was working with me I understood everything, everything within the limitations I have, I understood the mystery she gave me during those nine months. During those nine months, she gave me the three keys of Saint Peter. During those nine months she asked me to buy those three keys [there are candles in the form of keys], I bought them, and she worked with those keys. In Saint Peter prayer, the first key is made of iron: it is the key to open the paths that are closed for the person. The second key is made of silver, to open the spiritual world. The third key is made of gold, the key of prosperity. Up to this point, I was acquainted with the information. However, during the compromise, they showed me that each key was guarded by an archangel. When she was praying on me it was told to me that they were protecting me, closing whatever had to be closed, and opening the doors for me. All which I had looked for during the treatment, I achieved. First of all, my direction, the direction I needed to take in my material life. I was accepted in the program for journalism at a local college. When I was about to apply, I was not sure about what to do, I drank a Daimé here at the Center and they told me to enter through the door that was being opened for me. This is what I was looking for, but I was not aware of it before. I could find myself. I know that this will be hard, and I will have to study a lot, but I am enjoying it. When you have a direction, you can see that all the other things are nothing compared with what God has to offer to you. We have to attach ourselves to the good things, cultivating them, learning, this is the path to give a contribution to the world, and it depends upon our will to learn how to help other people. This is a gift from God. During that last ceremony they told me that my healing was only starting, that now I was ready to be really healed. I did not receive the cure for my kidneys, and I'm still sick, but they told me that from now on I would be healed. I even had

an appointment with a doctor, something I couldn't do before. I will proceed with some examinations this week. I went to an urologist. Tomorrow I will have an appointment with a gynecologist. They [the spiritual entities during the treatment—directly, without the intermediary of a medium] told me to follow the medical instructions, to take the remedies. Only now could my material cure take place.

After this, I asked her a final question. I asked her to recall her whole treatment, principally the *mirações*, and how she could relate those *mirações* with her entire process of sickness and healing during the nine months of treatment. She answered the question initially by recalling Lent, when she said she had one of the strongest *mirações* that she ever had. It is interesting that Maria considered the whole period of nine months as the treatment and not only the specific ceremonies once a month. Maria's Preta-velha asked her to accomplish a compromise with Gina, another member of the Center. That compromise took place over 21 days. On the last day of that compromise, still during the Romaria to Saint Joseph (this Romaria during 2004 occurred during Lent), her Preta-velha asked them to drink a Daime. They were cooking Daime that night. Both Gina and Maria went to the Feitio's house, and they had the opportunity to drink a freshly made tea. This is a very tricky situation: freshly made Daime is an adventure. In general, this is an "untested" Daime, being a Daime no one has drunk before, and nobody knows how strong it is or how much came out of the last pot. Those who are cooking the Daime can have an idea about its concentration examining its color (darker ones are more concentrated). However, those are not completely secure indications, and the only way to know the power of a batch of Daime is by drinking it. It is only after the experience of the first group of courageous volunteers that people can really qualify the Daime.

Going back to Gina and Maria, they went to the Feitio's house to drink the Daime. Maria asked the person in charge of the Feitio to serve her a full glass (about

50ml). Gina drank the same amount. They both returned to the Church. The Romaria was over, and people were ready to sing the Salmo of the Lent. Maria sat down, and in a matter of minutes, she could feel the Daime *subindo* (going up—this is a very common expression when people want to say that the effects of the Daime were growing strong very rapidly).

The only thing I was conscious of, the only thread of consciousness I had on earth was Gina, the only thing I had was her, who had drank the same Daime as I. I disappeared, I did not know who I was, I could only think of her. Then, a lot of stuff started coming at once, I entered into a very heavy work, within the Salmo [the Salmo of the Lent]—that Salmo is very long, and it appeared even longer because I was working in a very intense way during that Salmo. I worked a lot, I went up, I came down, and asked God that He could give me firmness, that I was not myself anymore. The whole thing fulfilled me completely, but I doubted it. When I felt the doubt, I saw myself in a huge trouble. When I doubted, I returned, and my Preta-velha told me that she was there with me, that I needed to firm myself, because I was doubting her also, and when I doubted I fell down to the floor, I fell with my face on the floor, I fell within the light.

This is a very interesting passage. Doubt, here, is not doubt about something, but it is simply “doubt,” the essence of doubt, doubt as a state, a state in which doubt can become manifested in many ways, including the doubt that God is ever-present and the doubt that her spiritual guides were there with her, and so on. Doubt is the main obstacle to “firmness.” People who are firm have God—firmly—in their hearts, and the mere presence of God gives them the power to enter into very dark worlds and levels of consciousness. Doubt, finally, broke Maria’s firmness, and, as a result, she “fell down to the floor”—her consciousness returned completely to the physical, and she partially lost consciousness of the spiritual space.

When the Salmo was over we stood up, Madrinha Francisca said a few things, and I was still having the *mirações*, but they were all together, there was no distinction anymore. After she stopped talking I looked to Gina, and I could see that she was not feeling even a half of what I was feeling. I told her “they caught us”! They had caught us within the light. I kneeled myself, and suddenly I saw something

wonderful, I saw a sanctuary, all lavender, like a sanctuary for confession, all resplendent, all lavender, and I surrender myself, I gave myself away there, without thinking. I gave myself away and asked God to give me firmness to enter into that work, that I wanted to go back, I became afraid. After that I asked Gina for us to go to the Cruzeiro for praying. When we went there, for praying the Third of Mercy [a specific sequence of prayers], I started seeing everything red, the mystery of the cross. It was red all around us, we were within the mystery of mercy. After that, we started laughing, laughing and crying at the same time, without control—this was a way to extravagate. I was crying and laughing. After that I received my Preta-velha, but it was not so strong anymore. She [the Preta-velha] told me that I was under penitence.

When Maria changed the intent and the place—from within the Church to the Cruzeiro—her *miração* changed: from lavender to red, from the confessional to the cross, from surrendering to receiving the mercy of God. God, however, was manifesting Himself as He crucified Jesus and His holy blood, washing away the doubt and fear. A very natural catharsis took place then: those very intense experiences request a lot of vital energy, of attention, and the person experiencing it is very tense and attentive. The catharsis is, then, the final explosion of the healing energy, a moment when the world of rules and norms is gone, and the individual is absolutely free.

That experience took place on a Friday, and as she said, her Preta-velha put her in penitence. The visions Maria had were a sign that her healing process was just about to start, and the penitence was intending to prevent Maria from moving her consciousness away from the higher levels of the spiritual world. Her Preta-velha then asked Maria to drink of the same Daime on Monday and on Tuesday and to pray to the Holy Trinity and then to Saint Joseph. On Monday, another person accompanied her. When he started reading the prayers to the Holy Trinity, Maria entered into the same work again; that is, she started having the same feeling that she had on Friday night.

I had felt [previously] so much fear, I had lost my firmness, and I said, “I want to confront it, I want to see what is that story, what is troubling me.” Then [as a

miração] I heard someone talking about me, I started hearing many people talking about me, people from here, and I had started to see a universe, I was seeing many threads, threads all tangled, and within those threads there were the heads of some *bichos*⁵¹, of some beings, and I was saying that I wanted to see. But they just showed me these threads and the voices, and there I came to a point that they told me that I could not go further: “return” “but why?” “because this is not the right moment.” I know that they closed it, they did not allow it anymore.

On Tuesday, she could not recall the experience. Her Preta-velha told her, however, that after Lent, Maria would have to take care of her life and that her Preta-velha was there to help her. On Wednesday, Maria participated in the ceremony of Instrução. Maria sat on the table.

I drank the Daime, I closed my eyes, and they were telling me: “Immaculate heart of Jesus, Immaculate heart of Mary, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is your protection.” I started meditating on those sentences, and many inferior currents were circling around me, but I could contemplate the mystery of Mary’s heart, of Jesus. Something happened with me during that work, and that’s what I call *miração*, ecstasy. It was like a lightning flashing in the sky. I know it was an archangel. I could only see his vestments and the symbols that he had on his hands. He crossed like lightning, frightening me, it was a light, white, very strong. After that, I had a work with Gina. I saw her all dressed in black, she was in a black tent, I did not recognize her, only when I came closer and I saw her in front of a bed, everything was black, I could see her clothes, so beautiful, such a fine fabric, all black. She had a veil covering her eyes, and when I came closer, I could see that it was her. I couldn’t understand and I couldn’t forget either. Later, they told me what it was, that it was not something bad for her, it was something good. I could find myself, I was feeling very well, but I was still searching for the reasons that took me to that other work.

On another day, still during Lent, Maria went home after a ceremony, still feeling the effects of the Daime, and asked her Preta-velha permission to use her pipe. Maria lit it and asked her Preta-velha, “Vó, show me it!” Again, the Preta-velha started to show her the same *miração*, but, after a while, the same prohibition: “My daughter, you cannot enter here, this is not yours, it does not belong to you.” However, this time, Maria

51 *Bicho* can have many translations. In a direct way, it means simply *animal*. In the way she used that word, it has a very negative connotation, probably meaning *worms*.

achieved a comprehension of the facts behind that imposed limitation, which made her stop trying to go further into that subject.

After that, Maria told me that her *mirações* got less intense. She started to have relationship problems with several people at the Center, including Gina. One day in August she came to me—unexpectedly—and said that she did not want talk with me anymore, that she did not want to give me any other interview. Until that moment we had been having a good relationship, and there were absolutely no reason for her to tell me that. It was not really her decision about no longer giving me interview (it was her right to do it) which was a challenge for me—but rather the way she communicated it to me, in a very aggressive way, again, with no (apparent) reason to do so. She stopped talking even with me. Our last interview was on July 29th. I entertained no hope that I would interview her again.

I kept observing her, however, and I followed her situation and relations with the other member of the Center, which became very bad. I saw her having very rough conversations with some spiritual guides, and many other people came to me saying that she had decided to leave the Center.

After some time, Maria decided to have a conversation with Pai José about all those troubles. Then he started to have many other conversations with her. He told her that he would help her to untangle the threads she had seen in her *miração*. Finally, by the end of the Romaria to Saint Francis (near to Saint Michael's day—the archangel with whom Maria had a special connection), Maria told me that she could feel, for the first time, her heart clean. She re-established a process to reapproach all of the people with whom she had problems, including me. A few days after her last treatment

(September 27th) Maria came to me—once more unexpectedly—and said that she knew how important her interviews were for me, for my work, and that she wanted to conclude the work we were doing together. Also, she looked for Gina to reestablish their friendship.

The day I resumed talking with Gina, it was the 27th [of September], they told me: “if you do not go there to talk with Gina, your sister, your whole compromise will be in vain.” I said that I would talk with her. I did not know how I would do it, but when I was leaving the Center the Erê of Dora (incorporated in that medium) came to me and said, “Aunt Maria, come here.” Gina was there, close to him. “Aunt Maria, you have to talk to aunt Gina, you love each other.” “Joãozinho, stop, this is not the right moment!” And Gina was there, with a very serious face. “Go there aunt, and give her a hug . . .” This was during the treatment. I went to the bathroom, and when I was coming back I gave a hug to Gina.

They both started crying.

A few days before the 27th, however, Maria told that she had an experience, at home, in which she discovered the key of many of her problems. She said that she decided not to go to the Romaria, but she drank some Daime alone, at home.

I entered into a work. I started going back in my life, I went back to my childhood, and I started to remember all the trouble I had then, also during my adolescence, and I found a lot of rejection. Then, they told me, “This is the key, every time you feel rejected, it brings up in you everything you went through during your childhood and adolescence.” This is something I already knew, but I did not want to accept. That day I accepted it. And it was Gina who told me, before we broke, that she asked me if I had ever felt rejected. I said that no, but in fact that was the reason. This has all to do with my healing process, this was the moment I became conscious of that problem, and they told that it was from that point that I had to work.

Finally, Maria answered my question concerning the link between her *mirações* and her process of healing and disease.

It has everything to do with it. Everything I went through was a preparation. I can tell you that, during those nine months, I achieved the comprehension of many things, but it was what they told me on the last day of the treatment that was the most important: “When someone is sick, when someone wants to be cured, the

sickness has to crop up for you to know what needs to be cured.” Everything I had inside myself cropped up, consciousness came, and now it is the process of curing. Now I will really enter my process of cure, that’s what they told me. I have been paying more attention to myself, and I have been more patient with our sisters, because if I get mad with something, with everything, I do not want that, I want to be healed. Every time I feel myself rejected, I have to trust more myself, I have to have more firmness, I have to believe in God, before everything else, and then in myself, and after that you have to do the good without looking to whom. I’m still in that process, but I dominate it slowly. Now I will fight for what I want, I have a direction for my life, I know where I am going, but I still have a lot to work in myself.

One year after I returned from Rio Branco, I contacted Maria again. I wrote to her to ask how her life was going and also how her kidneys were faring. She wrote me back saying that she was in the third year of journalism studies in a university in Rio Branco, and that she had a job writing cultural notes in a local newspaper. Also, she was “almost married,” engaged with another member of the Center. However, the problem in the kidneys was not yet solved.

Lisa

Lisa is a lawyer. She was born in Acre, in 1958, and she had been drinking Daime since 1976. Lisa did not look for the treatment by herself. She felt, since the beginning, that her problem was not serious enough for her to be in the treatment. After sometime, a friend of hers, witnessing her suffering, talked with Vó Maria do Rosário, who decided to put her in the treatment of the 27s.

Lisa had a lot of pain in her spine, mostly in the cervical area. She said that when she sits for too long, she cannot feel her legs, and her arms as well as one side of her face sometimes get numb. The medical diagnosis was that she had a calcification on the cervical area, hyperlordosis, and a reduction of mass in one vertebra. She also told me that the biomedical doctors did not understand how she has so many problems in the

spine without having gone through any kind of trauma. She used to take anti-inflammatory remedies and acupuncture, but these acted only as palliatives.

The first place where Lisa drank Daime was the Colônia 5000 center, with Padrinho Sebastião, where she stayed for three years. After those three years, Lisa decided to move away from the 5000, principally because she realized the seriousness of the “doctrine” and that she would need to devote herself completely to it, realizing at the same time that she knew that she was not ready.

After some time (she could not tell me how much), she resumed drinking Daime, but then at the Barquinha of Antônio Geraldo. The Daime was not enough to keep Lisa away from drugs, and she abused several substances. She told me that she almost went mad at some points. She looked for a psychiatrist, who, by coincidence (she assured me) was a member of the Casa de Oração center. The doctor asked her if she would be interested in visiting that center.

Manoel Araújo received her and indicated Rei Urubatã (a Caboclo) to take care of her. Her treatment with Rei Urubatã was long, but during all that time, Lisa was afraid of taking Daime. After a long time, she decided to drink it, but the effects were very unpleasant: when the Daime was strong, Lisa would panic and flee from the church. Slowly, the fear that was preventing her from having a smooth experience was controlled, and she could “work” normally with the Daime again.

She was still under treatment with Rei Urubatã (it was the year of 1991, and Madrinha Francisca had just left the Casa de Oração), but she did not have the desire to become a member, that is, to be a fardada. She told me that at that time she still had problems accepting the doctrine, and the discipline. On December 24, 1992, Lisa could

not go the service at the Casa de Oração, and on the 25th, she was invited to visit the recently formed center of Madrinha Francisca. She said that at that time she had a very strong work. The Festa was for the Erês, the childlike spirits. Lisa became very surprised—and scared at the same time—by the freedom the spiritual entities had at the Center. The second time she visited the Center was not until 1994.

For some time she kept going to both Barquinhas. Lisa felt that she would be more useful at the Center than she was at the Casa de Oração. Another element having a very strong influence on Lisa's decision was the latent humility she felt at the Center. Sometime before that, during a service at the Casa de Oração, Lisa had a *miração* in which she left the Casa de Oração and was walking on the streets, toward the Center. Then she came to a wooden fence, and someone, through the fence, gave her a rose. She felt that this was receiving a calling from the Center. Finally, she decided to join the Center.

At the Center, she started witnessing things that, before, were true only within her imagination: The *pontos-riscados*, the close relationship that spiritual entities, clients, and members had, the fact that people at the Center (and principally Madrinha Francisca) were always praying and doing their *compromissos*, the fact that there was no division between spiritual work and daily life, and the reality that she now lived for the Mission. All those things were captivating her.

Vó Maria Joana (a Preta-velha) started working with her, which helped her very much. Lisa started working as a *cambone* of Vó Maria Joana. However, the Preta-velha told her that this was fine for now but that soon Lisa would need to receive and work with her own spiritual entities.

However, Lisa started to have problems at the Center. Her spiritual works were becoming too intense for her to bear. She started to have problems even outside the Center, without drinking Daime. She said that she used to have some blackouts, “as if my spirit was leaving me.” She started to visit Madrinha Francisca every time she was in need (at nonservice hours too). Madrinha Francisca, during those visits, had received Dom Simeão to help Lisa, and slowly Lisa regained control over her life.

Then, something very unusual started to happen with Lisa. She told me that there were many works at the other centers that she used to attend in which she could not remember what happened. There came a moment at the Center when she could see all of the works that she performed at the other centers, and she felt herself “seized” by so many beautiful things that she said had happened but of which she was not aware.

One day Lisa had the opportunity to participate in a Batismo de Pagãos ceremony at the Center. She said that she had never participated in one of these special services because she had never felt the need to go that deep into the doctrine. When people started to sing to Dom Simeão in the Church, she said that she heard someone laughing. She opened her eyes and started to look for that person, thinking to herself, “How come someone is laughing here during such an important ceremony?” Suddenly, she said that she fell on the floor, receiving an exú. The laughing she heard before was from that exú (interesting to note that she thought someone was laughing—yet, the laughing was experienced as coming from outside her head). This experience was very strong for her, principally because she had never received a spiritual entity before. The exú was finally baptized.

After that, Lisa start working on her mediumship—although the correct term in English would be “having her mediumship worked out.” She started receiving spiritual entities during the Festas. She had a very strong resistance to receive Pretos-velhos though: “I will never be there myself, bending down, smoking a pipe, never!” she had assured herself. When people started to sing for the Pretos-velhos during the Festas Lisa simply would turn her back and leave the Salão de Festas. However, during a Festa on her birthday, she was in the middle of the circle and could not leave the bailado. She could feel her body bending down, almost falling to the floor. Madrinha Francisca came out of her house and started singing for Pai Vicentino (Madrinha’s Preto-velho). During the time Madrinha Francisca was singing, Lisa stayed there, bent over. When she finished, Lisa fell down to the floor at Pai Vicentino’s (now incorporated in Madrinha Francisca) feet. Slowly, she started to learn about the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas. During fieldwork, the only spiritual entity I witnessed Lisa receiving was her Preta-velha.

Lisa was still afraid of her mediumship. She told me that she suffered a lot until she accepted it, she was very afraid of losing control, and she did not trust the spiritual entities that were approaching her. Her suffering came to a point that she felt that she was mad. She said she could keep her “normal” outside appearance. She said that by that time her spiritual guides moved away from her, because in her words, “They knew that there was something inside myself that I could not go beyond, they knew that something had to come out of myself.” Finally, following the advice of two of her friends, she started to drink smaller doses of Daime, which helped her to find a balance in her life. After seven

days having *mirações* all the time—even without drinking *Daime*—Lisa received the explanation (from spiritual beings) that

I had to stop saying, “Those things are from the *Daime!*”, and after the effect of the *Daime* was gone, everything did not exist any longer. They explained to me, spiritually [that is, through intuition, inside her mind, I would say], that the “*Daime*’s things” were real, though most of the time I had not the capacity of being connected, but they existed, they were happening. The problems in my spine started in that time, I was holding too much of all those things inside myself.

I asked Lisa why she had decided to visit the *Colônia Cinco Mil* center in 1976.

I believe that my spiritual guides took me there. It was not intentional, I did not say that I would like to visit. I had heard just a few things about [that center]. My father knew *Mestre Irineu*. He was a policeman, and he and many of his colleagues used to spend the night at the *Alto Santo*, but he did not drink *Daime*. People used to comment about *Mestre Irineu*, that he had passed away. But when I went visiting the *Cinco Mil* I was taken there by my spiritual guides, no one had talked to me about it, and I did not try to know anything about it. I just went there and I had a very strong work, I was pregnant, almost nine months, and I saw my son. At that time I did not understand. I was looking at my belly and it was gone, the dress I was wearing was loose. I thought my belly was gone. And I saw a kid running around, and I did not care. I had saw the stars coming really close to me when I was outside the church, it was a good work, tranquil. Three years later, I saw my son running and I realized, “My God! That’s the kid I saw!” He was wearing the same clothes, and running in the same way. When I saw him I remembered at once. When I was a kid I use to hear voices, I used to see strange things, I thought I was mad, and my worry was to let not people know that I had those experiences. My family was Roman Catholic, I had never heard about Spiritism, or anything like that. I was very scared of dead people, and I used to see the spiritual entities. I was also very shy. I used to spend the nights awake, with insomnia. The other kids around were playing, and I did not join them. I used to suffer a lot because I couldn’t mention this to anyone. By that time there was a *terreiro* of *Umbanda* close to my house. I did not know what that was, but when they started to play the drums I used to get cold, I shook, I was scared, and at the same time I wanted to go there, but I did not know what it was, I just heard. When I was a teenager, I had other kinds of problems. I used to wake up, and when I tried to stand up, I couldn’t, my body was paralyzed. Then I used to think: “my God! Everything will start again!” because I did not know what it was that was happening. Everything started to spin, out of control, and I was static, paralyzed, hearing everything that was going on, people talking, everything. Later on, I could confirm the things I had witnessed, by asking people what they talked about, and people had said the same things I had heard. I could see that I was not dreaming. When I got older I read some books on Spiritism, but I couldn’t understand. I think

my own spiritual entities took me to the Daime, because when I drank it, it seemed to me as if it was nothing new, I knew what to expect from it [the Daime]. It seems like I have been taking Daime my whole life, I knew everything there, not materially, but it was as if I had some kind of spiritual contact with the beings and people, previous to my visit. The Daime revealed to me that all the things that I thought did not exist, that had me thinking I was mad, were true. I remember that I used to miss very much someone though I did not know who it was, I could feel a hole in my chest, and I did not know it was about. One day, I was here at the Center and I saw [in a *miração*] a canoe coming closer, and an Indian inside it; when he looked at me I knew that he was the person I was missing. I cried so much that day . . . it was beautiful. He stopped the canoe and looked into my eyes.

Lisa related to me a very interesting experience she had. During a Festa she was dancing at the Salão de Festas. Another woman, incorporated with a spiritual guide, was dancing too, making circular and fast movements. Suddenly, the woman crashed her the back of her head against Lisa's nose.

It seemed like was everything cracking, like a roof falling down. I looked for Madrinha Francisca, I thought I was going to die, because of the cracking, the pain inside my head. I entered her room, and she told me to inhale some Daime [she literally poured it into her nostrils] to stop the bleeding. She also told me to lie down for a while. When I lay down I saw two beings coming down, one on each side of me. I said to myself, "I will die, they have come to take me!" I surrendered, and I just waited. One of the spiritual entities worked on my hand and the other pushed some metallic thing within my nose. Away they went. The next day I went to the biomedical doctor to make an s-ray. The doctor said that, in fact, the nose was broken, but it did not move, it was still in the right place. I did not even need to immobilize it.

I had the chance of interviewing Lisa two times. The first time was after she already had participated in two treatments.

During the first treatment, I was sitting down. It was a very strong work, it seemed like I had a knot in my chest, and that was exactly that problem of holding myself so much, of not letting the energy of spiritual entities to work through me. Suddenly that knot opened up and I started crying, all the anguish, and everything that was holding me, all the oppression, left my chest. During the second treatment, I had lain down, and I felt a lot of pain, in my back, in my hips, and there came to me an intuition that after that treatment I would need to rest, that they had handled something inside me.

The second interview was after the treatment held on September 27th.

I think that only now I am attuning myself with the healing work. Today I felt the presence of the spiritual beings, of the beings responsible for the healing work. I can remember a man, an Oriental being, dressed as an Oriental. He did not say anything special to me, but I know he was a member of the team of spiritual healers. There was a time that everything from my waistline down became numb. I couldn't feel anything below my waist. I could feel the beings around me, and I started to feel as though in a surgery room, which scared me, because I had never done any surgery. But at the same time an intuition came to me that this was not a surgery, it was only a treatment, but made by a superior intelligence, that I had no need of worrying. I could then calm myself down. After sometime I concentrated myself on the Salmos. I did not feel like moving anything. But when the service was over I was better than when it started. I thought that when I had to stand up everything would be hurting, but I stood up and I felt so good! I think the treatment is starting to work.

Finally, I asked Lisa how she could fit all the transformations, all the teachings into her life as a whole.

You become a better person, in your relationships, it's a reflex. Everything we learn here I have to practice. If you just receive the teachings, if you do not practice them, I can know, but if I do not do, there is no value on the teachings. What I learn here—and this is a problem for me, sometime I take things too seriously, so seriously that I have problems—I have to apply these things in my life. Sometimes I am working, in my job, and I think, “How can I apply here what I learned there?” There is no reason in being here, drinking Daime, have all the *mirações*, if I cannot modify myself as a person, my attitudes, if I do not modify I am profaning the Daime. When you are ignorant, it's very easy to be forgiven, you are ignorant, you have no light. But when you have the knowledge—if you obtain the knowledge and act contrary to that knowledge—you can only wait because something bad will come to you if you transgress it. For me I cannot work only on my own salvation, because my salvation depends upon whatever I do here. I have to learn here, and practice it.

Lisa was exposed to a total of seven treatments at the Congá during the *Prestação de Contas*. After that, the *Preta-velha* indicated her to do nine more, and as of November, 2005, she was in the sixth treatment. She said that her physical problem is getting worse—although she assured me that spiritually she was better than ever. She mentioned that she was going to Brasília for a consultation with a better biomedical doctor.

Caroline

Caroline was a 61-year-old American family psychotherapist who decided to visit the Center exclusively because its healing services. A friend of hers, a professor of psychology, introduced her to the Santo Daime. After her first service in one American temple of the Santo Daime, she heard about the Center and decided to travel to Acre.

Caroline had broken her hip while skiing 10 years before her decision to travel to the Center. For some years, she managed the pain and discomfort, but at the end of 2003, her pain was almost unbearable. However, she was afraid of the hip surgery because she could not find a biomedical doctor that she could trust and because the risk of post-surgical limitations. In truth, however, the main reason was that she was not ready for the surgery.

The experience of being in Acre was quite shocking for her in the beginning. Caroline lives in the San Francisco Bay area, and suddenly she saw herself immersed in a third-world-in-process-of-development city in the middle of the Brazilian Amazon. She told me that she was scared, thinking that it would be “too difficult, too strange, painful, perplexing, in a way that [she] wouldn’t be able to integrate. The firsts few days I was depressed, not all the time, but from time to time, ‘What am I doing here, why am I here, it’s too hot, it’s dirty, why do they do this!?’”

The Center’s symbolic and spiritual universe was completely alien to her. Coming from a Lutheran background where churches and altars are spare, she saw herself immersed in a universe of statues, pipes, psychoactive substances, Orixás, and mediums. On the other hand, a sort of “common” worldview could be found. The fact that she found herself with a group of people and knowing that they were all aware of spirits, felt

good to her. From that standpoint, she could switch from feeling like a “sort of not friend” to feeling that

there’s this whole bunch of people that think that this is quite usual, expected, and I worked with the fear of not being understood, [or being] rejected. That was interesting, that was why I was afraid of coming here, that it would be too over the negative side of being here [that the experience would be too negative]. I was scared of something more dangerous here, that I wouldn’t understand how to work with. But I just understood that there are other people here who can.

She would not be able to stay at the Center through the next *Prestação de Contas* service (she arrived on March 1 and left the Rio Branco by the 15th). So, a special healing ceremony was arranged for her. Three *Pretas-velhas* worked on her. All of the people (around seven) took Daime on a Saturday afternoon. After one hour of singing *Salmos*, they asked her to lie down on a mat. A candle was lit over her head, another below her feet, and one on each side of the mat. The mediums received their spiritual guides and started a series of passes on her, first using the *espada* and later the hands. A lot of tobacco smoke was also blown over her whole body. Then a special liquid was prepared by infusing camphor in water, which was used by one of the *Pretas-velhas* on Caroline’s leg. At the end of the ceremony, a special *ponto-riscado* was drawn for sealing her healing. The ceremony took about three hours to be completed.

I asked Caroline what she experienced during the ceremony.

The interesting thing is that initially I was in a sort of euphoric place, and when I laid down on the mat the pain became so strong. Then I started to cry, my leg was just agonizing, and I could feel that they were working with my energy, and I could feel a hole in my femur, the hole that is there, I could really experience it, I could feel my leg sort of leaving me. Then I could feel sort of waves, people with me. Actually I had no images, which is interesting, I had no images, that was all sensations, all physical sensations, of what they were doing, the smell of the water, the sounds. I felt that they were working with me, and occasionally I opened my eyes, I couldn’t actually see anyone, but it felt like there was a lot of people. I could feel the people touching my leg, touching my heart, touching my

hip . . . that is forbidden there [in the United States], we barely touch the hand. I was [thinking] “wow! they are not afraid to touch me!”

She left the Center with the recommendation of taking, daily, an infusion of the top leaves of *embaúba* (*Cecropia sp.*), that the Preta-velha said would help after the surgery, to recover the movement of her leg. Also, the Preta-velha blessed a bottle of olive oil and asked her to drink one teaspoon daily and to massage her hip with that oil after the surgery.

After Caroline returned to the United States, she told me that the healing ceremony helped her to make the decision to go through with the surgery. However, she decided to do it not with the biomedical doctor with whom she was in touch before her journey. She had found another doctor, who was developing a new technique for the hip surgery, with a smaller incision in a different part of the leg. Also, she got in touch with a hypnotist. To her surprise, the hypnotist was acquainted with the Ayahuasca world and had been in Peru many times to drink it with local shamans.

The surgery was a complete success. Two months after the surgery, Caroline resumed swimming, and four months afterwards, she traveled to Machu Pichu (Peruvian Andes) and hiked many ruins there. She has a very active life and no problems remain with her movement.

Rudolf and Julio

To conclude this chapter, I introduce two complementary experiences concerning very similar problems. Both Julio and Rudolf went to the Center looking for a solution for the extreme pain they had in their joints. Rudolf (54 years of age), a Canadian man,

had a diagnosis by biomedical doctor. Julio (Brazilian, 22 years of age), however, had submitted to many exams and no (physical) cause for his pain had been found.

Rudolf was in a seminary for three and a half years. However, he has been a fardado at a Canadian Santo Daime center since 2000. He had many occupations during his life, such as managing natural food restaurants, working on a family farm, working in mines, making wooden toys, property management for special needs people, the latter being probably his favorite occupation. He was, by the time of the interview, semiretired for the last few years. He was in Rio Branco heading to Mapiá.

Rudolf grew up on a farm, and hard work was normal. He started noticing pain by the time he was 17 or 18 years old. He was having pain in his joints, and it was sometimes quite severe. He continued working at the farm, he did sports, worked in construction, and did martial arts. The pain in his joints had become normal for him.

Around the age of 50, the pain became too intense. His doctor took x-rays and said that he had no more cartilage in his hips, and he wanted to operate on him right away. The surgeons at the hospital looked upon it as a hip replacement. They did not discover how his problem began.

He had tried many different alternative treatments: Chinese medicine, acupuncture, moxibustion, herbs, massage, infrared, chiropractic, radionics, homeopathic, many spiritual healing techniques, energetic, reiki work, several kinds of flower remedies, and different diets.

I asked him the nature of spiritual life for him.

Spiritual life is total, you cannot let your mind wander, and consistently your mind wander you off the path to a certain extent, and it's the same with your bodily health to a certain extent. For me, your bodily health is a reflection of your spiritual health. So, the people I admire most as my spiritual guides and leaders

say that you should carry your body as you carry your cross. I do not mean suffering, I mean that if something comes in your way it comes for a reason. So, it comes across the reason, you come across the information you should make use of it. But, on the other hand it's a reflection of your self-discipline. I believe everything manifests for a reason to your higher self, that your higher entities have manifested this for a certain reason, and I believe that any physical ailment is a near reflection of what is happening in the astral, it's a physical manifestation of something that you have conceived of. I do not necessarily believe that it's karma, and again there are many spiritual writers of great evolution that say that you cannot judge an ailment or a condition of a circumstance by karma. It can be a preparation for a future life. So, it can be helpful for your fellow men. You cannot look upon it as you getting punished. It can be part of your punishment, or can be part of a combination of things. But, I do not look upon it as a direct result of something that I did in a past life although it can be, or it can be part of that. I tried to look upon it as maybe it is important to some etheric training for my next mission and for my next incarnation. This is where the spirituality of the Daime comes in.

The Daime is, for Rudolf, the element of clarification for the benefits of the other treatments. Rudolf told me that it gives him messages all the time, there is a discipline aspect, a discipline aspect to the Daime, and a discipline aspect to his personal life.

I asked him about his experience during the single *Prestação de Contas* in which he participated.

It was a very profound work, I was in quite a lot of pain, laying down for the first few hours, and when the healing started the pain was alleviated quite dramatically, and when he [the spiritual guide responsible for his healing, Vô Leôncio, working with Carlos Renato] entered his hands into my hips I felt shocks of electricity going through my body, and I shuddered quite dramatically at times. It was a pleasant shudder through my body. By the end of it I had much relief. I felt I was in a very holy sacred place, I felt I was in a temple! I was in a true mystery school. I was among very special people, very focused, very caring, very loving, non-judgemental, it was a joy to be there, and I felt blessed. Going through that wonderful healing, done out of pure love of humans, there was nobody there with a paper in the end saying, "I own this." There was only more love and more charity to my situation. You, in your own way, are your own healer, and we can help, but you have to want to be healed, like you desire your spiritual connection, you have to do it, you have to want it truly, and you have to have discipline to achieve it, so you can achieve it. You cannot achieve your spiritual vision [right away], you have to go through the steps of initiation. And some people can achieve this quicker than other people, and some people cannot. But what comes down to you is your commitment. Your commitment to prayer,

your commitment to be a good person. Some people go through life with what seems like a lot of luck. I cannot judge why some people are in good health and some people are good looking. But I do feel that a person makes its own deeds. And you have to do the discipline, spiritual and physical, if you want to achieve. Without wanting to sound corny, Jesus had to go to the desert and he had to fast. And he was tempted, and he had his trials and tribulations, and I have to carry my cross and go through my cross and tribulations, and I have to keep trying, trying, and trying until I can succeed with my physical and spiritual connection, I do not believe that you can separate these two. I believe that you have to keep your mind disciplined and charitable, and firm, as well as your body. For my *miração*, I would say that it was a set of instructions. And [the] instructions are very clear: “You have to follow what is given, if you do not follow what is given, your cannot go to the next step.” So, for me is a confirmation of keeping an internal discipline. Last night what I felt, what I received was a certain grace, a certain blessing, a certain confirmation that I am on the right path. And that even being there was a confirmation that these things are being given to me. And also to sit back: “here I am in this incredible place, this incredible set of circumstances, and to trust that, trust what is coming to me is spiritual guidance, spiritual help.” How many men [are there] in Toronto, Canada, with my probleme. I know that I’m not special, and that was also part of last night, it was all worked together. Part of what I got last night was also, I’ve been shown this for a reason. And the reason why I’m here will become apparent later. Whether [it] is to bring other people there, or [what], I do not know yet. But for me to learn patience. And another thing that came last night was that even if I do not get it now, I am imprinting in my etheric level that after I die I will be able to take this information of what I received last night and use it next time. This was a great comfort, because you cannot look upon life as a one-shot deal. You have to look upon it as you’re going to something greater, and that came through last night. I have to learn patience, no one can become a saint in one lifetime. It is a process. And we all make karma. And you just gotta do the best you can, and when you fail do not feel too feel too bad about it, that came through last night. I feel like last night helped me to pick myself up, [from] coming down on yourself, this impatience with myself that I cannot succeed right way, I need to be patient. They will let you know, and they will help you. That came through last night.

Finally, I asked Rudolf to relate his experiences during the ceremony with the health problems he was having and his process of healing.

I realize that my physical problem right now is just a manifestation of my life. In a nutshell, what has caused me to be in this situation is, [though] I do not think sin is a good word, sins. But, I think that your challenge of your life, and your lessons of your life, what I have learned, and what I am learning in this life, are manifest in my physical self, in patience, in self-clarification, in pride, in this tremendous amount of pride. In fact, I was thinking this one thing that I was capable to heal myself, no matter what the problem was, and I realized how much work that is to

truly heal yourself. You have to heal your mental self before you heal your spirit, before you heal your physical. To me, part of my problem is my pride. I felt that I was stronger than anybody else, that I could take more pain than anybody else, maybe I did, but in a way I found out how self-destructive this attitude was, and is. This is something I am working on. It is nothing more than this desire to give up: “I am better than anybody else, because I thought that when I did martial arts I was a better fighter than anybody else because I could take more pain than anybody else, I was faster.” But I realize that aspect, to drive to this goal, how self-destructive it is, how it’s a silly childish attitude. And I was saying: “ok, I recognize it”. This comes through the works and *mirações*: “I do not need this anymore”. Recognize, acknowledge it, and ask for help and clear it up.

After Rudolf’s extreme self-centeredness, we come to Julio’s case, which is the best example of extreme other-centeredness.

Julio had recently finished high school. When I met Julio, he was already at the end of his treatment. He went to the Center after he could no longer walk. He could only move his neck. For one and a half years he had extreme pain. The biomedical doctors gave him the diagnosis of rheumatism. He started taking Azufin and Dulcid (pharmaceuticals) every eight hours. The problem started in March, 2002. In March, 2003, the remedies were no longer working. He was submitted to tomographies, magnetic resonance imaging, blood samples, and different kinds of exams. The results were always negative.

Julio visited a *rezadeira*, who told him that his sickness was the result of black magic work made against him. He refused to believe her. He visited another one, who said the same thing. Finally, his uncle took him to the Center. A Preta-velha told him the same history, but she said that the black magic was intended to injure Julio’s brother but by mistake it “caught” Julio. The 27th of August of 2003 was the first time that Julio ever drank Daime: he was indicated by the Preta-velha to stay at the Congá during the ceremony. After that, Julio started to go to the Center for almost all of the services.

He said that in the end he had to believe that the black magic was real, because no remedy could alleviate his pain. In the beginning of the healing process, Julio told me that he became worse. He knew, however, that this was part of the process of his healing.

After that, by February of 2004, Julio started to walk normally again. He attended seven healing ceremonies. In the end of the Romaria to Saint Francis, he became a *fardado*. When I left the Center, he was back playing table-tennis (he used to participate in competitions before his sickness).

Julio got sick in place of his brother, who was the real “address” for the work of black magic. Julio worked as a shield for his brother. What is interesting here is that the biomedicine failed to heal Julio. On the other hand, the healing ceremonies, without the aid of pharmaceuticals—using only herbs and passes—brought Julio back into his normal life.

I am tempted to use here the classical interpretation of “symbolic efficacy” (Lévi-Strauss, 1967) for Julio’s case. However, I do not have enough data to go further in this direction, and assuming a case of symbolic efficacy here would be too simplistic. The point here is that a tremendous physical transformation took place in Julio under the influence of the forces at play during the many ceremonies in which he participated, forces emanating from the spiritual space. In the next chapter, I exercise the opportunity to explore the details of that kind of transformation, as well as how the images of healing show up in consciousness.

CHAPTER 10
IMAGES OF HEALING

Miração: Spontaneous Mental Imagery

*The image, like life, cannot be learned:
It manifests itself.*
(Durand, 2001, p. 411)

Before I enter into the main discussion of this topic, I would like to clarify that I have no intent to develop a comprehensive review of the literature concerning imagination, images, or imagery. My intent is to indicate that the process of *mirações* is spontaneous, whose source can be outside of the subject's awareness. A thorough review of the literature on the above-mentioned topics can be found in Giorgi (1987).

Jager (1987) identified three ways to approach, theoretically, the idea of imagination: image as “*imitatio*,” as “*aemulatio*,” or as “*phantasia*” (terms defined below). As an “*imitatio*,” the image is a “copy of something else that precedes or underlies it” (p. 109). Jager cited Lacan, Hume, Plato, and Pliny the Elder as sources of versions of this approach. Here image is thought of as something that would “lead us back to a surer ground from which it arose” (p. 110), which can be, as Jager indicated, the “neutral activity,” “essence,” or “archetype.” As an “*imitatio*,” the image lacks originality: “The entire realm of *imitatio* can be seen as governed by resemblances and dominated by the desire to shrink and eventually make disappear the fateful distance that separates image and ‘reality’” (p. 110).

The above posture, this eternal desire to remove separateness, leads us to the idea of image as an “*aemulatio*” or “a doomed and desperate striving to equal something that in its ideality remains forever out of reach” (Jager, 1987, p. 110). Jager pointed to two

directions as the result of treating image as an “aemulatio”: jealousy and paranoia, or to accomplish “the surrender of the dreams of continuity and making place for the cultivation of fruitful differences” (p. 111).

Jager (1987) indicated that the Greek idea of “phantasia” influenced Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger. “*Phantasia* refers to a presentation to consciousness, pure and simple and without distinction as to whether it concerns an actual or a remembered event or whether that event does or does not represent a true state of affairs” (p. 111). Jager indicated that in Greek “phantasia” refers to

appearance, display, parade, look, image . . . [in Aristotle] it refers to the faculty of the imagination both presentative and representative. . . . There is a link between *phantasia* and the Greek verb *phainein*, to make appear, to show, to shine. Another important linked word is *phaenomenon*. . . . With *phainó* (to bring into the light of day, to put into the light) we enter into the company of such words as *phanos* (torch), *phaneros* (visible, manifest, illustrious), which can be thought to cluster around *phaos* or *phós* (light). These words in turn refer us back to a hypothetical Indo-European root *ban* that might be translated either “white” and “light,” or even “a ray of light.” (p. 111)

Thus, the *miração* would be linked phenomenologically to Jager’s “phantasia.” It is very interesting how the word remits to luminous events. Consciousness is the place of light, and the images emerging within consciousness are the manifestation of that light. However, the *miração* can also be related to other approaches to the imaginative process. The *miração* can be an “imitatio,” such as in Marta’s experience with the flower (see Chapter 5): the flower was there, on the wall, apart from her. Concerning “aemulatio” the best example is Maria’s *miração* of the entangled threads. Finally, as “phantasia,” we have Kleymani’s and Dona Chiquita’s *mirações*, and Maria’s archangel as examples.

One of the main signs of the spontaneity of *mirações* is the amazing sense of wonder and awe it can cause. Unimaginable patterns of light and shapes, of beings and

landscapes, of feelings and thoughts all come together in unique unexpected arrangements. After the revelation is received, through the spontaneous mental imagery that has been sprouting within consciousness, comes the moment of interpretation, of understanding, of linking images to the day-to-day world.

A very cautious approach to the word “interpretation” is needed, however.

Interpretation here is not linked to an active and abstract intellectual activity but to the perception of the intrinsic meaning(s) arising from the *miração*. This is very evident in many of the descriptions made by Maria of her *mirações*. Shanon (2002) said that noesis and perception are intrinsically linked during the process of *miração*, when the line between knowledge and perception disappears. According to Shanon (2002), this is the revelation mechanism *par excellence*, when the person experiences a feeling of truthness: “the reception of knowledge is the main act in the vision. At times, the image itself, like a parable, is the mechanism by which truth is revealed to one” (p. 110). The *mirações* are multilevel experiences, never manifesting themselves alone; they come with words, feelings, thoughts, and so on. According to Shanon (2002),

How much of what is seen with Ayahuasca is the product of drinkers’ interpretation? Experientially, the visions usually impress those who have them as revealing other, independently existing, realities. Usually, what is seen is so foreign and unexpected that drinkers feel that they themselves contribute nothing to the contents of the visions . . . should we say that what is seen in Ayahuasca visions is to be divided into two: that which is “really” seen, and that which is the product of interpretation? . . . Maintaining that interpretative processes are involved in perception implies that the experiencing agent contributes to what he or she sees. This is true of perceiving agents in general; this may be true of Ayahuasca drinkers as well. Yet, all this does not imply that what is seen in the visions is merely subjective. Or rather, Ayahuasca visioning need not to be more subjective than ordinary perception is. . . . Our reality is the product of a dynamic interplay between what is given to us and what is contributed by our cognitive system. The interplay is such that any simplistic division between the two determinants is futile. Likewise with Ayahuasca visions. Admittedly, interpretative processes are involved in these visions, yet this need not imply that what

is seen is “merely subjective.” . . . Like ordinary perception, Ayahuasca visioning involves processes of interpretation, but these processes cannot be teased apart from the processes of visioning in any neat, modular fashion. Interpretation is not added to perception but rather, is ingrained in it. And, so is meaning . . . meaning is there in the very foundations of whatever we experience. In both ordinary perception and in visioning, the material of perception is imbued with interpretation, laden with meaning. What distinguishes the two mental states are the particular semantics that they manifest and the dynamics governing their generation and their development. (pp. 252-254)

Huxley (1990) made this point more than 45 years ago. During his experience with mescaline, he had some moments when the “colors were so intense, so intrinsically meaningful” (p. 19). Here “meaningful” is no longer the *thoughtful* part of meaning, but a *feeling* that they—the colors—were meanings in themselves. Meaningfulness became a strong feeling belonging to the colors, coming along with them. There were no longer thoughts about those meanings, but he felt them and he knew them all.

During her first *miração*, Maria (see Chapter 5) did not know for sure whether or she was experiencing a *miração*. Alverga (1984) said that during the *miração*, “Everything happens so naturally that we do not perceive what is going on” (p. 215). That is a moment when the person is residing consciously on two levels of existence, on the physical level and on the spiritual level, receiving the instructions. The power of Daime’s experience—principally from the *miração*—is exactly this: it puts together, without lowering the quality of any of them, different levels of existence. This integration in a single whole of what most of the time is perceived by us as a collection of parts working together—as our lives—during the process of *miração* is the source of healing. The *miração* brings into consciousness the elements responsible for and capable of facilitating that integrative process.

During the *miração*, information is also linked in a very peculiar way. Material from many different sources is linked, guided primarily by intuition. Again, Maria could intuitively place side by side, Saint Peter's prayer, the problems in her life (the feeling that her ways were closed, and that the work with the keys would open them), and her strong devotion to the archangels. At the same time, she also was gaining a better perspective for her future life.

Casey (1991) distinguished three types of imaginative experience. The first one is the "conscious imagining" (p. 15). This is essentially an "everyday phenomenon, with which we are all familiar from its pervasive presence in the daytime world. It includes everything from flickering fancies to daydream and reveries" (p. 15). According to Casey, the ego can continuously control that kind of experience. Whatever appears here is self-evident, and there is no space for illusions or hallucinations.

The second type of imaginative experience, according to Casey (1991), is the "active imagination" (p. 17). This is the world of "personified figures of the unconscious" (p. 17). There still is an "element of control" (p. 17), but this is no longer for and by the ego "in its self-appointed sovereignty, but to ensure that the unfolding of a given imaginative sequence is followed through as fully as possible" (p. 17). This is the kind of experience when we "enter into the drama of the psyche itself by participating in what is psychically real, in what is capable of changing us in some basic way" (p. 17). He continued,

In this process of self-dramatization, we come up against entities and events which derive, not from the fickle freedom of the conscious ego—not even from the constraint of a personal unconscious—but from the genuine autonomy of an objective, impersonal psyche. For we are experiencing neither the projections of an idle reverie, nor the personifications of petulant passions. Rather, in active imagining we confront the *dramatis personae* of a different proscenium of

experience altogether. Or more exactly, such apparitional figures guides us, if we are willing to follow them, toward a different kind of imaginative experience. . . . Therefore, if active imagining begins with a procedure of concerted elaboration of fantasies, it ends with a breakthrough into the disclosure of a world which is not of our own making (p. 17).

The third kind of imaginative experience is what Casey (1991) called the “archetypal (or visionary) imagination” (p. 18). Like the conscious imagination, here the person having this experience sees self-evident objects but does not “regard what [he or she] imagine[s] as purely possible” (p. 19). The contents of those experiences are psychically real in a sense that encompasses and yet transcends both perceptual and self-dramatized realities. Because it works with the contents of personal and collective unconscious, the archetypal imagination moves beyond conscious imagining, as does active imagination. In active imagination, however, the scenes “of imaginative action [are] confined to the immediate vicinity of the imaginer’s personal sphere of concern” (p. 19). This is a method of “ego-building” (p. 19). The active imagination, however, permits a first glance at the “extrapersonal domain” (p. 19), because those enacted stories are “trying to tell us something not just about ourselves but about the archetypal dominants upon which they themselves are founded” (p. 19). Casey, however, said that this is not an adequate way to explore the entire domain of archetypes. The only way to enter the “archetypal region” is, according to Casey, in the archetypal or visionary imagination.

The visionary imagination is, still following Casey (1991), “a magical act in the spirit . . . which transmutes gross matter into subtle, immaterial bodies” (pp. 19-20). The archetypal imagination moves the subject toward the place of the

archetypal structures themselves, not in their separate imagistic fulgurations but in their joint con-figurations. . . . Through visionary imagination we come to know

archetypes. . . . For in the experience of visionary imagination we do not encounter individually isolated archetypes. Archetypal topography, the method which discloses the order inherent in the content of such imagining, reveals the presence of whole clusters of archetypes; and it is within these groupings alone that individual archetypes can be experienced and known. It is not accidental, then, that a visionary imagination is capable of disclosing a crowded canvas of angels or demons, planetary gods or supra-celestial beings (p. 20).

By exploring the archetypal imagination Casey (1991) came to three paradoxes:

- (1) Archetypal imagining deals with a certain kind of consciousness, a consciousness that is not empirically oriented, but rather a “heightened awareness, a form of attention differing both from attention to the merely mundane and from the attention involved in dreaming” (p. 20). However, Casey (1991) said that, what someone experiences in visionary imagination is “rooted outside of human consciousness, whether this consciousness presents itself in the form of the ego or in the more expansive format of the self. Therefore, just at the point when personal consciousness has reached its psychical zenith, psyche itself is surpassed. The impersonal, the nonhuman, is met with” (pp. 20-21).
- (2) Archetypal imagination leads individual consciousness, as Casey (1991) described in the first paradox, to a place where that individual consciousness finds itself in an extraconscious domain: this is the “placescape” of the archetypal configurations. However, according to Casey, this is not the ultimate place for human experience. This ultimate place is the world of ideas, the place that emanates the being of all forms. The difference between the archetypes and ideas of forms is that, whereas for the archetypes “meaning is inseparable from the images in which it is embodied (hence this meaning is always expressed metaphorically), and being at the archetypal level takes the form of psychical reality” (p. 21). On the other hand, the meaning of the forms “cannot be

exhausted by metaphorical expressions; as conceptual, such meaning cannot be condensed into images but remains the object of thought” (p. 21). The scope of the forms is expanded throughout the entire cosmos. Here Casey said that we find the “Form of the Forms . . . the One . . . [which] can bring together, within the compass of a single concept, the multiplicity of the many” (p. 21).

(3) The third paradox is as follows: images accessed through archetypal imagination intermediates between the *Physis* and the realm of the spirit. Those images intermediate, but they are not merely intermediary. They cannot be replaced by any other kind of intermediary activity. According to Casey (1991), archetypal imagination “provides a necessary and unique *medium* within which archetypal realities come to be reflected in the form of vibrant images . . . it supplies structure to what is psychically real” (p. 23).

What is interesting here is the kind of analysis we can undertake concerning the *mirações*. The *mirações* are revelations of the truths we find in the sacred realms, and ultimately about God. The *mirações* are brought by the spirits, and they show to the person experiencing them the hidden *Mistérios*. The *mistérios* can be understood as Casey’s “ideas”. The *mistérios* are the ultimate reality. The *mistérios* are revealed by the spiritual entities, the spirits, the living beings of the extraconscious archetypal realm.

Finally, Casey (1991, p. 22) introduced three of what he called the “Regions of Being.” The first one is the “Physis,” in which he placed “sensory perception; memory; ordinary imagining insofar as it merely replicates what is perceived.” This is the “empirical world of determinate loci in an objective space and time.”

The second Region of Being is the “Psyche,” which is related to “ordinary and active imagining insofar as they move us beyond the empirical realm; above all,

archetypal imagining as the envisioning of clusters of archetypes” (Casey, 1991, p. 22)

This is the “imaginal world: (a) as personified in the contents of the unconscious; (b) as dramatized in active imagination; (c) as a self-presenting domain of apparitional figures” (p. 22).

Finally, the third Region of Being is the “Spirit,” in which the “active intellect or the ability to grasp Forms as ultimate conceptual categories” (Casey, 1991, p. 22). This is the “The world of Ideas or Forms, including the Form of Forms or the One; all that is intelligible in a strictly conceptual sense” (p. 22)./

Considering the above, the “active intellect” is not an absolute—constituted by “pure thinking”—act. Imagination, for Casey (1991), is a particular act of the mind, and not one more way of thinking or knowing. According to him, “Turning imagination into a mere mode of knowing or thinking trivializes it as much as if it were considered a mode of perception” (p. 34).

Casey, following Dufrennes’s (1976, as cited in Casey, 1991) ideas about what Dufrenne called the “un imaginaire profond” (p. 132), presents a core idea for all of the structure that I am trying to give to *miração*. According to Casey,

[Dufrenne] attempts to show that the imaginary is wholly *immanent in Nature*, and thus situated within what is perceived. . . . It is anchored [in perception] . . . not because it allows us to anticipate unapprehended aspects of perceived objects (this is, strictly speaking, a matter of *savoir*) but because it gives to these objects themselves a different allure. . . . By implication, the kind of imagination which such an imaginary would require is . . . one which seeks to penetrate the perceived and to transform it *from within*. For such an imagination to become operative, it must function at a strictly pre-objective level of human experience. (p. 71)

Dufrenne (1976, in Casey, 1991) no longer situated

imagination exclusively on the plane of representation, this deeper type of imagining would bring us back to the pre-representational, to a primordial level at which the perceived and the imagined are not yet distinguished. At this level, the

subject would imagine not by representing Nature, but by re-establishing contact with it. For we have to do with it. For we have to do with “a subject still taken up in Nature” [Dufrenne, 1976, p. 131]. It is at this point that “*un imaginaire profond*” can root us in Nature, for here and here alone “the imaginary is in the thing” [Dufrenne, p. 132]. (Casey, 1991, p. 71)

Miração would be, then, an example of this deep imagination. Casey (1991) said that Merlau-Ponty (1964), in *Le visible et l'invisible*, worked with “parallel reflections” (p. 72), which are “echoing Kant’s claim that imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself.” Casey decided not to work with it because he said that this is a heightened kind of imagination, and he is interested in the ordinary kind, the everyday kind, the most used kind. The point is that this deeper kind might be precisely what *miração* does.

The images in the *miração* can be understood as the link between the internal and the external world. Images would group in consciousness that which would happen isolated in the form of feelings, thoughts, sensations, perceptions, intuitions, the group of people, the light, the sounds, the culture and its symbols, social relations, and much more.

Araújo (2005) had a somehow different perception of the process of *miração*. For her, the *miração* is a psychosocial construction (p. 11), “social phenomenon that construct individual reality of the Daimista, directing his or her way of knowing the world and himself or herself” (p. 55). It is the moment when “the biographical unites itself with the collective through the hymns” (p. 137). *Miração* for her was an emergent process (see Chapter 5). In fact, that can be, but as evidenced in my research, apparently not always. Sometimes, the *miração* molds both the sociocultural and the individual. The *miração* receives, of course, influence of culture, but it is not directed by it, not in an absolute sense. The best examples would be the cases of *mirações* when the person literally has no

words to describe it: the words are not there because what is seen is beyond the cultural realm. Nevertheless, Araújo (2005) rightly pointed out that it occupies the position of a link between worlds.

As a link, though, those images are embedded in spontaneity: the “link” is, most of the time, exactly the “missing element.” If they were not spontaneous, they would be known beforehand, and the struggle when looking for or expecting the link to emerge would make no sense. When the *miração* is “open” (see Chapter 5) a very clear message is received, a message that was not there beforehand, that had just emerged out of the process of the *miração*. Sometimes, however, the *miração* is also part of a process of achieving understanding.

The images during the *miração* would be the result of imagination. Bachelard (2001) understood imagination not as the ability to form images but to “deform” them (p. 1), the human capacity of fusing images with other images. Imagination, for Bachelard (2001), meant imaginative action, which turns imagination in something “open, evasive. It is, within human spirit, the experience of *openness*, the experience of *novelty*” (p. 1; emphasis original). Images are, for Bachelard, the “primordial psychic reality” (p. 47), and being so it is not their objective appearance that determines its power but its subjective meaning. Bachelard said that the imagination imposes on the subject its images, it is the same as putting “the dream before reality; the nightmare before the drama; terror before the monster; nausea before the fall . . . images are not only before thoughts, but also before narratives and any emotion” (p. 102).

As such, the movement would be present before the impulse. Imagination would be a spiritual activity, obtaining form within the soul, acting in the body, receiving, then,

weight, and volume, and thus becoming manifest within the consciousness of the imaginative person. Imagination would be the internal currents of being, the currents of movement, of tendencies, and of predisposition. The images seen in the *mirações* would be the “states of the soul,” the materialization of something much deeper and anterior, the materialization of the dream that comes before and forms reality. “The dynamic image is a primordial reality” (Bachelard, 2001, p. 102).

As an integrative process, the body is deeply involved in the *miração*, principally when that process is linked to mediumship, as in Lisa’s case. On two occasions, her body was “transformed” by the *miração*: the first occurring when she incorporated—for the first time in her life—an *exú*, and the second during the *bailado* for the *Pretos-velhos*. Here the body provides the image of what is going on within consciousness.

Casey (1991) situated images as the element that holds together the soul and spirit, in human existence. It does so because images are the common element shared by both imagining and remembering, by imagination and memory. Spirit and soul are held together in a bodily existence through images. Imagination, according to Casey, goes to the future, whereas memory goes to the past. Imagination moves the body toward the soul, principally from behavioral modifications. Imagination also allows feelings to be expressed “in categories, concepts, and words” (p. xvi). Following Casey, that expressive process is not only a matter of verbalization, even if it happens quite frequently. It is much more about a matter of a “progressive *articulation*, which is achieved by a conjoint ramification and specification of the forms of feeling” (p. xvi; emphasis original).

At the same time, still following Casey (1991), memory brings what he called “flying thoughts” toward “personal or inter-personal history and tradition” (p. xvii). This

is the realm of culture: culture is deeply rooted in memory, culture is always a retrospective process. He added,

This “back” [movement of memory] need not be temporal only; it can refer to a constantly available fund or source of experience and meaning. Nor need remembering occur in an explicitly scenic format. There may be merely the sense that “I’ve been here before.” (p. xvi)

Remembering also connects feelings (soul) and body, it puts in evidence a “massive network of habitual movements and responses” (Casey, 1991, p. xvii).

According to Casey (2001), two consequences need to be assumed to sustain the thesis that imagination operates as an intermediary function. The first one is that imagination is not

originative in character. As intermediate, it cannot bring itself into being from its own resources alone. This is not to deny that . . . it may well be capable of producing new synthesis of elements: new Gestalten, new psychic situations, new insights. But if it is truly intermediate, it cannot bring forth *de novo* all of the elements of these syntheses. Some, if not all, of such elements must stem from a more primordial level of experience. This means that imagining depends—at least in part—upon this originary level. (Casey, 1991, p. 64; emphasis original)

As a spontaneous process, the *miração* can cause people to have new insights about their lives and new psychic situations, but people cannot trace back from the *miração* the elements that gave birth to the images. Most of the time, the *miração* is considered to have been brought by some spiritual being or by the Daime itself.

The second consequence is that “imagining cannot be regarded as *ultimate* in status” (Casey, 1991, p. 65; emphasis original), which causes imagination to be surpassed by some other mental or even spiritual activity. I would state that it can be surpassed also by another emotional or physical (at the body level) activity. However, as Casey (1991) stressed, imagination has an activity of its own, it has an autonomy that can interfere with

other mental activities, and it is not regarded only as a transitional process. Imagination has “its own unique content and modus operandi” (Casey, 1991, p. 68).

Stephen & Herdt (1989) used the very similar concept of “autonomous imagination.” Basically, it works by principally reshaping subjective experience, it can “simultaneously filter and alter social participation, introducing new and unique meanings and images outside of consciousness into a person’s cultural repertoire” (p. 4). Autonomous imagination works on the border between internal desires and social necessities, influencing and being influenced by personal needs to match both. It mediates between individual experience and culture, constituting the foundation for inner religious experience.

Stephen’s (1989) main point was that “autonomous imagination” takes place as an elaborated “imaginative narrative outside conscious awareness” (p. 53). However, she distinguished between the “autonomous imagination,” which is the “process of constructing the dream or vision, which always remains outside consciousness and hidden from the self” (p. 54), and the “autonomous [or active] imagining,” the byproduct of the autonomous imagination, “which may rise into consciousness but is experienced as originating outside the self” (p. 54): dreams, visions, waking dreams, active imagination, and so on.

Active imagining differs from imagination during normal awareness by the vividly externalization of its images, and because those images have “their own momentum” (Stephen, 1989, p. 55). Active imagining is richer (concerning the quality of its images) and more inventive, and it has the property of receiving a special influence of

(but not to be determined by) external and cultural elements. Also, it “exerts a special influence over involuntary mental and somatic processes” (Stephen, 1989, p. 55).

Thus, active imagining is the meeting of the internal forces of autonomous imagination and the external world of culture and environment. What is missing here is the mention that other people—and I am here speaking specifically of the processes of autonomous imagination occurring in their mind—might influence my own active imagining. Although the active imaginings of different people could cross-influence each other—for example, I could tell a *miração* to someone and later that person could have a *miração* similar to mine—what I mean here is that someone could be influenced not by the products of the autonomous imagination of another person but by another person’s process of autonomous imagination itself.

This is a hypothesis that needs further research and clarification, though for the time being I can present some examples. The first one is when two persons have similar *mirações* without being aware of each other *mirações* (see the Dona Chiquita *miração* of the *farda*, which later Antônio Geraldo also saw). More than one time I heard people at the Center saying that they “had entered someone’s mystery,” that is, that they had shared a *miração* with someone else. Unfortunately, I could not collect any extensive narrative concerning that experience.

I had once a personal experience that could be used here. I was drinking *Daime* with a friend of mine. I was recovering from a sickness, and I was feeling very weak. I was silently praying, asking for strength and healing. Suddenly, I saw a spiritual being flying over my head, all dressed in golden clothes, emanating a very powerful energy. My friend, who was sitting with his back toward me, moved in his chair, which

interrupted my *miração*. I was overwhelmed, and a deep feeling of peace invaded me. I asked him, just for curiosity, something like, “Did you see that?” To my surprise he answered, “Yes.” I asked again, “Did you really see it?” He said, “No, I did not see him, but I could feel someone powerful passing over us.” Where did this event take place? In the spiritual space.

Another topic that should be mentioned is that the active imagining influences reciprocally the process of active imagination that was its source (Stephen, 1989), the processes of active imagination, which explains its apparent influence over both mental and somatic process.

Sena Araújo (1999) provided a complementary understanding of this process when he said that the *miração* provides for someone contact with the spiritual world with that person’s spirit leaving his or her body and reaching higher consciousness levels. This was true, for example, for Maria when she had that experience in her house (after having been drinking *Daime* throughout the whole day) during the *Romaria* to Saint Joseph/Lent. As I showed above, however, the achievement of that higher level of consciousness can be considered inclusive instead of exclusive concerning the body. It is true that during many kinds of *mirações*, one’s consciousness is absolutely within the spiritual space, but during some other *mirações*, that same consciousness can look “down” to the body, including it in the perceptive process.

If the *miração* were voluntary, it would be based mostly upon memory. According to Farthing (1992), mental images are constructed from information stored in long-term memory. Memory is present in some processes of *miração*. Maria, for example, had the chance to contemplate forgotten facts of her childhood. However, those images and

feelings, experienced during the process of recalling facts of the past, obey the rule cited above: that images are pregnant with meaning, generating a deeper understanding of those facts, and yet an understanding deeply rooted in the present. Memories are not simply remembered; they are connected to the present. As Durand (2001) said, we cannot confound imagination and remembrance. Memory is part of the imaginative process, precisely because it is the source for providing fragments of something lived to the imagination to build a totalizing picture of life: “the vocation of the spirit is the insubordination to existence and to death, and the fantastic function [imagination] becomes manifest as a pattern of that rebellion” (p. 403).

If the *mirações* come and go at the person’s will, it would be extremely difficult to find “alien” (not belonging to the person’s familiar universe) elements in those *mirações*. How could one evoke a vision using an object that a person had never seen before? Its revelatory qualities would be lost or considered as an illusion. There are currently many reports considering that revelatory aspect of Ayahuasca (see, for example, Alverga, 1994; Shanon, 2002).

Noll (1985, p. 444) wrote that “from the phenomenological point of view,” not only the mental imagery that occurs during the experience with psychoactive substances, but also “our everyday experience of mental imagery is distinguished by its spontaneity.” Casey (1976, p. 68) described imagining as an “autogenous” process, “one that begins of itself in the strict sense that it begins by itself, that is, through its own internal agency and not through external causation.” For Casey, spontaneous imaginative acts are characterized by “effortlessness,” “surprise,” and “instantaneity,” and spontaneous imaginative experience “arises suddenly, in a psychic vacuum” (p. 14).

Maria's experience of an archangel "lightning" within her consciousness is a good example for this. It was absolutely effortless and instantaneous, generating surprise, and above all, ecstatic.

Throughout such an experience, the body is deeply influenced (when it is not also engaged) by the *miração*. Good examples are the processes of Lisa, Caroline, and Rudolf. Each of them experienced very intense pain. However, after the *miração*—and the spiritual work—were complete, a great sense of relief was felt. Frenopoulo (2005) pointed to that direction with his definition of *miração*.

[A *miração* is] an enhanced mode of attention. In this case, intentionality is directed toward spirituality, normally imperceptible or less perceptible to the desensitized average person. In each episode, the specific mode of embodied consciousness involved in the *miração* combines eidetic, somatic, emotional and other components in a particular way. A focus on the *miração* as a specific embodied mode of spiritual attention requires recognizing that the participant is interpellated by the sensations. . . . The participant must interact in some way with these sensations and alterations, interpretively and deliberately. (p. 55)

Frenopoulo (2005) arrived at the same conclusions as I presented (Mercante, 2004): "After the *miração* begins, the person can interact with the vision, but one cannot make it happen" (p. 8). Also, "The *miração* leaves the nervous system and goes deep into the body, becoming responsible for the process of healing. There is, thus, a fusion among consciousness, body, senses, and imagery" (Mercante, 2003, p. 39).

[During healing ceremonies] there is a concentrated attention on the physical body, on the problem the person is experiencing. When the sick person is ready to receive a vision, or in other words, when the sick person achieves a level of consciousness about his or her body, emotions, feelings, spiritual and physical beings, and also about the setting of the ritual, this person is able to be healed. And also, to perceive this healing. The vision comes, and also the physical change. . . . The examples given by *miração* points that mental imagery would be *perceiving* in mental and body images. Human beings are strongly visually oriented, and so, those images obtained during a *miração* would be the result of a conscious perception of many different stimuli. The neuronal systems active in emotional process have a close relationship with the systems related with

homeostatic process and with instincts. The system composed by brain, nervous system, and body reacts tuned with the external and internal world, generating states that emerge into consciousness through auditory, visual, and somatosensorial images. Synthetically, we could have the following model: emotions ⇔ images ⇔ thoughts ⇔ culture ⇔ body ⇔ emotions, and all the possible interlinks. (Mercante, 2004, p. 10)

Frenopoulo (2005) seemed to ignore Alverga (1984) too, who also stated that the *miração* is “synthesis among affective comprehension, reason, and the feeling of the image” (p. 324). Alverga continued, saying that it is an experience “based upon a powerful ethics” (p. 324) that causes people to transform their internal and external worlds, becoming a source of healing. Paskoali (2002) noted the same information. For her, moral and ethical transformation leads to physical transformation.

Healing

Healing is a central aspect of the Center’s service. Healing ceremonies occur every week on Saturdays and more emphatically on the 27th of every month. People seek help for healing different aspects of their lives, not only sicknesses, but various challenges including, for example, financial problems and broken relationships. The spiritual guides are called *os curadores*—the healers, those who come from their realm of light for doing charity, for helping people to achieve a better life, and, above all, for helping people to find God within their hearts.

Before talking about healing, however, it is important to describe how people at the Center perceive sickness. Beth for example, told me, “Sickness is to be infirm, is to have some kind of deficiency, in the body, in the spirit. On the spiritual side, sin is a sickness. It was told us that we all are sick, with some deficiency, we are sick.”

All of those who go to the Center are sick, in the terms described above, in one way or another, the members and mediums not being exceptions. Humanity, in a broad sense, is considered to be sick. Humans are constantly out of balance. Generally, they barely feel God within their hearts, and this simply is seen as the main cause of sin and of sicknesses. Different people need different ways of treatment. For some to become a medium is part of their treatment. In a broad sense, most of those who visit and stay in the Center are looking for some kind of self-knowledge: they have recognized that they are sick in one way or another, and the process of self-knowledge is the path toward healing.

The notion of “sin” cited by Beth above was better explored by Alcimar. He told me,

Sickness, in reality, is not only what destroys the matter, the body. What destroys the body is a material sickness. The spiritual sickness is everything that makes the spirit to regress more and more. When someone has a devotion and then throws everything away, by starting to do things contrary to the teachings, that person acquires a spiritual sickness, which is harder to be healed. Those who may have acquired a spiritual sickness, they are more difficult to be healed. The person who acquired a certain level of knowledge and then throws everything away, it is very hard for that person to recuperate everything there. It would have been much better if that person was sick first and then received that teaching, preserving it for the rest of his or her life. This is better than to know [to have knowledge] and then trying to do things wrongly.

We can understand from his speech that there would be a perceived separation between physical and spiritual sicknesses at the Center, but this is not so obvious. There is, certainly, a point that sickness is only spiritual or only physical, but the healing of a physical problem can occur by acquiring spiritual knowledge, as when someone is sick and then receives a teaching, thus “preserving it for the rest of his or her life,” following not a knowledge that someone already has is a sign of spiritual problem, of spiritual

weakness, a sickness that needs to be treated spiritually. This is the main “sin” that someone can commit: the sin of ignorance, not in the sense of “not-knowing” but in the sense of “not-applying-what-is-known.” Nevertheless, spiritual sickness can result in a physical problem as well.

Pelález (1994) found a somewhat different picture in the group with which she worked (the Santo Daime’s center in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina State, in the South Region of Brazil). That group, according to that author, has two categories of sickness: the physical and the spiritual. Among the physical problems, there are the short-term sicknesses, whose cause they try to discover by looking only for its material causes. When the sickness is more persistent, the group tries to look for the reason or reasons—the “why”—supporting the beginning of the problem; they search for its spiritual causes. In both cases, the “healing would not be only the recovering to a non-symptomatic state, but it implies the modification of the habits that generated the sickness” (p. 77).

Pelález (1994) also stated that spiritual sickness, closely linked to the process of spiritual growth of each human being, and of all humanity, is itself a piece of the self-knowledge work itself, as it will be indicated by Groisman (1999) below. Like Groisman, Pelález agreed that in this situation healing is a synonym of salvation, principally from drinking the “Holy Light,” the Daime.

Sickness can be understood as a disequilibrium, as an unbalance of forces. This is how Lisa described it to me:

Sickness is an imbalance. Human beings establish an unbalanced relationship with nature laws, for some reason, through his or her thinking, acting, feeding, everything, it is all interlinked. Sickness comes when we are unbalanced. Sickness is also predestined to happen sometimes. Before we incarnate, the sickness is there on the spiritual plane. I am telling you today these things because it was clarified for me [during the treatment] tonight that we always think about sickness

as something bad, nobody wants to be sick, but sometimes this is the best solution for someone who does not have a spirituality, does not believe in God, in religion, sickness become a door for that person to look for something that sometimes they do not even know what it is, of a higher being, of God. There is that disequilibrium, that unbalance, the person is predestined to have that sickness, my organism will achieve an unbalanced state for me to develop that sickness, but the main reason is spiritual. For example, do you think if Madrinha Francisca did not get sick she would be here at the Center today? And Saint Francis? A man that healed everybody, he died sick. How did he develop his sicknesses? Was it a disequilibrium? This is sickness, for us to be more humble, by no other reason we bow our heads. People go through calumny, humiliation, bad finances, but this is not enough for achieving humbleness. This is different with sickness. There comes a moment that you go to the bed, you become vulnerable. This is how I see sickness. It is a gift from God, He gives freewill, He is so good, He also give us a chance, if we do not want to meet Him, he unbalances us, He gives us that opportunity. Today they told me that everybody has his or her own health, that we enter that hall and there is that healing energy there, everything goes around healing, material healing, this is the main thing. Yes, people looking for help only for the problem is at the physical body. Nobody look for help when they have a minor spiritual problem, it needs to come to the physical. I always ask for my mental, spiritual, and emotional healing. I know that the material healing is not enough, if they had told me that my physical healing would have no reflection on my spiritual life I wouldn't want it, because I know that this is not the way. Some people spend the whole life sick, but this is no reason for desperation, because there are things that are not under our control.

Healing needs to be complete, whole, on all levels, to be effective. Sometimes what happens is that the physical body, as it is the last one to get sick, is the last one to be healed. Sickness is sent by God sometimes, as a sign, as a calling. The same theme appears on Rudolf's explanation about sickness. What is interesting is that Rudolf is coming from a completely different cultural background (he is Canadian). This is obvious in his speech, but the meaning behind it makes evident that there is a connection between his way to look at sickness and Lisa's. Rudolf told me that

Sickness is a manifestation of your higher self. I do not believe germs cause it, for instance. I believe sickness is a state. It is like a vibration, is like a frequency. I believe that things like a parasite or worms can be a manifestation of a lower astral frequency, I believe sickness can be frequencies, vampiric frequencies that you have attracted for every reason. That's why you cannot be judgmental, you just have to accept it and go on from there. The proof is that, trauma for instance,

has a signature in the brain that connects to measuring, and trauma can have a sexual or emotional aspect that can manifest later as a physical trauma. But the ultimate cause of that, is that you cannot unravel your own encounter. But I believe that all sickness can be cured. Sometimes we look upon sickness as a stroke of fate, that is somehow completely the wrong path. I believe that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that happens in your day, and in your life that is not planned with whatever you wish to call it, your higher self, or your spiritual self. You've been through this, and it has been planned, and you have a choice to make, and whatever choice you take has a manifestation.

The similarity is present in the fact that both for Lisa and for Rudolf, sickness comes from a higher instance: it is sent from God or from the higher self. However, Rudolf's speech centers on personal choice, personal option, even if the person is not (now) aware of that option. Sickness for him is a manifestation of a personal—although at times unconscious—choice, and there is no way of knowing the ultimate cause of the problem.

For Lisa, on the other hand, sickness is a result of fate, something sent by God. The person has no choice: sickness is the voice of God sending a message that is yet to be understood by the person. However, the ultimate cause is there, present: God, or, His not-yet-achieved message. Once the message is heard, healing is present.

Paskoali (2002) indicated that for the members of the Centro Espírita Daniel Pereira de Mattos (the *Barquinha do Antônio Geraldo*), sickness is the “manifestation in the body of inadequate ways of acting and feeling” (p. 152). For Mestre Antônio Geraldo (Paskoali, 2002, p. 152), sickness is based upon guilt: human beings—and not God—are responsible for creating their own health problems.

The definition Alcimar gave for me concerning “healing” was a continuation of the above “God’s message” cause for sicknesses.

Healing happens when the person gets rid of the things that are not good for the body, for the spirit. To be perseverant, to do the good deeds Jesus asked us to do,

to be loyal in the heart, love. Justice is the basis for all this. If we live with justice the person will always do some of those things: the love, he or she will be perseverant, a good parent, and if he acts with justice he or she will accomplish the 10 commandments.

Justice, then, would be the essence of the 10 commandments written by Moses under God's dictation. Following God's voice imprinted in the 10 commandments, by acting with justice, people would achieve healing in all the levels of their lives.

Healing, however, also can come through unknown or uncertain paths. According to Beth healing is

To achieve something we know is good. Sometimes the person knows what problem he or she has, and knows what to do in order to heal it. But sometimes the person does not know, you cannot even know it, what to do for helping that healing to happen. Sometimes the person comes here with a wounded leg, (yet, there is) some pain that nobody knows from where it comes. The person had gone to the doctor, he or she knows it hurts, had done all the exams, but nobody knows what it is. Is it spiritual? Sometimes he or she was healed, yet still does not even know what the problem was. Sometimes the sickness is a discipline from the entities, as when the person is a medium, and healing would come through working with his or her entities, to get prepared to do it, to let the entities work. Sometimes people like that arrive here, and from that time on his or her life starts to changes.

Sometimes the problem, the sickness, is present, but its causes are never known. Healing would come through a inner movement, like a decision to change something in that person's life, but the real cause is never clarified, even when the symptoms are over.

The other idea of healing was expressed by Lisa. She returned to her speech concerning equilibrium, balance in life.

For me, healing is to return to an equilibrium, not only materially. I consider myself healed, not when I become a saint, but at the moment I achieve tranquility in my body, even if I have to accept some kind of deficiency. Someone loses a leg, that leg will never get healed, but the person learns how to live with it. My spiritual healing, if something will not change, neither spiritually nor materially, I hope I will have tranquility to work it out, but principally I hope that my soul will be healed, that I have peace, love, harmony. This is healing.

Lisa's idea of healing is attuned with Maria's perspective on the same subject. Maria did not, in our interview, answer directly what healing meant to her, but throughout her speech concerning her sickness, several elements came out concerning what healing would be. She mentioned principally equilibrium, a balance in her life, but mainly for her mental life, for her to be able to evaluate better her life. Again, calmness and tranquility appeared as main inner elements indicating the path toward healing.

Maria openly related her problem with her kidneys with her karma, and said that when her soul was purified, her kidneys would be healed. During her process of achieving this inner balance, Maria had to face her inner life deeply, which caused, initially, several problems. After she recognized what she needed to change, however—more than that, when she achieved enough inner strength to purify in her soul what she knew she needed to purify, she achieved a balance in her life. Maria became conscious not of her problem, of her complexes, but of her inner path toward the resolution of many problems. Healing came not when she had her kidneys cured—one year later she still had kidney problems—rather, healing came when her soul was strong enough to face the day-to-day problems and when she had adequate inner forces to remain calm even in the middle of the problems.

The Daime is considered, among all the techniques and medicines, as the main healing agent. The Daime is the main medicine. Paskoali (2002) said that the Daime is considered the “true therapist” (p. 172), giving the diagnosis, the indication of the treatment, and how to maintain a healthy state. However, I heard members of the Center say that the Daime alone, in some cases, is not enough. The Daime would help in the sense that it would open the spiritual world to the sick person; it would give him or her

the necessary instructions, the teachings. However, without a devotion, without the prayers that would keep that person firm in the purpose of going beyond more serious problems like drugs and alcohol, that person would never develop enough inner strength to stay away from drugs and alcohol.

I heard other people also say that sometimes the person would not even need to receive *passes* (on of the main techniques for cleansing and healing), sometimes just “being present” at the Center would help in the healing. Also, words and teachings heard from lectures, orientations, on the lyrics of the Salmos and Pontos are all part of a process that involves not only the body as a whole, but the being as a whole, in the process of spiritual healing.

Paskoali (2002) indicated that facing the pain, trying to understand its causes, (rather than turning away from it) is the path for healing recommended at Antônio Geraldo’s Barquinha. Also, this is considered as an opportunity for purification. Healing would come from faith and repentance—the path for a life within light. Faith and repentance would generate a deep modification of the way of living. People at Antonio Geraldo’s Barquinha consider health as a gift from God, related to the knowledge of the doctrine and deservedness (Paskoali, 2002).

The medium, as a vehicle for that healing, would need to attune his or her mind, soul, and spirit with that flow, the current of healing energy present and felt, also manifest in the movement of other beings throughout the spiritual space. Healing, so, would be to put oneself within that current, helping other people to achieve that same experience.

Clodomir Monteiro da Silva (1981, 1985) talked about a moment in healing rituals in the Santo Daime called “shamanic collective trance,” as a way to establish a spiritual current among the participants of the rituals. The collectivity is responsible for the individual healing⁵². To that author, the process of healing happens through symbolic efficacy (see Lévi-Strauss, 1967), when the group of healers gives to the sick person a way to express himself or herself. That is the moment when the sick person becomes resigned and in a certain way is healed. It is the Daime, a “Divine Being,” that helps this teleological process, principally with moral and spiritual correction. A deviation from the supposed best pattern of behavior, inserted and contextualized in a cosmic plan, is considered the real cause of sickness. There is also the risk of a connection with noxious spirits, enhancing the actual disorder. Monteiro da Silva (1985) said that the sickness is a signal of transgression, and a state of equilibrium and order is achieved with resignation.

Groisman (1999) gave continuity to Monteiro da Silva’s thought, clarifying it and enhancing the importance of the social role of sickness when he stated that the healing system of Santo Daime is based upon human conduct, leading to an ethical code. According to him, “What is done to the good, attracts the good; what is done to the evil, attracts the evil” (p. 113). As such, sickness appears when there is not harmony between social and spiritual laws and individual attitudes. The healing and the search for a healing, according to Groisman, is an element of self-knowledge, a process that begins at the time of social contact with other persons (this is also indicated by Monteiro da Silva, 1985), who participate in the healing: members of the healing group of the church, relatives, neighbors, friends, et cetera.

⁵² This is not new in medical-anthropological literature, the difference here is that this process happens in an active and direct participation of the community in the healing process, not only via social contact.

During the healing ritual, sick people have the chance to perceive the roots of their problems and to look for the precise moment when the primal harmony was lost. The beverage and its effects interact with the ritual (in fact, it is not really possible to separate them—as I mentioned in the Introduction, the Daime can open the doors of consciousness, but it is the ceremony that guides the person through the spiritual space), assisting the person to find the correct conduct that will lead to the healing. The first step is the personal and cosmic forgiveness (Groisman 1999).

Alex Polari de Alverga (1984) is an internationally known Padrinho (spiritual leader) of the Santo Daime. He is the author of several books concerning this spiritual path. According to him,

The transformation which the Daime requests is a kind of ethical therapy. The option for virtue is an individual choice. And virtue is exactly a revealed and absolute truth. . . . This is the way we can put together, within the Daime, the notion of healing and salvation, making a synthesis between mental medicine and spiritual comfort, something very effective, fighting against any “sickness” on complementary levels. (p. 219)

If there is salvation, like in many Christian paths, there is a purgatory. Peláez (1994) followed the ideas of Monteiro da Silva (1981) and indicated that this process is the best route to spiritual healing. This healing could come via repentance and seeking of self-forgiveness (also see Groisman, 1999), or via “physiological catharsis” (Peláez, 1994, p. 84), from vomiting, diarrhea, and crying. These are the ways to eliminate all the spiritual “messes” one has inside. Suffering leads to healing as a signal of salvation.

Synthesizing, Peláez (1994), like Alverga (1984), indicated two ways of healing. The first one is to “receive a healing,” referring more to physical sickness, which in general happens during one or more rituals but with a finite number of them to get a solution to a specific problem. The other way is “self-healing in the doctrine.” This is the

path of spiritual growth itself, the way of a spiritual healing that could occur throughout the whole life. In both ways there is a history related to suffering, merit, “divine mercy,” and salvation (Peláez, 1994, p. 88).

The healing is neither the representation, nor the complacency, nor even the mere verbalized consciousness. It is an effort toward the re-control of the directions of being. Of practicing the Goodness and Justice, of being in harmony with the laws of the Universe. It is, first of all, a spiritual pedagogy . . . the path of spiritual healing is the exercise of virtue, the discipline of knowledge, the pedagogy of Goodness and Truth. (Alverga, 1984, p. 219)

According to Sena Araújo (1999)—who worked at the Casa de Oração center of the Barquinha—all sickness has its starting point in the spirit. It is a signal of disharmony with the cosmic energies. Before its manifestation in the physical body—where biomedicine acts—it is possible for the spiritual forces to help the person acting at more subtle levels of existence. According to this conceptualization, the western biomedical physicians work only with the effects of something, whereas a healing ritual tries to work with the condition as whole.

In the Barquinha, the healing could be conducted even after death. Sena Araújo (1999) cited a case in which a person died from stomach cancer. The person could receive, at the astral level, the “light of the doctrine,” and be healed. Death is not the end of suffering. To exhaust it entirely, people need to accept their spiritual lives, becoming conscious of them. After this, they can truly be healed. The Barquinha tries to work with the causes of sickness instead of solely with results as with biomedicine.

Sena Araújo (1999) also said that the people at the Casa de Oração also consider the possibility that a sickness can be caused by a malevolent spirit called *egun*. That kind of spirit absorbs the light of the affected person. It is common in the healing ritual to

capture and to perform the “indoctrination”⁵³ (the action of teaching a doctrine to the spirit) of this kind of spirit, thereby separating it from the person.

Most of the time, it is the spirits, through their mediums, that confer the healing at the Barquinha, though it can also occur in the Bailado, when, during the Festas, the participants dance freely rounding in a circle at the sound of drums, clapping, and guitars. Sena Araújo (1999) said that “from the circle emerges good fluids and entities (spirits) from light that could confer material and spiritual wellness to the person” (p. 236).

In the Santo Daime system, there is more of an emphasis on self-knowledge and transcendence: it is an esoteric system. People are encouraged to look for their own healing, being helped by other members on the physical level and by spiritual entities from subtle levels, as we can clearly see in Rudolf’s speech. In the Barquinha, they pay more attention to external causes of sickness, such as evil spirits, and the healing process is conducted most of the time by a spirit incorporated in a medium, and as such, it could be classified as an exoteric system.

However, there is no clear-cut line between those levels. There are moments in the Barquinha ritual that fit perfectly in the description of Alverga (1984) about the self-healing process using salvation. The whole ritual (as are all the different rituals at the Barquinha) is about healing. The beverage itself is considered a healing agent, and all who drink it are in a healing process. Physical sickness is only the tip of the iceberg, a more visible instance of a problem, and with participation in the rituals, people can go beyond (or below) that “tip.” So, the Barquinha has a more explicit way to handle the

53 This is not the same as the *Doutrinação de Almas* ceremony though (see Chapter 7). When an egun or any other without-light spirit is captured, it can be subjected to a sort of short lecture, when the lecturer talks about spiritual, moral, or ethical values, trying to convince those unenlightened spirits to change their behavior and beliefs. After that, the spirits are given to Dom Simeão to be taken to the field of light mentioned in Chapter 7, where they will be prepared to return to the Center to receive baptism.

people that have already achieved the tip, who manifest their problems on the physical level. It also happens in the Santo Daime, however, that there is a private “healing ritual,” when someone sick can receive a special and more direct attention of qualified healers.

According to Langdon (1988), health problems can be defined as the “characteristic ways that members of a culture perceive, define, and explain health and sickness, indicating the causes of these states and the treatment” (p. 12). Langdon (1998) also defined health services as the “way how a society organizes itself to offer treatment to someone sick. They [the health services] are linked to the social organization and behavior in case of disease, through family, doctors (in a broad sense), and therapies” (p. 12). In that sense, the Barquinha is an essential part of a “health service” to the people who look to it for treatment.

Langdon (1988, 1994) made an interesting interpretation concerning the way in which Native South American Indians think about the process of sickness. They treat both mystical and natural causes. They act with common sense, based upon empirical observations of causes and effects. Even though they use Western medicine, they interpret sickness according to their cultural parameters as do people when they look for treatment in the Barquinha (Mercante, 2002).

Langdon worked within Kleinman’s (1980) understanding of medical systems. In general, all medical systems have a cultural aspect—basic concepts, theories, normative practices, and common ways of perception; and a social aspect—organization of roles and principia of a relational behavior (Kleinman, 1980). According to Kleinman (1978),

The “health care system” articulates the sickness as a cultural idiom, linking beliefs about the causes of sickness, the experience of the symptoms, specific models concerning the behavior of sickness, decisions about the alternatives of

treatment, actual therapeutic practices, and consequences of the therapy. It establishes, so, a systematic relation among those components. (p. 86)

According to the World Health Organization (WHO; Helman 1994, p. 105) the definition of health is “a state of physical, mental, and social complete well-being, and not only the absence of disease or illness.” This obviously can be quite difficult to achieve. However, there are two words here that are very similar but that express very precise concepts inside medical anthropology: “illness” and “disease.”

“Disease” is the deviation of objective patterns of normality. It is based upon physical changes of structure and functioning of an organism that could be shown objectively and quantified according to normal physiological measurements (Kleinman 1980). Here is the field of actuation of allopathic physicians *par excellence*, the physical body. On the other side, “illness” is a subjective state. Here we have several non-physiological factors that motivate a person to seek assistance, including from Western physicians (Kleinman, 1980). This separation is part of a model, and it is not actually concrete for whoever is experiencing the problem. The dividing line between illness and disease is very soft and relative, and subjective impressions are closely related to objective measures.

So, for suffering people, it does not matter whether they have an “illness” or a “disease.” However, Kleinman’s division of sickness into those two categories puts into evidence a very important aspect of allopathic biomedicine: that system holds only “half truth” concerning diagnostics and treatments and also only “half understanding” concerning the causes and evolution of sickness. As such, allopathic doctors do not have the “last word” concerning sickness and health. They are part of a very complex and multicausal system.

Krippner (1999) put in evidence a very interesting point of view. He said that allopathic biomedicine is concerned primarily with “curing,” working to eliminate the symptoms of sickness, which is, for the allopathic physician, the main route for achieving a health state. On the other hand, Krippner said that traditional medicines (and here the Barquinha can be included) work with healing, the integration of unity among body, mind, emotions, and spirit. So, some sick people can be “cured” and others cannot be, but all of them can certainly be healed (Krippner, 1999; see also Mercante, 2002; Sena Araújo, 1999).

Good (1994) also formulated in his book a particularly interesting question: “To what extent is ‘disease,’ in Kleinman’s early definition of the term, distinct from ‘illness?’” I could say that there is no difference in the Barquinha at all. All problems, according to its model, are essentially spiritual. There is no difference in Portuguese, as there is in English, between “illness” and “disease.” In Portuguese, the main translation for both words is simply *doença*. The basic difference cited in the literature would be between *doença espiritual* (spiritual sickness) and *doença física* (physical sickness—see Peláez above). However, in the Barquinha, all problems have a spiritual source, and there is no distinction, at a gross level, between the two. Talking with the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas, I heard many times that all sicknesses are spiritual, though some have stronger physical signs. Some of those sicknesses they can treat completely, some others they can only work on the spiritual side, and a biomedical doctor would be requested to assist in healing the physical body.

Miração and Healing

I was very distressed when I arrived there, as the service had already started. Master Daniel looked at me and asked me if I was to drink Daime. My whole life I have been drinking very little Daime, if they give me too much I got too restless. He gave a little bit of Daime. It did not take long and I started getting anxious, I started jumping, to whoosh. He [Daniel] looked at me and said to his wife, “Maria, take Chiquita inside!” I was dressed in a black skirt and a white blouse. When I looked at the skirt, I could see the darkness, that hole so horrible that I felt like falling inside it. I said, “Maria, that skirt is terrible!” She got a white cloth and wrapped it around me. Then I saw many things. I saw Caboclo, I saw my aunt that had died crazy. A group of Caboclo arrived, dancing in front of me. They threw garlic on the floor and danced over the garlic. I start crying because of the garlic. After all that anxiety I saw a very fat and black woman, she was stirring a broth, and that broth smelled like candles, it seemed like it had been made only with candles. She told me, “Drink.” I used to have very strong migraines. I was a washwoman, I couldn’t have a meal that I did not throw up, I had to stay the entire day without eating in order to work. And then she gave me the broth and I said, “I won’t drink that broth, it smells like candles!” She said, “If you do not drink it you won’t get better!” “Bring it!” She brought it and I drank all the broth. She told me that for ten years I would not feel any pain or distress, and that in the next week a sickness would commit everybody at my house, but nothing would happen to me. And in fact everybody got sick in the next week, though not only at my house, but everywhere. I felt nothing.

Sometime later, a sick man appeared there to see Master Daniel. He told me and the other mediums in our group [including Madrinha Francisca] *fazer uma procuração*⁵⁴, [to search for his problem]. The day that man arrived there sick, someone had worked sorcery on him, and he could lay down with a woman and nothing would happen. He [Daniel] told us to search to see what it was. I felt when I received the Caboclo, that [the Caboclo] took me to the bottom of the sea, to undo the sorcery. When Daniel came, I told him what I had seen. He said, “Very good!” He told the man to leave and to return five days later to tell him how the things were going. The man came back healed.

Some years later, I was there with Mestre Irineu, and I went to the bottom of the sea again. I was very sick, and I said that I was not going to the Alto Santo anymore. I worked as a washwoman for the wife of the governor of Acre, and she told me to go to the Alto Santo in order to have a conversation with Mestre Irineu. It was the 15th of the month. I was very sick, I was feeling very weak, with a lot of pain in my body. By 4:00 p.m., I left for the Alto Santo. I always have drunk very little Daime. That day I talked with Mestre Irineu and he said, “You will only receive your healing if you drink a whole glass of Daime.” I got scared: “Master, a whole glass of Daime, what am I going to do?” When the time to drink

54 Literally: “to develop a search.” That means, to search, spiritually, for the source or sources of the problem of that person.

came, I told to the person that was serving, Chico Granjeiro: “The master told me to drink a whole glass of Daime, I will only get healed if a drink it.” Then I sat down close to Raimunda. I was affiliated to the esotericism⁵⁵ by that time. I started to see everybody’s life. I was saying: “master, people are not following the esotericism, they receive the magazine and do not read it, they say the Daime shows everything!” Mestre Irineu told me, “Yes, it shows, but if the person reads it, they can go deeper. It gives a lot of intuitions, and the esotericism is pure Daime, because it is a communion of the thought.” Suddenly a white man, very beautiful, came to me and said, “Let’s go? You will receive your healing at the bottom of the sea” “Let’s go!” “Close your eyes.” I closed them [this is happening during the *miração*] and when I opened them I was in a *terreiro*, the most beautiful thing in the world. There was nobody I could recognize, I knew no one. Everybody was dancing, singing, those beautiful Pontos: *é lá no mar, é lá no mar*. . . . This Ponto is from Chica [it is from the Center—however, there was no Center by that time]. The man stood by my side and a small girl incorporated, dancing, said, “What’s wrong with her, she doesn’t talk!” “That’s the way she is, she stays quiet.” Then I started to cry and said, “I am very sick,” and I cried more, I started to tell them what my problem was, but I was crying a lot. The girl gave me her hand and took me to the center of the *bailado*, whirling, whirling, I was bending from one side, and then to the other, but I did not fall. When the music stopped, she gave me her hand and asked me, “Are you ok?” “Yes.” “This is your place, you cannot run away, this is your destiny, you will get better, for more 10 years you will not get sick.” I was a washwoman, I worked in a restaurant, I do not know how I had energy for that. (Dona Chiquita)

Those *mirações* of Dona Chiquita are very representative of the level of consciousness that someone can achieve during a healing process. I introduced Dona Chiquita in Chapter 3. Dona Chiquita found herself completely immersed in another realm, and what is interesting is that her *mirações* have no linear relation with the changes in her health state, in her physical structure. Dona Chiquita obtained not only the return of her health, but she also gained a very strong immunological resistance. Without having been asked, her grandson (Kleymani) told me that same story, and he said that in fact, Dona Chiquita remained for years and years without getting sick.

55 The *Círculo Esotérico Comunhão do Pensamento*, an esoteric school. The affiliated members receive a magazine where the teachings of the school are contained, a system very similar to the one adopted by the Rosicrucians.

It is also very interesting that Dona Chiquita could see the source of someone else's problem. Her Caboclo took her to the bottom of the sea and undid the sorcery that had been made on a client, and that person got better. The client was not told about Dona Chiquita's *miração*, he was simply dismissed by Daniel, and told to return some days later—which he did, and this time, healed. This excludes the hypothesis of symbolic efficacy (Lévi-Strauss, 1967). Dona Chiquita experienced, in the spiritual space, the healing of that person.

In her third *miração* there is another very interesting element: the healing during the *bailado*, mentioned by Sena Araújo (1999). However, that *bailado* was not on the physical plane but in the spiritual space. Dona Chiquita was at that time affiliated with the Alto Santo center, under the guidance of Mestre Irineu. The Santo Daime *bailado* has a structure completely different from the Barquinha *bailado*, yet Dona Chiquita had a *miração* with the *bailado* from the Barquinha.

It is not the case that everybody can have this kind of experience, being clearly a revelation. Some people can have more symbolic *mirações*. Lisa, for example, had a vision of a line of spiritual healers, all aligned so straight that she could not see the second guide in line. At the same time, she was suffering with a problem of her spine—hyperlordosis, an abnormal curvature. I have to mention also that Lisa's own idea of sickness and health rests around the idea of balance. The balance that she was looking for in her life was manifested in her *mirações*. The healers were acting on her to give her spiritual balance of the “unbalanced” situations that she had experienced throughout her life due to her extremely sensitive spirituality. The body was already damaged, and there

would be no spiritual way to fix it, but the cause of that unbalance could be fixed, healing her spirit, and by leaving the body to be healed by the biomedical doctors.

Maria, as another example, was much more concerned with healing her uncertain life than her kidneys. The urinary problem was her physical illness, but she barely mentioned it during all of the interviews we did. Her focus was always on her life: both spiritual and material. The *mirações* played a very important role in transitory moments of her life. The first was when she decided to leave the Colônia Cinco Mil for engaging at the Center. She received a Salmo instead of a Santo Daime hino, and as well, experienced a very powerful purification during her first ceremony at the Center, when, after throwing up, she saw everything as if it were pink. This became even clearer at the end of her treatment, when she had her internal life well organized and her worries about her kidneys were almost gone.

It is interesting to examine Maria's trajectory more closely. As Maria was not at peace with herself, she could not establish healthy relationships with other people. Gina, her best friend, ended up as the scapegoat for Maria's problems, precisely because Gina was her best friend, and as she was the person who was more in touch with Maria's inner troubled reality and life. Then came the *miração* with the entangled threads, animals, and voices talking about her. Maria could not identify the owners of the voices, but she was certain that those people were talking about her. She faced in her *miração*, at the same time, how "entangled" her internal life was, and her desire to find, outside herself, someone to blame for her problems.

The next important *miração* was the one with the archangel flasing like a lightning and the archangel: the deeper she went into herself, the larger the conflicts

became, the more protection she needed, and the more protection was available. She was being immersed in the troubled side of her inner life, and the Center was providing her a safe environment for that inner journey. I believe (and this is speculation of my part), that if she had not experienced those *mirações* with the archangels, which gave her that sense of security, that she would not have surrendered completely to her healing process and the desire to disappear from the Center would have been the stronger impulse. The feeling to surrender to the treatment finally came at the end of that time.

Caroline's situation was a bit different. Caroline was in search of a better relationship not with her inner world but with her physical body. The rapid physical changes imposed by aging were not well assimilated by Caroline. When she had her hip broken, she had to face several physical limitations that she was not ready to confront. She went to the Center looking for help to go beyond the struggle with her physical body, a struggle materialized by the surgery she would inevitably have to undertake.

During the process of gaining awareness of her physical body, Caroline could feel the hole in her femur, and she could, during the ceremony, get in touch with a piece of herself that she was trying to avoid. All of the fear that she had about the surgery—about a hypothetically unsuccessful surgery—blew up in a cathartic process of extensive crying. Also, she felt hands touching her body, another sign of the enhancement of the centering of her awareness on her physical body.

After she became more acquainted with her physical body from the ceremony, and after all of those extremely physical sensations, the fear that had been blocking her life vanished. She changed doctors, found a hypnotist who, by an extreme coincidence, was intimately familiar with Ayahuasca, and undertook a very successful surgery.

Vó Maria da Calunga gave me a useful explanation concerning the relationship between the healing process and the *mirações*.

Each person is a universe. The truth is that each person is in a [different level of] development. There are people who drink the Daime and they do not see the spiritual entities, they cannot see the spiritual side, but they feel it in their bodies, in the matter, even though they do not see. This is something only God knows why. When the *salão de cura* [the room in the spiritual space where the spiritual healers are] opens, the healers come for healing in the name of the Healing Power, that is God, in the name of Our Mother Holy Mary, of our Mother of Charity, and Saint Francis of the Wounds, who is the one who opens the rooms for healing here in our doctrine. Each one receives what they deserve, according to their faith, and their heart. It is like in the Salmo of Saint Francis for opening the mystery of healing, he is the one who comes to do the healing, and those who have not faith will not be healed. However, those who have faith will be healed. Even if people drink tea, the Preto-velho prays, if they have not God within their hearts, have faith, healing doesn't take place.

Faith is the space where healing takes place. Without faith, fear surpasses and blocks any attempt at physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual transformation. Faith is the element behind surrendering and trusting healers. Faith was the force behind Caroline's surrendering. Faith was behind Julio's extreme physical transformation. Faith kept Maria linked to the Center, even when she believed that everybody there was against her and she was strongly determined to leave the Center. Faith is what kept Lisa in treatment, even when she knew that she needed to find a doctor to treat her spine.

Another Preta-velha, Vó Maria Clara (in an interview I made on July 26, 2000) discussed very clearly the role of the *miração* in the process of healing.

The *miração* is, let's say, the astral world, an invisible world where we find a sacred source, the source of the holy love, the source of all that brightness, of that force. Only those who deserve can receive it. The *miração* comes differently to every person, according to what they carry with them, each person is different. The *miração* is based upon the faith, the firmness, everyone's path. The *miração* is not only a vision, it is something far beyond that, when people can have the chance of seeing one step above themselves. They can see things that are above them, things that are not for all to see, and that's why people say, "He or she is blind, knows not God's gifts," because those are sacred mysteries. There is a

relationship between what the person is seeing and what is going on with his or her body because when you enter in the work of some sickness, of the feelings you are having, things start to come out and the person can see them. The person can see them, the person can acquire knowledge about himself or herself, of the things he or she is feeling. If it is sorcery, you can feel a *bicho* moving within your belly, if you can see it, if you feel it, it is because that thing is coming out, it is exploding. In the healing process, you are getting free of all those things. During that process, you see not only the good side of things. Healing is related to everything you have in your life. Healing is not only because you are in a bed, having pain. The sin, when you are within that light, everything [is important].⁵⁶ [For example,] if you drink it [Ayahuasca] without respect, only to see things, no [you cannot do that], you need to get healed, you need to heal your errors, this is the process of healing, and not only for those who are covered in wounds. Sometimes you think, “I feel so bad, so much pain, what is this pain?” That pain is related to sin, and that’s why people have difficulties in seeing. “My God, I am doing so much, why is it so difficult?” Those are the sons and daughters who are on the Earth, accomplishing, and paying for something. If there were no difficulties it would be too easy, and here is where sin enters, where enters the difficulties. Many people come with deficiencies: “Why, my God, why?” They are paying on that plane, they are accomplishing their mission, for being able to achieve God’s feet. Everybody in a single emanation, in a single current of force and light. That light is very sublime, it has very profound mysteries. It is an eternal journey, from which there is no return, it’s an infinite healing, to the sacred glories, the eternal healing. It never ends.

According to Vó Maria Clara’s description, the source of sickness emerges into consciousness from *miração*. This is the way to understand Maria’s *miração* with the *bichos* and entangled threads: her internal problems were coming out, were “exploding.” *Miração*, then, is a revelatory vehicle. At the same time, by becoming conscious, the elements that emerge in the *miração* are expelled. The light—the Daime—brings revelation and illuminates the darkness of life and of being. Also, the *miração* is in itself the source of healing, precisely due to its revelatory characteristics. Vó Maria Clara changed the status of sickness as a fate, as a burden, and put it as a sign—the sign of the accomplishment of a mission, the mission of self-transformation. Healing is the sign that the sick person is on the path of getting closer to God.

⁵⁶ “When you are within that light” (*quando você está dentro da luz*), that is, after the effects of the Daime start to be felt, the person is believed to be within the light of the Daime, of Jesus (see Chapter 5).

Alcimar also described the *miração* as a revelatory element.

The *miração* is a clarification of the processes going on in our lives, of our transformations. Sometimes you are doing something wrong and do not know it. When that light becomes manifested, you know it. When they are sick, many people cannot know why they are sick. Sometimes they know. All is based upon the degree of evolution of the person, most of the time people do not accept that they are sick because of their own faults, and they can make their situation even worse. The beings that manifest themselves within that light will clarify a situation only if there is a need for that person to have that clarification. Sometimes the person is always praying, always concentrated in God, and get sick. Why? Because we are in a field of preparation, each time we beat a difficulty, with love, dedication, not letting those difficulties shake our spiritual path, we get more and more elevated. Each time, the person gets closer to purification.

The *miração* here is clearly brought by the beings working within the light, the Daime, to bring understanding to the sick person concerning both the facts behind the sickness and about the treatment itself. It is interesting to note that the Shipibo-Conibo from the Peruvian Amazon have a very special technique of healing (Gebhart-Sayer, 1986). The shaman starts to receive drawings from Nishi-bo, the spirit living in the vine of Ayahuasca. The shaman can see those drawings everywhere, and from the drawings, can make a diagnosis concerning the health situation of the patient. Then, the shaman starts singing, and the songs produce more visionary drawings, which are applied, with singing, over the body of the sick person.

However, in the Barquinha, the sick person can also have access to the visions, although, as Alcimar said, that person needs to be ready to *see* the teachings. Both Vó Maria da Calunga and Vó Maria Clara said that the sick person might not acquire awareness about the healing process, even when healing takes place. Paskoali (2002), working in the Barquinha of Antônio Geraldo, indicated that some people can see the treatment and others just feel or have an intuition about it. Alcimar says that the sick

person will receive the *miração* only if she or he has capacity enough for understanding the teachings. Sickness can be, according to Alcimar, a preparation for achieving a higher status of being.

The *miração* is intrinsically linked to healing. However, that healing is much broader than recovery from any kind of sickness. Healing means cleansing the whole being, and it is happening all the time, at all levels, even with those who are not overtly sick. Healing is a process of self-transformation.

The anthropologist Thomas Csordas (1994), working with Charismatic Christians, achieved very similar conclusions. According to him, “The locus of efficacy is not symptoms, psychiatric disorders, symbolic meaning, or social relationships, but the self in which all of these are encompassed” (p. 3). Csordas’s definition of self is that it is “neither substance nor entity, but an indeterminate capacity to engage or become oriented in the world, characterized by effort and reflexivity” (p. 5).

The self lives in a world through the body, and in a world along with other bodies. Csordas (1994) said that the body is attuned to those other bodies, synchronizing, thus, all the selves’ behavioral dispositions. The “self-referentiality of the whole” (p. 14)—a whole which is composed of bodily experiences, habits, and world—happens in a process of “inwardness” that awakens the “senses of presence in the world and of copresence with others” (p. 14). Both effort and reflexivity are the tools for becoming “oriented in the face of the vertigo of essential indeterminacy encountered in this awakening” (p. 14). Here we find that both reflexivity and effort are core characteristics of the self, and the main consequences of reflexivity and effort, according to Csordas, are self-awareness and objectification. Again, Maria’s process of healing fits easily within this frame.

The therapeutic process has, for Csordas (1994), an “experiential or intrapsychic” (p. 57) transformative power. According to him, it is following the track of the experience that we can touch on efficacy matters, which is a creative process, that results in a “new mode of orientation in the world—the appropriation of both spontaneity and of its results—is thus accurately described as a sacred self” (p. 67). The therapeutic process also involves a change of focus of attention, or, in other words, an “ensharpment” of the focus of attention in the precise point of the body that needs to be healed; it is the change to a “somatic mode of attention” (p. 67). Caroline’s, Lisa’s, and Rudolf’s experiences are excellent examples of an ensharpenment of attention on the body.

Healing, for Csordas (1994)—and for the people at the Center (see Maria’s example)—is not restricted to the ritual moment. It can begin there, although it can transcend “the event and continues as an everyday self-process” (p. 70). Csordas (1994) pointed out that “the recognition of healing is a modulation of orientation in the world” (p. 70), so, with healing, people modify their activities in the world according to symptoms, and it is this reorientation of their lives that constitutes healing.

Csordas (1994) came to a definition of imagination as the “general capacity of human creativity, including the reflexive capacity to transform one’s orientation in the world” (p. 74). According to him,

Images as indexical icons of divine power and as symbolic signs both reinforce the disposition to be healed, and are direct experiences of the sacred insofar as immediately occurrence is recognized by the patient as spontaneous and as immediately relevant to her situation. Finally, images as symbolic signs may initiate the elaboration of alternatives by directing the attention of the patient toward a particular aspect of her life experience that can be taken up into the therapeutic process of ritual healing. (p. 108)

Revelatory imagery comprises not only signs but also acts, “embodied acts” (Csordas, 1994, p. 148), dissolving, then, the perceived duality between mind and body. Csordas (1994) also indicated that revelatory imagery intermediates between self and other using an intersubjective interplay: both imagination and memory are “embodied self processes” (p. 143). Maria’s healing process occurred via remembering her childhood. The emergence of those memories was stimulated by a focus of attention on the aspects of her life, self, and body that were in need of being transformed and healed. According to Good (1994),

For the person who is sick, as for the clinician, the disease is experienced as present in the body. But for the sufferer, the body is not simply a physical object or physiological state but an essential part of the self. The body is subject, the very grounds of subjectivity or experience in the world, and the body as “physical object” cannot be neatly distinguished from “states of consciousness.” Consciousness itself is inseparable from the conscious body. The diseased body is therefore not simply the object of cognition and knowledge, of representation in mental states and the works of medical science. It is at the same time a disordered agent of experience. (p. 116)

If the body can be involved in a process of disordered experience, healing can come with exploring a process of ordering consciousness. For Good (1994), the body is the agent of experience. For people at the Center, the body is a result of a disordered consciousness, even when that body influences consciousness. The major sign of the influence of the body on consciousness is that the body—not only the sick person’s body, but also the healer’s body—in deeply involved in the process of healing. According to Blacking (1977), “Feelings, and particularly fellow-feelings, expressed as movements of bodies in space and time and often without verbal connotations, are the basis of mental life” (p. 21). The healing ceremony is composed of “movements of bodies in space and time and often without verbal connotation.” The mediums move through the room,

touching the sick bodies. Mediums, literally, embody the agent of healing. In that moment, sick people and healers share somatic states understood by Blacking (1977) as the “consequences of the sensory communication system of the human species. . . . Telepathy and bodily empathy, for instance, are not paranormal but normal” (p. 10). The mere presence of the Pretos-velhos and Pretas-velhas within the medium’s body constitutes a healing force, which emerges in the sick person’s consciousness as images of healing.

CHAPTER 11

MIRAÇÃO AND CONSCIOUSNESS

According to Farthing (1992), “Consciousness is, in a sense, the fundamental fact of human existence” (p. 7). Like life itself, consciousness cannot be completely delimited by a definition. According to Laughlin et al. (1990), “The term *consciousness* derives from the Latin *consciuis*, a root that means roughly, ‘experience with knowledge’” (p. 82). A closer analysis, however, reveals that *Consciuis* = *Con* + *Sciuis*. *Con* = together with, at the same time with. *Sciuis* = to know (Marchant & Charles, 1957). As such, the word “consciousness” literally means “the state of knowing together.”

Continuing with Laughlin et al. (1990), “The *sine qua non* of consciousness . . . is intentionality: the fundamental realization that consciousness is always of something” (p. 103). According to these authors, there is, during the process of *becoming conscious* through *intentionality*, a “subject-object polarity.” Laughlin et al. (1990) said that human consciousness “is largely the *product* of forebrain processes and that afference must reach a threshold of intensity to enter consciousness, even when cortex is directly stimulated” (p. 106).

This biological perspective is not new. Jung (1964) rooted the collective unconscious, the most controversial aspect of his psychology and arguably the most esoteric and mystical one, deep in the brain. Writing specifically about the “mythological fantasies,” Jung asked, “Where do these mythological fantasies come from, if they do not spring from the personal unconscious and hence from the experiences of personal life?” and too he answered, “Indubitably they come from the brain—indeed, precisely from the inherited brain-structure itself” (p. 10).

Laughlin et al. (1990), like all scientists working with consciousness within a biological frame, assumed a very cautious position, trying to keep their researches in a universe familiar to the Western science. According to Baars (1994), “Many findings converge to show that consciousness reflects a basic architectural aspect of the nervous system, functionally equivalent to a global workspace in a parallel and distributed set of neural processors” (p. 149). Baars (1997) also said that “consciousness creates access to many knowledge sources in the brain. . . . Consciousness seems to be the publicity organ of the brain. It is a facility for accessing, disseminating, and exchanging information, and for exercising global coordination and control” (pp. 6-7). Baars (1994) summarized this school: “Consciousness turns out to be an essential functional component of the nervous system, a major biological fact, playing multiple and indispensable roles in all psychological tasks” (p. 150).

The biological trend is very strong here. This biological approach obviously generated good information about consciousness and certain tools to handle it. The biological trend has its limitations also, although there have been many attempts to surpass them. A good example is the model by Laughlin et al. (1990), which is a strong attempt to include subjective concepts such as experience, behavior, and symbol in the objective world of neurophysiology. Another example is the introduction of the previously banned metaphysical influences into sciences (principally from the “quantic revolution” in physics), resulting in nonbiologically based definitions of consciousness. Hunt (1995), for example, considers consciousness beyond its physical substrate:

[T]he evolution of “neural sets” does not create consciousness but allows the sentience of their constituents to fuse into ever more complex fields of conscious awareness. The brain would not create or “cause” consciousness as it “gathers” and focus it. If so, the physiological characteristics of nervous systems will never

tell us much about consciousness as many cognitive scientists today would like to believe. (p. 5)

Oubré (1997) presented another useful example of a “metaphysical returning,” in talking about the “ritualistic factory of consciousness” (p. 121). She described consciousness as a process that includes the perception of several sensorial modalities, besides thoughts, emotions, and somatovisceral sensations. Furthermore, she went beyond this to explore mystical—noumenic—experiences, the capacity to perceive subjectively a transmaterial dimension. Oubré’s considerations about her ritualistic factory of consciousness exposed the basic two levels where consciousness is acting. The first is the material level, which includes perceptions, somatovisceral sensations, and even thoughts and emotions. The second one is a transmaterial dimension.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Metzner’s (1989) definition of state of consciousness is “*the system, context, or field* within which the different aspects of the mind, the contents of consciousness, including thoughts, feelings, sensations, perceptions, images, memories, and so forth, function in patterned interrelationships” (p. 331; emphasis original). Following Metzner (p. 331), there are two major metaphors to describe consciousness: geographical metaphors and temporal or biographical metaphors. The first group of metaphors describes consciousness as a unified thing, a whole with many different parts. For example, I could use the image of consciousness as being a whole that is bigger than its parts, each part corresponding to the different states someone experiences. The second group of metaphors describes consciousness as a continually changing thing, in which each state is a unique thing, linked but not fully dependent on the states before and after it. There is here the risk of focusing too much on each state of

consciousness, weakening the image of consciousness as a process that includes the many parts.

Laughlin et al. (1990) tried to avoid the above-cited risk when, as mentioned in Chapter 2, they centered their analysis on phases of experience rather than on states of consciousness. According to Laughlin et al. (1990),

The *awareness* of experience involves cognition about self and world. The root meaning of “awareness” is the same as “wary” and connotes careful attention to the world and detection of danger. Because the definitive characteristic of awareness is *recollection*, *remembering*, or *recognition* of invariant and recurrent patterns in experience, awareness obviously implies a role played by knowledge in experience. . . . The cognized episodes of experience and their mediating neural networks are *phases*, and the points of experiential and neural transformation between phases are *wraps*. (p. 141; emphasis original)

Each “wrap” can be an object of intentional awareness (attention), being “unwrapped” into a new “phase” of experience that occurs when the person can acquire consciousness about the contents of this new phase. Laughlin et al. (1990) built a link among consciousness, intention, the ego, and experience. According to Laughlin et al., “Our ego then is the part of us that apprehends entities or events outside of itself. When this apprehension is within the bounds of awareness, we call it our experience” (p. 244).

Conscious experience generates knowledge. The ego apprehends entities (and events) that fill the sensorium, becoming aware of them. Also, the ego selects and organizes that material. That organization generates knowledge and also is promoted by the knowledge about that material. According to Laughlin et al. (1990),

The sensorium is filled with content which we see, hear, feel, intuit, and think about. Its structure imparts form and meaning to that content. We know only the content constructed within the sensorium. We *know* by applying the structures that organize that content; it is the organizing that *is* knowing. (p. 242; emphasis original)

According to Laughlin et al. (1990), the ego and its apprehended objects create a relationship of interdependence. The ego's existence is caused by (and paradoxically causes) the perceived and apprehended objects: "The subject is experienced as arising and dissolving with the object. . . . In Husserlian phenomenology, both the object (*phainomenon*) and the ego (*cogito*) are simultaneously constituted within the stream of consciousness" (p. 103).

The paradox here is evident: how can the ego appear into consciousness? What is behind consciousness being conscious of the ego? Is there an ego being conscious of its own ego? According to Laughlin et al. (1990), whenever we have an object in consciousness, we have the ego. A consciousness without objects is a consciousness without an ego, but there still exists the consciousness. Teilhard du Chardin (1995) stated that this is the only completely human characteristic, the consciousness of being conscious. In fact, Teilhard du Chardin called it "reflexive" consciousness, the driving stimulus for human evolution.

Those ideas were well explored by Eastern philosophies long before the existence of the Western philosophers themselves. It is important to mention that I have neither space nor the pretension for a comprehensive analysis of this complex field of knowledge. According to Swami Atmananda (1996, p. 103), "There is a vast existence and consciousness above the mind. The mind is constituted to grasp only things presented to it by the five senses. . . . Also there is the super-consciousness which is beyond the reach of the mind and the senses."

There are two Eastern concepts commonly translated as consciousness. The first one is *Citta* and the second *Jnana* (or *Viñāṇa*). According to Aung (1972, p. 2) *citta*, is

“thinking of an object . . . [thinking] is used in its most comprehensive sense of . . . to know.” Thittila (1969, p. 358) said that *citta* is “mind, ideation, heart, mind, mind base, controlling faculty of mind, consciousness, the aggregate of consciousness, and, depending on the aforesaid, mind-consciousness-element.”⁵⁷

According to Swami Atmananda (1996, p. 112), the ego-sense (*Buddhi*), mind, and what he called “residuum” or the “seat of memory,” are parts of *Citta*: “Buddhi is the determinative faculty; Mind is the receiver of sense impressions which it passes on to Buddhi to assess their relative values. Ego-sense is the feeling of ‘I’ which unifies itself with all the different mental activities.”

Taylor (1978) gave more details about *Citta*. It is formed by “changing cognitive thoughts (*vritti*) and simultaneously in the unconscious as ‘latent impressions’ (*samskaras*)” (pp. 39-40). He continued, those latent impressions lie “dormant in the unconscious,” until they are ready to “sprout forth into the field of awareness to produce more cognitive thoughts under the appropriate future conditions” (p. 40). There is an interesting parallel here with the “phases” and “wraps” of experience cited by Laughlin et al. (1990). The “latent impressions,” previously a “wrap,” can arise into the awareness field during a phase of an experience, creating or introducing, so, another phase of experience, generating more cognitive thoughts.

According to Aung (1972), *Viñāṇa* arises during “the relation between subject and object” (p. 2), and it is the “the totality of consciousness” (p. 235). He also said that both words (*citta* and *viñāṇa*) are translated as synonyms in English, signifying consciousness, in the sense that one is not more important than the other. Taylor (1978) completed,

⁵⁷ In fact, this quotation begins with the sentence: “Therein, what is consciousness?” Thittila did not mention “*citta*” explicitly. However, in the subject index of his book the entry for that definition is under *citta*.

The two most common terms associated with the normal flow of thoughts and feelings, as well as the sense of personal identity, however, are *samjna* and *vijnana*. *Samjna* refers to ‘consciousness’ of data coming in exclusively from the sense organs. . . . *Vijnana* is used to refer to the general faculty of conscious awareness, not only of sense-data (*samjna*), but also feelings, the body, and the unconscious. (p. 45)

Finally we return to the discussion of the ego. According to Taylor (1978),

Samjna and *vijnana* [or *viñāṇa*] refer to the stream of individual thoughts and feelings . . . and are used by the Buddhists to define the nature of the normal personality. As such, they play a major role in defining the apparent continuity of consciousness from moment to moment, and, in turn, give the impression that there is a lasting sense of sameness about personal identity. (p. 45)

There are two extremes in a continuum. On one side, there is a complete identification with the personal identity—the ego—and a craving for the contents of the ego’s apprehension during experience. At the other extreme of this continuum, there is the full comprehension of the origin of the ego and how transitory it is, because this ego becomes now the result of a duality that no longer exists. As soon as the object disappears, and only consciousness remains, the conclusion as such is that this absolute consciousness is the source of all manifestations. This is what Laughlin et al. (1990) called the third level of knowledge, the level of realization.

According to Swami Atmananda (1996)

Ignorance is the one pole of existence which is within the common experience of all. The other pole of existence is Atman. That pole is reached by Anubhava or realization of Atman as Sat-chit-ananda—(Existence, Knowledge, Bliss). But this is to be *experienced*. According to the great Classic Indian philosophies, religion is traveling with conscious effort from ignorance of Atman to the full blaze of the Atman, after knowing intellectually the vast difference between Purusha and Prakriti or the ‘seer’ and the ‘seen.’” (p. 121; emphasis original)

Laughlin et al. (1990) distinguished three general levels of knowledge about the cosmos, acquired via three different levels of experience. The first level is *belief*, “where knowledge is restricted to the symbolic expression of cosmos committed with memory.

One ‘believes’ in the experiences reported by others” (p. 227). This is not a real knowledge but vicarious knowledge, because there was no direct experience.

The second level is called *understanding*. As soon as we begin to have direct experiences of the cosmos, we have the chance to perceive an organization inherent in that cosmos, but the organization of the cosmos is still different from our own organization. This is “the stage at which one’s learning begins to ‘make sense’ in light of direct experience. The cosmos appears to be a total system of knowledge, rather than bits and pieces of memorized material” (Laughlin et al., 1990, p. 228).

The third level of knowledge is called *realization*. This is the moment and state when the organization of the cosmos begins to match the organization of the person. The knowledge of the cosmos begins to belong to the person. This is “the stage of *full* participation in the cosmos as modeled. Experience of cosmological relationships is now more direct than vicarious. The cosmos has become *real*” (Laughlin et al., 1990, p. 228). It is interesting how those three levels can be related to Jager’s (1987) theoretical approach to the imaginative process: “belief” can be related to experiences of having images as “*imitatio*,” “understanding,” as “*aemulatio*,” and finally “realization” to “*phantasia*.”

I agree with Farthing (1992) when he wrote that mental imagery is thinking through images. However, the examples given by a *miração* show that mental imagery also could be perceiving and feeling in mental and body images constructed in consciousness. Human beings are strongly visually oriented, and so those images obtained during a *miração* would be the result of a conscious perception of many different stimuli.

Farthing's (1992) ideas about mental imagery took into account processes such as memory and thoughts. Taussig (1987) however, included another category of phenomena to be mediated by images. He used the Kantian notion of "schematism" as a process that can use mental images linking individual and society, using images and consciousness. However, the schematism, according to Taussig (1987, p. 462), makes the connection between sensory impressions and the *a priori* of the knowing act on the generation of knowledge. For Kant (1996), the *a priori* categories are the notions of time and space. Taussig gave to those notions solid existence, including them in the social relationship between individuals and society. Images are the link between the internal and the external world, grouping in consciousness what is happening isolated in the form of feelings, thoughts, sensations, perceptions, intuitions, people, light, sounds, culture and its symbols, social relations, and much more.

The trance state produced both by the ingestion of Ayahuasca and the ritual may involve a profusion of images from *mirações*. Ayahuasca intensifies emotional and integrative states. This is essentially the process of healing. It happens even if the person is not actually sick and in treatment. It happens all the time, and it corresponds to the *spiritual healing* par excellence.

According to Damásio (1996), the neuronal systems that are active in emotional process have a close relationship with the systems related with homeostatic process and with instincts. This author stated that the system composed of the brain, nervous system, and body reacts when it is tuned with the external and internal world, generating states that emerges into consciousness through auditory, visual, and somatosensorial images. This view is the direction taken by Achterberg (1985). According to her, imagination is a

“mechanism of communication among perception, emotion, and body changes” (p. 8).

Synthetically, as stated in Mercante (2004), we could have the following model: emotions ⇔ images ⇔ thoughts ⇔ culture ⇔ body ⇔ emotions, and all of the possible interlinks. Serotonin has a strong influence over this system (Damásio 1996), and the enhancement of availability of serotonin and of its sites on neurons’ surfaces caused by ritual and Ayahuasca amplify it very strongly.

The perception of the *mirações*, emerging out of the connection of the above-cited elements and levels, cause, inevitably, alterations on the nervous system through the synapses involved in that process. Laughlin et al. (1990) worked with the concept of *homeo-morphogenesis*, a term denoting “causally linked transformation of a similar, but not exact, kind in two or more structures” (p. 134). An alteration in one point of the organism, in this case the nervous system during the *miração*, can result in alterations in other parts of this organism, even if they are not apparently connected, in a systemic integration. During a ritual, the sensory stimulus has a direct connection with the physiological alterations that happen in different parts of the body. Also, Shanon (2002) worked with the idea that Ayahuasca would enhance a natural and basic fact of human cognition, which normally is not very apparent: it pushes “drinkers’ perception to a mode of operation that does not distinguish between the different sensory modalities” (p. 338).

Most of the above discussion is synthesized in the idea of “psychointegrator” plants, developed by Winkelman (1996, 2000). According to him, “The term *psychointegrator* reflects the substances’ systemic neurophenomenological affects, integrating brain processes and experiences” (Winkelman, 2000, p. 210). Ayahuasca impels the whole organism into an integrative state, and this integration is strongly

influenced by the serotonergic system. Winkelman (2000) stated that “one emphasis of psychointegrators is on psyche, meaning not only mind but also the soul and spirit.

Psychointegrators stimulate the integration of behavior, protomentation, and socioemotional dynamics with language-based ratiommentation, egoic representation, and personal identity” (p. 210).

The effect of Ayahuasca generates many and complex levels of experience in consciousness. Those experiences can be the source of a deep knowledge, both of the world and of the self. The sequence proposed by Laughlin et al. (1990) for levels of knowledge about the cosmos (“belief,” “understanding,” and “realization”) fits very well with the idea of deservedness proposed in the beginning of the essay by Alverga (1984) and Shanon (2002), and also cited by my own informants. People experience different complexities of *miração* according to the “grade” of spiritual discovery and self-knowledge that they have attained: they receive only the *mirações* that they “deserve” or are ready to receive.

Alverga (1984) said that the *miração* is a “synthesis among affective comprehension, reason, and the feeling of the image” (p. 324). He continued by saying that it is an experience “based upon a powerful ethics” (p. 324) that makes people desire to transform their internal and external worlds. Thus, the *miração* is the synthesis of the experience lived on those many different levels of experience and existence, being the result of knowledge coming from different sources in consciousness. It is, at the same time, an organizing principle of information and consciousness, becoming thus the source of knowledge. This is what I am calling here the “Ayahuasca cycle,” and the *miração* is

what keeps, sometimes, the person from becoming overwhelmed by the flow of information that happens during that experience.

For Csordas (1996), “Revelatory images and imaginal performance are the experiential substance of the ritual relationship between healer and patient” (p. 105). Again, the *miração* can be understood as an emergent experiential process, the source of which is both on the physical level and on the spiritual level. He continued, “A further element of efficacy originates in the very embodiment of healing imagery, insofar as the body is the existential ground for efficacy in general” (p. 106). The *miração*, then, leaves the nervous system and goes deep into the body, becoming responsible for the process of healing.

We find both positions among the descriptions of *mirações*. There are those moments of overwhelming experiences, when the “Daime fulfills completely” and the experience is too fast, too overwhelming to be understood (see Kleymani’s experience). It is a moment of chaos, of disintegration, when coherence is not achieved. This moment can be characterized by intense negative body feelings, emotions, and thoughts, a moment when consciousness can be in complete chaos and the subject can experience a deep process of dis-integration. Disconnected images appear along with fear and vomiting, and the person can feel that he or she might die or break into pieces. However, when that person understands the “core” element causing the feeling of disintegration, all the bad and disintegrative feelings/thoughts vanish, and the person (in general) can have a beautiful *miração* encompassing the whole body of elements linked to the experienced situation. That understanding might not come as a rational process but as a mere “letting go” through vomiting, for example. The chaos is literally expelled, and harmony

achieved (see, for example, Maria vomiting and seeing everything as pink). As the effect of the Daime diminishes, the person receives the images again in an understandable way.

The images of the *miração* can be understood as signs of a deep connection with the seen and also as a process of integration with the spiritual being(s) under sight or even with the Whole. The images are a process of understanding. The *miração* can be a moment of complete coherence among all the internal, external, and spiritual elements. This coherence emerges to consciousness principally (though not solely) in visual images, generating at the same time knowledge and understanding of a certain situation in life, and even about life as a whole.

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

*As human beings we are what we are through conversation,
but through reflection we can change
our conversation and our being.
This is our freedom, and our freedom belongs
to our psychical and spiritual being.
(Maturana, 2002, p. 121).*

The intent throughout this dissertation has been to explore the dynamic and profound relationship between the subjective and objective details of spontaneous mental imagery experienced by patients undergoing treatment in the healing rituals of the Barquinha of Madrinha Francisca and the details of their healing process.

This relationship is extremely complex, and it is clear from this present work that much more investigation needs to be done in this area to strengthen the implications of the data and to provide the foundation for further diverse research into understandings of the human being and the world within which it functions. Simply, this dissertation, within its means, serves to indicate directions of inquiry and meaningful correlates, which I hope will be followed and deepened by future researches in anthropology, religious psychology, sociology, neurology/neurophysiology, and medicine.

I recall here some of the characteristics of the *miração*, as described throughout the dissertation. Primarily, a *miração* is received as a result of a momentum of “deservedness;” it cannot be evoked at will. The occurrence of a *miração* is a spontaneous process; however, after the *miração* begins, the person can interact with that process. One of the main indicators of the spontaneity of a *miração* is the sense of amazing wonder and awe that it can cause. Consistently, after the revelation embedded in the *miração* is received, and this in the spontaneous mental imagery that has been

sprouting within consciousness, follows the moments of interpretation, of understanding, and of linking images to the day-to-day world. It is important again to note that deservedness or merit is requisite to receive a *miração*; that is, its occurrence is linked to subtle factors of consciousness and as such cannot be “forced” in any conventional way.

One of the more evident roles played by the *mirações* during healing processes is that of mediator. A *miração* openly mediates, within the consciousness, among the different elements that influence and shape a person’s experience as a whole: the body, feelings and emotions, the spiritual space, ritual, and the mind. In certain *mirações*, it is clear that one of these elements is preponderant. At other times, a dialogue among two or more elements is magnified, or, in the case of certain *mirações*, there is no clear dominant element but instead simply the apparent mediation uniting the various aspects of experience in one congruent and meaningful whole.

For examples of this mediation and preponderance, we have, in certain cases, the body as the dominant element, as in the examples of Caroline and Rudolf. In other cases, the bodily element represents itself in context with the ritual, as in the instance in which Lisa saw a straight line of healers. The healers were in the spiritual space and were brought to the Congá by the ceremony, and at the same time, the previously described problem in her spine (see Chapter 9) probably influenced the way she saw them arranged during her *miração*. During Dona Chiquita’s *mirações*, in which she experienced the woman cooking the “candle broth,” perception of the spiritual space was dominant.

Maria (see Chapter 9) is probably the best source of narratives about *mirações* of this dissertation. Her body strongly influenced the several moments when she could, during the ceremonies, recall her childhood, finding there the source of her actual kidney

problems. During the moments of strong psychological transformation, the spiritual space became open for her, functioning as a source of spiritual support. When she was with Gina praying the Third of Mercy, at the feet of the Cruzeiro, she found herself and Gina immersed in red: the prayers and the fact that she was at the Cruzeiro, create, along with that “redness,” a deep feeling of mercy that extinguished the fear and doubts concerning the reality of her experience. This fieldwork has, in presenting just a few cases, indicated the potential complexities of the interaction of those many levels of life during a *miração*.

The *miração* reveals itself to not only intermediate between those levels; it also influences and modifies them reciprocally. Even when the *miração* is openly influenced by the lenses of the body, of culture, of personal mind, of a collective mind that emerges during the ritual, it, too, is the moment when the spiritual space becomes open, enhancing the possibility of modification of the body, of culture, of the personal mind, and of that collective mind. *Mirações* would be, therefore, the result of a combination, in the individual’s consciousness, of ritual, ingestion of Ayahuasca, processes of self-transformation/knowledge/exploration, and elements of the spiritual space.

The spiritual space is, in the Center’s cosmology, a very objective level of existence. It becomes manifest via mediums and *miração* and interacts with the physical plane. In fact, the physical plane is the manifest result of the relationships established among the many forces present in the spiritual space.

The spiritual space is defined throughout this dissertation as an immaterial, multidimensional, and original place where powerful forces are at play generating dispositions, intentions, and meanings, as well as sensorial, emotional, and mental impressions.

The spiritual space can be seen through different lenses (culture, body, mind, and emotions). The process of self-discovery and self-actualization cultivates better and “cleaner” lenses, although I believe from my inquiry, but currently without sufficient proof, that the lenses cannot be easily removed. The exploration of that space is the process of spiritual development itself, and each dimension of life is believed to be contained within the spiritual space.

The process of self-knowledge and self-development provoked by the combination of Daime and ritual not only creates the chance of a deep inner transformation, it also gives an impulse for it. The Daime is considered a spiritual light turned into a physical substance, and by drinking it, people enhance their own spirituality by gaining more light. The light of the Daime indicates where we need to improve our lives to gain in ourselves more light, to make our spirits brighter.

From the spiritual space (again, influenced by the lenses) emanates dispositions, intentions, and meanings. The result of the action of those three resultants of the spiritual space is behavior. Dispositions move human beings. These dispositions create the intention to be and act in the world, or even the intention to not be and not act in the world. Mingled with intentions would come meanings, enhancing and modifying them.

As an example of this principle, the lyrics of a Salmo may, through meaning, influence someone’s action. However, much of what occurs during ceremonies in the Center is not directly linked to the meaning of the lyrics of the Salmo; rather, events are not fully shaped but midwifed by the setting of a tone or intent. Music is a vehicle, a spiritual activity. We have no idea of what we will find at the end of the journey. The poetic images of the Salmo link, many times, the individual to the spiritual space. This

can happen through meaning, but meaning is revealed here to be more than a static concept, as music by itself, independent of lyric, also has that power. The same Salmo can have very different effects on different people, or on the same person on different days. This latter phenomenon is evidenced in that, during the Romarias, the same sequence of Salmos is played repeatedly during a very long sequence of days, yet participants experience very different works each day. As such, music fulfills conscious intention, creating the necessary conditions for every person to work on different (and sometimes on the same) parts of the spiritual space appropriate to the works they face.

The more the person purifies his or her soul, the higher that soul will go through and in the spiritual space. The purification of the soul comes, essentially, from self-knowledge but also from a process of surrendering to a higher power and to forces such as love, humility, and charity. Those forces interact in a way such that the resulting practices give the Center its unique character, generating both its practices and physical space.

Deeply linked to the “cultural lenses” of the Barquinha are the original Christian, African, and Amerindian matrixes. As noted previously, the main contribution of a original matrix to a religious system is its ethical code. Under the influence of the spiritual space, from practices and ceremonies, the matrixes and their respective ethical codes are subjected to a process of combination and recombination within the Center’s spiritual space, which in turn is forming a new matrix for future religious systems.

That new and emerging matrix is experienced as the flux of the spiritual currents within the Center’s spiritual space, where each ethical element is evaluated, incorporated,

changed, or discharged. The process takes place “within the light of Daime,” through the experience of the *mirações*, and under the guidance of the spiritual beings.

In this process, charity is what facilitates the assimilation of the ethical code from one spiritual current by a being belonging to another spiritual current, promoting and enhancing the feeling of spiritual community among beings that shares the same physical and spiritual space, as well as ceremonies and practices.

During the spiritual work, a flow is established, a current of information, of movements, of energy, of images, and of beings. There is a flow of consciousnesses within consciousness. At the outset of a spiritual work, people must situate themselves within that flow of beings, feelings, and emotions, initially by assuming a passive attitude. This is accomplished by singing, praying, and, during the *bailado*, dancing.

Those activities (singing, praying, and dancing) act as external points where the most “moving” and agitated parts of the mind are fixed, liberating consciousness to access the more subtly evident parts of that same mind.

After this movement of perception away from the conventional mind, the individual assumes an active participation within the current. This is done through the work, through the “work within the light.” The light is the matrix of the flow, of the current, and the work is the contribution that each brother and sister gives toward keeping the light moving, flowing. The initial passivity is for quieting and silencing the mind, giving the chance for the more silent parts of that same mind to be accessed by consciousness. The work brings forth those silent parts of mind to consciousness.

The remission of the “I” is the first step of the individual required to enter the spiritual space. The “I” becomes passive to that space so that the whole can become

manifest and act. Prayers support this remission, as does singing, for one accepts the guidance of someone else so as to enter the spiritual space (as both the prayers and songs are lead by experienced members during the ceremonies). The individual thus becomes a channel for the collective: images flow from one person to another; spiritual guides who work normally with one person manifest themselves to (and sometimes even through) other people; someone receives the lyrics of a Salmo of someone else's spiritual guide, and a third person receives the music of that same Salmo. The most intense exercise of that remission comes from mediumship, when the "I" yields to another "I" to assume control of the physical body. In remission, the many individual spiritual spaces become integrated within the body of the single spiritual space.

However, by contrast, the more that the ego is surrendered the more the *Eu superior* (the superior I), becomes enhanced. This is the spiritually working "I," the I that is surrendered to God, but that is also active within God, actively promoting God's wishes and accomplishing His will. This "I" does not disappear in the experience of those in the Center, even during the process of incorporation of the spiritual guides.

The spiritual guides are called *os curadores*—the healers, those who come from their realm of light to give charity, to help people to achieve a better life. Ordinarily, people having a *miração* are present in the spiritual space: a conscious action is taking place, and they are there with a nonphysical body. However, the physical body becomes very involved in the process of *miração* when the *miração* is coordinated along with mediumship.

The integrative power of the combination of Daime and ritual, principally expressed in the experience of a *miração*, is considered the source of healing. The

miração brings into consciousness the elements responsible for and capable of facilitating that integrative process.

Initially, as one enters a healing regimen at the Center, any sickness can be considered either only physical or only spiritual. However, the methods that address conditions are not limited to the same category as the condition itself; the healing of a physical problem can occur by acquiring spiritual knowledge, and a physical activity, such as the *bailado*, can act as a healing agent for a spiritual sickness. As one deepens in the process of healing, any problem comes to be considered to have a spiritual source, and the distinction between physical and spiritual sicknesses becomes diluted.

Sometimes, a sickness can be treated completely during the healing ceremonies in the Center, yet there are at times problems that can be only addressed in the spiritual aspect at the Center, and in such cases a biomedical physical doctor would be requested to assist in healing the physical body.

Sickness can be understood as a disequilibrium, an unbalance of forces. Healing, the process of rebalancing, on the other hand, at the Center can be understood as being accomplished by putting oneself within a current of healing energy present and felt during the ceremonies and also manifest in the movement of other beings throughout the spiritual space. Those seeking healing need to attune their mind, emotions, soul, and spirit—finding a syntony of their whole being—with that flow of the healing energy. The main active expression of healing would be the act of helping other people to achieve that same experience.

Faith is very important for any healing process, as it is the main force that assists a person to go beyond fear. This is significant as fear is the primary force that, if it had

sufficient strength, might block any attempt of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual transformation.

The process of healing is also connected with the change from a perception of oneself as being composed of many different and somehow isolated parts—physical body, mind, emotions, spirit—and with consciousness linking each of them independently to the self, toward an extended process of integration of these parts in a self-conscious-whole individual. As such, an initially apparent duality of physical body and spirit with consciousness in the middle tends to disappear.

Consciousness is a tool of the Self, used to operate throughout the material life of the body. The body can be seen as emanating from the Self (the essential core part of each human being and generally its least known aspect), whereas consciousness constructs the bridge between the many levels of an individual's existence and the Self. The instant that the Self expresses as a body, it also is the body. The part of consciousness specifically connecting the body and the Self is the body-consciousness, and these parts (Self, mind, body, etc.) work as a system. When the body is modified (by any technique), the Self receives different kinds of information—it becomes conscious of different events and entities—from all over the system, not only from the modified part.

This explains the observed possibility of manipulating access to the more subtle levels of existence through the body, and this is why it is easy to believe that the body is the source of consciousness. I am positing that the human body is in some sense the result of human consciousness. This process of becoming conscious emerges from experience, and during that experience, the fact that the subject becomes conscious does not change: only the elements in consciousness can change.

Thus, the concept of altered states of consciousness is counterproductive when considering the Center's worldview of a universe inhabited by nonphysical beings who are able to communicate with and through those who are incarnated. As I tried to demonstrate throughout the dissertation, the meeting with spiritual beings and the experiences during the *mirações* are not part of an altered universe only achieved from an altered consciousness. These events are, for them, part of life as a whole.

A completely "awakened" person, someone completely aware of her or his own more subtle sides, is rarely found in this world. Most of us have only brief perceptions of these subtle levels. The more subtle aspects of our spiritual life can be perceived as constituting a background for our actions and thoughts. However, most of the time they have a silent action that can be translated as a predisposition to certain habits or behaviors, making themselves known and acting principally through feeling and intuition. On a similar note, people who are completely aware of their bodies are also very rare. In short, people who are completely conscious of themselves are very rarely encountered! The process of becoming conscious, through experience, expands in both of these directions, from subtle to material.

The link between consciousness and culture is very significant here. Culture provides the code to express and make these areas of consciousness meaningful as they are brought to light. Culture is the mother of form and works in two primary ways. It centers consciousness within a limited band of action and perception, giving us concrete symbols for understanding the world and working with practical elements. Culture also offers tools for transcending this perception, principally via ritual. During a ritual, an individual has the opportunity to become aware of other levels of existence beyond

conventional daily tasks. In this event, we have culture acting over and on consciousness. The process of sharing information about experience is another way to create, access, and enhance reality, and it is at the same time, the tool for altering culture itself. Consciousness acts, via a reflexive “I,” on culture, opening a space for deep cultural change.

Finally, it is important to address the fact that for those living in the Center’s cosmology, life—and by extension, consciousness—does not disappear with the end of the life of physical body. Death, as Pai José stated, is a state of being, a deep ignorance of the fact that there is a spiritual world, a spiritual space, and God.

The *miração*, then, is a process of perception. It is the moment when different entities (physical body, culture, emotions, mind, soul, spiritual space, etc.) become connected within consciousness. These connections can receive a broad range of degree of influence of these different entities, assuming, thus, an infinite variety of patterns.

These patterns—the images during the *miração*—have the power to make the Self conscious of the many subtleties of the forces emanating both from each single entity and from the combination of entities. These patterns have the power to make the Self conscious of the transformations occurring in both the entities and the combination of entities.

At the same time, the *miração* is, in itself, another experience—a source of transformation of the above-mentioned entities. As such, the *mirações* can be the source of images not only of healing, but also for healing, a healing that, in a broad sense involves the whole individual; indeed, it involves the whole universe.



Figure 52.
Rainbow after storm.
Picture taken from the women's
area at the Igreja.

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APPENDIX
MODEL OF QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Occupation:
4. When did you begin to drink Daime (or Ayahuasca)? Can you describe your first experience?
5. Tell me about your personal life. Are you married? How many sons and/or daughters do you have?
6. What is your health problem?
7. Can you tell me about your experience during the treatment?
8. Can you tell me about your *mirações*?
9. How do you relate your healing process with the *mirações* you had during the treatment?