

**Sacred Work: Transforming Spirit and Community in Lucena, Paraíba**



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*O amor que eu te tenho/Dentro do meu coração/É vós quem me guia/No caminho da salvação*

*Agradeço profundamente.*

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## Statement of Social Relevance

There has not been a great amount of research that has been conducted on Santo Daime. As such, my research will make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge available to those who are curious about the church, its practices, and their social implications. There is much stigma, prejudice, and even persecution of Santo Daime. Hopefully a more intimate look at the social ramifications of work with Santo Daime will ease these preconceptions.

Santo Daime is the only completely Brazilian religion: a unique syncretism of indigenous Amazonian traditions, Portuguese Catholicism, African spiritualism, and Kardecist Spiritism, whose convergence reflects Brazil's unique history. By contributing to the written history of Santo Daime, I will be documenting a unique example of how Brazil's complex history and multiplicity manifests today.

Furthermore, this research takes a deep look at an emerging moment in history, in which ancient and once isolated spiritual practices that are at the root of the indigenous Amazonian/shamanic worldview are spreading across the globe to urban centers in the middle of modernity. In studying the shift that Santo Daime activated in one community, the reader may speculate about the radical implications of its emergence and expansion. This research and the researcher's experience is a part of this expansion, and her historical context as a young, American, university-educated woman is one example of the modern convergence of these radically different cultures.

This research, by documenting a growing spiritual work, whose roots remain in the Amazonian/shamanic worldview, and its social implications, adds to the richness and pluralism of modern academia that collectively poses a new paradigm that challenges dominant notions of progress and development, which continue to perpetuate systems of human oppression and environmental destruction. Although this case study may be small, I hope that it provides insight into one revolutionary instance of social justice work.

Lastly, as interest in the use of *entheogens* continues to grow in the Western world, it is essential that dialogue be open between Westerners and the communities that have already established their safe and effective use. This research will open another doorway for dialogue and might further our understanding of if and how *entheogens* might be used effectively and safely in the future, by what means, and to what ends.

## Review of Secondary Sources

Santo Daime was founded in 1930s by Raimundo Irineu Serra, a rubber tapper from Maranhão, who received instruction from a figure who he recognized as *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*<sup>1</sup> during a shamanic ayahuasca ritual, instructing him to found a new church that would Christianize the ritualistic use of ayahuasca. *Santo Daime* is the result of Mestre Irineu's inspiration. Santo Daime is a syncretic church, whose origins reflect the multiplicity of Brazilian culture and society: the ritualistic use of ayahuasca and the primacy of singing and music are rooted in indigenous traditions of the Amazon; faith in Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Catholic Saints originated in Portuguese colonial Christianization; the inclusion of *orixás* and some musical elements represent the African roots of Brazilian culture; and the worldview constructed in Santo Daime that recognizes a multidimensional reality, including many realms of spirits, reincarnation, and the law of karma, resonates heavily with Allan Kardec's Spiritism.

Santo Daime split into various factions during the lifetime of Mestre Irineu and after his death in 1971. Padrinho Sebastião Mota de Melo, also a rubber tapper from the Amazon, became a popular spiritual teacher. Padrinho Sebastião founded the community *Céu da Mapiá* deep in the Amazon near Rio Branco, which is now the largest *daimista* community. Padrinho Sebastião welcomed all who came to the Amazon to know the power of *Daime*, and as such, his lineage has spread to urban centers all over Brazil and across the globe: to the United States, Europe, and Japan. Padrinho Sebastião registered his religious and philanthropic entity as *The Eclectic Center of the Universal Flowing Light Raimundo Irineu Serra (Centro Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal Raimundo Irineu Serra—CEFLURIS.)*

Padrinho Sebastião welcomed all who came to the Amazon to know the power of *Daime*, including many middle-class intellectuals and artists. They learned the doctrine of Santo Daime, which exists in the form of hymns that are sung during the rituals, and which preach “love for nature and consecrate the vegetal world and all the planet as the sacred scenario of our earth-mother.”<sup>2</sup> These visitors brought the doctrine back to their homes, spreading Santo Daime to urban centers around Brazil and around the world. As its popularity spread, ayahuasca as a religious sacrament became the subject of close legal scrutiny. In the early 1980s, the Brazilian government organized the first commission to investigate the ritualistic use of ayahuasca and to determine its legality. The commission included medical doctors, anthropologists, psychologists, representatives from the Brazilian Justice Ministry, the Federal Police, and the Army. The commission, known as *CONFEN*, visited numerous communities of Santo Daime.

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<sup>1</sup> The Virgin Mary

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

What they found in each was a high level of social cohesion, organization, and work capacity, infant mortality and delinquency rates nearing 0, the absence of alcoholism, malnutrition, and violence, self-respecting habitation, nutrition, and work patterns. The CONFEN report concluded that:

*the religious rituals conducted with the sacramental drink Santo Daime/Ahyauasca didn't bring injuries to the social life, though contributed to its better integration, being remarkable the benefits testified by the usuary religious groups members. Legalization in Brazil.*<sup>3</sup>

Pharmacologists determined that Santo Daime does not present the behavioral alterations or addictiveness characteristics of drug abuse, thereby suggesting its legality within the religious ritualistic context. The result of this government-funded process of investigation, and various subsequent studies, was the legalization of the ritualistic use of Santo Daime/ayahuasca.

What these researchers and investigators saw in the various *Daimista* communities demonstrates the communal implications for the deep spiritual work of Santo Daime, which is “a spiritual work which aims at self-knowledge and the experience of God or the Superior I Inside.”<sup>4</sup> These are the implications that I want to further study in the community of *Céu da Flor da Nova Era* in Lucena, Paraíba.

Kenneth Tupper, in his essay “Entheogens and Existential Intelligence: The Use of Plant Teachers as Cognitive Tools,” begins an investigation of the possibility of entheogens being used as tools to enhance what he calls *existential intelligence*. Drawing on Gardner’s (fill in here) multiple intelligence theory, which poses that intelligence is “the ability to solve problems or fashion products that are valued in at least one culture or community” (503, Gardner quoted in Tupper), Tupper explores the potential implications of using entheogens in education. They would be stimulators of creativity, he writes, drawing on quotes from Aldous Huxley, and further ones capacity to engage in “transcendental concerns” (505.) Tupper’s essay, while creative and an interesting resource its variety of resources, does not critically engage the question of how entheogens might be used practically, why existential intelligence is an important and revolutionary measure of intelligence, and how its inclusion in education would challenge our society and how it shapes its students today. As he says, “The use of entheogens such as ayahuasca is an example of the long and ongoing tradition in many cultures to employ psychoactives as tools that stimulate foundational types of understanding” (510.) Some interesting questions to explore are: How do the institutions and systems of our society betray foundational types of understanding and

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<sup>3</sup> "Legalization in Brazil." *Santo Daime - The Rainforest's Doctrine*. CEFLURIS / Céu do Planalto. 6 Dec. 2008 <<http://www.santodaime.org/institutional/legal.htm>>.

<sup>4</sup> *Santo Daime* official website, [www.santodaime.org](http://www.santodaime.org), 8 Oct. 2008.

how does such understanding necessitate and lead to revolutionary change, within the individual and within the community? What would society look like if education on these foundational types of understanding was primary? Do societies like this exist already?

By examining the worldview constructed through working with Santo Daime, the vision for the future of our world that is held by *daimistas*, and the type of community that they have created, I will reveal one example of how the deepening of existential intelligence affects one's relationship with and participation in society and community. The community of Apôitchá and Céu da Flor da Nova Era is in essence a result of this process. I will not use the term existential intelligence, for my research on this matter is limited to this one essay, but I will explore the lives and work of people who have made their spiritual practice central to their personal evolution. As such, I am examining one example of the existential intelligence that evolves through the work of introspection and self-knowledge assisted by the ritual use of ayahuasca and its consequences for society.

Edward Macrae, a professor of anthropology, a researcher for the Center of Studies and Therapy for Drug Abuse, and a *daimista*, writes a basic overview of Santo Daime in his essay, "The Ritual and Religious Use of Ayahuasca in Contemporary Brazil," which is available on the official Santo Daime website. In it, he describes a brief history of Santo Daime, its current rituals and practices, and some of its social implications.

Macrae's description of the rituals, which he describes as "an opportunity for learning and healing and for the indoctrination of the spirits present either in the 'material' or in the 'astral' planes," emphasizes that in studying the effects of Santo Daime, one cannot de-contextualize the use of ayahuasca. The rituals are, in anthropologic terms, "'rituals of order' that promote group and hierarchical cohesion and a search for harmony both within and without." From the spatial organization of the ritual, the use of symbols, the hierarchical social organization, the dietary and behavioral preparation, the control of the dosage of *daimé*, the use of music and hymns are all part of the set and setting in which the "voyages" induced by *daimé* take place. The hymns are especially important in grounding participants during their voyages and "also help in the interpretation of the experiences people have... They help to create connections between the lived experiences and the magical or mythical symbols with which they become invested." Macrae emphasizes that this investment in shared symbols leads to social cohesion, and whose spiritual function "was lost by Western societies when they abandoned their traditional ways of organizing unconscious drives and using these 'sources of renovation' for individual and collective benefit."

Macrae's analysis thereby leads to the claim that Santo Daime restores elements of community that were lost in the construction of Western societies. As such, the Santo Daime community challenges Western paradigms and necessitates, in the actualization of its lessons, the creation of a radically different society. As Macrae points out, in its original context, Santo Daime, and other ayahuasca-based religious movements, "played an important role in helping migrants from the forest adapt and integrate into their new urban environment." Today, its participants come from a different background with new sets of social and existential problems. "These young people also have to cope with...the sexual and work ethics and the breakdown of traditional family organization and values," writes Macrae. In my research I will ask how participation in Santo Daime affects the participants interaction and relationship with these issues and how they have transformed through their spiritual work.

Macrae makes an interesting and important connection between the "kind of transcendental experience that many search for in the compulsive use of alcohol and drugs" and the experience of ayahuasca. This claim needs to be carefully explored, because the alignment of drugs and ayahuasca is a very sensitive matter and one that puts a great spiritual movement at risk of being profaned and banned. However, in recognizing that there is often a search for the sacred that is undertaken in a misguided manner through the abuse of drugs and alcohol, perhaps we will be better prepared to understand the urgency of this basic human search and how limited are the paths to this transcendent experience within our society. "The disciplined use of ayahuasca," says Macrae,

provides...a safe, well-mapped route to the kind of transcendental experience that many search for in a compulsive use of alcohol and drugs. Thus, taking part in these religious groups tends to be a particularly effective way of dealing with alcoholism and drug addiction, since, rather than just saying no to any kind of induced alteration of consciousness, they show how to do it most effectively and in greater safety.

I will study this healing power of Santo Daime, which I will study in the ritualistic and communal context of the Santo Daime Church without de-contextualizing the use of *daime*, and how it turns those on the margins of society, which is generally the place of drug-abusers, into seekers of light and creators of productive means of sharing their spiritual path and working for good in the world.

One of the most extensive collections of first-hand ayahuasca experiences of Westerners is the collection, Sacred Vine of Spirits: Ayahuasca, edited by Ralph Metzner. Metzner includes a thorough introduction of ayahuasca and Western research that has been conducted on it, an essay by Dennis McKenna on its ethnopharmacologic history, an essay on the psychology of ayahuasca, written by Charles Grob, its



neuropharmacology as explained by J.C. Callaway, and a conclusion, in which Metzner speculates on the future uses of ayahuasca in Western culture. The book includes 24 firsthand accounts which I will not focus on, because the experiences pertaining to my research will come from within the community.

Metzner writes at length about the ways in which the ayahuasca experience reveals for its user a relationship with the world that conflicts with the relationship proposed by the dominant paradigm, which continues to support the expansion of international corporations, capitalism, and societal structures based on domination, exploitation, and marginalization. Metzner affirms that the use of ayahuasca, especially in ritual form with the support of the spiritual community develops “a worldview radically different from the prevailing Western paradigm of scientific modernism” (Metzner, 2006.) In the face our global economic, environmental, agricultural, social, and existential crises, the revitalization of Santo Daime in the Western world, as well as other consciousness-expanding practices, signifies an ever-increasing desire to supersede the dominant and outdated Western paradigm, which in its dominance has wrought profound destruction of life on this Earth.

Before experiencing the ayahuasca experience first-hand, most Westerners, I think it is safe to say, would deny the reality of the worldview revealed through the experience because it so challenges the dominant Western conception of reality. The pervading attitude in the West that any experience outside of our “normally perceptible realm of sense experience,” especially when brought about by the ingestion of drugs or plants, is purely “hallucinogenic” is a detrimental one. Such criticism is steeped in the conditioning of the dominant Western scientific paradigm, whose narrow focus on material reality has led to such detachment and misunderstanding of our natural reality that we have, under its dominating influence, exploited our Mother Earth to depths of devastating destruction, imagining we could escape without harm. Metzner contextualizes this still-pervasive attitude as rooted in the division between human spirituality and nature wrought by the rise of mechanistic paradigms in Western science in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries:

On the one hand was science, which confined itself to material objects and measurable forces. Anything having to do with purpose, value, morality, subjectivity, psyche, or spirit was the domain of religion... Inner experiences, subtle perceptions, and spiritual values were not considered amenable to scientific study and came therefore to be regarded as inferior forms of reality—“merely subjective” as we say. This encouraged a

purely mechanistic and myopically detached attitude toward the natural world. Perception of and communication with the spiritual essences and intelligences inherent in nature have regularly been regarded with suspicion, or ridiculed as misguided “enthusiasm” or “mysticism” (Metzner, 2006.)

Metzner emphasizes that “from the perspective of Jamesian radical empiricism... the phenomenological descriptions of consciousness explorers must be accorded the same reality status as observations through a microscope or telescope...[T]hey are subject to verification, comparison, testing, and replication by anyone else who chooses to avail themselves of these perception-enhancing tools” (Metzner, 2006.)

The aspect of Metzner’s research that my own will enhance are the speculations about how the ritualistic use of ayahuasca will affect modern communities. How does the paradigm established deep within the Amazon forest manifest and affect when it is planted in urban centers? I will explore one example of the way in which the ritualistic use of ayahuasca at Céu da Flor da Nova Era motivates its participants into living lives devoted to social justice.

Engaging in social justice means engaging in a quest for freedom, equality, and liberation. Especially when tied so closely with a profound spiritual practice, it implies a quest for Truth. Metzner portrays the way in which ayahuasca unveils reality to its user with force and clarity. I see some interesting connections between the ayahuasca experience in Santo Daime and Pedagogy of the Oppressed of Paulo Freire. I will further explore this relationship in my research to evaluate the empowering and liberating effects of Santo Daime practice for a few individuals in Lucena, Paraíba and the ways in which they live out that experience of empowerment and liberation in their work with the community.

The way in which Mestre Irineu understood the ayahuasca experience parallels the way in which Freire speaks of the praxis of liberation as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1970.) The term that Mestre Irineu gave to the visionary states produced by ayahuasca is “miração,” a term that combines the verb “mirar,” meaning to look at or to contemplate, with the word “ação,” meaning action (Alverga, 1999.) Alex Polari de Alverga, a member of the Doctrinal Council of the Santo Daime Church, describes that in the ayahuasca ceremony, the participant is invited “to be the protagonist of the ‘miração,’ a position in which he is fully responsible for his acts in the astral world.” While much of the vision is what he calls,

“a vast sea of quantic indetermination,” there are distinct and decisive, though brief, moments in which “the self... makes decisions concerning our destiny” (Alverga, 1999.) The ayahuasca journey activates the individual’s observational, or reflective, ability to see at profound levels the way in which she is an actor the world, to see the way in which these decisions, no matter how small, shape our reality; even the quality of our thoughts is revealed as an actor on reality (Alverga, 1999.) Through the *miração*, writes Alverga, “We are...summoned to fulfill the great responsibility of being co-creators of the universe.”

This description is strikingly similar to Freire’s description of what a liberating education should be, in which both teachers and students, by engaging “in the task of unveiling... reality, and thereby coming to know it critically... discover themselves as its permanent re-creators.”<sup>5</sup> By this understanding, supported by innumerable personal accounts, the sacred ayahuasca ritual is a liberating experience. The worldview that it reveals necessitates that one assume complete responsibility for her actions by revealing her role as a creator of that reality and dispelling the misconception that she is merely an object of an already determined reality. It is not surprising, then, that so many people’s responses to the experience is to engage in work for social and environmental justice and well-being.

Freire, I can speculate, would understand the use of ayahuasca as a tool for authentic liberation, as he writes, “Authentic liberation—the process of humanization—is not another deposit to be made in men. Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it.”<sup>6</sup> Santo Daime appears to be just that—a praxis, not a doctrine to be deposited, but an experience to be lived out by each individual with the support and solidarity of their spiritual community.

One last comparison: Freire writes, “The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility.”<sup>7</sup> The purging effect of ayahuasca, which manifests physically in the form of vomiting, thereby purging the body of toxins, and psychologically, purging one of past traumas, negative thought patterns, compulsive behaviors, and even those traumas and patterns of the collective experience of humanity, such as the toxicity of

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<sup>5</sup> Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006. 69.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 79.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 47.

war and oppression (Metzner, 2006). After purging these patterns of being, or “ejecting” them, in Freire’s language, the individual has the potential, with the support of the plant teacher, to realize themselves as free in and responsible for the process of co-creating reality. Metzner reports many accounts of radical healing and transformation that affirm this potentiality. In this way ayahuasca is truly an expedient means of facing our most challenging life-long tasks of healing and liberation; as Alverga says, “Shortcuts are necessary when the distance we need to cover is great and the time at our disposal is brief.”

## Introduction

It is my belief, and my experience, that the one who truly commits herself to the task of human liberation is on a spiritual path. The process of unveiling the realities of social injustice begs her to ask the deepest questions of her identity and her purpose in this life. Deep reflection on the roots of injustice and oppression leads her to see these roots reflected and internalized within herself. As she takes actions to help her brothers, she realizes her limitations and her imperfections: she speaks of peace but inside she is not at peace. She teaches love and passes judgment on her brothers. She tries to reflect deeply on an instance of injustice, but her mind is too cluttered and conditioned to see it clearly. Her attachment to material wealth, comforts, and accessories prevents her from leaving the very institutions that she condemns, entering into solidarity with those in need and working with them for justice and equality. She can only carry out revolutionary work as far as she has liberated herself.

The path of self-liberation is inherently a spiritual path; the spiritual path is one of liberation. It is a process of clearing our systems of the conditioning, delusions, and internalized values that make us unconsciously preserve the status-quo and its cycles of oppression. The spiritual path is the process of unveiling the world as it actually is. The path of social justice is putting into practice the insights of the spirit, for the world that supports, honors, and develops the freedom of the human spirit will be a humanizing and just world.

Paulo Freire writes,

The radical, committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a ‘circle of certainty’ within which reality is also imprisoned. On the contrary, the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled.<sup>8</sup>

From the second-hand accounts and first-hand experiences I gathered in my three weeks in the community of *Céu da Flor da Nova Era (CFNE)* and *Apôitchá* in Lucena, Paraíba, I attest that the spiritual work in Santo Daime<sup>9</sup> lifts the veil on reality with a unique intensity. It is an expedient means of self-knowledge and clarity. For those who accept the world and themselves revealed, Santo Daime is a powerful guide that sets them on a life path of light, personal transformation, and commitment to the spiritual evolution and material well-being of their *próximo*,<sup>10</sup> working toward a New Era.

The following presents a small window into the work that has grown from ten individuals’ encounters with and commitment to working with Santo Daime. The individuals who I lived and spoke with have accepted reality unveiled and commit their lives to the evolution of the human spirit. I encountered difficulties in translating my experience in the field onto these pages. As I glimpsed into the depth of the work that these ten individuals undertake in CFNE and Apôitchá, I was overcome by humility at how little I knew of the world unveiled and how much *work* it is to fully accept and embody the insights of that reality. I hope that what I am able to share might motivate the reader on their path of truth, love, harmony and justice.

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<sup>8</sup> Freire, 39.

<sup>9</sup> Santo Daime is the name of the religious cult and the sacramental tea, ayahuasca.

<sup>10</sup> In the Bible, *próximo* translates as *neighbor*, but it really means *near*—all those around you

## Abstract

On the edge of the town Lucena, Paraíba, 50km outside of the capital city João Pessoa, there is a small church of Santo Daime, a unique religion of unique Brazilian syncretism, called *Céu da Flor da Nova Era (CFNE)*, the majority of whose members work at the NGO *Apôitchá*, founded by the same founders as the church. In 2005, *Apôitchá* was presented with Itaú-Unicef's national award, paying homage to the effectiveness and the heart with which the NGO carries out its work to protect and educated the children of Lucena. The relationship between CFNE and *Apôitchá* suggests that the spiritual work of members of CFNE, who participate regularly in the ritualistic use of *ayahuasca*, known as *Daime*, deeply informs and motivates work for social justice and equality, actualized through their work in *Apôitchá*. Through interviews with ten individuals who are members both organizations—making them *Daimistas* and *Apoitchecos*—this research aims to answer the questions of how their first encounters with *Daime* changed their life, if and how it guided them to work for social justice, how their spiritual work continues to support, orient, and transform their work, and how the worldview constructed through their spiritual work informs their vision of their social/educational work with *Apôitchá* in the community of Lucena. I will use Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as context to determine the liberating capacity of the informants' experience with Santo Daime and its implications for revolutionary social transformation.

## Changes in the study

My original proposal was to work with three individuals involved in Santo Daime, members of *Céu da Flor da Nova Era (CFNA)* and the NGO Apôitchá. For a number of practical and ideological reasons, I resolved to interview a greater number of people. The drawbacks of this approach were that I did not have the opportunity for multiple interviews with the same informants, and the depth of the information I received from them is thus largely limited to one single interview. However, to choose three people arbitrarily proved to be ill-fit to the study—the possibility of interviewing one person multiple times was uncertain, and I was not prepared to isolate a few people for in-depth study while excluding many others who engage in the same spiritual and social work would have, which felt like a betrayal of the work of both CEFLURIS and Apôitchá, which are both rooted in community.

The worldviews that I was able to construct through the interview process was somewhat limited because of the norms of privacy around the *mirações*. While some individuals revealed significant insights to me concerning their personal experiences in the *salão*, informants told me that a lot of the *miração* is best kept private. Another challenge was that many informants struggled to put their experience into words.

I also proposed to study the methodologies and pedagogies of Apôitchá, how they relate to the spiritual work of Santo Daime, and evaluate the effectiveness with which the educators translate their spiritual insights into their teaching. In the reality of my research, I experienced a few limitations and alterations to this proposal. First: the methodologies and pedagogies of Apôitchá each represent an enormous and complex field of study, which I am not ready to undergo in this small-scope research project, though I will provide a brief synopsis of each. Second: while there are many interesting connections between the methodologies and pedagogies of Apôitchá and the spiritual and ritual work of Santo Daime, the connections between the two cannot be attributed exclusively to members of Santo Daime. Apôitchá is a religiously diverse community; many of the educators that practice liberating pedagogies, which in my opinion have much in common with Santo Daime, are not themselves *daimistas*. The informants who are both educators and *daimistas* who had the deepest connection to these pedagogies were largely unavailable for interviewing. Third, my question of effectiveness proved to be an unworthy one: the need of the children involved was so great, the variety and profoundness of the work of Apôitchá so vast, that it seemed ridiculous to ask whether

the work was effective. I can answer now: YES. If I asked how to what extent, where would I go to measure? Calculate the number of students who stayed in school because of Apôitchá? Measure the love the children received at Roda do Sol and the negligence at home prior to their arrival? The psychological effects of receiving songs instead of screams?<sup>11</sup> Being hugged instead of hit? Estimate how many young girls were reading, making art, or playing music instead of in the street and on a fast track to pregnancy? Would I ask the young girl whose three older sisters all had sons by the age of 16 and who suffered extreme sexual violence and exploitation why she spent all her free time at Apôitchá? Their receiving a national award that judged 1,682 NGOs might be the best way to claim its effectiveness, due to the thoroughness of their study. Due to the brevity of my stay and narrowness of my scope, I largely let this question go, though in other ways this work provides implicit answers.

The theme of Santo Daime as a revolutionary means of social inclusion arose and asserted itself throughout multiple interviews and observations. The social relevance of Santo Daime as social inclusion has vast implications and real effects, as the existence of Apôitchá attests. Currently, very little research exists about the social implications of Santo Daime for modern communities, and so much stigma and prejudice against it, that I feel it is essential to write about these transformations that Santo Daime co-affects with and within the individual, and with and within the community. As this work demonstrates, Santo Daime has the capacity to effect radical and revolutionary personal, interpersonal, and communal transformation.

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<sup>11</sup> Day 9. *Events: Roda do Sol*, 26.



## Methodology

I gathered the majority of my information from interviews and conversations. The intent of the interviews was to encourage the informants to speak at length of their experience, to stimulate their thinking and not limit their responses. I ended up interviewing ten individuals, formally and informally.

After a meeting with my advisor, we determined that it be helpful to develop a questionnaire, which informants could answer on their own time. Apôitchá was very busy during these weeks and it was challenging to schedule interviews with some key informants. The questionnaire enabled me to get some important perspective I would have otherwise missed, but largely it was ineffective.

For the majority of the interviews I translated as I transcribed the words of my informant. Though it was impossible for me to write everything down, I was able to stay extremely faithful to the words of my informants. While there are in some places flaws in the translation, and the wording is sometimes my own, as exact translation is sometimes impossible, due to the frequency with which I use the informants' exact words, I consider all my citations to be direct quotations, and annotate them as such in the monograph. Where I choose to leave a word in its original Portuguese, I suggest a close translation.

I used a voice recorder for my second interview with Marcos & Selma (Day 8) and my formal interview with Andréa (Day 10). The quotations from these interviews are close to exact translations, and the reader may refer to the field journal for exact transcriptions in the original Portuguese. I received two written responses to the questionnaire—from Danielly and Lilian—whose exact words also appear in their original Portuguese in the field journal.

I was an active participant in the activities of Apôitchá and in the spiritual works of CFNE. I attended meetings, participated alongside children in classes, observed the teachers, participated in morning prayer, ate breakfast and lunch with the team of Apôitchá, participated in the four spiritual works that occurred during my stay, and visited, occasionally or frequently, each of the five houses and families situated across the road. I spoke informally and formally with all the informants, establishing relationships outside and within my role as a researcher.

## The scene, in brief

I spent just over three weeks living in the community of Apôitchá and Céu da Flor da Nova Era (CFNE), in Lucena, Paraíba (Monday, November 10—Wednesday, December 3, 2008). The church CFNE is located directly behind Apôitchá. The church is in the *mata*, the brush or low-growing forest, as is custom in Santo Daime. Apôitchá is on a sand/dirt road at the edge of *Lagoa dos Homens*, distanced from the urban center of Lucena. On the other side of the road are five homes, all of which house families of *daimistas*, committed to working with Santo Daime in CFNE, and all of whom work at Apôitchá.

## Lucena, Paraíba

The town of Lucena is situated on the north coast of Paraíba, 50 km outside of the state's capital João Pessoa. It has a population of approximately 11,000 inhabitants. The economy of Lucena is based on fishing and the production of sugarcane, coconut, and pineapple. The town lacks a theatre, cinema, library, cultural center, and even a newspaper stand. Lucena ranks as one of the poorest cities in the state's quality of life index: the average salary is R\$158,31<sup>12</sup>, 30% of the population making even less, and 32% of the population is illiterate.<sup>13</sup> In the poorest neighborhood, *Bairro Novo*, also known as *Carrapeta*, many of the homes are made of palm trees and mud, lacking sewage and often electricity. The conditions of poverty are reflected in serious cases of domestic violence, alcoholism, hunger, sexual and psychological abuse, exploitation of child labor, sexual exploitation, early and unplanned pregnancy, poor quality of education and low retention rates, and a variety of diseases that are spread through contaminated water and lack of sewage systems.<sup>14</sup> The challenges of the border communities increase greatly during the winter when the rainfall fills the dirt and sand roads, isolating all those who live outside the urban center of the city. Water is abundant in Lucena: small rivers run through the mangroves in the rural parts of the city, and the Paraíba River meets the ocean on the outskirts of town. The geographic terrain is composed of low-growing forest, mangroves, and beach along the coast. The natural landscape of Lucena is rich and diverse. Year-round ecological-based tourism is on the rise, and Carnival continues to draw thousands to Lucena. Up in the hills behind the urban part of town are two historic churches: Igreja da Guia, built in 1591, and the ruins of Igreja de Bom Sucesso.

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<sup>12</sup> Minimum wage is R\$415.

<sup>13</sup> Macedo, Leonor. 6 Dec. 2008

<<http://http://www.educacaoeparticipacao.org.br/modules/news/article.php?storyid=14>>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

## Santo Daime

Santo Daime was founded in 1930s by Raimundo Irineu Serra, a rubber tapper from Maranhão, who received instruction from a figure who he recognized as *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*<sup>15</sup> during a shamanic ayahuasca ritual, instructing him to found a new church that would Christianize the ritualistic use of ayahuasca. *Santo Daime* is the result of Mestre Irineu's inspiration. Santo Daime is a syncretic church, whose origins reflect the multiplicity of Brazilian culture and society: the ritualistic use of ayahuasca and the primacy of singing and music are rooted in indigenous traditions of the Amazon; faith in Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Catholic Saints originated in Portuguese colonial Christianization; the inclusion of *orixás* and some musical elements represent the African roots of Brazilian culture; and the worldview constructed in Santo Daime that recognizes a multidimensional reality, including many realms of spirits, reincarnation, and the law of karma, resonates heavily with Allan Kardec's Spiritism.

Central to Santo Daime is the ritualistic use of ayahuasca, baptized by Mestre Irineu as *Santo Daime*.<sup>16</sup> There are two plants that constitute ayahuasca: the vine Jagube (*Banisteriopsis caapi*) and the leaf Rainha (*psychotria viridis*.) The vine represents the masculine and brings force, while the leaf represents the feminine and brings light.<sup>17</sup> Together, they produce the entheogenic experience, which is said to help one experience their true nature, the nature of reality, and the Divine within. The vision is called a *miração*, combining the words *mirar*, meaning to watch or contemplate, with *ação*, meaning action. Studies show that the ayahuasca experience is often indistinguishable from classical religious mystical experience.<sup>18</sup> The *miração* is guided by the ritual of the ceremony, which includes rhythmic music, a simple dance, and the *hinos*, or hymns, which are the ultimate guides. The hymns are received and passed down by various Mestres. They speak of love, firmness, light, nature, and a wide variety of Christian, African, and Indigenous divine beings.

Santo Daime split into various factions during the lifetime of Mestre Irineu and after his death in 1971. Padrinho Sebastião Mota de Melo, also a rubber tapper from the Amazon, became a popular spiritual teacher. Padrinho Sebastião founded the community *Céu da Mapiá* deep in the Amazon near Rio Branco, which is now the largest *daimista* community. Padrinho Sebastião registered his religious and

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<sup>15</sup> The Virgin Mary

<sup>16</sup> The name of the religion and the name of the sacramental ayahuasca is *Santo Daime*, though often the ayahuasca brew is referred to as simply *Daime*. They recognize that within this natural plant brew is a great teacher, a *mestre*, and a Saint; thus the term *Santo* is included. The common experience that it gives everything that you ask it for led Mestre Irineu to use the term *Daime*, or "give me."

<sup>17</sup> Day 4. *Formal Interview: Márcio*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Metzner, 3.

philanthropic entity as *The Eclectic Center of the Universal Flowing Light Raimundo Irineu Serra (Centro Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal Raimundo Irineu Serra—CEFLURIS.)*

Padrinho Sebastião welcomed all who came to the Amazon to know the power of *Daime*, including many middle-class intellectuals and artists. These visitors brought the doctrine back to their homes, spreading Santo Daime to urban centers around Brazil and around the world. As its popularity spread, ayahuasca as a religious sacrament became the subject of close legal scrutiny. In the early 1980s, the Brazilian government organized the first commission to investigate the ritualistic use of ayahuasca and to determine its legality. The commission included medical doctors, anthropologists, psychologists, representatives from the Brazilian Justice Ministry, the Federal Police, and the Army. The commission, known as *CONFEN*, visited numerous communities of Santo Daime. What they found in each was a high level of social cohesion, organization, and work capacity, infant mortality and delinquency rates nearing 0, the absence of alcoholism, malnutrition, and violence, self-respecting habitation, nutrition, and work patterns. The CONFEN report concluded that:

*the religious rituals conducted with the sacramental drink Santo Daime/Ahyauasca didn't bring injuries to the social life, though contributed to its better integration, being remarkable the benefits testified by the usuary religious groups members. Legalization in Brazil.<sup>19</sup>*

Pharmacologists determined that Santo Daime does not present the behavioral alterations or addictiveness characteristics of drug abuse, thereby suggesting its legality within the religious ritualistic context. The result of this government-funded process of investigation, and various subsequent studies, was the legalization of the ritualistic use of Santo Daime/ayahuasca.

What these researchers and investigators saw in the various Daimist communities demonstrates the communal implications for the deep spiritual work of Santo Daime, which is “a spiritual work which aims at self-knowledge and the experience of God or the Superior I Inside.”<sup>20</sup> I entered the community of *Céu da Flor da Nova Era* in Lucena, Paraíba to research these implications.

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<sup>19</sup> "Legalization in Brazil." *Santo Daime - The Rainforest's Doctrine*. CEFLURIS / Céu do Planalto. 6 Dec. 2008 <<http://http://www.santoDaime.org/institutional/legal.htm>>.

<sup>20</sup> *Santo Daime* official website, [www.santoDaime.org](http://www.santoDaime.org), 8 Oct. 2008.

## Céu da Flor da Nova Era

In 1993, when Marcos and Selma arrived in Lucena, Paraíba, natives of Minas Gerais and Paraíba respectively, there was only *mata*, brush, around the margins of *Lagoa dos Homens*. They met a couple from Rio de Janeiro who practiced Santo Daime and who had brought with them the sacramental tea ayahuasca, known as *Daime*.

In the beginning, ceremonies were held by candlelight in the middle of the *mata* around *Lagoa dos Homens*. There was no bridge to cross the river so they waded across with the materials for the ceremony on their heads.<sup>21</sup>

Witnessing the extreme poverty of Lucena, the degradation of its inhabitants and its environment, Marcos and Selma "felt the need to give back to the people here in Lucena, to respond to the social, ecological, environmental problems; to care for our home."<sup>22</sup> Their spiritual work with *Daime* made their sense of responsibility and urgency to help their fellow human beings all the more profound. With support from *Daime*, which helped them receive clear instructions on how to proceed, Marcos and Selma created an NGO in order "to systematize [their] work so [they] could have a greater effect."<sup>23</sup> The first meeting of the organization soon to be known as Apôitchá met under the roof of Céu da Flor da Nova Era.

Today, the church remains a small and strong point of gathering. During my visit the smallest spiritual work involved nine people and the largest twenty-five, plus seven young children and babies, including mostly *fardados* and a few visitors. They host all the traditional spiritual works of Santo Daime: *missas*<sup>24</sup>, *concentrações*<sup>25</sup>, the festivals in honor of the Saints and the birthdays of the Mestres,<sup>26</sup> and one unconventional work, which is a women-only work that uses Sacred Dance<sup>27</sup>. All are welcome at Céu da Flor da Nova Era:

*"We receive everyone with open arms,"* said Selma. *"There's a hymn of Padrinho Sebastião that says, 'There is no beautiful nor ugly / He illuminates all equally.'"*<sup>28,29</sup>

Added Marcos, *"In truth, from what we learn with the Mestre, Padrinho Sebastião, and with the greatest teacher who is Jesus, is that we are not fit to judge anyone. We are here only to help."*<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Day 6. Preliminary Interview: Marcos & Selma, 16.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Mass: held on the first of each month. See Day 22 in the Field Journal.

<sup>25</sup> Concentraion: held on the 15 and 30 of each month. See Day 6 and Day 21.

<sup>26</sup> See the Santo Daime website for the official calendar of works:

<http://www.santoDaime.org/doctrine/calendar.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> See Day 20.

<sup>28</sup> Day 8. *Preliminary Interview with Marcos & Selma: Selma*, 25.

<sup>29</sup> "Não tem bonito nem feio / Ele ilumina todos iguais."

<sup>30</sup> Day 8. *Preliminary Interview with Marcos & Selma: Marcos*, 25.

## Apôitchá

Apôitchá was born in 2001, under the roof of Céu da Flor da Nova Era.<sup>31</sup> The name comes from a local *lucenense* phrase "a pois tá," pronounced "apoitchá." It is difficult to translate the meaning of the colloquial phrase, but it somewhat parallels the phrase, "we'll see about that..." As a symbol of valorization of popular local culture, the expression gave rise to the acronym APÔITCHÁ: Associação de Apoio ao Trabalho Cultural, Histórico e Ambiental.<sup>32</sup>

In the very beginning, Apôitchá offered environmental programs and cultural events with the objective of preserving the natural environment and cultural values of Lucena, Paraíba. Events included a concert in commemoration of the birthday of Jackson do Pandeiro, a Paraibano musical icon, trash pickup days in the mangroves and the beach, and nature walks through the *mata*.<sup>33</sup> One volunteer gathered children under a large *cajueiro* tree to read them children's stories. They began a radio program called "Apôitchá no Ar," which reported facts and tips on themes like the environment, local culture, and health.<sup>34</sup>

At the first town forum, entitled "Trash: what to do?" the seed for *Rede Participativa* was born.<sup>35</sup> From there, the members of Apôitchá began a participative diagnosis:

*We wanted to hear the people, the schools, the community to hear what it was that they hoped for from a project whose theme would be environmental education.*<sup>36</sup>

From this conversation between parents, teachers, the mayor's office, and Apôitchá, Rede Participativa was born. Rede Participativa began working with three schools in the municipality on this theme of environmental education. The program quickly evolved to confront the issue of violence and domestic abuse.

*It was only after the work of environmental education that we were doing with the children did we begin to perceive that these children suffered a lot of violence. Initially, we didn't know that this was a big problem, but it was discovered with the passing of time. We couldn't close our eyes to this, because it was really screaming, and troubling, so we needed to face this question*<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>32</sup> "Sobre." Apôitchá. 6 Dec. 2008 <<http://www.apoitcha.org.br/>>.

<sup>33</sup> O Norte, João Pessoa: Sunday, 22 Apr. 2001.

<sup>34</sup> Day 10. Interview, Part I: Andréa, 30.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*.

Re-evaluating the conditions of the children and adolescents of Lucena, Rede Participativa re-articulated its goals “*to stimulate a joy in the children, youth and teachers of Lucena to awaken their joy for reading and writing, raising their self-esteem and developing their consciousness of citizenship in relation to human rights, the environment, sexuality and values of respect, cooperation, dialogue and solidarity.*”<sup>38</sup> These themes were elaborated through classes in theatre, poetry, literature, music, and youth leadership, which directly reached 260 youths age 7-16 years old in situations of extreme poverty, domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, and child. The objective of the education offered by Rede Participativa was “*to instrumentalizar (to be instrumental in motivating) the communities of Lucena to develop a new outlook on their reality and to collectively construct ways to transform it, looking for the best quality of life during infancy and adolescence.*”<sup>39</sup>

Rede Participativa faced the challenge of accomplishing this goal in one of the poorest cities in the state of Paraíba: a city that lacks a theatre, cinema, cultural center, library, and newspaper stand; where the average salary is R\$158,31 and 30% of the population makes less; and where 32% of the population is illiterate.<sup>40</sup> Apôitchá encountered serious problems with domestic violence, alcoholism, sexual abuse and exploitation, child labor, hunger and malnutrition, unplanned pregnancy, and HIV and other STDs. Amongst children and adolescents they faced increasing problems with drug and alcohol abuse, discriminatory attitudes in relation to gender, religion, race, class, and especially in relation to people infected with HIV, early unplanned pregnancy, and learning problems with literacy.<sup>41</sup>

The programs of Rede Participativa focused on the question of literacy, their methods of teaching literacy took on many forms. Said Andréa Carrer, the general coordinator of Apôitchá:

*We believe that a person that makes use of reading and writing comes to have another social and cultural condition, and is capable of changing their social status, their way of life, their relationship with others, with the context, with the cultural norms, make change in themselves and, thereby can exercise their citizenship in a more qualified way.*<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Jornal a União. 4 Oct. 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Apôitchá pamphlet, undated.

<sup>40</sup> Macedo, Leonor. "Ação socioeducativa : Lucena e sua rede participativa." Educação e Participação.

<sup>41</sup> Apôitchá Powerpoint presentation. May, 2007.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

Without the support of Rede Participativa, children entered *a primeira série*, at which time a student is 7 years old, without knowing how to read. Continuing along this track for four or five years, these students were turning into adolescents without even the ability to read. “*When Apôitchá made the Rede Participativa,*” says Andréa, “*some of these children learned to read in less than a month.*”<sup>43</sup>

Apôitchá built a children’s library, with some 1,500 books, which remains until this day the only source of children’s books in the city. “*Many children had never placed their hands on a book, nor even a toy,*” said Andréa.<sup>44</sup> The books from their children’s library are loaned to the students of the nine participating schools with which Apôitchá works, as well as used for in-house programs.

In 2004, Lilian Galvão came to Apôitchá with the ambition of creating a center to care for children infected with HIV. These children were amongst the most neglected in Lucena: there was no AIDS awareness in the city, unnamed cases, rising rates, and non-existent services. *Roda do Sol* was founded the same year to attend to these children, especially those who lacked the conditions to live at home because of vulnerable situations of abuse, neglect, or orphanage. Being the first program of its kind in the state, it is considered a pioneer program.<sup>45</sup>

In 2005, *Roda do Sol* entered dialogue with the infant and youth justice system of the city, and determined the need to expand their services to include children who were victims of serious abuse. They welcomed fourteen children from 1-10 years of age to make *Roda do Sol* their temporary home. At the present moment there are 6 children who live there, who suffer mental and physical deficiencies or serious cases of abuse and neglect at home. During the day more children come to *Roda do Sol* to make use of their services. *Roda do Sol* cares for about fifty children and their families. Children receive professional medical attention once a week at *Roda do Sol*, which also offers alternative therapies including Reiki, physical therapy, and psychology for the children, and floral homeopathy and psychology for mothers.<sup>46</sup>

In 2005, Rede Participativa was chosen amongst 1,682 NGOs all over Brazil as the recipient of the Itaú-Unicef Award, which “*honors Brazilian NGOs working to*

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<sup>43</sup> Macedo, Leonor. "Ação socioeducativa : Lucena e sua rede participativa." *Educação e Participação*. 30 Jan. 2006. 6 Dec. 2008.

<sup>44</sup> "Mulheres quem fazem uma diferença." *Claudia* 1 June 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Day 1. Informal Interview: Lilian, 5.

<sup>46</sup> *Jornal a União*. October 4, 2005.



*ensure each child's right to quality education in Brazil, particularly children living in vulnerable socio-economic conditions.*"<sup>47</sup>

With the money awarded to them, Apôitchá built the castle that today houses its in-house programs. The location chosen was next to the *cajueiro* tree where Apôitchá first took root. *Rede Participativa* became *Roda, Rede!, Prevenção, Letramento e Inclusão Social (Prevention, Literacy and Social Inclusion.)* The program expanded to include 9 public schools, 2084 children and adolescents, 190 educators, and 500 families.<sup>48</sup> The classes offered include literacy, theatre, music, journalism, artisan crafts (including sewing and jewelry), graffiti, silk-screening, and gardening. These classes elaborate the themes of environmental awareness and preservation, culture of peace, safe sex and sexuality, drug and alcohol prevention, and human rights.

Many of the classes of Apôitchá are focused on art-education: "*Art is a way of awakening the capacity of involvement, of participation, of self-expression, of disposition to take risks, to dare, to undertake without having fear of making mistakes or being made fun of, and the possibility to know oneself.*"<sup>49</sup>

*Roda, Rede!* offers a program especially for teachers of reading and writing. Traditionally, education in Lucena is strictly limited to the teacher writing on the blackboard and the children learning to copy down what has been written, without learning how to think or how to express themselves. The educators of *Roda, Rede!* bring creative methods of engaging and educating the children to the schools and to the teachers through their program *PROFA*.

In the words of one student:

*Apôitchá motivated me to not give up my dreams, because to dream is to create a new life. I am an adolescent and I can dream until I conquer what I want. Everyone here helped me to lose my shame, to have pride of my color, to help people, not to have preconceptions and that it is with force that one achieves things...I believe in the future, I believe in life, I believe in people and in dreams.*<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> [UNICEF in Brazil](http://www.unicef.org/brazil/english/newsline20.htm). UNICEF. 6 Dec. 2008  
<<http://www.unicef.org/brazil/english/newsline20.htm>>.

<sup>48</sup> *Apôitchá Powerpoint Presentation*. May 2007

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Jornal de Apôitchá*. Volume 0. June, 2007.

## **Findings and Analysis: Exploring the implications of spiritual work with Santo Daime on social justice work in Lucena, Paraíba.**

### **Part I. Be the change you wish to see in the world: the internal work**

*When we leave the ego to the side, under our feet, and we put the children first, in mind and in heart, we are capable of recognizing the value of everything that comes in addition so that the children become happier, are more included, more citizens. With this, it no longer matters what “I did” or what “someone did,” what really matters is how much the children are gaining with this and how much we can involve ourselves with this to collaborate, to participate.*

*Putting yourself in second place as an individual or an institution, thinking foremost in the well being of someone or many, is a radical change in paradigm, in worldview. This is LOVE. This is a profound revolution made within the individual and this brings consequences and changes for a community, for a society in which these individuals are inserted. The transformation is from the inside out, as the teacher Paulo Freire said. And an intimate reform that ejects the vanity and puts in its place the sentiment that pertains to the group, the “we,” of humanity, of “the net.” This is revolutionary and can change the reality of our children and adolescents!<sup>51</sup>*

*~ Andréa Carrer, general coordinator of Apôitchá*

The work of the members of CFNE and Apôitchá seeks to revive the spirit of each human. As Andréa says, the revolutionary process of transformation begins on the inside. In order to be capable of transforming reality, an individual needs heal themselves of their conditions that limit their full potential. These conditions include fears, delusions, the dominating and selfish ego, and perhaps most severely, drug addiction. The accounts given by my informants show an extraordinary capacity for Santo Daime to effect the transformation of all of these limit-situations.

#### **Daime and drug addiction**

Healing ourselves is not easy; it is a life-long struggle. For those at CFNE, *Daime* offers support. As many informants said, “*Daime is a shortcut.*”<sup>52</sup> In my research prior to entering the field, I read that ayahuasca is an effective cure to drug-addiction, especially proven with alcohol, heroin, and cocaine. In the field, I continued to hear stories of this healing:

*“I passed through a period of alcohol dependence; I drank every day. My friend told me about this practice that uses a tea to liberate oneself from vices... [After my first work] I lost all my desire to drink... After my first work with Santo Daime my life began to take on a different meaning. I felt the presence of God, that we are all one. My consciousness of cosmology awakened, of micro and macro cosmologies. I began to study and search more, and it was Daime that opened the doors. It was the opening that began my search.”<sup>53</sup>*

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<sup>51</sup> This quote hangs in the secretary’s office in Apôitchá. See p. 4 of the Field Journal for the original Portuguese.

<sup>52</sup> Day 6. *Preliminary Interview with Marcos & Selma: Selma*, 18.

<sup>53</sup> Day 4. *Formal Interview: Márcio*, 12.

*“A friend of ours—the one who introduced us to Santo Daime, the one from Rio de Janeiro—her father and her stepmother, and her mother included, were all addicted to cocaine, very addicted. [Her father] entered their house putting a gun to the heads of his two little sons to get money because he had drug debts...”*

*“...he had sold the door to the house...”*

*“...because he was an addict. He was a very good musician. He played with famous figures of Brazilian music, and he was addicted to cocaine. When someone told him about Santo Daime, there wasn't any center in Rio; he had to go to the Amazon. And so he went to the Amazon, was there for a time, taking Daime, and he returned cured. That was when he took his wife to participate also, because he had been cured, and so he took her, and today everyone in her family is cured, free of cocaine, just with Santo Daime. There wasn't any clinical intervention at all, only Santo Daime.”<sup>54</sup>*

How is it that Santo Daime is such a powerful cure for drug addiction? I still didn't know if *Daime* helped effect a cure in a truly empowering way. Of course, being free of chemical dependency necessarily has a liberating effect, but how deep was the process of liberation taken up by the ex-dependents? How much did they take up the responsibility for their cure and how much was affected by the *Daime* alone? Paulo Freire writes, *“It is essential for the oppressed to realize that when they accept the struggle for humanization they also accept, from that moment, their **total responsibility** for the struggle.”<sup>55</sup>* Marcos and Selma, two of the founders of *Céu da Flor da Nova Era (CFNE)*, shared some perspective on why people change their behavior after beginning spiritual work with Santo Daime:

*“Normally [people who have started working with Daime] abandon certain vices...You start to have consciousness that your body is the house that God gave you to take care of, and so you want to take care, you want to be responsible, and so you start to liberate yourself of these vices because you start to held responsible,<sup>56</sup> really, within the work.”<sup>57</sup>*

*“As Daime expands our consciousness, he who uses it starts to take responsibility more, to better himself as a person, to evolve spiritually, and so[Daime] really is a shortcut for spiritual evolution. It accelerates this process, and with this expansion of consciousness, [a person] starts to polish, improve<sup>58</sup> himself more quickly.”<sup>59</sup>*

Paulo's story sheds some more light on what this consciousness-expanding experience can look like in the context of the *miração*. Recall that the word *miração* is composed of the verb *mirar*, meaning to look at or contemplate, and *ação*, meaning action. These two elements parallel the reflection and action that Freire emphasizes as the constitutive elements of a liberating education:

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<sup>54</sup> Day 8. *Formal Interview: Marcos & Selma*, 24.

<sup>55</sup> Freire, 68.

<sup>56</sup> ...*ser cobrado, mesmo, dentro do trabalho.*

<sup>57</sup> Day 8. *Formal Interview: Marcos & Selma*, 22.

<sup>58</sup> *lapidar*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

*“Authentic liberation—the process of humanization—is not another deposit to be made in men,” he writes. “Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it.”<sup>60</sup>*

Notice how these two elements manifest in Paulo’s *miração* and how they each contribute to his cure:

*“One of the things that really got me was when I looked at my hands and saw a lot of dirtiness, a lot that I needed to clean. All of a sudden I had a *miração*. I took a trip into my bloodstream. I saw my cells, the parts of my body that had begun to deteriorate, to rot, really. This was very strong for me—to see how much I was destroying myself, how I was treating this house that God gave me.*

*In that moment I meditated on my life... Like images on a TV, scenes of my life flashed before me. All this in the first work... I got that feeling of dizziness, nausea... But I knew I had to stay until the end to see how it all was. Then all of that anguish that I saw, all of a sudden began to clear away and I felt a great harmony with myself.*

*The instructions that I received were the following: if I were to continue as I was, with the same behavior, I would find my coffin... This is the instruction I was receiving: “The light is here—you’re seeing the light is here—you know the path already, you know how to arrive. But it’s your choice; if you want to fall into a pit you can do that too.”... And in that moment I saw the repercussions of all that I had done—to my body and to my spirit. And I saw all the repentance of everything I had done...*

*So, since that moment I made a promise with myself that, with that force that oriented me, I would change my life and not miss the Santo Daime works—that I would get to know it. Since then I came always for the 15 and 30 days of the month. My purpose each week was to make it to the 15 and the 30 to come and receive instructions and change my habits.”<sup>61</sup>*

Paulo’s *miração* depicts an experience that unveils his reality. Having been submerged within his condition of addiction, he emerges to see a deeper vision of his addiction, the destruction of his body, and the consequences of his actions that are leading him toward death. The intensity of the experience, accompanied by a sense of insight and truthfulness, was profound enough to awaken him to his actions, accompanied by anguish and nausea. However, the situation is revealed as limiting, not immutable: his behavior in various moments of his life had created this situation, and with another change of behavior he could lead himself out. In a decisive moment, he is presented with a choice: the path of life and light or the path of death. The message comes in such a way that he immediately understands his complete responsibility. As another informant said, *“Sometimes words don’t arrive at people’s ears. But with Daime you have no way of not hearing... You can accept it or not, but it comes through.”*

Contextualizing this process of liberation in the theory of Freire—in which the revolutionary, committed to liberation, enters more deeply into reality,

*“by means of which people discover each other to be ‘in a situation.’ Only as this situation ceases to present itself as a dense, enveloping reality or a tormenting blind alley, and they can come to perceive it as an objective-problematic*

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<sup>60</sup> Freire, 79.

<sup>61</sup> Day 23. *Formal Interview: Paulo*, 57-58.

*situation—only then can commitment exist. Humankind emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled”<sup>62</sup>*

The *Daime* acted as a powerful tool to plunge him into his reality, experience its repercussions intensely, and, seeing its origins and context, showed him a path to conquer his problematic situation.

Still, as awakening as the moment was, it does not prove to be a cure, for the clarity of the awakening moment is often short-lived and as motivation diminishes we fall back into old habits. Indeed, one day Paulo faltered. He accepted an invitation to a party, where wine was abundant. “*Jesus gave wine to his disciples, right?*” and so he had a glass...and another...until he was drinking straight from the jug.

*“...The next week we had the ceremony of São João, which is that big work, twelve hours of dancing. I came, and on my way I was thinking about the week before. I thought, ‘The spirits forgot about that already, no problem.’ I was deceiving myself, pretending the beings of light forgot what I had done.*

*I was sort of ‘spiraling’ along, without being able to evolve much within the work. In the very end, the last serving of Daime, Marcos gave me just a little bit, and all that cleaning that I hadn’t done...I did a big cleaning, a ‘limpezona.’*

*I felt the presence of Mestre Irineu—I can’t say whether it was him, but I felt his energy. And he said, ‘Aqui não é para brincadeira, não. Here is no place for joking around. If you want to be here, be serious about being here. If it is for you to be here and out doing these things you do, you don’t come here anymore. You choose; the two don’t go together.’*

*I asked for forgiveness from God for my weakness, and from Mestre Irineu. I asked for firmness, to be firm in my place, firm in my place in the salão. And I made a promise: after I asked for forgiveness, I asked for another chance, and made a promise...and until today I haven’t wavered. It’s been 3½ years since then.”<sup>63</sup>*

This second experience shows the sort of *cobrança*<sup>64</sup> that one receives through *Daime*: the responsibility is to practice actualizing the insights received under the force of *Daime* in daily life outside of the *salão*<sup>65</sup>; in the next work, one is held accountable for how well he or she has fulfilled this responsibility.

The *limpeza* or cleaning that Paulo does under the force of *Daime* demonstrates another way in which *Daime* helps affect radical transformation and healing.

### **The cleaning and the cure: physical effects of Daime**

There are a variety of physical effects that *Daime* generates, all of which can be understood as deep cleansings.

*“Sometimes Daime has the effect of making you vomit. This is a cleansing, a curing that’s happening. Santo Daime helps us in this way. To arrive at the crystal palace, the celestial heights, the world of the divine, to meet beings of*

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<sup>62</sup> Freire, 109.

<sup>63</sup> Day 23. *Formal Interview: Paulo*, 58.

<sup>64</sup> *Cobrança* basically means responsibility, with a sense of accountability. It implies that you are being ‘checked up on’ by someone to see how well you are caring for the responsibility. I will simply use *responsibility* wherever it doesn’t make a significant difference in meaning.

<sup>65</sup> Where the spiritual works take place; the inside of the church.

*light, you have to be very clean. So when you ingest this tea, which is a Saint itself, which is light, it does this cleaning so you can find the light.”<sup>66</sup>*

Sometimes *Daime* finds toxins that don't exist in the physical body but in another plane of our being, like the energetic body.

*“I had the sensations of a cleansing—I felt as if I were vomiting—I opened my eyes and thought, “Wow, these guys are quick—I vomited and they already cleaned it up?!”<sup>67</sup>*

*Daime* searches our being on seemingly every level—physical, emotional, mental, energetic, psychic...—and “ejects” from these various systems the toxins that contaminate our actions, feelings, thoughts, and otherwise. Freire speaks of the image of the oppressor that we internalize and our need to “eject this image.”<sup>68</sup> It appears that *Daime* is capable of inducing this process to some extent, though I am not in a position to describe in what way, exactly.

Some informants praised *Daime* for the energy it gives them to undertake their work. After an especially exhausting week, Lena said:

*“If it wasn't for Daime I would not have been able to ‘catch the wave.’ Thank God for Daime. After a work with Daime, I get the energy to keep going. Sometimes it is only a work with Daime that I can recuperate the energy to keep going, and to feel good about it.”<sup>69</sup>*

*“It takes a lot of energy to be able give in this work, in this living together. Daime gives the energy back to reciprocate.”<sup>70</sup>*

*“I look in the energy that is generated in the church to transform the instructions and sensibility into practice in the institution.”<sup>71</sup>*

The psychoactive component of *Daime* is DMT, which structurally resembles the naturally-occurring neurotransmitter serotonin.<sup>72,73</sup> Marcos and Selma spoke of the changes that they have witnessed and experienced through spiritual work with *Daime*, which they attribute to the effect of *Daime* on our naturally occurring serotonin production:

*“He goes on stimulating serotonin that also helps one have humor, have a more temperate disposition, more tranquil, more good-humored.”<sup>74</sup>*

*“We have never heard of a case of an old woman in Mapiá—because they have a lot of little old women in the Amazon, taking Daime since always—and they never speak of any of the old women having these sicknesses like Alzheimer's,*

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<sup>66</sup> Day 4. *Formal Interview: Márcio*, 14.

<sup>67</sup> Day 23. *Interview: Paulo*, 57.

<sup>68</sup> Freire, 47.

<sup>69</sup> Day 23. *Lena*, 56.

<sup>70</sup> Day 15. *Formal Interview: Juan*, 37.

<sup>71</sup> Day 18. *Interview, Abraão*, 46-47.

<sup>72</sup> Callaway, 96.

<sup>73</sup> DMT is also a naturally occurring neurotransmitter. Callaway, 100.

<sup>74</sup> Day 8. *Interview with Marcos & Selma: Marcos*, 23.

*those degenerative diseases because it's this story that [Marcos] spoke of, of serotonin. It really is scientifically proven that Daime, it activates inside of you brain this substance that you produce a lot of when you're a child, and when you go on growing it starts—the brain begins to stop producing it until you arrive at old-age and it produces just a little bit. And it's the substance responsible for our well-being, for our good-humor, and Daime activates it, and makes you produce more.”<sup>75</sup>*

There were also many stories that spoke to the power of *Daime* as a cure or remedy for various illnesses:

*“It's a true cure. There was a case here, we received a man with a case of gastritis. The first time that he took Daime he was cured. He was cured and it never came back.”<sup>76</sup>*

*“I wasn't looking for a spiritual path; I wasn't searching. But, what brought me, because I never used drugs, and [my husband] used cocaine, and what brought me to Santo Daime was that a year after he started to frequent the Santo Daime Church he stopped using cocaine. He got well, and he hadn't been well. Before he knew Santo Daime he was in a very deep process of depression. Very depressed, very bad, and I didn't know what to do to help. So, he started to get better, and stopped using cocaine, and so we agreed to live together. And from there I began to frequent because of him, because I saw the changes in him.”<sup>77</sup>*

*“My uncle is schizophrenic, and the whole family is very nervous on account of this. And so, as my uncle was very ill, we started to do small works of cure for him. And he was very aggressive when he was in crisis. He had been interned in a psychiatric hospital and...he would hit everyone because he was very aggressive. And when we gave him Daime, the Saint Daime, he calmed down, cried, asked forgiveness from my grandmother, and he slept. He passed a week without sleeping, and when he took Santo Daime he slept. And he would pass a lot of time well, calm. And so we did some works for him like this, oriented by the people of the church.”<sup>78</sup>*

The effects of this healing have various implications that affect the social justice work of those who are touched by this healing power of *Daime*. While every individual's experience is completely personal and intimate, a few common implications are: (1) the vision of a cure. The healing power of *Daime* is so strong and stands in such opposition to the Western paradigm of medicine that one who witnesses its potent healing capacity is forced to deeply question that paradigm. As such, *Daimista* communities work with alternative therapies and potentially are able to largely rely on *Daime* as medicine, thus making self-reliance and self-sustainability all the more attainable. (2) Faith in *Daime*. Witnessing and experiencing its benefits in such variety of ways, the *Daimista* deepens their commitment to their spiritual work of Santo Daime.

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<sup>75</sup> Day 8. *Interview with Marcos & Selma: Selma*, 23.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid: Marcos*, 23.

<sup>77</sup> Day 10. *Interview, Part I: Andréa*, 31-32.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

Most of those who experienced its healing later became *fardados*<sup>79</sup>. (3) Physical ability. If one has a physical ailment, or is depressed, she cannot engage in her work. From the stories accounted here, *Santo Daime* appears to keep those who use it energetic and healthy, thereby supporting them in their daily work.

At another church of *Santo Daime*, a *fardado* has taken up the practice of literally picking people up off the street—those who live there, who are poor, homeless, destitute, and often addicted to drugs—and bringing them to take *Daime* during a spiritual work. Many of them, according to a few informants, soon become *fardados*.

Andréa told an especially touching story:

*“My sister had a tumor, cancer...She was 23 years old. And so, I had a *miração* in my spiritual work, that I should give *Daime* to her every day, a little bit, and do a ritual and do massage on her, and take her also to the rituals of the church, and she was pregnant also. And Mestre Irineu, I had contact with him during a spiritual work, and her said that this pregnancy was her cure, and so she needed to accept it because this would cure her. And one of the times that she took *Daime*, she saw this, that it was a being that was coming like a seed of life in her body that was dying and that this baby was coming to truly help her. And so she, during these eight months—he was born at eight months—and when he was born the tumor also disappeared, and she was well.”<sup>80</sup>*

Now her nephew is nine years old, and already a *fardado*. He said that he wanted to be a “*guerreiro*” of Mestre Irineu, a “*guerreiro de bom*,” a warrior of good.

While I entered my research with the intent on studying the social work carried out in Apôitchá, the reality of *Santo Daime* as a means of radical social transformation—which manifests in part in the existence and work of Apôitchá—was so extraordinary, that it became a large focus of my research. By the social inclusion of *Santo Daime* I am referring to its capacity to *resgatar* people, to bring them from destructive or unproductive lives and guide them into and along a path of spiritual evolution and humanization, in which they realize the need to help their *próximo*, their brothers and sisters around them, working for the evolution of the human and the spirit, and protecting the sacred site of it all: our Earth. Others were already on a path fortified by these same values, and *Daime* served to affirm them on it, awaken deeper understanding, and provide instructions and orientations, explored in the next section. In the case of CFNE, those who followed the path of *Santo Daime* joined a community committed to social transformation, mainly through the education and protection of its at-risk youth. Even for those who came to CFNE without sincerity, without searching for truth or the path of liberation, there is the potential for the experience to radical transformation, which other social justice organizations aim to provide:

*“I had come looking for something to make me *doidão*<sup>81</sup>, you know? Like a recreational drug experience. But the spirituality was waiting for me, like I think it’s waiting for many.”<sup>82</sup>*

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<sup>79</sup> Day 8. *Interview with Marcos & Selma*, 24.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>81</sup> *Doidão* is the words used for the high or the “trip” of recreational drug use

<sup>82</sup> Day 18. *Interview: Abraão*, 48.



*“Once a group of ‘gutterpunks,’<sup>83</sup> kids from street, came. One had a [little container] through his ear, full of weed...salvaged clothes...all dreads, you know? And so, they took Daime and there was a young couple, and he helped me carry some things [back from the church] and he said, ‘Marcos, it’s like this: My life, starting today, is going to change. I’m from Paraná... We’re going to go back and get in contact with our families, who we haven’t been in contact with for many years, and we’re going to get close with our family again and organize our lives.’”<sup>84</sup>*

*“There have been many people who have come here with serious addictions—cocaine, heroin—and who have become free of their addiction, have become people of light, and started working for their próximo<sup>85</sup>, for their brothers around them.”<sup>86</sup>*

As the informants continue the process of self-healing with the support of *Daime*, they walk the path of self-knowledge. As one informant said, *“He shows us what we are, who we are, what we are being in that moment. The work he does is of self-knowledge.”<sup>87</sup>* The path of self-knowledge is more or less the same as a wide variety of spiritual practices, which is why they are quick to add that Santo Daime is just one more. But at the same time, *“Santo Daime, different from other religions, is very intense.”<sup>88</sup>*

*“Daime is fast. Meditation, Gnostic practices, are slow. They involve a lot of discipline and require really a lot of time to awaken. Daime slaps you awake! It is a shortcut on your spiritual path.”<sup>89</sup>*

While *Daime* helps the informants wake up to reality and show them their true path is a spiritual one, their evolution on this path must be their own. Here is where the real work begins.

### **Personal evolution: taking up the path of liberation**

As Freire says, *“Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly...It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion.”<sup>90</sup>* While *Daime* helped the informants experience “the light,” it does not hand it over as a gift. As the informants accepted their path within CFNE and Apôitchá, they assumed the work of personal evolution and self-perfection, which is the primary work one assumes through spiritual work with *Daime*.

*Daime* gives clarity and insight to see what the work is that needs to be done, as demonstrated in the accounts of instructions received by the informants, but it is her

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<sup>83</sup> Marcos used a slang term that I didn’t know. From his description, though, I think that this is the equivalent English slang term.

<sup>84</sup> Day 8. *Interview with Marcos & Selma: Marcos*, 24.

<sup>85</sup> Próximo is translated in the Bible as “neighbor,” but really it just means “near,” everyone who is near.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Day 23. *Informal Interview: Michele*, 60.

<sup>88</sup> Day 3. *Preliminary Interview with Marcos & Selma, Selma*, 10.

<sup>89</sup> Day 4. *Formal Interview: Márcio*, 14.

<sup>90</sup> Freire, 47.

responsibility to actualize the insights: “When we receive instructions in a work, we have that time before the next work to put it into practice. That is our *cobrança*.”<sup>91</sup>

As Juan affirms:

*“Santo Daime shows you the light, shows you how it is, and then after all this light and love he doesn’t show it anymore. And you stay working to get that light and that love again. To arrive there again you have to work. You see how it is. Daime shows you love, essence. Then takes it away so you have to work to arrive there again...In the *salão*, it is easier. Santo Daime is a divine being inside you, helping you. But in the day to day...With Daime, we see our strengths and our weaknesses and we can become better because we know the value that each of us has. In the spiritual work we see a lot of this value in each person.”*<sup>92</sup>

Santo Daime helps one see their faults and weaknesses, and see the potential of perfection, but the work is our own—no one and nothing will do it for us.<sup>93</sup> Our inner world is our domain—no one else has access to our inner universe. Within ourselves we have everything we need for perfection; we just need the keys to access and unleash that which we want for the world. The inner work of self-perfection and self-transformation is the work that each informant undertakes as the domain that they are responsible for in the process of social-transformation. It is the work of, “*Liberation—freedom from our psychological defects, from the cargos and incumbencies of society, free of all of these stories.*” This is the essence of the work. Says, Juan:

*“This work is interior. If I’m working with these kids, trying to bring them harmony, and I’m in disharmony, then it’s all a lie. One has to be in harmony, in peace, in love, in justice. We are mirroring for them. Like Mother Teresa said, we are working to be but pencils in God’s hand. We have to be a medium. We have to sharpen our point in order to allow God to use us to write His word. We have to be connected. If I want to talk about love, I have to know about it. If I want to talk about respect, harmony, justice...a thousand things! If I just use these words, they are nothing, just words. Patience, charity... As *Padrinho Sebastião* said, every thought is a being. They’re all phalanges—you have to call them, vibrate with them, manifest them. I need to manifest it to pass it to another. Our work is this, and it’s very hard work.”*

The spiritual works of Santo Daime are moments of deep reflection on the day to day. If the informant has been living in a way that betrays their full human potential, “*Daime wakes you up. He’s fast. So many things...so much information.*” Then comes the action of actualizing the insights of deep reflection: “*To organize it and to work on it is the challenge. But it’s all gifts. Each time. They come in many forms, but Daime only gives gifts.*”<sup>94</sup>

Lilian, the coordinator of Roda do Sol, said,

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<sup>91</sup> Day 23. *Informal Interview, Michele*, 62.

<sup>92</sup> Day 15. *Interview, Part I: Juan*, 36.

<sup>93</sup> See Day 6. *Concentração*, 18.

<sup>94</sup> Day 23. *Informal Interview, Michele*, 62.

*“Daime allows me to look inside. I feel Daime as a spirituality of self-knowledge. And as we go on working spiritually and materializing our experiences in concrete actions, projects, acts of love, better adjustment in our group and community, I perceive that this spirituality of self-knowledge is real, palpable and revolutionary.”<sup>95</sup>*

## **Support on the path: orientations, affirmations, and creativity**

### *I. Orientations to Apôitchá and social work*

The path of self-knowledge through work with Santo Daime enabled the informants to hear and obey their true selves, their hearts, with greater clarity. The informants described how *Daime* helped them arrive where they are now, working at Apôitchá and CFNE, a community that promotes the dynamic work of spiritual evolution and *caridade*. By examining the accounts of the informants, I will show how *Daime* helped them follow their path by providing guidance and affirmation, and revealed to each that their path is one of spiritual work for the well-being of their *próximo*, and teaching children who are in especially vulnerable conditions of poverty.

*“[In my first work here] I had this miração with Iemanjá. She said I was going to stay here, be in this Church, work here, live here. I felt content. I didn’t know how it was going to happen, but if she said it, it was going to happen.”<sup>96</sup>*

*“I was in a search, lost a little...The moment that the force arrived the first time I came here to the church I understood what had been calling.”<sup>97</sup>*

*“Padrinho Sebastião had come during various works telling me that my work was here, to stay here working with children. I had these insights.”<sup>98</sup>*

*“I had a vision of the Amazon River—it was the color of Daime—they really are the same color, actually. It was huge, like it is, and there was forest all around. It was beautiful. I saw lots of kids suffering—hungry, in the street, in need. The moment we stopped I perceived that I saw these things and knew I had to do something.*

*At the time I didn’t understand what the connection was. I had taken Daime, but only once in a while. I didn’t understand that that’s what the Amazon meant. Only when I took Daime here did I understand what it had all meant. It was very cool to be confirmed in this work like that.”*

Paulo also said that in first experience with it here, *Daime* oriented him to work here at Apôitchá, using his art, graffiti, to teach children.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Responses to Questionnaires: Lilian, 65.

<sup>96</sup> Day 17. Formal Interview: Lena, 42-43.

<sup>97</sup> Day 18. Formal Interview: Abraão, 48.

<sup>98</sup> Day 4. Formal Interview: Márcio, 13.

<sup>99</sup> Day 1. Informal Interview: Paulo, 5.

These explicit messages that orient the *Daimistas* on their life path give motivation and force to those who receive them. The hymns of Santo Daime sing about *firmeza*, firmness, frequently, which can reinforce and affirm the insights that the *Daimista* is having.

*Firmeza, firmeza no amor / Firmeza, firmeza aonde eu estou*  
*Firmness, firmness in love / Firmness, firmness where I am*

## ***II. Instructions as messages from the heart***

From the stories and experiences I gathered, my understanding of these instructions changed. I stopped connecting the word *instructions* with the idea of an external voice, and came to understand them as internal messages from the heart, or from the divine inside. The term that many researchers have chosen to classify ayahuasca is *entheogen*, meaning “discovering the Divine within.”

Lilian describes her perception of the instructions she receives through *Daime* as a clarity resulting from the removal of the dominance of the ego and the emotional baggage that obstructs our vision of ourselves and our reality:

*The majority of the time I perceive that an instruction is part of the internal world inspired by Daime that manifests itself **and works** removing the emotional, painful experiences, our Ego energies and that which blocks our understanding and our vision. (This can hurt a lot, but it's necessary for our internal growth!) Having removed these elements, we find ourselves facing the positive, dynamic elements of our personality, with experiences that favor the evolution of our family and of our social environment through the relationships that we establish. In this way we come to have more clarity, intimacy, insights.<sup>100</sup>*

The instruction that Andréa received in her first work at CFNE affirms the assertion that *Daime* does not itself instruct, but rather guides one toward her own knowledge, which she holds not within her rationalizing mind, cluttered with Ego energies, but in the heart.

*“I asked, in the spiritual work of Santo Daime here—in this little church here, Céu da Flor da Nova Era—I asked my guides, I asked to the greater spirituality, if it was here, my place, if I should come her, if it was here that I was going to do what it was I had to do because I didn't now exactly what it was...I didn't know what I was going to do, and then I heard a voice ask me, say to me: ‘Ask your heart. Is it here?’”*

Andréa didn't answer that same day because her heart didn't answer. She returned to her home in São Paulo, where she was a professor at the University of São Paulo.

*“I was working there one day, without being able to breath, very sick, because I had a really hard time breathing because of the pollution there. And then, one day in the middle of a spiritual work I had a vision. I saw myself here on the beach*

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<sup>100</sup> Responses to Questionnaire: Lilian, 65.

*with the sun rising, and the sun said to me, 'Why do you do this to yourself?' And so on that day I decided that I would leave, that I would come here."*<sup>101</sup>

### ***III. Instructions to teach and unleashing the creative spirit***

The transformation of the human being in the process of liberation must begin with the recognition that we are each a protagonist in our lives. *Daime* helped each of my informants take the responsibility to be that protagonist. Through their spiritual work they constantly rediscover themselves as fully responsible creators of reality. The ayahuasca journey activates the individual's acute observational and reflective ability to see at profound levels the way in which she is an actor the world. By turning micro actions that occur in our inner universe into macro actions, it becomes easy to see the way in which our decisions, no matter how small, shape our reality; even the quality of our thought is revealed as an actor on reality.<sup>102</sup>

Their continuing work with *Daime* helps them evolve their creative processes by encouraging them to enter ever deeper into reality, where the fount of creativity exists. It is truly this intimacy with reality that provides the creative impulse. As Freire says, "in the task of unveiling... reality, and thereby coming to know it critically...they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators."<sup>103</sup> We are free to create whatever our heart desires, and yet most of us remain paralyzed by this freedom and mechanized by our conditioning. Through the liberating process of working with Santo *Daime*, my informants became better able to take up this vocation as creators, and teachers, in the world. Alex Polari de Alverga, a professor and Mestre in Céu da Mapiá, affirms that through the intimacy with reality that the *miração* brings, "We are...summoned to fulfill the great responsibility of being co-creators of the universe."<sup>104</sup>

For those informants who already entertained their artistic abilities, their work with *Daime* inspired a shift in the way they understood and used their art as tools for empowerment and healing for themselves and others. Their instructions specifically oriented the informants to teach children and use their art to do so.

*"Before Daime, I worked doing commercial painting. 100% confines, profits. I painted as a means of profit. After knowing Daime, some of the orientations I received were to work for a needy community...The instructions I received were to use my graffiti to work with poor children."*<sup>105</sup>

Now Paulo teaches a graffiti class and silk-screening class at Apôitchá. Instead of using his graffiti to paint letters on storefronts, he now "looks to leave a message"<sup>106</sup> and arranges excursions for the kids to do the same, spreading their message and their art around Lucena. "I also like to use phrases from the hymns in my work. *Abraão* jokes that I do the *Evangelho segundo graffiti*, the New Testament according to graffiti."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Day 10. *Formal Interview, Part I: Andréa*, 30.

<sup>102</sup> See Day 20. *Participation: The Sacred Dance*, 52, and Alverga, 1999.

<sup>103</sup> Freire, 69.

<sup>104</sup> "Might the Gods Be Alkaloids." Alverga, 1999.

<sup>105</sup> Day 23. *Interview: Paulo*, 53.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

Lena recalls:

*“In various works these ideas, these instructions came to me that I was to work with children, to share art, to teach children this art. Instructions on sharing our knowledge—what you know how to do, teach it”<sup>108</sup> ...I always saw that my art wasn’t just for me to do, to make a little money, but to teach it to others. Now I am helping these women create, make a little money, have a little independence, take care of their children...”<sup>109</sup>*

Lena currently teaches an artisan class for mothers. She has taught them how to sew, how to make bags, dolls, and decorate with messages of peace, love, and harmony. The way in which her work with *Daime* helps her to enter more deeply and creatively into her reality has provided Lena with new motivations and creative inspirations in her work in Apôitchá:

*“... Then I was an educator, visiting the schools. With Daime, I saw that in bringing the books to these children, we were bringing new worlds to them that they never had access to. We did this whole thing with dance that all came through Daime. Andréa and I were working together, and we got all these ideas through Daime. Daime would motivate me to bring the kids into nature, so we would go to the beach, go into the mata, to teach them respect for the Earth, to give them contact with the spirits there...”<sup>110</sup>*

Sometimes the information is very practical, like Paulo receiving technical tips in a visit from Padrinho Sebastião,<sup>111</sup> and Abraão receiving rap lyrics from Jesus.<sup>112</sup>

Abraão, who teaches the music classes at Apôitchá, is able to work on his ability and receive creative insights during the spiritual works. He teaches percussion and vocals to two groups of children, a beginning group and an advanced group, using a diversity of Brazilian rhythms with rap influence. *“Artistically, I receive many insights. Daime is musical in the extreme. 95% of a work is music.”<sup>113</sup>*

The lyrics he writes for the classes’ songs are inspired through *Daime*. They share some of his insights with the children, speaking of the environment, culture of peace, the power of love, the word, and positivity, a story waking up to the destiny of teaching the little ones, the beings of the future, with joy, love and harmony, and about the illusion of capitalism and the truth of love.<sup>114</sup>

*“Because I pass many hours living with music, and it is amplified significantly by the force, I come to experience situations [musically]. I then try to transfer this into my work with the children. To share music with them, the language of music, the respect of sound, of timbre.”<sup>115</sup>*

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<sup>108</sup> Day 17. Interview: Lena, 41.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

<sup>111</sup> Day 23. Interview: Paulo, 59.

<sup>112</sup> Day 18. Interview: Abraão, 49.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>114</sup> Lyrics from the CD by “O Poder do Verbo,” released by Apôitchá, 2007.

<sup>115</sup> Day 18. Interview: Abraão, 49.

For Andréa and Lena, working with Daime helped them connect with the sacredness of belly dance and use it as a tool for healing. This account relates the way in which their spiritual work with *Daime* deepened their understanding of the sacred and awakened their creative spirit in the sense of creating artistic expression and creating community through teaching and helping others deepen their own self-knowledge, thereby transforming a personal hobby into work for social justice and humanization. When Andréa learned how to belly dance, she said, she would show off what she learned at parties, allowing everyone to watch, and putting her body on show for many men. Through her work with *Daime* she saw how sacred this dance actually was, and never used it out of a sacred context again. She practiced alone in her home, dancing for the Goddess, and received instruction to share this Sacred Dance with others. Here at CFNE she leads a women-only work that uses Sacred Dance once a month.<sup>116</sup> When a woman deeply enters the work of the Sacred Dance, she said, she realizes its healing powers for recovering the sense of sacredness of her femininity, the power of sexuality, harnessing it for good and for healing, connecting with the power and grace Goddess, empowering her with self-respect.<sup>117</sup>

Lena rediscovered the Sacred Dance with Andréa:

*“I already studied the sacred dance, but here I learned in a really spiritual way. Here it was with caridade<sup>118</sup>; these women who need so much curing in relation to sexuality... My mission here in Lucena, with the women here, has been to develop this more. Here I learned to practice the sacred dance as an instrument of cure.”<sup>119</sup>*

Lena explained that at the time, she had just arrived at Apôitchá. She had accepted Andréa’s invitation to be the first “Social Mother” at Roda do Sol, and as part of her duties, was studying how to teach the young women who would arrive about sexuality and prevention education. At Roda do Sol, she lived with a young girl with HIV who had been living on the street. It was a very intense and transformative time, she said.<sup>120</sup>

*“At this time, I was making these big connections. The work of dance, the sacred dance—the belly dance, but in another context. It works with sexual energy, but [I was working] to educate this energy, to channel this energy for something positive—not to bring... prejudice.*

*When I danced before I didn’t perceive this. I knew it was good for my body, my chakras, that through it I could connect with the Goddess...but I could also dance for men. And doing that would bring an energy that wasn’t good for me.*

*When I studied it here with Daime I learned it in another way—I could use this dance to heal myself, to educate myself about being a woman, and help heal those souls that suffer because of this energy. And it was very beautiful. I woke up to this.*

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<sup>116</sup> She emphasized that this work is very unconventional and should not be used as a measure to understand Santo Daime as a whole, because it is very specific to this community.

<sup>117</sup> Day 20. *Participation: The Sacred Dance*, 51.

<sup>118</sup> Charity, love, compassion.

<sup>119</sup> Day 17. *Interview: Lena*, 44.

<sup>120</sup> Day 2. *Informal Interview: Lena*, 8.

*This helped me in my work for prevention, to understand, Why was I doing this? What my work meant in terms of resgatando my karma, why was it important to help these women understand their sexuality?"<sup>121</sup>*

Andréa is currently the general coordinator of Apôitchá, a post that she plans to leave next year so that she can teach a class on the Sacred Dance to the girls of Apôitchá. In the community that Apôitchá serves, the exploitation and profanation of sexuality is a critical issue. It is common for any girl over the age of thirteen to become pregnant. Sexual violence and exploitation of women of all ages is basically the norm. The stories of abuse, of reoccurring rape, and sexual violence are heart-wrenching. While I want to respect the privacy of the individual who divulged the most intimate stories to me, I feel it is important to share some of her story, as it gave me, more than any other experience, a window into the seriousness of the work at Apôitchá.

Isabel<sup>122</sup> was ten years old when she started sleeping with her boyfriend. He was 45 years old. At age thirteen she moved in with him. He was, and continues to be, a captain on the police force. She got pregnant at age 14, and at 15 she had her son by means of a C-section. After the surgery, she was told that she needed to wait two months before engaging in physical activity, including sexual relations. The father of the child waited no more than two days before forcing himself on her. Her stomach tore open. She almost died. She cannot leave him, she said. He has come to her mother's home brandishing a revolver, and has put it to her head. This violence, intimidation, violation, and oppression of these instances, amongst many others, make the depth of psychological disturbance in Isabel appear in various ways on the surface. The image of Isabel holding her two-year old son and sucking her thumb is engrained in my mind. This is only one piece of one girl's story. The women of Apôitchá and CFNE have a lot of work lying ahead.<sup>123</sup>

## **Part II. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine: working in the community**

*"You don't bring light to where there is already light; you bring light to where it is needed to illuminate darkness."<sup>124</sup>*

### **Apôitchá and caridade**

Apôitchá was born under the roof of Céu da Flor da Nova Era. Witnessing the poverty of Lucena, the degradation of its inhabitants and their natural environment, Marcos and Selma naturally "*felt the need to give back to the people...to respond to the social, ecological, environmental problems; to care for our home.*"<sup>125</sup> In their works with *Daime*, their principles of giving and *caridade* were strengthened, and their sense of responsibility and urgency to help their fellow human beings all the more profound. In one work with *Daime*, Marcos and Selma received instructions that they should

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<sup>121</sup> Day 17. *Interview: Lena*, 44.

<sup>122</sup> *Pseudonym*

<sup>123</sup> See Appendix I, page 40.

<sup>124</sup> Marcos. Day 3. *Participation: Spiritist Meeting*, 10.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 15.



create an NGO, systematizing their *caridade* so that it was practical, so they could receive help and funding.<sup>126</sup>

There are various insights that help orient and motivate the informants in their daily work of *caridade* with Apôitchá. Each individual expresses and experiences it in a different way since they do not practice *caridade* because it is a pillar of the doctrine, but because each has experienced, with the help of the *mirações*, the reality that makes *caridade* essential to the evolution of the spirit, as necessary as food and water.

Indeed, the doctrine of Santo Daime is never preached; there is no leader of the spiritual works, only the individual experience, the internal *miração* guided by singing the hymns. Further, Santo Daime doesn't proselytize: while CFNE always has its arms open to receive anyone who chooses to come, it abides by a rule of all Santo Daime churches of not extending invitations, believing that people will come when they are ready, when their spirituality has prepared them. The fact that what is learned through spiritual work with *Daime* is individually motivated and individually experienced as an entirely internal and personal process harkens back to the words of Freire. As Freire says,

*"The revolutionary leaders must realize that their own conviction of the necessity for struggle (an indispensable dimension of revolutionary wisdom) was not given to them by anyone else—if it is authentic. This conviction cannot be packaged and sold—it is reached, rather, by means of a totality of reflection and action. Only the leaders' own involvement in reality, within an historical situation, led them to criticize this situation and to wish to change it."*<sup>127</sup>

The experience of the *mirações* seems to bring such depth of reflection that, for the *Daimistas* of Apôitchá, the necessity to take action arises in the extreme. Seeing clearly the illusions and ills of the world and the subtle or overt ways that she contributes, she awakens the conviction to take up the struggle to transform dehumanizing systems into a humanizing reality. In this discovery, the practice of *caridade* becomes natural and essential.

In the church, when one reaches a certain level of commitment she decides to *se fardar*, which means "a promise with the doctrine of Santo Daime, to leave caring for yourself and to care for those around you. This is the essential promise of the *fardado*, as much in the ritual as outside."<sup>128</sup> In the same way, says Marcos, in undergoing the work of inner personal transformation with *Daime*,

*"There comes this need to help your próximo, to be part of something, because this question in Daime of brotherhood is strong, and community, like in Mapiá, which is a Daimist community."*<sup>129</sup>

Abraão describes that the intensified experience of the collective within the works of Santo Daime, manifested in the music, the sea of voices, maracas, and the current of people dancing in unison, is for him a lesson and manifestation of the power and essentiality of the collective, and a reminder of the fact that without it, we are nothing:

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>127</sup> Freire, 67.

<sup>128</sup> Day 18. *Interview: Abraão*, 48.

<sup>129</sup> Day 8. *Interview with Marcos & Selma: Marcos*, 23.

*“At a point, [all the parts—voice, dance, and maraca] become only one—that’s where you have an expansion of consciousness—and all those people, the collective, makes it much stronger, more powerful than all the rest. Daime does this, creates this power in the collective... There is a hino that says ‘If my brother doesn’t go up, I don’t go up.’<sup>130</sup> The collective—Santo Daime is collective. Alone you are nothing; you have to have your brother at your side.”<sup>131</sup>*

It is not always easy, said a few of the informants<sup>132</sup>, to work with people who are not actively seeking their spiritual evolution. However, *Daime* is the ultimate guide. *“With Santo Daime, whatever you ask for, you will receive an answer. It accelerates so we are sensitive to receive. The more you give, the more force you need from Daime, the more force you will receive from it.”<sup>133</sup>* The informants use their spiritual works in CFNE to receive answers and orientations that settle doubts, fears, or lack of clarity, or provide creative stimulus or new inspirations. The spiritual works are moments of regeneration for physical, emotional, and spiritual energy that helps the informants engage in their work at Apôitchá. Paulo describes how some of his insights through *Daime* help him in his day to day work:

*“I look to receive orientations in the spiritual works of how to go forward with certain situations. Having the spiritual vision that we are all equal...I can understand that each of us is passing through a situation in part of our evolution... What are we giving to each other, to each child? In each of them, they have a spiritual essence. However difficult they may be, their essence is spirit—pure, beautiful—that they haven’t discovered yet.”*

### **The illusion of materiality, the reality of the spirit**

For all the informants, their work with *Daime* clearly reveals or reaffirms in them the illusion of materiality and the values of modern capitalism:

*“This is all illusion, the world in which I have to make money to buy things, buy a house, buy a car, buy another car, buy a car for each kid...It’s all illusion. We finish this work in this ropinha<sup>134</sup>—this body—and that’s it.”<sup>135</sup>*

The accumulation of wealth beyond the level a human needs to live in health and in equality with others, the accumulation of accessories, these material things provide the false sense of security enables one to divert ones awareness so that she doesn’t have to face reality. The people of CFNE and Apôitchá live simply and with pleasure. Many of them, including Andréa, who is the general coordinator of Apôitchá, work on a volunteer basis.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>130</sup> *Se meu irmão não subir, eu não soube...*

<sup>131</sup> Day 18. *Interview: Abraão*, 47.

<sup>132</sup> See interviews with Juan, 36-37

<sup>133</sup> Day 15. *Interview, Part I: Juan*, 36.

<sup>134</sup> “these little clothes”

<sup>135</sup> Day 6. *Preliminary Interview with Marcos & Selma: Marcos*, 18.

<sup>136</sup> Day 10. *Interview, Part I: Andréa*, 31.

Knowing that when we leave this life we leave with nothing, what remains? In the breakdown of materialism, the paradigm for progress turns from one of accumulation of wealth to one of the evolution of the human spirit. As Michele affirms, *“You are here to work on the spiritual, to evolve your spirit.”*<sup>137</sup>

Unlike the path of the yogi or the monk who retreats to the mountains in search of spiritual evolution, the *Daimistas* of CFNE are motivated by *“The principle of caridade: for all the world to evolve, which is the mission.”*<sup>138</sup>

As Marcos said, *“You don’t bring light to where there is already light; you bring light to where it is needed to illuminate darkness,”*<sup>139</sup> later adding, *“You have to go to the middle of the povão, the lot of people, so they can find their light, their spirituality.”*<sup>140</sup>

Apôitchá is a manifestation of the conviction that one’s own spiritual evolution, which is the true work of this human life, is achieved through putting the ego aside and replacing it with a mindset of the well-being of the collective. In Andréa’s words,

*“Putting yourself in second place as an individual or an institution, thinking foremost in the well being of someone or many, is a radical change in paradigm, in worldview. This is LOVE. This is a profound revolution made within the individual and this brings consequences and changes for a community, for a society in which these individuals are inserted. The transformation is from the inside out, as the teacher Paulo Freire said. And an intimate reform that ejects the vanity and puts in its place the sentiment that pertains to the group, the “we,” of humanity, of “the net.” This is revolutionary and can change the reality of our children and adolescents!*<sup>141</sup>

While the work is first and foremost a spiritual work, it is not and cannot be separated from the material world, from practical help from those in need.

*“Things have to have harmony. We live in spirit and material. We need balance—spiritual and material. These things can evolve together, in my perspective.”*<sup>142</sup>

*“We need to give practical help that people need in this life. If everyone went to the mountains to meditate how would this planet be?”*<sup>143</sup>  
*“If we don’t do this we can’t progress.”*<sup>144</sup>

The progress of the evolution of spirit within the collective, which is the vision of CFNE actualized through the work of the church and Apôitchá, is best understood within the worldview that the informants construct through their experience in the spiritual works of Santo Daime, and which are informed by various religious, spiritual,

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<sup>137</sup> Day 23. *Informal Interview: Michele*, 62.

<sup>138</sup> Day 15. *Interview, Part I: Juan*, 37.

<sup>139</sup> Marcos. Day 3. *Participation: Spiritist Meeting*, 10.

<sup>140</sup> Day 6. *Preliminary Interview with Marcos & Selma*, Marcos, 17.

<sup>141</sup> This quote hangs in the secretary’s office in Apôitchá. See p. 4 of the Field Journal for the original Portuguese.

<sup>142</sup> Day 23. *Interview: Paulo*, 60.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid: Selma*, 17.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid: Marcos*, 17.

and scientific philosophies, including Allan Kardec's Spiritism. To understand the informants' vision of their work in the present and for the future, we return to its roots: what did it mean to choose the name *Céu da Flor da Nova Era*? What does it mean to be a flower of the New Era?

### ***A Nova Era: 2012 & The New Era***

The worldview constructed through spiritual work in Santo Daime is supported and interpreted within the framework of Kardecist Spiritism. The worldview is one in which human beings make up one level of a multi-dimensional reality that consists of many realms of spirits and within which we experience many cycles of reincarnation. The world we live in now is the world of *tests and atonement*.<sup>145</sup> This world is full of suffering, and the spirits who occupy it constantly face tests. However, connecting to the greater work of the evolution of the spirit, these tests take on new meaning:

*“The tests that come to confuse and disturb us, they help you harmonize more than any other. They are the biggest masters of your ignorance to help you harmonize. You have to be connected to the great work...All these tests are for me, for my growth. The principle of caridade. In the future, all this is going to be all light. I learn a lot here. In the future I'll be full of learning. The principle caridade:for one and for all.”<sup>146</sup>*

*“In his divine essence he knows what he has to do to be full of light. As we're on this world of tests and atonement, we have tests in every moment. And in each moment there are two paths we can take: one is to practice unconditional love for all forms of life on the Earth and be full of light; or we can be living, testing out negative sensations—anger, speaking badly of others...This is what makes us sick. It's the law of action and reaction—when we give this negativity to others, it comes back to us. It might take a while sometimes, but it'll come back—and that makes us sick.”<sup>147</sup>*

By choosing the path of light, we spiritually evolve and prepare ourselves for lives that will be more filled with light, love, and happiness, and we will leave our tests and suffering behind. For those who do not choose the path of light, they face a vastly different future. These choices, some believe, both light and ignorance, are about to become more intensely magnified in the coming years.<sup>148</sup> Many traditions across cultures and times prophesize an “apocalyptic” event occurring in the near future that will transform our world and the human condition: it is written in the Bible, the impeccably accurate Mayan calendar, Kardecist Spiritism, and was foreseen by Padrinho Sebastião. In the language of Spiritism, this world will pass into a world of *regeneration*.<sup>149</sup>

*“Padrinho Sebastião said, in line with various prophecies like the Mayan calendar, that there will be a drastic realignment, and a new people—also like the*

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<sup>145</sup> Kardec, Allen. *The Gospel According to Spiritism*. The Headquarters Publishing Co., 1987.

<sup>146</sup> Day 15. *Interview, Part I: Juan*, 36,37.

<sup>147</sup> Day 23. *Interview: Paulo*, 60.

<sup>148</sup> Day 15. *Interview, Part I: Juan*, 37-38.

<sup>149</sup> The five worlds of Spiritism are: primitive worlds, worlds of tests and atonements, regenerating worlds, blessed worlds, and celestial or divine worlds.

*Apocalypse of the Bible. There will be a new alignment, new values, a new time. This system that we've created of capitalism, built on a lack of respect for our Earth... The Earth will survive and be alive, [but the way we live with her will have to be completely different...]*"<sup>150</sup>

What this change represents is the natural evolution of the spirit, which works to pass through the five levels on its way to the divine world of purified spirits.<sup>151</sup> In truth, noted some of the informants, the shift into the New Era is well under way. It is manifesting in the collapse of the economy of the United States, the increasing threat of global warming and fatality of natural disasters, and in the spread of doctrines of liberation and spiritual evolution, such as Santo Daime.

Santo Daime presents an especially fascinating potential for the regeneration that will take place on this Earth, if the prophecies prove to be true. Santo Daime originates from the wisdom of those living in the Amazon, one of the most natural and wild landscapes left on Earth. Industrialization and urbanization, environmental degradation and material obsession, and the growth of institutions of violence whose purposes are to maintain systems of inequality and exploitation of labor have been the driving forces of Colonialism, Capitalism, and the struggle for wealth and power. Can it be that the dominant paradigm, which values materiality above the human spirit and has divorced humankind from spirit and from the natural world, is undergoing a radical transformation? If the prophecy is true, and communications break down, mass transportation ends, necessitating that each local community be self-sustainable, might its dominance come to an end? If money loses its value and we are forced to examine our lives and see what we have really created, how will our dominant paradigm shift? In the most isolated region of the world, whose riches are best counted in the numbers of species, cures, and culturally-intact indigenous tribes hidden in its dense forests, is the heart of a growing movement worldwide. For those who are a part of it, the paradigm has shifted and the message is clear. To repeat, for good measure: *You are here to work on the spiritual, to evolve your spirit.*<sup>152</sup>

*"This is all illusion, the world in which I have to make money to buy things, buy a house, buy a car, buy another car, buy a car for each kid... It's all illusion. We finish this work in this ropinha—this body—and that's it."*<sup>153</sup>

The degradation of the natural and spiritual world wrought by the dominating paradigm of Capitalism and Colonial conquest has brought us to the brink of complete devastation, whose godheads, the international corporations, are threatening the very existence of the Amazon for the first time in history. It is in this moment that we encounter the expansion of Santo Daime.

*"People think they are awake but they're asleep. Daime wakes you up. You are a part of everything, and everything is a part of you. You are in everyone and everyone is in you. So I think for the future, by 2012, it will be well spread around the world. It was born in the Amazon, in the heart of Brazil, in the*

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<sup>150</sup> Day 6. *Preliminary Interview with Marcos & Selma: Marcos*, 17.

<sup>151</sup> Kardec, Allen. *The Gospel According to Spiritism*.

<sup>152</sup> Day 23. *Informal Interview: Michele*, 62.

<sup>153</sup> Day 6. *Preliminary Interview with Marcos & Selma: Marcos*, 18.

*forest, in the mata, the bush, where God is—well, God is in everything, but primarily in nature.”<sup>154</sup>*

Whatever the future might hold, CFNE and Apôitchá are together already living out the reality of the world of regeneration. As the name clearly says, they are already a flower of the New Era.

*“I believe the great alliance is living in community—share, protect each other, which is very important. Indians do this, though in a primitive way. We lost this. We each need to have our own story; no one helps each other. We believe this: you have to have community. The hinos say this—brotherhood is the New Era that Santo Daime forecasts.”<sup>155</sup>*

*“I believe that the practice of caridade, of doing good for our próximo, of helping those around us—in the New Era, this practice is going to be much more intense. We’re going to be practicing these things much more than we are now...Apôitchá will be a big point of work, continuing to be what she is: a point of light to receive people who feel this need. The evolution of the being through education... This is no more than regeneration.”*

*“It is important to learn to live together in the future and in harmony with nature. If we have sustenance that is the base... We want integration in the system and at the same time to leave the system and be self-sustainable.”<sup>156</sup>*

Through their work in Apôitchá, the informants are working toward both of these goals of integration into the system and self-sustainability so that they can live independently of the system, and its insecure future. Juan actualizes this work through the Mandalla: a garden of edibles that uses rainwater for irrigation. He is learning with the children how to make this garden grow in the infertile and sandy soil of Lucena. Lena, in teaching mothers how to sew various artisan crafts, incites their creative abilities and helps them to both integrate into the system and be self-reliant outside of it. Their work provides them with some income and the perspective and self-esteem that comes with having a profession:

*“They can be independent, not just depending on the income of their husbands. Lots of them have no perspective on life—they stay home all washing dishes and looking after their kids. So to think they can have a profession...”<sup>157</sup>*

Inciting their ability to create also provides them with self-reliance and the ability to make necessities like clothing without depending on commercial institutions.

CFNE and Apôitchá are already actualizing the work of the New Era, as grounds for regeneration through spiritual work and education. They are both religiously diverse communities, as anyone who enters CFNE can keep whatever other religious practices or doctrines they’d like, and Apôitchá displays a wide variety of religious and spiritual faiths, practices, and understandings. Their spiritual and social work prepares them for the New Era to come, which will likely put many more people in both material and spiritual need.

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<sup>154</sup> Day 4. Interview, Part I: Márcio, 14.

<sup>155</sup> Day 6. Preliminary Interview with Marcos & Selma: Selma, 17.

<sup>156</sup> Day 16. Interview, Part II: Juan, 39.

<sup>157</sup> Day 17. Interview: Lena, 45.

## Conclusion

The work of *Daime* is above all a work of unveiling reality. The rest of it follows. The intense and honest internal experience of the self and reality through the *miração* dispels delusion and illusion, orienting all the informants on a path of self-perfection and *caridade*. This path is one of re-creation and regeneration. The community that has grown from under the roof of *Céu da Flor da Nova Era* demonstrates the power of spiritual work with *Daime* to actualize a new society.

The accounts of the ten informants of this study demonstrate the intimate connections between their spiritual work with Santo Daime and their work as educators in the NGO Apôitchá. For many, their lives were completely transformed in their first experience with *Daime*: in the unveiling of their reality, *Daime* revealed to them their complete responsibility in the creation of themselves and their reality. Through this intense vision of reality, radical transformations of behavior and ways of life are possible, as demonstrated most forcefully in Paulo's account. For others who already were on a path of social justice, their work with *Daime* provided firm orientations, a deepening of the understanding of the sacred, and new insights for creative expression.

The power of Santo Daime to cure disease and addiction has important implications for a self-sustainable society in the future. The common orientation that the informants received to teach children, especially those in vulnerable and destitute situations of poverty, also demonstrates the regenerative power of *Daime* to bring new life and creative expression to those in need. We can envision the social work of the informants of this study as a reflection of the inner-work that *Daime* performs within their bodies: a clearing away of physical, psychological, spiritual, and energetic contaminants that limit the expression of our full human potential.

The community of *Céu da Flor da Nova Era*, through work in the church and Apôitchá, is truly a blossoming of the New Era of regeneration. Follow-up studies in the coming years and the years following 2012 will be all the more telling.

## Appendix I

### *The depth of the work*

In participating in the Sacred Dance, I began to get a sense of the vastness of Andréa's work, Lena's, and all those who had accepted this intense path of discovery, of unveiling, of responsibility, and of *work*. I saw so much that I needed to heal within myself, that I felt the depth of which these women had, with years of work with *Daime*, worked for their own healing, for those women around them like Isabel, and for various realms of spirits who are in need of the same healing. They work for the evolution of *all*. I realized that social justice for my informants, the members of Apôitchá and CFNA, meant taking up the vocation to be fully human within their infinite inner-world, for the very *carênte* community of Lucena, and specifically Carrapeta, and for the spirits of the multi-dimensional world. Without being able to observe the effects of spiritual work with *Daime* on the spirit world, I realized, the understanding of its work for the evolution of the spirit will be lacking. "If *Daime* is an intense shortcut," I thought, "think of where Andréa must be ten years after starting to work with it."

After my talking with Isabel, as well as visiting her home, I felt more of the reality of the work of Apôitchá. I recognized that I had no experience with the kind of need that exists in Lucena, nor with working with children in the vulnerable situations that the children of Apôitchá are in. The next day, after participating in the Sacred Dance work and opening a small window into the reality of a multi-dimensional world of spirits, I came to recognize that I know only the tip of the real work that happens in Apôitchá and under the blue corrugated roof of Céu da Flor da Nova Era. I need to express the inadequacy of these words in paying respect to my informants' work.



## **Areas for further study**

### ***Apôitchá: regeneration through education***

The educators of Apôitchá utilize three pedagogies: the educators of the young children of Roda do Sol work closely with Waldorf Education, and the associated philosophy of anthroposophy; the educators that visit the public schools of Lucena work with the pedagogy of Paulo Freire; and the theatre group works reproduce the creative pedagogies of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. As all of these works are aimed toward the liberation of the human being, an interesting study could be done that analyzes their interconnected elements and how they are lived out in the work of Apôitchá. Kardec's Spiritism could be included, as well, as it is another prominent philosophy within the Apoitchecho community.

### ***The religious, social and political history of entheogens***

A very interesting study would be on the influence of entheogens on various religions and prominent philosophers (such as Plato) and the history of institutional religious and political actions that banned and marginalized their use. What was at stake for those in power? What sort of thinking was stimulated by their use? What practices? What ways of life? How did they threaten the dominant institutions of that time? And what is the historical connection between those and our dominant institutions (of church and state)?

### ***A follow-up study***

The coming years will only reveal more about the reality of the New Era. Whatever happens will provide new insights and understanding to the work undertaken in CFNE and Apôitchá, making further and deeper study possible.

## **Definition of Special Terms**

*2012*: the year of completion for the thirteenth cycle of the Mayan long calendar, marked by astrological changes in the position of our solar system and speculated changes in human life on Earth

*Cipó*: vine, the masculine element of ayahuasca providing force

*Conviver, Convivência*: to live together with, the state of living together

*Cobrança*: a responsibility given to someone that they will be held accountable for

*Concentração*: concentration; the ceremony that happens every 15 and 30 of the month

*Daime*: Santo Daime is the name of the religious cult and the ayahuasca; Daime can refer to either one

*Daimista*: one who practices Santo Daime

*Fardado/a*: one who commits himself to Santo Daime through a religious ceremony, to become a fardado/a

*Hinos*: hymns, which are received while under the force of Daime

*Hinário*: a book of hymns. There are various hinários, each received by a teacher.

*Iemanjá*: Orixá of the Oceans and salt waters. Known for her beauty, femininity. Often depicted as a mermaid in the Santo Daime Church

*Miração*: the visionary journey of Daime, composed of the words *mirar*, to look at or contemplate, and *ação*, action

*Orixá*: a deity of religions that originated in the Yoruba religious system, including Umbanda and Candomblé

*Rainha*: the leaf that makes part of ayahuasca, representing the feminine, bringing light

*Resgatar*: to recover something that has been lost

*Salão*: the inside of the Santo Daime church, where spiritual works take place

*Se-Fardar*: to become a fardado/a

## **Primary Sources**

Day 1. *Informal Interview: Paulo*  
Day 2. *Informal Interview: Lena*  
Day 3. *Participation: Spiritist Meeting*  
Day 3. *Preliminary Interview with Marcos & Selma*  
Day 4. *Formal Interview: Márcio*  
Day 6. *Preliminary Interview with Marcos & Selma*  
Day 8. *Formal Interview: Marcos & Selma*  
Day 10. *Interview, Part I: Andréa*  
Day 15. *Formal Interview, Part I: Juan*  
Day 17. *Formal Interview, Lena*  
Day 18. *Interview, Abraão*  
Day 20. *Participation: The Sacred Dance*  
Day 23. *Informal Interview: Lena*  
Day 23. *Formal Interview: Paulo*  
Day 23. *Informal Interview: Michele*  
*Responses to Questionnaire: Lilian*

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## SIT Appendix

1. Could you have done this project in the USA? What data or sources were unique to Brazilian culture?

It would be interesting to do this project at the Santo Daime Church in Oregon or Hawaii. Other than these locations the research would be impossible. Conducting this research in the States would change its nature significantly, and of course it would have nothing to do with Céu da Flor da Nova Era or Apôitchá.

2. Could you have done any part of it in the USA?

No, I don't think there was any part I could have done in the USA.

3. Did the process of doing the ISP modify your learning style? How was this different from your previous style and approaches to learning?

The ISP was completely new to me. The research process, the reality that I lived with and partook of, everything. I don't know how to isolate this question; I had never done a research project before—interviews, keeping a journal, participation, observation, living in a community as a “researcher...”

4. How much of the final monograph is primary data? How much is from secondary sources?

I would say that 95% is primary sources and 5% is secondary.

5. What criteria did you use to evaluate your data for inclusion in the final monograph? Or how did you decide to exclude certain data?

I organized some recurring themes by color and worked off of that. If I had had more time, I would have gone through a more thorough process.

6. How did the “drop-offs” or field exercises contribute to the process and completion of the ISP?

They were helpful. In these experiences I conducted my first formal and informal interviews, and kept my first field journal. They were definitely good preparation.

7. What part of the FSS most significantly influenced the ISP process?

The community project, I would say. It was the most in-depth preparation.

8. What were the principal problems you encountered while doing the ISP? Were you able to resolve them and how?

Arriving on site and realizing that I needed to change my problem statement was problematic. I did not really tackle this problem, but just kept working without thinking of it much. I think that not resolving it was not the best solution. Not getting an interview with a key informant was unfortunate, but not really a big problem.

9. Did you experience any time constraints? How could these have been resolved?

Since I was living on site, I had a good amount of time. I would have liked to stay longer. This could only be resolved if the ISP period was extended, which, if I were to repeat the program, I would support.

10. Did our original topic change and evolve as you discovered or did not discover new and different resources? Did the resources available modify or determine the topic?

It sort of changed. The information I received from interviewees gave me a new perspective on my topic.

11. How did you go about finding resources: institutions, interviewees, publications...?

I was in a small community, and so I met everyone, lived with them, and so finding interviewees was easy. This was my biggest source of information. Other sources were given to me by members of the community—books, articles, magazines, etc.

12. What methods did you use? How did you decide on such methods?

I used open-ended questions for interviews, encouraging people to tell stories. At one point I used a questionnaire, as my advisor and I decided would be helpful. She was one of the two people who answered it. There wasn't really that specific information I wanted to get at—more I wanted to hear what people had to say.

13. Comment on your relationship with your advisor: indispensable?...

I was very fond of her. I wish we had more time to spend together. She was so busy we only had our meetings and that was about it. She was very helpful, and I think my project would only have been better with more time with her. Our educational styles weren't clashing, but her high level of organization made me feel like a putz.

14. Did you reach any dead ends?

Not once.

15. What insights did you gain into the culture as a result of doing the ISP, which you might not have gained?

Read my ISP. It might be one of the most mind-blowing yet. Santo Daime is authentically Brazilian, so everything I learned about it (which is ssoooo much) I would not have gotten otherwise. This manifestation of syncretism that is expanding from the Amazon, embracing everyone who comes, mostly on either side of the bell-curve, and revealing this new paradigm for the New Era is the most beautiful intermixing of the creative energy and faith that I had been getting to know in Brazil before the ISP.

16. Did the ISP process assist your adjustment to the culture? Integration?

On one hand there were ways in which I felt like such an outsider—being a researcher, an American in a little community, new to Daimé...But the convivência definitely helped me integrate, being alone instead of in a group, and being where I wanted to be. Now, having left, I feel very integrated here because I am a part of something here, and know some things that most Brazilian's don't about a piece of the culture here.

17. What were the principal lessons you learned from the ISP process?

Keeping a thorough journal can be really awesome. When you enter a community, if you really want to know what's going on, approach it like you're doing a research project. And, from my ISP process, the evolution of the spirit is my only work here. Always follow your heart.

18. If you met a future student who wanted to do this same project, what would be your recommendation to him/her?

I would give a hug and say, "This is the best thing you've ever done for yourself. Have a ball."

19. Given what you know now, would you undertake this, or a similar project again?

**INFINITE YESes.** In fact, the project of my life is going to be somewhat of a continuation of this study!!!