"In the Master's House": History, discourse, and ritual in Acre, Brazil

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Abstract

The "Brazilian ayahuasca religions," as they have become known since the publication of the important collection edited by Labate and Araújo (2002), are a congeries of associations that emerged, in the mid-to-late 20th century, from the Brazilian experience of the Amazonian rubber boom. Since the 1970s, these groups have become increasingly present in nationwide Brazilian and international discourse as some of them expanded beyond Amazonia. Discourse about these groups has focused on two thematically linked notions. The foremost of these is the ingestion of ayahuasca, a psychoactive "tea" decocted from two native plants that is widely used in indigenous and emigrant contexts in the Amazon, and which is strongly marked by its cultural and geographic origins. The other notion, particularly prominent in the case of Santo Daime (the most widely known of these groups), is the New Age and countercultural aspects of the groups' identity.

The focus of this dissertation is on Alto Santo, the name by which the first *Daimista* center in Brazil is known. It is based on 15 months of fieldwork at Alto Santo and in the region between 2002 and 2007. Alto Santo is located in a rural neighborhood on the periphery of Rio Branco, capital of Acre state, which borders Peru and Bolivia in the westernmost portion of Amazonian Brazil. Daimistas at Alto Santo regard the adoption of Santo Daime by countercultural, usually middle-class southern Brazilians as a usurpation that upset the web of local negotiations that were navigated by the center's founder, Raimundo Irineu Serra, from the beginning of his work with ayahuasca in the 1930s to his death in 1971. Of especial concern to them, given the Daimista emphasis on moral reform and civic participation, is the danger of ayahuasca's being profaned by association with countercultural drugs. (Ayahuasca contains DMT, a "scheduled" substance under international law.)

The dissertation's first three chapters analyze the process by which ayahuasca, rebaptized as "Daime," was symbolically brought from the forest to the town, made fitting for "civilized" use, and incorporated within Irineu Serra's "house" (*casa*). This, I argue, was a novel event in the history of emigrant ayahuasca use in Amazonia. As the dissertation shows, the successful establishment of the "Master's House" involved multiple mediations by Irineu Serra, as a Brazilian "big man," of "his" people's relations

with local officials, international esoteric associations, the Brazilian nation at large, and the (Christianized) spiritual powers of the forest. I view this process primarily through the lens of Roberto Da Matta's model of a Brazilian "ritual system," in which the hierarchically-ordered casa is the preeminent form of Brazilian sociality, complemented by the depersonalized space of the "street" (*rua*) and the transcendent "other world" (*outro mundo*).

The final two chapters treat Alto Santo ritual, showing how it is framed by discourse about the advent of Irineu Serra's *Doutrina* ("doctrine") in Acrean society. The *feitio* ("making") process that produces Daime is analyzed for its material significance to Alto Santo practice, as well as for what it contributes discursively, as the conduit by which the forest's power is translated to the worship hall for use in Daimista "spiritual work." This spiritual work, conceived in accordance with esotericist ideas about intentionality and vibrational communication at a distance, is most visible in the collective performance of corpuses of hymns on Catholic feast days. The final chapter examines discourse about the hymns, using the concept of "entextualization" in showing how it, together with the formal features of the hymns themselves, supports Daimista ritual experience of hymn-singing as a confrontation, in the presence of divine law, with one's moral misadventures.

Signature page

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It is both gratifying and daunting to reflect on all the help that I have received with this project: gratifying, because the list turns out to be quite long, which means that people were willing to help, and because this help gives the work the possibility of real value. But it is also daunting, because this same reflection raises the question of whether I have done justice to the material, which is never a comfortable line of thought.

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Introduction: In the Master's House

Introduction

It was easy enough to learn the way to the Master's House; it was harder getting up the courage to go there. In 2002, I was on a preliminary field trip to Amazonian Brazil, visiting spiritual centers where people used *ayahuasca*, a psychoactive drink of indigenous origin. I had spent the June festival season in Mapiá, a small village in Amazonas state, founded, in the early 1980s, as a kind of "New Jerusalem" in the forest. There, on spiritual pilgrimage, middle class Americans and Europeans mingled with Brazilians from the country's wealthier southern region, as well as with locals who lived there year-round. In the 1990s, Mapiá emerged as the hub of a globalizing movement known generally as Santo Daime, or by its institutional acronym, CEFLURIS.[1] The group's leaders would travel to its affiliate centers in Brazil and abroad, bringing both ayahuasca (called *Daime*) and their ritual skills, especially the musical and vocal performance of hymns while under the influence of ayahuasca. During the "June feasts" celebrating

[1] CEFLURIS stands for Centro Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal—Raimundo Irineu Serra, roughly "The Raimundo Irineu Serra Eclectic Center of the Universal Flowing Light."

Saints Anthony, John, and Peter, members of these far-flung centers would, in turn, descend upon Mapiá by the hundreds, transforming the village temporarily.[2]

CEFLURIS had been known in Brazil since the publication, in 1984, of a memoir by former guerrilla radical and poet Alex Polari de Alverga (Alverga 1984; see also Alverga 1992), in which he described his spiritual journey to this forest religion; by the late 1980s, several celebrities of national renown had publicly joined Santo Daime, further bolstering its presence in Brazil's media. CEFLURIS began expanding to other countries, too, during the 1980s, but the advent of widespread Internet access by the end of the millennium greatly accelerated this process. Versions of *Daimista* mythology began to appear in English on the World Wide Web, emphasizing links to ancient Inca rulers and connection to the forest. Alverga's 1992 book, too, was published in English translation late in the decade. Entitled *Forest of Visions* (Alverga 1999), it depicted Santo Daime as internationalist, ecologically focused, and universalist, and it presented a version of Daimista history and cosmovision that culminated in the establishment of Mapiá in the midst of the forest. Its account of the group's history narrated the mystical transfer of authority from founder Raimundo Irineu Serra to Sebastião Mota de Melo, known as

[2] In 2002, on my first visit to Mapiá, I met several couples from the region surrounding the University of Virginia. Some of them were members of a CEFLURIS-affiliated group in the Washington, D.C. suburbs; others lived in rural central Virginia, less than an hour from Charlottesville. My feelings of chagrin at first meeting these people are worth noting, I think, for what they reveal about how I thought about Mapiá as a place fundamentally disconnected from civilization and "real life."

Padrinho (Godfather) Sebastião by his followers. Under Mota de Melo's leadership, in Alverga's account, the living heart of Santo Daime moved from its birthplace near the city of Rio Branco, capital of Acre state, to a former rubber camp in the midst of the forest, just over the border in the state of Amazonas.

CEFLURIS discourse had a stronger impact on my initial orientation to Santo Daime than I would have liked to admit. Back in Rio Branco for a couple of weeks at the end of my trip, I sought to round out my survey of the "Brazilian ayahuasca religions" (Labate and Araújo 2002) by returning to their source. The prevalence of CEFLURIS-derived accounts of Santo Daime in the Brazilian national media and on the Internet had had a profound effect on my pre-field sense of Daimista cartography: Mapiá, as the place where the group's leaders resided, seemed to be at the center of the universe. Its vital satellites, as revealed in these accounts, were several: Alverga's previous home center in rural Minas Gerais state was understood to be a going concern, as were the large urban centers in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo; robust groups existed, too, in some North American and European cities, above all in Amsterdam; and regular movement of persons between the group's sylvan center and urban periphery kept things active.

Everything I knew thus prepared me to be disappointed with the remaining centers in Rio Branco, which I determined to visit mainly for the sake of doing due diligence in my preliminary survey. I had little doubt that Mapiá would be my main field site. An

acquaintance connected to people I met in Mapiá told me how to find the Rio Branco city bus terminal, and said to look for the bus called "Irineu Serra" after Raimundo Irineu Serra, the native of Maranhão state who emigrated to Acre during the rubber boom, and is recognized as the founder of Santo Daime. One sunny afternoon, I walked the few blocks across the town center from my hotel to the bus station, and caught the bus to the Master's House.

Ayahuasca in Rio Branco

In the mid-2000s there were, as I came to find out, a dozen or more ayahuasca-using spiritual centers in Rio Branco, with hundreds or thousands of members and important connections to the local political and cultural landscape. They can be divided into two "families": those that trace their history to the life of Raimundo Irineu Serra and call ayahuasca *Daime*, and those linked to the career of José Gabriel da Costa, who founded the now-international group the *União do Vegetal*[3] in the neighboring state, Rondônia, in the late 1950s, where ayahuasca is known as *hoasca* or simply *vegetal*. The groups stemming from Irineu Serra's spiritual line can be further divided into the "Barquinha" groups and the Santo Daime groups. The "Barquinha" or "Little Boat" line grew out of

[3] The name literally means "Union of the Vegetal." It preserves a double ambiguity in Portuguese: "union" can be taken to refer to the organization itself, while "vegetal" denotes the drink, pointing to a social group defined by its use of *vegetal.* Alternatively, it indicates the "union" of the drink's two principal plant ingredients, which is symbolically elaborated in the group's discourse.

the work of Daniel Pereira de Mattos (Mestre Daniel), an early disciple of Irineu Serra who stayed on in the Vila Ivonete neighborhood when Irineu Serra moved farther out to establish Alto Santo in the early 1940s. Each of these groups, including Alto Santo, underwent processes of schism involving leadership disputes, so that at the time of our research there were several representative groups of each of the "lines."

A salient aspect of these groups' identities, beginning at least in the 1970s, was their position with respect to "traditionalism" versus "eclecticism." Given the fact that all these practices were deeply eclectic in the sense of combining the Amerindian technology of ayahuasca with Catholic iconography, European esotericist philosophy, six-string acoustic guitars, maracás, suit coats and ties, and so on, it should be noted that the sense of what counted as eclectic was quite situational, having to do with the introduction of elements beyond those installed by the founder and a degree of openness toward "outsiders" (again, a relative term in an area that was settled by non-Indians only after the 1870s or so). In this dichotomous view, Alto Santo was the arch-traditionalist group, while CEFLURIS and Mapiá represented the leading edge of "eclectic" practice, which sometimes included elements of trance-possession systems like Umbanda and other markedly Afro-Brazilian features. Within each "line" there were more- and less-traditionalist groups, which tended to form alliances with one another across their historical boundaries: people from the traditionalist groups at Alto Santo

cooperated with the more traditionalist Barquinha center, while the more "eclectic" Barquinha chapel received regular visits from Mapiá visitors passing through the regional capital as they travelled.

Why did I need courage to go the Master's House?

On the bus I was nervous about going to Alto Santo. This might seem a bit odd, as I've said it was my understanding that Rio Branco was basically moribund when it came to congregational ayahuasca drinking. It makes some sense, on the other hand, in light of the polarization just outlined. The proximal source of my nerves was the stories I'd heard from those who frequented Mapiá and had tried to visit Alto Santo, the first Daimista center, founded in the 1940s. According to these stories, Irineu Serra's widow, Dona Peregrina (he died in 1971), was fatally prejudiced against people from Mapiá and CEFLURIS, being opposed to outsiders and "hippies." Her truculence with such people was the stuff of minor legend in CEFLURIS circles. To make matters worse, everyone who told me about visiting Alto Santo emphasized that before one could attend a ritual, it was necessary to go and speak with Dona Peregrina, and to obtain her personal permission; according to one story I heard, she had made a girl from Mapiá cry by denying her request to participate. This, incidentally, was one of my first clues about the importance of the institution of the house at Alto Santo: Dona Peregrina took personal responsibility for everyone who came to the center. It was true that visitors to Mapiá

were also “screened” at Boca do Acre, the town where the road ended and one must take a boat on the river to reach Mapiá, but this generally consisted of checking that they were affiliated with some Daimista center elsewhere, and little more. Once I arrived in Mapiá itself there was no sense of being monitored or watched, and I never spoke with the community’s leaders before participating in a ritual. This made sense, as literally hundreds of people were arriving for the June festival season, and it would have been a large production to interview them all individually.

It seemed that there was something specific about the anxiety I’d heard expressed about meeting with Dona Peregrina and asking permission to attend a session there. For one thing, she appeared in these narratives as the gatekeeper to something of value, belying the general impression I had picked up of the Rio Branco centers’ inconsequential status in the broader field of the ayahuasca religions. (Sometimes people explained their visits as being more about visiting the places associated with Irineu Serra; he appears in their discourse as the somewhat distant founder, behind the much more discursively vital figure of Padrinho Sebastião.) More significantly, talk about meeting Dona Peregrina focused on the experience of middle-class counterculture being seen, and judged, with a traditional, rural Brazilian gaze.

Padrinho Sebastião's people were "hippies"

Sebastião Mota de Melo was something of a newcomer by the standard of longtime Alto Santo families such as that of Dona Peregrina, the Gomes clan (see Goulart 2004 for a useful kinship diagram). He had arrived at Alto Santo around 1964, seven years before Irineu Serra died. Padrinho Sebastião established CEFLURIS in 1974, having left Alto Santo after his attempts to declare himself successor to Irineu Serra were rebuffed. In the process he took a significant portion of the Alto Santo membership with him, including some of the "old guard"—proof positive of stories of his considerable charisma. On the lands of Mota de Melo's agricultural colony, some kilometers' distance from Alto Santo, many of these people settled in a sort of collective production arrangement that was meant to take communal living one step farther. "Hippies" and backpacker-travellers from the south of Brazil began to appear in the region during the 1970s; some stayed on, finding the welcome mat out at Mota de Melo's compound, known as Colony 5000, and later became some of the first disseminators of Santo Daime to the south and overseas.

The adherence of "hippies" to Padrinho Sebastião's community at Colony 5000 is generally seen at Alto Santo as an unmitigated disaster. Where Irineu Serra had worked for decades to make Daime respectable, and something distinct from "drugs," the *mochileiros* (after *mochila*, backpack) also used cannabis and psilocybin mushrooms,

classing them together as “power plants” capable of creating sacred spaces within an otherwise inimical modernity. At Alto Santo such “mixing” was unacceptable; instead of exalting other plant drugs to sacramental status as “entheogens,”[4] it suggested a debasing of Daime to the level of common narcotics.

The tension between Daime as an emergent folk practice and drug use by disaffected urbanites reached its peak in 1983, when a young backpacker was arrested on the streets of Rio Branco—profiled by the police because of his “hippie” appearance—with a quantity of cannabis in his pack, which he said came from Colony 5000. Breathless local press coverage of the incident detailed the connection between rootless vagabond hippies and weird homegrown cultists, and little attempt was made to preserve identity distinctions that were of first-order importance to people at Alto Santo (as well as to the other “traditionalist”centers). This incident epitomized, if it did not entirely define, attitudes at Alto Santo toward both CEFLURIS and toward the press’s portrayal of Santo Daime, with its wanton mixing of names and fames with different moral values. Other

[4] This term was coined by Gordon Wasson, Jonathan Ott, and others in a 1979 paper (Ruck et al. 1979). The point of the neologism was to replace labels with medical and psychopathological connotations (such as “hallucinogen” and “psychotomimetic”) with a word more closely reflecting the sense the authors believed attached to the ethnographic use of psychoactive substances for religious and spiritual purposes. Thus the term combines the Greek morphemes *en-* [within], *theos* [divinity], and *–gen* (creating, bringing about). (It is worth noting that the authors also rejected the term *psychedelic* because of its close association with Western counterculture; their own term, in the intervening three decades, has made substantial inroads in anthropologoid discourse, although in certain contexts it can appear still to be slightly precious or self-serving.)

sensationalist stories followed in the national media, detailing the dalliance of celebrities with Santo Daime. By the time I rode the bus to the Master's House that day in 2002, people at Alto Santo had come to view publicity and the press with great skepticism, convinced that they were less interested in the truth than in "creating confusion" and selling copy, to the detriment of the good name of Irineu Serra.

These things were not so clear in my mind that day as I arrived at the end of the bus line, where I'd been told I would find Alto Santo. Nevertheless, even then I knew that I, bearded at the time and wearing my hair long, fit right into a stereotype people from Alto Santo might sometimes have of folks from CEFLURIS. I'd been in Acre long enough to know that beards and long hair marked men in certain ways, usually indexing leftist political thought and / or countercultural affinities. In Mapiá such conventions were not only disregarded, but actively overturned: Padrinho Sebastião grew a very long beard after he left Alto Santo that became an iconic part of his image (he died in 1990), and which has been emulated by others. Mustaches, beards, and long hair on men were thus commonplace in Mapiá but virtually nonexistent at Alto Santo.

I walked up the embankment that ran along the highway and, passing through the gate, made my way across the pasture that separated Dona Peregrina's house from the roadway. To my right was a life-size statue of Irineu Serra, gazing east to greet visitors. I entered another gate around the house's curtilage and, approaching the wrought-iron-

enclosed verandah, I clapped hands to announce my presence, and asked permission to enter: *dá licença?* Dona Peregrina received me on her verandah in a formal manner, offering refreshments and snacks, which were brought from the kitchen. I described my research project briefly, and told her I would like to come to a ceremony at Alto Santo. She did not respond to my indirect request, and conversation died down. Eventually she got up and began moving furniture on another part of the verandah. I began to feel angry then, as though she were wasting my time. I did not feel the least bit committed to fieldwork at Alto Santo, and briefly considered just leaving. Instead, after a time I arose and addressed her directly, asking very politely but firmly if she would allow me to attend the next seated, contemplative "concentration session" on a given date. She studied my face, seeming annoyed. I looked back at her, as unwavering as I could be. Finally she said, simply, "I'll let you."

From forest to city (to forest again?)

This initial encounter with Dona Peregrina and Alto Santo would eventually recalibrate the way I understood the field of the Brazilian ayahuasca religions. More than this, as I learned how people at Alto Santo viewed themselves and their relationship with Irineu Serra and the broader contexts of Brazilian society and the world at large, I saw a cultural richness to Alto Santo social life that led me to rethink my views on drug consumption more generally. The kind of richness I mean here is not the same as

extravagant or aesthetically pleasing performance, but is rather a systematic relatedness to, and expression of, Brazilian values and forms of social organization. By the same token, I do not mean to imply that CEFLURIS is culturally impoverished, or that its forms of organization are not also Brazilian; it is not, and they are. But I began right away to see *difference* at Alto Santo, and the more I learned about Santo Daime history the more I saw this difference as significant, and related to the way the group's discourse engaged important Brazilian social forms, above all the *casa*, or house.

There is a basic movement, described in various ways in Alto Santo discourse, but always centered on the transfer of spiritual power from the forest to the city; Irineu Serra is said to have learned of ayahuasca in the no-man's-land between Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru, and to have brought it from its indigenous context there to the city in order, as one hymn puts it, "to cure the Christians." This movement from the forest to the city is thus also a movement from pagan and wild to Christian and civilized. While many others used ayahuasca in the region's rubber camps, Irineu Serra distinguished his project by establishing a Brazilian *casa*, house, with ayahuasca-as-Daime as its moral center of gravity. Because ayahuasca was associated with wildness and Indians, much of the drama of Alto Santo narrative on Daimista history revolves around the serial misunderstanding of Daimista moral orientation as something alien to Brazilian civilization and opposed to its values.

The trajectory of Sebastião Mota de Melo and his followers, by contrast, presents an additional step, a movement back toward the forest. There is something familiar about this schema, with its rejection of existing social organization and its attempt to establish an alternative form of collective life in a new space, on a sociological tabula rasa. In its general outlines, it appears to be classic communal utopianism of the sort that has come in and out of fashion over the past few centuries, most recently in the 1960s and 1970s counterculture. In retrospect, it seems that my initial focus on Mapiá had as much to do with its structural affinity with world-renouncing religious movements as it did with my greater exposure to CEFLURIS-derived media owing to its global circulation. In other words, the creation of a New Jerusalem in the forest through the ingestion of a psychoactive indigenous drink fit nicely with the Western tradition of appropriating native spiritual techniques to address the shortcomings of modern (sub)urban life. It seemed at first like a chance to merge the communalist psychedelic ideals of the hippie era with an updated ecological sensitivity, and I believe that many visitors to Mapiá saw it in this general way, too.

By the time I found myself on Dona Peregrina's verandah, the naïve imagery of Mapiá I'd carried into the field with me had already begun to transform. Several weeks spent in Mapiá showed me that the situation was, at the very least, considerably more complicated by social drama than I had foreseen—including, for example, resentments

on the part of an emergent local Sherpa class about the distribution of visitors' wealth. For some visitors to Mapiá such disillusionment led to angry rejection of the whole place: I recall one young German man who determined to confront the spiritual leader of CEFLURIS (Sebastião Mota de Melo's son Alfredo), accusing him of abrogating his mission by caring more about money than spirituality.

Something about the idea of Mapiá met my expectations of what a hallucinogen-ingesting communal settlement should look like. Inasmuch as it seemed to offer a chance to go outside the confines of modern life, to immerse oneself in the Amazon forest—that preeminent contemporary symbol of wild nature—and literally to ingest indigenous spirituality, Mapiá resonated with powerful currents of discourse and desire. Quite apart from the much wider circulation of CEFLURIS discourse as compared to that of Alto Santo, I believe there is something about the movement of CEFLURIS back to the forest that helps account for its appeal.

Cannabis as symbolic condensation of counterculture

The reasons for this movement are not as clearly specified as some other things in Daimista history. Sebastião Mota de Melo had been driven from Alto Santo in the early 1970s, and for the next decade Colony 5000 grew, attracting outsiders as well as locals, and drawing increasing attention to itself. This attention was often negative: it was the

height of Brazilian military rule, and many of those who came to Colony 5000 were sympathetic toward the kind of “subversion” the junta had in its sights. The fact that some former guerrillas joined CEFLURIS, such as Alex Polari de Alverga, is evidence that these sympathies were real. In my view, these and other contextual elements (including Sebastião Mota de Melo's purported affinity for spirit possession) were symbolically condensed in the image of *maconha*, the colloquial Brazilian word for cannabis. For many of the people I knew at Alto Santo, the departure of Padrinho Sebastião and his followers from the outskirts of Rio Branco for the depths of the forest was explained by their desire to use this herb unmolested. In such accounts, there is little room for doubt about the negative moral value of cannabis, and CEFLURIS’s move to the forest appears as dishonorable, confirming both its leaders’ unwillingness to defend their practice and their easy recourse to evasion in order to continue it. João Rodrigues Facundes, known around Alto Santo as "Nica," and whom I cite repeatedly in this dissertation, put the matter with succinct disdain: they went to the forest "to raise the flag of *maconha*."

For people at Alto Santo, who had for years felt themselves enmeshed in misunderstanding, struggling against prejudiced views of their use of ayahuasca for recognition as respectable members of Acrean and Brazilian society, CEFLURIS’s openness to hippie backpackers and to the psychoactive substances identified with them were sure signs of its having strayed from the path established by Irineu Serra.

Even worse, from their perspective, was the fact that the press's reporting tended to place *maconha* and Daime on a single conceptual plane. This false equivalence in the public eye was the source of a great deal of resentment and wariness toward others' attempts to represent Alto Santo and Daime.

The broad effects of these attitudes toward the representation of Alto Santo by others were driven home to me as I left Alto Santo after that first visit: as I paused on the highway, looking back to Dona Peregrina's house to photograph the surrounding field, a man I'd never seen before drove by, paying very close attention to me. He pulled his car to the shoulder and, getting out, demanded to know what I was doing. Given that I was standing on public property, I felt a bit indignant at being challenged, and told him curtly that I was taking pictures. He insisted that I go back to Alto Santo with him and reveal to Dona Peregrina what I had done. When it turned out that she had lain down for a rest, the man assured me that he would make sure she found out later what I had been doing, as though it were some kind of transgression. I learned later that this man was not even active at Alto Santo, but was a distant relative of Dona Peregrina. The proprietary sense he displayed seemed to me at first to be paranoid and contrary to respect for public property, and it did not make me want to do fieldwork there. It occurs to me in retrospect that my emotional reaction was another early, important sign of the relevance of the house motif to Alto Santo life.

Castaneda, drugs, and cultural others

If the proximal cause of my anxiety at meeting Dona Peregrina was a fear of being judged too sympathetic with countercultural types, it occurs to me that there was more background behind the feeling.

From the perspective of mass media and popular culture, the Ur-encounter of the modern West with traditional hallucinogenic drug rituals is to be found in the writings of anthropologist-turned-New Age guru Carlos Castaneda. As a graduate student at the University of California at Los Angeles in the 1960s, Castaneda wrote three books (Castaneda 1968; 1971; 1972) in which he described a series of meetings with Don Juan, a mysterious Indian man living in the desert, purported to be a Yaqui. In the narrative, these meetings gradually became an apprenticeship in Yaqui sorcery, involving the use of several different plant concoctions which, to judge by Castaneda's descriptions, were strongly psychoactive.

The narrative form of Castaneda's work was highly unusual at the time, and his first book appended a "structural analysis" of Don Juan's philosophical system (Castaneda 1968). The incongruity is almost laughable: the body of the work is bereft of theoretical apparatuses and conventional ethnographic description, while the "structural analysis" is abstract, and barely recognizable as being based on the same material as the

storytelling. Indeed, it is not so much an ethnography of Yaqui sorcery (Don Juan and a few fellow sorcerers are the only Indians who appear in the text, and they live in houses in the desert, not Indian villages) as it is a kind of *Bildungsroman* of Castaneda himself. In the third book, *Journey to Ixtlan*, Castaneda's apprenticeship turned away from psychoactive drugs to other techniques; this book, lightly edited, appears to have been submitted for his dissertation.[5] *The Teachings of Don Juan* and the books that followed established Castaneda as a cult author of global appeal, eventually selling more than 10 million copies in numerous languages; his first four books continue to sell thousands of units yearly, and none of his titles has ever gone out of print (Marshall 2007).

While Castaneda was a gifted storyteller, the appeal of his books, in my opinion, rests almost entirely on the tremendous power of their premise: a denizen of the First World, oblivious to his own arrogant ignorance, meets an old Indian shaman ("sorcerer"), discovers the limits of his academic knowledge and rational worldview, and transcends them through techniques involving (at first) plant drugs that allow him to glimpse "a

[5] There is some ambiguity as to which work was intended to function as Castaneda's dissertation. Ralph Beals, an ethnographer of the Yaqui and a teacher of Castaneda's at UCLA (though not, in the end, a committee member), reports that he saw a ms. version of what became the first book, adding that he expressed "objections to the identification of Don Juan as a Yaqui and to the quality and relevance of the analytical appendix" (Beals 1978:357). It is possible that Castaneda tried, and failed, to get this book accepted for his degree. Richard DeMille, Castaneda's self-described "stalker" and punctilious critic, seems to think as much (DeMille 1990). I wonder what might have been the significance to Castaneda's faculty of his turn away from drugs in the third book, and what other factors may have permitted *Ixtlan* to function as a dissertation where the *Teachings* did not succeed.

separate reality" and understand another, indigenous "way of knowledge," altering his life forever.

Castaneda was hardly the first Westerner to write about shamanism and plant hallucinogens in this way. Among his more famous predecessors in the immediately preceding decades we find R. Gordon Wasson, the banker-turned-amateur mycologist and scholar of shamanism, whose 1957 article in Life Magazine, "Seeking the Magic Mushroom," told the story of his journey to Mexico's Sierra Mazateca to participate in *veladas* with psilocybin mushrooms held by María Sabina, a local healer (Wasson 1957). In a similar vein, the *Yagé Letters*, written between the poet Allen Ginsberg and novelist William Burroughs, depict their experiences drinking yagé (one of the many names for ayahuasca) in Colombia (Burroughs and Ginsberg 1963). The same year that Castaneda published his *Teachings*, anthropologist Michael Harner, who studied shamanism among the "Jívaro" (Shuar) of Ecuador and Peru, went to print in the science magazine *Natural History* (published by the American Museum of Natural History) with an article entitled "The Sound of Rushing Water" (Harner 1968). Harner's text is notable for its departure from the kind of strictly bracketed exposition of native worldviews that has often been the default mode for ethnography; in particular, it shocked and inspired readers by mixing descriptions of Shuar perspectives on the spirit world with a recounting of Harner's own fantastical experiences drinking yagé. Wrote Harner (1968:15):

> For several hours after drinking the brew, I found myself, although awake, in a world literally beyond my wildest dreams. I met bird-headed people, as well as dragon-like creatures who explained that they were the true gods of this world. I enlisted the services of other spirit helpers in attempting to fly through the far reaches of the Galaxy. Transported into a trance where the supernatural seemed natural, I realized that anthropologists, including myself, had profoundly underestimated the importance of the drug in affecting native ideology.

Harner is suggesting here that his firsthand experience drinking yagé could lead to more accurate conventional accounts of Shuar views of the cosmos, but in its historical context the significance of Harner's account of his yagé trip was, like Castaneda's books and Wasson's earlier article, to encourage popular interest in the hallucinogenic plant drugs used by indigenous peoples around the world. This interest certainly related to the sympathy many in the West felt at the time for peoples affected by colonialism, but it was grounded in a much more enduring curiosity about experiencing cultural otherness that goes back to appropriative rituals such as those of the Parisian *Club des Haschischins* of the 1840s, where intellectual luminaries including Théophile Gautier, Charles Baudelaire, and Alexandre Dumas would gather in a gothic mansion for sumptuous feasts and, dressing themselves in a mishmash of "Oriental" attire, would ingest preparations of hashish and immerse themselves in visionary fancy. The concept of shamanism in particular came to exercise a fascination on the Western imagination at least as early as the Enlightenment, when images derived from early ethnographic

reports of shamanism were taken up as critical, counterbalancing elements in Europe's quest for a modern self-image (Flaherty 1992).

Castaneda participated in the formation of a discourse in which hallucinogenic plant drugs of traditional use were unambiguously associated to countercultural currents. While earlier legislation had criminalized, for example, Native American use of peyote and ethnic minorities' use of cannabis, things changed when interest in such drugs spread to the children of the white American middle class: drugs became countercultural.[6]

This status was formalized in the 1965 Drug Abuse Control Amendments, which were begun as legislation to address the consequences of prescription drug use, but quickly expanded to include the plant hallucinogens and their synthetic analogues, such as LSD, when these caught the attention of the youth and, especially, the media. Within a few years, the Nixon administration birthed the system of "schedules" we know today as part of the omnibus 1970 Controlled Substances Act; "hippie" drugs such as cannabis, psilocybin, LSD, DMT, peyote, and others were placed in the most restrictive category,

[6] Of course this is a bit of a simplification. Cannabis, as "marihuana," had long been associated with the world of jazz music in American culture, from whence it began a migration into the mainstream that was itself mediated by the Beat movement (see, inter alia, Lee [2013]). Its use became exponentially more prevalent, however, during the 1960s and 1970s, which contributed to the plant's status as a symbol of political resistance.

Schedule I, comprising substances officially designated as having a "high potential for abuse," no recognized medical utility, and no safe dosage level, even under the supervision of a physician (CSA 1970).[7]

The American drama that unfolded around countercultural drug use and its legal repression had, as key themes, intergenerational tension and the quest for an authentic, meaningful life. Figures such as Timothy Leary were portrayed in the media as Pied Pipers, come to lead the youth from the proper reception of their birthright to societal destruction.[8] With Leary, the notion was explicit that modern society was dehumanizing. The point of taking drugs like LSD was to become aware of the "programming" to which one had been subjected and the social "games" that people were playing in order to retire from and transcend them. Leary theorized LSD as a modernist drug, a way to cast off the "shackles of tradition"—to be an individual apart from culture—in order to inhabit a more authentic, natural, fulfilling existence.

[7] The CSA "schedules," influenced as they were by political concerns, present a series of anomalies to common sense: while cannabis is in Schedule I, which makes it impossible to prescribe and very difficult to research, methamphetamine and cocaine are in Schedule II, as is oxycodone, a more potent opioid than heroin. Journalists, in my experience, often publish incorrect information about the schedule status of these drugs, presumably because of the mistaken assumption that the schedules will correspond to their own "common sense."

[8] The (false) science-discourse meme that LSD caused chromosome damage was one of the most insidious strategies to instill a deep-seated sense that these drugs were likely to send things dangerously awry with the cosmos and humanity's place in it, by threatening the biological basis of social reproduction.

Mapiá and Santo Daime in the context of Castaneda

Much the same proposition, it seems to me, is behind the attraction of Mapiá to foreigners and to Brazilians from the county's more affluent and cosmopolitan southern region. At Mapiá, the promise of individual transformation and liberation is augmented by a vision of alternative sociality, a "New Jerusalem" whose geographical separateness and location in the forest suggest the "back to nature" movements that have periodically been salient social phenomena, most recently within the postwar counterculture. This rejection of the world through retreat to the forest joins an encounter with indigenous spiritual power there in a powerful constellation of images that is structurally similar to Castaneda's tale.

Most of the work that has been done on the Brazilian ayahuasca religions situates itself, not in the context of Castaneda and the others who constructed countercultural drug discourse, but in the line of sober scientific investigators who studied ayahuasca. This litany begins with the description of ayahuasca given by Manuel Villavicencio in a book about Ecuador's geography (Villavicencio 1858), continuing through the account by English botanist Richard Spruce, who encountered ayahuasca in 1850, but whose notes were not published until later (Spruce 1908), and then on to the great 20th century botanist of South American plants, Richard Evans Schultes, considered the world's foremost authority on the botany and traditional use of hallucinogenic plants at the

time of his death in 2001 (see, inter alia, Schultes and Hofmann 1980). In my view, this strategy is useful to contemporary anthropologists mainly because it establishes a naturalistic motive for the investigation of the ways ayahuasca is used now, and with it a certain scientific credibility. Scientists investigate nature for the same reason Sir George Mallory said he took on Mount Everest: "Because it's there"; similarly, I think, studies of ayahuasca use in Brazil have tended to soft-pedal their authors' position toward cultural politics of drug use as a motive for, and context of, such study, preferring to frame themselves as disinterested investigations of cultural phenomena.[9] I suspect this strategy is often a way to reassure skeptical administrators of a project's academic merits in the face of the social stigmatization of nonmedical drug use, and even of misgivings about the researcher's motives.

[9] This is certainly a generalization, but a broadly accurate one that points to the framing used by scholars working on ayahuasca, most of whom originate in the same segments of Brazilian society that were drawn to the version of Daimista practice associated with Sebastião Mota de Melo. It can even be extended, I am tempted to argue, to contexts in which the subject of discussion is explicitly the question of the anthropologist's objectivity when she participates in rituals involving ayahuasca drinking (see, for example, the discussion in Labate 2000). It should also be noted that several Brazilian scholars who write about ayahuasca self-identify as activists against drug prohibition; to this extent there is explicit engagement with drug politics.

Anthropology and psychedelics

Anthropology as a discipline did not escape the tremendous politicization of drug use in the United States, and in the West more generally, in the 1960s.[10] In 1966, at the American Anthropological Association's meetings in Pittsburgh, anthropologist Allan Coult proposed the creation of a subsection named Psychedelic Anthropology, only to be rebuffed by AAA president Frederica de Laguna when he attempted to formalize the organization. In January, 1967, de Laguna wrote Coult, explaining that the then-impoverished Association would not publish his call for members for this new subsection since "this could be construed as an endorsement by the American Anthropological Association of the taking of psychedelic drugs," and "might lead to difficulties with the many state and federal laws which we might be accused of infringing by sending such a notice through the mails," further depleting the group's coffers (de Laguna 1967). Castaneda, whose writing was initially received as anthropology and was reviewed in the discipline's journals, later found his work and ethics loudly denounced by those who took it upon themselves to analyze his oeuvre for

[10] Anthropologists had, of course, studied hallucinogenic drug use among indigenous peoples for decades; the Americanist tradition of studying peyote use, for example, is as old as the discipline itself (Mooney through La Barre, Schneider, and Slotkin). I single out this moment to begin this discussion because of the much-heightened salience hallucinogenic drugs assumed in popular discourse of the 1950s and 1960s, mediated by Wasson, Castaneda, and others—Aldous Huxley being an important figure not yet mentioned.

ethnographic verisimilitude and to declare it fictional (de Mille 1990). Harner may have escaped such harsh criticism, but he also left the discipline, and started the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, dedicated to distilling the techniques of “core shamanism” for modern benefit.

These events were hardly earthshaking within the disciplinary walls of anthropology, however; for the most part this work was not understood as relevant to the questions that animated privileged anthropological discourse: one did not see structuralists or cultural materialists citing Castaneda’s discussion of the “second attention,” for example. Debate about Castaneda and others involved mainly the authors, their defenders, and the attackers, without much staying power within the anthropological literature and with little engagement by the public, who in the end probably couldn’t be bothered to care much about standards of ethnographic research when reading a compelling story.

As “New Age” discourse became more prominent in popular culture, the anthropological trend leaders went in other directions, including preoccupation with the process of text production. Those anthropologists whose work was informed by their psychedelic drug experiences, such as Gregory Bateson, did not emphasize the fact in their writings, nor, to my knowledge, did they attempt publicly to contest the

criminalization of the "hippie drugs."[11] Indeed, some scholars raised the question of authenticity in such a way as to provide an anthropological rationale for the persecution of countercultural users of psychedelic drugs: Weston LaBarre, for example, the student of Native American peyote rituals, saw counterculture figures such as Aldous Huxley and Havelock Ellis as "ethnologically spurious, meretricious and foolish poseurs" (1975[1938]:xiv) whose dabbling in psychedelic plant rituals represented a vain refusal to countenance the foundation of Western ontology in *koiné* consensual reality, as opposed to the individual experience of spiritual potency he saw at the base of a Native American worldview. It would not be fair to blame LaBarre for the human rights violations of the drug war, but authoritative discourses like his have helped to provide a rationale for viewing psychedelic drug taking as aberrant in the context of Western modernity, and fundamentally alien to "our" philosophical and intellectual heritage. Within the discipline of anthropology, LaBarre's pronouncements set the tone for a division between a traditionalist, objectivist approach to indigenous ways with psychoactive plant drugs and a sensibility that took its cues from Castaneda's approach and Harner's claim, based on his yagé experience cited above, that

[11] Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, published in 1972, is sometimes viewed as inspired by his experiences with LSD. Bateson consulted with the CIA and other government agencies involved in "mind-control" programs such as MK-ULTRA (Price 2007), which involved LSD, and worked at the VA hospital in Palo Alto, California when aspiring author Ken Kesey participated in experiments with hallucinogens there. Bateson was first given LSD by CIA doctor Harold Abramson, and it was he who invited Beat poet Allen Ginsberg to take LSD at the Palo Alto hospital in 1959, according to Lee and Shlain (1985:58).

"anthropologists…had profoundly underestimated the importance of the drug in affecting native ideology."

The result of all this within academic anthropology has been an attenuated engagement with drug use and drug politics, particularly outside the niche "community health" and "prevention" paradigms. Allan Coult's vision of a "psychedelic anthropology," focused on categories such as subject, mind, and experience, partly came to pass with the genesis of the Anthropology of Consciousness subsection of the AAA in 1974 (Schwartz 2000), many of the founders of which were interested in parapsychology and viewed Castaneda's work as a paradigm shift for the discipline. The subsection has suffered from some stigmatization, as one senior anthropologist told me, as being populated with scholars whose motivation for their work is a desire "to get high."

A fuller discussion of how the cultural politics of the "war on drugs" has shaped anthropological discourse on psychedelic plants belongs elsewhere, but this brief outline will help to reveal a few points that are important to this study. One of these is the issue of research focus: most anthropological studies of the Brazilian ayahuasca religions have taken CEFLURIS as their focus; very few anthropologists, even at this writing in December, 2013, have conducted long-term fieldwork amongst the "traditionalist" groups in the Amazon (Goulart 2004 and, especially, Cemin 1998 are at least partial exceptions). In my estimation, this has to do with perceptions of difference

that are based in regional and class identity: the more affluent southern Brazilians who conduct most anthropological research in Brazil were initially drawn to CEFLURIS partly because it was present in various parts of the country and therefore salient to them, but especially, I think, because its connections to Brazil's leftist counterculture and what I characterized above as its forest-city-forest movement made it seem more interesting than the traditionalist groups.

Alto Santo thus appeared under-studied to me, but it was not just this "knowledge vacuum" that attracted my attention; it was also the way that the tension between Alto Santo's traditionalism and CEFLURIS's eclecticism pointed to the fundamentally conservative take on Brazilian society that Alto Santo embodied. This conservatism was the source of my apprehension about engaging with Dona Peregrina and Alto Santo, but it was also fascinating as an intellectual problem, given the anti-social (revolutionary / resistance / socially threatening) depictions of the "hippie drugs" in Western drug politics, that a drug-using religion could ground itself in traditional social forms. What happened in Acre to make this possible? This became a guiding question of my research.[12]

[12] The cultural-political context of drugs also helps make clear why my journey to Alto Santo was initially daunting: subject to the same suspicions as, say, the Anthropology of Consciousness subsection (viz., that

Why Alto Santo seemed interesting in light of all this

My first notice of Santo Daime came about 10 years before setting foot in Acre. As an exchange student to Brazil just out of high school, I heard incredulous whispers from some of my more (it bears pointing out) marginal acquaintances in my southern Brazilian host town, talk about a group where they drank a tea that "makes you very crazy" (*te faz ficar muito doido*). The vernacular implied similarity to the drug use of middle class Brazilian youths, an implication that set up the punch line: "And it's legal!" This was in 1992, the year when the government, after several years of study, declared religious ayahuasca use in Brazil a lawful cultural practice.[13]

What my *colegas* perceived with such clarity was that legal ayahuasca use presented a seeming contradiction: only seven years out from the end of a military regime whose darkest days saw political dissidents detained, tortured, and murdered, Brazil now seemed to be attesting to the moral legitimacy of countercultural drug use. Just as significant, it was a peak period for the global legitimacy of the United States-led drug war, and the thought of any of the "hippie drugs" escaping general prohibition seemed unthinkable to many.

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my overriding aim was to "get high"), I worried that I might be grouped invidiously with the "hippies," rather than viewed as a scholar.

[13] On the process of legal regulation of ayahuasca in Brazil, see MacRae (2008).

Encountering Dona Peregrina's stern attitude toward the cultural wave that carried Santo Daime to wider awareness, I wondered about the people at Alto Santo: who were they, sociologically speaking? Santo Daime in general seems to fall between LaBarre's "authentic" Indians and his "foolish poseurs" who appropriate their rituals: if there is a legitimate sense in which ayahuasca and its use are part of the history of Acre and of the Amazon region more broadly, it is still true that there was no question of becoming the Indian Other. The people who emigrated from Northeastern Brazil to the Amazonian rubber camps, it turned out, epitomized the "invisibility" of Amazonian non-Indians.[14]

The dynamic I discovered between Alto Santo and CEFLURIS mirrored, in some ways, the wider scenario. If LaBarre saw countercultural peyote (and other drug) use as spuriously mingling Western ontology and Native American cosmovision, what to make of the appropriation of ayahuasca by these Amazonian Brazilians, whose identities were already deeply hybridized from their African, Indian, and European origins? When they looked askance at CEFLURIS-linked practices, what kind of distinctions did they draw?

[14] It is ironic that many non-Indian Brazilians from Amazonia grew up (mis-)understanding Indians as relics of the region's past, no longer to be found there, while anthropologists, until quite recently, have had the opposite problem: with a few notable exceptions (Wagley 1953; Galvão 1955), Amazonia has appeared to be populated only by Indians, despite the fact that 95% of the region's population identifies as non-Indian (Nugent 1993; Harris 2000).

The importance of the Brazilian institution of the *casa* (house) to Alto Santo social organization, cosmology, and ritual practice dawned on me gradually. I did not appreciate its significance at first, partly because of the expectations I had that the thing of interest was how ayahuasca was used as a form of countercultural resistance. I realized, eventually, that much of what seemed interesting to me at Alto Santo was related to discourse about it as a *casa*, and the entailments that flowed from this, especially biographical discourse about Irineu Serra as an appropriate person to head such an instititution.

Organization of the dissertation

The general plan for the text is to offer segments focused first on history, broadly conceived, and then investigate Alto Santo ritual in light of this. Thus the dissertation begins by examining the implantation of particular social forms in rubber boom-era Acre and the notions of cosmological order that accompanied them. It then confronts the question of the "rise of the Master's House" within this context, showing how the institution's emergence from earlier practices with ayahuasca partook of key themes, such as civilization, progress, and conversion of indigenousness to Christianity, that were involved in the overarching project of bringing Acre into the nation.

Chapter one, “The historical formation of Acre,” takes its title from the magisterial three-volume account of Acre written by Leandro Tocantins (1979). My goal for the chapter is to outline the sociological categories and processes that contextualize the “Master’s House.” A key decision in the chapter organization was to minimize discussion of the particular case at hand here in order first to familiarize the reader with the discursive environment of Acre. The chapter is divided into three sections, corresponding to what I think are significant divisions in Acre’s chronology. An initial period runs from the first explorations of the region by non-Indians to the collapse, with the advent of Asian plantation latex in the 1910s, of the rubber boom. A time of “stagnation” followed the rubber collapse, when Acreans had to deepen their reliance on indigenous techniques of getting a living in order to make up for diminished trade with the outside world. This was when more thoroughgoing Acrean identities developed in practice. During a third phase of Acre’s history, beginning with its elevation to statehood in 1962, cultural politics and the representation of identity came to the fore.

The focus of the second chapter, “Between esotericism and indigenism” is the encounter, endlessly repeated, of emigrants to the Amazon with ayahuasca. The chapter’s primary claim is that ayahuasca had an important role in shaping how many of the settlers of Acre and the Amazon—those charged with implanting the nation, and civilization, in the jungle—viewed their mission there. Examining several early contexts

of ayahuasca use and the discourse about it, the chapter shows how Euro-Brazilians incorporated ayahuasca into their narratives of civilizational bridge-building. The influence went both ways: European esoteric philosophies, including Comtean Positivism, also shaped how emigrants to the Amazon understood their experiences with ayahuasca.

Among the many contexts of emigrant ayahuasca use, what really distinguished the career of Raimundo Irineu Serra was the drink's close association with his honor and name as a Brazilian citizen, and consequently with the house that he established. The third chapter takes on Brazilian notions of the house as a social institution of hierarchical encompassment, in which "greater" persons draw others into their spheres of influence and protection. It shows how discourse produced by followers of Irineu Serra construes him as a kind of Brazilian "big man" fit to lead such a house, and represents his work with ayahuasca (misunderstood as it was) as entirely consistent with, and even productive of, Brazilian Catholic moral values.

Making ayahuasca is a central process in Alto Santo social life, in material as well as semiotic terms. Chapter four details the steps of the *feitio*, the ritual process by which ayahuasca-Daime is made at Alto Santo. In documenting the procedural aspects of the *feitio*, the chapter aims to amplify their symbolic significance. For example, it shows how the framing around gathering the plant constituents for ayahuasca recapitulates the

motif of forest-to-town movement found in Daimista origin narratives. (This was the first chapter written.)

The final chapter, "'Here within this truth': Hymn-singing and 'spiritual work' at Alto Santo" shows how ritual experience at Alto Santo is organized around the encompassing figure of Irineu Serra as an avatar of truth. It examines the ways formal features of Daimista hymns encourage their entextualization, which in performance supports experiences of encounter with truth within a context of moral-self-examination.

Chapter One: The historical formation of Acre

Introduction

The present-day state of Acre, located in the western-most portion of the Brazilian Amazon, occupies an area approximately the size of the American state of Georgia. It is shaped like a bow, with its stave bulging toward the south / southwest and its string canted slightly southeast off an east-west axis. The western part of the state encompasses the Juruá River basin, and the Purus River is in the eastern half of the state; both of these sediment-rich "white water" rivers flow into the Amazon's main channel further to the east, in Amazonas state. Historically, the difficulty of travelling directly between the Juruá and Purus watersheds meant that each communicated more easily with Manaus than with one another.

Acre's longest borders are with the state of Amazonas to the northeast and with the Peruvian department of Ucayali to the west, and it shares shorter borders with the Pando department of Bolivia to the southeast and the Brazilian state of Rondônia to the east.[15] Although parts of Acre lie less than 200 miles from the Andean city of Cuzco, the

[15] Rondônia was named in honor of one of Brazil's national heroes, Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondôn, the famous military officer, explorer, avatar of civilization, and Positivist. See chapter three for more discussion of *Marechal* Rondôn's role in setting the tone of exploration in Brazil's backlands.

state's topography is relatively flat. Approximately 90% of the state was still covered in primary tropical forest in 2000, with the heaviest deforestation having occurred in its southeast corner, in the municipality of Rio Branco, the capital city on the Acre River (an affluent of the Purus).

For the purposes of this chapter, Acre's history can be divided into three periods. The first of these, from about 1877 to 1912, was a period of exploration and implantation of the rubber camp (*seringal*) model, the "conquest" of the region. The seringal was the key institution in Acre's development, as it established the forms of production and the social hierarchies whose continuity and transformation have been the stuff of the area's subsequent history. In the second period, the advent of Asian plantation rubber caused a collapse of global prices, and Acre entered a time usually viewed as "stagnant." In fact, in the interval between World Wars, Acrean society saw important developments as the urban areas took on a more stable shape, and economic diversification in the forest, necessitated by the price collapse, began to reflect the encounter with the indigenous people of the region. World War II brought a brief revival of the rubber monoculture, as well as new waves of emigrants to Acre, but it was also the beginning of a long goodbye to the rubber industry. The third period, from Acre's elevation to statehood in 1962 to the present, is marked by the demise of the credit system that underlay rubber extraction and by a wholesale shift of economic policy, promulgated by the post-1964

military regime, away from extractivism and toward cattle ranching. Beginning in the 1970s, however, the people whose livelihood was threatened by the conversion of the rubber camps into pasture organized resistance, melding social justice and environmental questions in a way that garnered international support in the changing political climate of the 1980s and 1990s. In the ensuing transformation of Acrean politics, the knowledge and "traditions" of Indians and rubber tappers gained new value as the "forest" became the central trope through which Acreans (and others) figured the state's relationship to the nation and the world.

By focusing on the economic and political history of Acre in this chapter, I am acknowledging the importance of outside forces in shaping the social context within which Alto Santo arose. My aim, however, is to present the following historical narrative, not as the cause or explanation of Alto Santo's coming into being, but as an outline of part of the context in which its practice—including not only its ritual life but also the processes that constitute its institutional existence—is made meaningful. Alto Santo has been constituted at each moment of its history through the conjuncture of global forces (the international rubber market), national aspirations (including Brazil's attempts, especially during military rule, at "modernization" through Amazonian development), and local and personal projects (the rise of "the house of Mestre Irineu"). As I show in later chapters, both the "inside" of Alto Santo and its relations with the

"outside" world must be understood within the changing geographical, ethnic, and political landscapes produced by the shifting alignments of these different levels.

I. 1877-1912: The rise and fall of the Golden Age of Rubber

Brazil's westward march

To a degree unusual in the rest of the Brazilian Amazon, the history of Acre state is the history of the rubber boom. Between 1850 and 1920, the rubber economy transformed the social and natural landscape of the Amazon and its tributaries. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants, the bulk of them from the Brazilian Northeast, took the long steamer ride up the Amazon to work the rubber trails of the *seringais*. First they settled in the Lower Amazon, where the rubber brought from the tributary rivers came together in towns and cities along the main stream, many of which had begun as colonial era forts or missions. These cities were also regional trade centers before the rubber era, gathering together the "backlands drugs" (*drogas do sertão*), such as sarsaparilla, cacao, cinnamon, and other products of forest flora and fauna that were objects of small-scale trade from the very beginning of Brazil's exploration.

As global demand increased, rubber entrepreneurs rapidly expanded their sphere of activity westward, toward the Andean headwaters of the Amazon. Here the situation was sometimes very different from that downstream, where pre-existing trade

networks were available for exploitation and expansion by the rubber industry, and settlements created at other historical moments could be repurposed as entrepots. In the Upper Amazon entire tributaries had seen little military presence, scientific exploration, or missionary activity up to the time of the boom. Acre's two largest rivers, the Purus and the Juruá, for example, flowed through territory that lay beyond the eastern horizon of Peruvian mission activity and at the western edge of Brazilian movement. Moreover, these rivers were often seen as being too threatening because of the fierceness of the Indians who lived along them, so early explorers including Humboldt, Spix and von Martius, and later Alfred Russel Wallace and Richard Spruce, favored other waterways, such as the Negro to the north or the Madeira to the south, in their journeys. The perceived "fierceness" of the indigenous peoples along the Purus and Juruá may have followed from the lack of forts in the area, which itself resulted not only from the distance of the Purus and Juruá basins from established centers of civilization, but also from a lack of sufficient economic motive to explore them. Thus, what would become the Acre territory also lay, at the middle of the 19th century, in an area where definitive international boundaries had yet to be set, let alone surveyed.

The Treaty of Tordesillas, signed in 1494 by the crowns of Portugal and Spain, had, in the absence of much practical knowledge of the New World, assigned the bulk of the vast Brazilian hinterland to Spain by purely cartographic fiat. A quarter-millennium later, the

Madrid treaty of 1750 gave to colonial Brazil something like its modern shape. This treaty reflected, in a way that the geometrical line of Tordesillas did not, the principle of *uti possidetis*, that whoever productively takes ownership over a territory has a legal claim to its ownership.

The Madrid treaty and the later treaty of Santo Ildefonso (1777) were concerned primarily with the Portuguese claim to missionary colonies in the south. As demand for rubber increased, however, the now-independent Brazil focused on its energies on pressing its claim to ever-larger areas of the Amazon. It was aided in its westward progress by the fact that possession of the deeper, downstream sections of the river network and of Atlantic ports gave it control of the only viable routes for large-scale exportation to the European and North American markets. The introduction of steam navigation on the Amazon in the 1850s opened relatively easy access to thousands of miles of tributaries of the main channel and their affluent rivers, some of them, such as the Purus and Juruá, navigable to within a few hundred miles of the Andes during the rainy season. This easier access meant Brazil could credibly claim, in many areas, that its citizens were making productive use of land that was nominally the property of other nations, invoking *uti possidetis*.

Acre in the rubber boom

In 1867 Brazil and Bolivia negotiated new boundaries in the Amazon that expanded Brazil's claim further westward, but which still left the Acre and Purus watersheds under Bolivian control. These two basins enclosed what was probably the best area for rubber in the entire Amazon valley, beginning with the Acre River, an affluent of the Purus and source of the highest quality "Pará fine" (as it was called after its port of export, Belém do Pará). Three socio-geographical qualities of Acre—its richness in rubber, its position straddling previously established (but un-surveyed) boundaries, and Brazilians' easier access to it—conspired with steadily increasing demand for rubber in the 1890s to make it rather suddenly, after four hundred years of European colonization, a focus of national governments and international capital, as well as a target of emigration from the arid Northeast.

The Purus River was first mapped in 1864-1865 by the English explorer William Chandless, who noted the rising fame of the area over the previous decade, which he attributed to "its richness in vegetable products," particularly rubber, which was found "up to as far as anyone has gone in search of it" (Chandless 1866:87-8). Brazilians such as Manuel Urbano da Encarnação had settled on the Purus as early as the 1850s, but Chandless's reports drew new attention to the area.

In the Brazilian parts of Amazonia, much of the rubber tapping was done by *nordestinos* (Northeasterners), the product of indigenous, European, and African miscegenation in the sugar-producing regions of the northeastern coast that were so important to the colonial economy. (This "type" is often referenced in Acre with the metonymic term *cearense*, since many emigrants to Amazonia came from the state of Ceará.) The Northeast was uniquely positioned to supply labor to the rubber camps. It had experienced great prosperity during the sugar economy of the early colonial era (1494-1822), but had been in a long economic contraction since the middle of the 17th century (Santos 1980:98). Moreover, cyclic droughts are a feature of life in the Brazilian Northeast, and a particularly vicious drought in 1877 forced many to choose between leaving and starving.

It was not only material hardship that motivated the migration of Northeastern Brazilians into the Amazon, however. Well-dressed flaks for the Amazonian rubber camps circulated throughout the cities of the Northeast, such as Fortaleza, Recife, Natal, and others, promising *nordestino* subsistence farmers the chance to earn an easy fortune and then return to their homeland, transformed by wealth (Santos 1980:108). In this romantic view, the rubber tapper was portrayed as autonomous: he would work independently in the forest, collecting his own rubber and selling it to the camp owner (*patrão*). Some of those who signed up for the rubber camps did return home, but many

were never heard from again. Of these, many died of malaria or other illnesses; others simply began new lives in the Amazon. (Still others returned only decades later; this was the case for Irineu Serra, who visited Maranhão in 1957 after 45 years in Acre.)

Estimates on the exact numbers of interregional migration in the rubber boom vary, but the scope is clear: according to the sources discussed in Santos (1980:99-100), between 300,000 and 500,000 migrant Brazilian *nordestinos* tried their luck in the Amazon between 1872 and 1910. Many of them headed for the seringais of Acre. In the Purus valley, the non-indigenous population increased from about 8,000 in 1877, the great drought year, to some 60,000 at the turn of the century (Church 1904:598).

Acre's history is usually told primarily with reference to these Northeasterners, who have been understood as the protagonists of the Acrean drama. Their suffering and their sacrifices are often folded into narratives of national progress, compared to the conquest of the southern hinterlands by the *bandeirantes* ("flag-bearers") whose earlier feats of *desbravamento* ("de-wilding") are an important element of nationalist histories of Brazil. Because of their valor, these narratives suggest, the nation is closer today to realizing its Positivist motto, "Order and Progress." Another side of these stories, of course, is the violent subjugation of indigenous peoples in all parts of the country, justified by the supposed savagery of the Indians, the mission to save souls, the expansion of civilization, or some combination of these motives. While this side has

often been ignored, in the last few decades anthropologists working in Acre have learned an impressive amount about the variability of these contact situations, and about how they were experienced by indigenous peoples. If the “rescue” of multiple perspectives on Acrean life in the rubber boom upsets the dominant views of this history, what is more important for my purposes here is achieving a multidimensional understanding of relations between Amerindians and emigrant rubber tappers in the region. Only by appreciating the contradictions and ambiguities of their interactions can we contextualize Irineu Serra’s appropriation (and transformation) of ayahuasca as Daime.

Here I want to keep the experience of the Northeastern rubber tappers in focus, but not in support of a Brazilian nationalist history. I am more interested in illuminating the kinds of relationships rubber tappers and indigenous people established during the boom because these relationships conditioned the spread of knowledge about ayahuasca to the emigrant population. Former rubber tappers, not Indians, were the ones who came to Irineu Serra’s house in search of healing. And yet, despite its Christianization as Daime, ayahuasca’s connection to the forest and to the people of the forest has persisted in Alto Santo narrative and song. What is the significance of this connection for people at Alto Santo? I will take up this question more directly in chapter two. For the present, I want to outline the kinds of interactions the expansion of the

rubber industry in Acre brought about between tappers and Indians. While these relations were mediated by the "language of violence" that was the *lingua franca* of the seringal system (Wolff 1999), they were not only destructive: relationships, lives, and identities were made from the encounters of Indians and rubber tappers in Acre.

Caboclos and cariús in Acre: Violence and exchange

As elsewhere in Amazonia, little is known about the configuration of Indian society in Acre before the arrival of Europeans on the continent, and the available information is marked by its "fragmentary and conjectural character" (Aquino 1977:38). John Hemming estimates that in pre-Columbian times there were 30,000 indigenous people in the Purus and Acre river basins, and another 22,000 along the Juruá (1978:501). In the historical era the indigenous societies of the area have been small-scale, semi-nomadic horticulturalists, but large earthworks ("geoglyphs") exposed by clearcutting in eastern Acre and across the Bolivian border suggest that large-scale societies may once have occupied the area (Pärssinen, Schaan, and Ranzi 2009; see also Heckenburger and Neves 2009).

The languages spoken by the indigenous peoples whom the rubber tappers encountered in Acre belonged to two linguistic families, Pano and Arawak. As early as 300 AD a network of Arawak groups had occupied the border area between the Andes and the

lowlands as far east as the Ucayali River in what is today Peru, and were involved in trade relations that linked the highlands and the forest (Renard-Casevitz 1992). Various Pano-speaking groups occupied the areas farther to the east, in the Juruá, Purus, Madre de Dios, and Madeira river basins, which straddled the Peru-Brazil and Bolivia-Brazil borders. They probably migrated into the area from the Beni and Guaporé basins to the southeast between 100 and 300 AD (Erikson 1992). The boundaries between the Arawak-speaking peoples to the west and the Panoan groups to the east were made permeable by trade and intermarriage (Renard-Casevitz). Still, interethnic warfare was common enough that the rubber tappers in Acre came to understand the Ashaninca (an Arawak group formerly known as the Kampa) as traditional enemies of the Pano groups in the area, and occasionally pitted them against one another. These Pano groups dominated the Acre territory at the start of the rubber boom, most prominently among them the Kaxinawá, Katukina, Yawanáwa, and Amahuaca.

As rubber camps were opened further and further upstream, encounters with Indians were common. The dominant view of contact with these forest societies was framed by the larger project of rubber exploitation as the productive and civilized subjugation of the natural environment: the Indians had either to be transformed from “wild” (*brabo*) to “tame” (*manso*)—a process equally often viewed in an explicitly religious aspect as “catechism”—or else eliminated from the sphere of civilization’s activity. Thus, Mariana

Pantoja Franco identifies three possibilities for indigenous peoples who come into contact with the rubber industry: integration, expulsion, or decimation (Franco 2001:15). This formulation captures well a sense of the rubber economy as civilization's juggernaut, altering the landscapes it occupies without itself being altered. But, as Franco's work illustrates, if the rubber economy was seen as (and in some ways in fact was) a kind of monolithic "civilizing agent" toward the Indians and the wild landscape with which they were identified, framing it this way obscures some of the particularities of the Acrean situation. For one thing, not only Indians but also newly arrived tappers were transformed from *brabo* to *manso* as they learned to be socially useful in the rubber camp environment. (This nomenclature is a bit of a puzzle: to what degree does the similarity in terminology reflect commonalities in the ways these "taming" processes were conceived of and experienced?) Moreover, to imagine a self-contained civilization engaged in constant purification of wild elements within it diverts attention from the ways that people, technologies, and ideas moved between tappers and Indians.

For Terri Vale de Aquino, relations between Indians and rubber tappers in Acre took place within an incipient structure of complementary identities, *caboclo* and *cariú*. *Cariú* is used by Indians in Acre to designate "all the Brazilians in the area who have links to rubber extraction," while the term *caboclo* is used, more generally, "to designate, indiscriminately, all the survivors and descendents of the various indigenous groups of

the region" (1977:73). It is thus a binary classification, formed in the historical experience of the rubber boom, in which prior distinctions were subsumed under a rubric that offered a basic contrast between autochthon and emigrant, savage and civilized. In Aquino's account the *caboclo* / *cariú* duality is interesting partly for the way that it is transformed during the 1970s, as southerners began buying large land tracts in Acre and a new duality emerged, in which rubber tappers and Indians were on the same side, united in their opposition to the "destroyers of the forest." But his main concern is certainly the ways that the designation *caboclo*, through its negative valuation of all things indigenous, conspired in the justification of oppression.

Scholars have split opinions on whether *caboclo* designates a "real" sociological phenomenon or not. Some, such as Harris (2000) and Nugent (1993) use it to name the "invisible" Amazonians who are not generally recognized as Indians, by themselves or others, but who are the product of historical contact between Indians and other Brazilians, and who make extensive use of indigenous technologies and environmental knowledge.[16] Along the lines of this quasi-adjectival sense of the word, Weinstein

[16] In this sense their view approximates that of the noted Amazonian historiographer Arthur Cézar Ferreira Reis (1953:118), for whom there is little question of the category's reality as a label for a biological-cum-social entity: Amazonian caboclos were "descended from the 'tapuios' who had left tribal life and scattered along the rivers and streams, lakes and ponds, in little homesteads, and maintained daily contact, through commercial transactions, with those said to be representatives of Western civilization adapted to the Americas."

(1983:90) argues for the analytical validity of a “caboclo lifestyle” consisting of a "subsistence orientation combined with limited market production, participation in several different economic activities, [and] organization of production around the individual household." Others (e.g., Pace 1997) argue that scholars should eschew *caboclo* altogether because of its derogatory connotations.[17]

Such debates seem beside the point to the extent that they offer an exclusive opposition between the objective reality of a caboclo essence (or economic form) and pejorative name-calling. It is analogous, I think, to asking whether “races” really exist: rationalist critiques of the basis for racialized discourses do not immediately dispel their classificatory force in ordinary discourse or undo, from one moment to the next, social exclusion based on their judgments of kind and value.

In my understanding, the *caboclo* concept is part of a system of classification that indexes the historical encounter of indigenous people and other Brazilians in the Amazon (cf. Gow 1991). It designates not so much a physical type or a kind of person, as a protean quality of indigenousness that can be attributed to a wide range of phenomena, including individuals but also foods, technologies, forms of sociality, and

[17] Lima’s work on the *caboclo* category (Lima 1992) was not available to me for consultation, but appears to be a study of the ways the category is used across various contexts, assuming in some of them a positive function of supporting a “local” identity, while reclaiming a term used in derogatory fashion by others.

moral qualities (cf. Bashkow 2006 on Orokaiva uses of the concept of the *whiteman*). Although the qualifier *caboclo* certainly has a moral valence, one which has often been extremely negative and has served to justify heinous acts (as I will illustrate in more detail in a moment), its value has changed over time, and is in any case a function of the particular context in which it is employed.

That *caboclo* is a plastic and contingent category is made clearer when we consider the fact, noted by several scholars (Aquino 1977, Wolff 1999, Franco 2001), that while Acrean ideas about the term resonate with its broader Amazonian usage, the scope of reference tends to be different. Whereas in the broader Amazonianist literature *caboclo* has usually contrasted “acculturated” Indians and their descendents with forest Indians, in the Acre of the rubber boom it could refer to Indians on either side of the perceived civilizational divide, and functioned basically as a synonym of *índio*: there were *caboclos brabos* and *caboclos mansos* (Cemin 1998; Iglesias 2008), “wild” and “tame” Indians.

Charles Wagley, in his classic study of Amazonian social life on the lower Amazon (1953:140), notes the peculiar, allonymic usage of the term in the community of Gurupá: along with the classifier *tapuia*, which Wagley says designates an “American Indian physical type,” *caboclo* is "used in a sense of dispraisal; people do not use them when speaking directly to people of Indian physical characteristics." For Wagley, there is a profound sense of shame attached to the category that is related to the inferior

position of indigenous qualities within the Brazilian schemes of social classification as evidenced at the time of his research. Even the “Negro” has more pride in “his” slave roots than the descendents of indigenous peoples, who “do not like to be reminded of their Indian ancestry” (1953:141). Because Indian slave labor was more common in the Amazon than African slavery was, Wagley argues, “Indian physical characteristics are therefore a symbol not only of slave ancestry but also of a social origin in colonial times lower than the Negro's" (ibid.).

Like other images of “primitive others,” it should be pointed out that the ideal of the *caboclo* is ambivalent. Not everything about the *caboclo* is negative. Writes Wagley, “The caboclo appears as a good hunter and fisherman. He has a special sensitivity for the habits of animals and he knows almost instinctively where and how to hunt or fish. No one can remember a famous hunter who was not a 'caboclo with but three hairs on his chin’” (Wagley 1953:141). The “nature” of the caboclo, which for Wagley is bracketed as a local view of social categories, gets a realist treatment by Ferreira Reis (1953:118), for whom a kind of salt-of-the-earth integrity attends the *caboclo* type:

> They are a typical product of telluric forces. Rowers, boat builders, fishermen, bush guides. The forest and the waters keep no secrets from them. They know how to traverse and ripple through them without hesitation or misgiving. They identify all the flora and fauna, with their habits and particularities, quickly and surely. The rivers, lakes, and the forest provide them with food through fishing, hunting, and fruits, which they eat or make into drinks.

In this account, it is the caboclo's origin in "telluric forces"—his identification with earthly nature—that determines his social utility. Indeed, when one considers the omnipresence of native or local guides and pilots in efforts to conquer the Acrean wilderness, from Manuel Urbano da Encarnação's assistance of William Chandless in exploring the region in the 1860s, to the contracting of locals as translators and guides in the border survey expeditions of the 1910s and 1920s, such type descriptions appear as left-handed compliments to the local *caboclos* that both acknowledge and diminish their ability. Even as high-status officials and explorers depended on *caboclos* to navigate and survive within the Amazonian landscape, they commonly derided them as inferior beings.

If the closeness of the *caboclo* to nature made "his" skills indispensable to Brazilian conquest of the forest, it also underwrote a stereotype of innate moral incapacity that made sense of the low social position of the *caboclos* and justified their treatment. Aquino (1977:74) compiles a series of qualities attributed to the *caboclo* in *cariú* discourse: they are "lazy," "vagabonds," "irresponsible," "lacking ambition," "inconstant," "otiose," "thieves," "without future," "treacherous," "vengeful," "distrustful," "savage," "infantile," "sorcerers," "drunks," "animals." Such portraits of the caboclo, it should be noted, likely reveal more about the tappers than they do about those they are meant to characterize. In this series of associations, writes Aquino,

"there is implicit the idea that the negative characteristics of the *caboclo* are, in inverted form, the positive qualities attributed to the *cariú*" (1977:74). In some sense, then, the "caboclo" comes to symbolize the obstacles to civilization, at the same time as it represents local knowledge crucial to survival in the forest. This is a point to which I will return throughout this dissertation. For now, let me anticipate later discussion a bit by noting that, in Alto Santo discourse about the beginning of Irineu Serra's "mission," it is from the hands of a "Peruvian *caboclo*" that he first receives ayahuasca.

Correrias

In this section I characterize the most violent aspects of tapper-Indian relations, typified by the *correria* raids, then move to a brief consideration of ways this focus hides the variety of forms of interaction and exchange between them. I return to the issue of adoption of indigenous knowledge in the section below on the post-boom period; here I conclude with a discussion of the life of Felizardo Cerqueira, a famed Acrean "Indian tamer," as a means of illustrating the ways that interaction of tappers and Indians took on productive forms, even within violent and unequal relations.

During the golden age of rubber, recruitment of Indian labor does not appear to have been a significant priority in the Acre region, as it was in some other parts of the Amazon (Aquino 1977:41). From the perspective of rubber camp owners, Indians were a

threat to the industry, and had generally to be “tamed,” “catechized,” or killed. According to Constant Tastevin, a French Catholic missionary, from about 1890 Brazilian tappers began coming up the Tarauacá, Envira, and Muru rivers in western Acre, traditional lands of the Kaxinawá, Kulina, and Katukina, expulsing and killing Indians there (Tastevin 1926). Rubber camps were typically opened by a *mateiro* (from *mato*, meaning “bush” in the sense of wilderness), woodsmen who knew the forest well enough to construct the paths that connected the rubber trees in a circuit. Keeping these paths open meant preventing Indians from obstructing them, and from stealing supplies from tappers or killing them. It was something of an open secret, writes Aquino, that “many seringal owners maintained and paid professional *mateiros* whose principal function was less that of ‘opening’ rubber trails than that of killer and assassin of “wild Indians” [*índios brabos*]” (1977:42).

Rubber tappers were also killed, on occasion, by the indigenous peoples whose lands they invaded; more frequently, their belongings were stolen, their huts burned, and the rubber trails they attempted to open were blocked with tangles of vines and trees. The infamous *correrias* (from the verb *correr*, which means ‘to run’ in both Spanish and Portuguese) were the standard mode of avenging such thefts and attacks on rubber camps. They were usually led by a guide who was either a “tamed” Indian or a Northeastern “Indian tamer” (*amansador de índio*). The guide would first track the

Indians to their dwelling place with a group, and then surround it. The men, well-armed, waited until dawn, then opened fire. Correrias were notoriously violent, and recountings of them at their worst mention atrocities including "cutting [Indian men's] testicles and putting them in their owner's mouth; throwing Indian children in the air and sticking them on a knife; slaughters that covered everything (the stream, the feet of whoever arrived) in the red of their blood" (Pantoja 2003:18).

Alfredo Lustosa Cabral, a privileged Northeasterner whose brother owned a rubber camp in Acre, and who spent ten years in the region during the height of the boom, described a correria as follows:

> On the opposite side of the river, in front of the seringal Redemption, lived the Katukina. They attacked a tapper's hut at the place called Primavera, near ours. They killed three people and took what they found.
>
> A correria was quickly organized. Quick and decisive action was needed. It was twenty men together, with three hundred Winchester cartridges each. Redemption provided four young men, the rest were gotten from other seringais. Penetrating the bush, they came upon the village [*malocas*] after almost three days' travel. There was a huge garden, full of crops, on a high plain, and in the center a big house…
>
> They arrived at six in the evening, when the savages are usually gathered at home. They slept a ways away. At five in the morning they advanced, forming a closed line of fire. With alarmed yells the Indians came running out of one door and the other, and at that moment the true aim of the attackers put them on the ground. The slaughter was great, but many managed to flee.
>
> Approaching the big house they were able to capture about fifteen *curumins* [Indian children] between eight and ten years old. The little ones they left. …

> On the return, the prisoners began to yell too much, making it necessary to abandon them, leaving them stranded. Others practiced savagery, blowing open the heads of the innocent with bullets.
>
> Thus the whole village left for faraway places, and never returned to massacre the workers of the seringais there. [1985(1950):61-62]

The violence of these raids, and the further atrocities documented against Indians during the rubber boom in other places (Casement 1912; Taussig 1987), constitute cruelty of genocidal proportions. In Pantoja's words, "the indigenous peoples who inhabited the areas where rubber trees occurred were subjected to extreme violence—physical, moral, and cultural—that resulted in the disappearance of several ethnic groups…" (2003:17). At the same time, this research, as well as that of several others (Aquino 1977, Wolff 1999, Iglesias 2008) shows that too tight a focus on the violence, severe as it was, obscures other aspects of contact between tappers and Indians in the rubber boom. For Pantoja, whose primary informant was the daughter of an Indian woman captured in a raid as a child, such work is aimed partly at the humanistic goal of ensuring that individual lives "are not seen only through the prism of denunciation and victimhood" (2003:15).

These authors' work also adds depth to our understanding of the kinds of relationships that were established between émigrés of the rubber economy and indigenous people. It has frequently been reported, for example, that indigenous girls and women were

sometimes captured and made wives or concubines of rubber bosses, as well as domestic servants; sometimes rubber bosses would “give” Indian women to good workers. Pantoja’s and Wolff’s work shows the affective side of such relationships, which were conceived in violence, but resulted in the formation of kinship relations, as well as the exchange of cultural knowledge.

Felizardo Cerqueira: Indian “tamer” and cultural mediator

Aquino’s and Iglesias’s discussions of the life of Felizardo Cerqueira are also very helpful for comprehending the range of forms of interaction between rubber industry personnel and indigenous people (Aquino 1977; Iglesias 2008). Cerqueira gained fame in the western part of Acre as a “tamer” (*amansador*) or “catechist” (*catequizador*) of Indians in the 1910s and 1920s. In an autobiographical narrative, discussed extensively by Iglesias (2008), Cerqueira explains the beginning of his career as the result of a visceral reaction to the injustice of the *correrias*, which he aimed to stop by finding a way to integrate Indians into the rubber trade. His method was to take a small group of rubber tappers, often with a “tame” Indian who could speak the language of the target group, and to capture one or more Indians. These were then brought to the rubber camp, where they were shown around in order to make them “aware of our friendship and ways of treatment” (Iglesias 2008:201). After a few weeks, Cerqueira would return

his captives to their forest home with gifts, in the hope that permanent trade relations could be established.

In this way, Cerqueira began to establish himself as a kind of "father" to the Indians, a *bom patrão* ("good patron") who could protect them from depredations and provide them with the "merchandise," or manufactured goods that quickly became indispensable, such as machetes and guns. In the 1910s, Cerqueira brought a group of Kaxinawá to work on his seringal Revisão on the river Jordão; some say that they were his slaves, and it is well documented that he marked many of them with his initials, tattooed upon their forearm (Aquino 1977:43; Pantoja 2003:22; see especially Iglesias 2008:302-303). These Indians were, in fact, known as "Felizardo's Kaxinawá," and they tapped rubber for him and, eventually, served him as a security force when he was contracted by other rubber bosses to "pacify" the Indians around their seringais. Despite their subordination to Cerqueira's will, Kaxinawá individuals interviewed by Aquino in the 1970s did not view him in completely negative terms, and saw in Cerqueira a different type than Indian killers or slave raiders, such as the infamous Pedro Biló. Said one:

> Pedro Biló didn't tame Indians (*amansar caboclo*). Pedro Biló killed caboclos... Felizardo Cerqueira tamed caboclos, gave merchandise to us caboclos... Felizardo and [his uncle and mentor] Angelo Ferreira tamed Indians to work for them. All of us here worked with Felizardo. (Aquino 1977:43)

The markings made by Cerqueira denoted a kind of ownership, to be sure, but the relationship they signified had a positive side in that it gave the Indians a place, however inferior, within rubber camp society, and thus protected them from being targeted as "wild." We must not ignore the coercive aspect of this situation, in which subservience, inscribed on the body, is the price of protection from the terrors of the correrias. Nevertheless, at least some of "Felizardo's Kaxinawá" and their descendents speak of Felizardo's tattooing in ways that frame it, not as a loss of freedom and identity, but as a constructive process of conversion from "wild" (*brabo*) to "tame" (*manso*). The mark was like a "birth certificate" that contributed to—if it did not in itself enact—passage into a condition of "civilization." The "FC" tattooed on their arms was, one Kaxinawá man told Iglesias in 2007, "the Indians' first document" (Iglesias 2008:303, n. 301). If his initials were like a birth certificate, then Cerqueira was, in some sense, like a father to "his" Indians, helping them to be reborn into civilization, baptized with Christian names. They, in turn, displayed fierce loyalty and great deference toward him. Tastevin describes, in somewhat Conradian terms, Cerqueira's "harem" of women and his warrior men who were "ready to spill their blood" for him (Tastevin 1926:48; cited in Iglesias 2008:307).

Cerqueira himself is said to have bragged of having fathered 80 children by Indian women (Aquino 1977:43). It is not clear whether he raised any as his own, although he

did acknowledge his “companion” Raimunda, a Kaxinawá woman, in his autobiography (albeit without explaining who she was; Iglesias 2008:306). One child known to have been Cerqueira’s was raised by his “tame” Indian employee, and in the 1940s took control of a rubber camp. This was known as the “caboclo seringal” because of its all-Kaxinawá workforce, and the son in question, Sueiro Sales, was known as the “caboclo boss” (Pantoja 2003:24). This kind of situation, in which a non-Indian becomes the “boss” of a group of indigenous people whose labor he controls, was not typical of the rubber economy in Acre. Gow (1991) suggests that it was fairly common in Amazonian Peru, however, for rubber bosses to control Indian labor by establishing exchange relations with indigenous leaders in an arrangement that echoed the “indirect rule” of imperial Britain.

Both cases reveal that straightforward enslavement through physical coercion was not the only way, or even the most common one, that indigenous people came to tap rubber. Instead, through the formation and manipulation of alliances, rubber bosses took advantage of existing social obligations to direct labor toward rubber extraction. Cerqueira’s case in particular is interesting for my purposes here because it reveals something of the perspective of the Kaxinawá people who took Cerqueira as their patron. Their testimony makes clear the error of viewing the relationship only in terms of economic exploitation. At the least, it reveals the extent to which notions of

civilization were hegemonic, insofar as some Kaxinawá came to value positively Cerqueira's tutelage because it helped them advance on the path from savagery to civilization, a movement that they came to accept as necessary.

Many groups of Indians, rather than participate in the rubber economy, fled to the headwaters, to areas where there were few rubber trees. And yet it was not a one-way door; Aquino notes that the Kaxinawá studied by Kenneth Kensinger on the Peruvian side of the border, who are framed as more "traditional" because of their isolation from the rubber industry, also occasionally descended the rivers to work for a time. The relationships established in the context of the rubber industry created social networks, however steeped in violence, which linked different kinds of persons: rubber bosses, tappers, "tame" and "wild" Indians, men and women. They also formed connections between the more remote parts of the forest, the rubber camps, and the towns. The fact that these relationships between *caboclos* and *cariús* perpetuated inequality did not impede the circulation of cultural knowledge and people along the routes they established, although it clearly shaped the values attached to them.

As "wild" Indians were made "tame" and became an integral, if denigrated, part of the social landscape of the rubber economy, Acre witnessed a process whereby "the management of difference comes to take place in a situation of intense contact—and the differences find common languages" (Pantoja 2003:25). *Caboclos* did not become

cariús, but they did become "tame"; *cariús*, likewise, showed greater or lesser openness to indigenous culture. (The fact that there is no equivalent, even in the opposite direction, of the wild-to-tame movement of *caboclos* for the *cariús* underscores the hierarchical nature of the intercultural relationship: it was the Indians who were expected to change.) Felizardo Cerqueira is an example of an individual who was particularly open to this kind of exchange (to coin a neologism, one might say he became a "*cariú brabo*"). He is known to have embraced aspects of Indian cultures, especially of those Kaxinawá with whom he made his life: Cerqueira lived with "his" Kaxinawá, had children with them, participated in their dances, drank ayahuasca with them, and used snuff with them.[18] Cerqueira writes passionately in his autobiography about his "mission" to bring civilization to Acre's Indians, but it is clear that the exchange went both ways. His example shows that, although the "language of violence" (Wolff 1999) was the dominant form of communication between Indians and rubber tappers, communicate they did.

[18] This information is from Iglesias (2008). It should be noted that Cerqueira's autobiographical manuscript, which was composed partly to justify his claim to a government pension based on his work "taming" Indians in service of the *pátria*, is saturated with proclamations of his affinity with forest Indians, but omits the details of his personal involvement with them. Although at least one non-Indian in Acrean society had already published an account of his personal experience with ayahuasca by the time Cerqueira composed his memoir, and Mestre Irineu himself had been mentioned, respectfully if with some irony, in a novel (Freire 1920; Medeiros 1942; see chapter 2), Cerqueira may have deemed such details too sensitive to reveal in a venue in which his honor as a Brazilian citizen was at stake.

Aviamento

The initial settlement of rubber camps in Acre took place in a haphazard scramble. Land seemed limitless, and titles were nonexistent, forged, and sometimes overlapping, given the multiple authorities at play at various points (the Bolivian government, the government of Amazonas state, and the governments of Galvez and Plácido de Castro). The rubber camp model that prevailed in Acre varied somewhat from the situation in the lower and middle Amazon regions, where diversification of rubber tapping with subsistence agriculture, small animal husbandry, and collection of other forest products was fairly common, and resulted in a lesser degree of rubber tapper dependence on the camp owner and the company store (Bakx 1988). As the rubber economy installed itself in the parts of the western Amazon that had few non-Indian settlers, however, there prevailed a model in which large seringais were worked by many tappers who, brought in by steamer specifically as laborers, lived in near-total subjection to the camp owner and were forced to trade exclusively with the company store, or *barracão*.

Particularly during the height of the rubber boom, between 1890 and 1910, exclusivity of exchange between the rubber tapper and the company store was pursued through a credit structure known in Brazil as *aviamento*, and in the Spanish-speaking Amazon as *habilitación* and other names (see Gow 1991). Under *aviamento*, a rubber camp owner would contract with merchant houses in downriver cities, especially Belém and Manaus,

to outfit workers and transport them upriver in exchange for rubber to be delivered at the end of the tapping season. The tappers would thus arrive in the rubber camps already in debt to the owner. Forbidden to hunt, fish, or grow crops, they had to buy all their food and supplies from the barracão at prices set by the owner. Such prohibitions were justified by owners as ways to increase rubber production, but as several authors have noted, they functioned to create dependence upon the *barracão* and the owner by leveraging tappers' basic necessities (e.g., Coelho 1982, Souza 2002). As Peter Gow (1991) observes, the transfer of rubber under these circumstances is more of a "turning in" of what already belongs to another, than it is a sale between independent agents, making the system one of debt cancellation rather than credit.

Rubber tapper debts were notoriously difficult to pay off, particularly given the manipulation rubber camp personnel often engaged in to keep tappers in debt. Scholars have documented various examples of profiteering in which rubber camp bosses inflated prices of merchandise 100 percent or more relative to downstream markets, then shorted tappers by paying far under market price for the rubber they produced, or adjusted the weight downward to account for loss of mass through drying; sometimes, too, rubber camp personnel used writing and arithmetic to mystify tappers and increase their advantage over them (Aquino 1977, Santos 1980, Weinstein 1983). In the "golden age" of rubber (and beyond, especially in the Juruá valley in the western part of the

state), owners of rubber camps also sought to keep control of their workers by forbidding them to leave until their debt had been liquidated. They agreed amongst themselves to refuse to take on any tapper whose debts to another owner had not been liquidated, so that for many workers it was impossible to leave even a situation that was clearly unjust. Local police often colluded in the system by arresting "fugitive" tappers who left with a seringal with a debit in their account.

Although tappers owed monetary debts to the rubber camp owners—debts that were explicitly recorded in account books and which therefore had objective existence—there was also a sense that a tapper owed his boss a moral debt because the latter took responsibility for his welfare. Indeed, the acknowledgement of such indebtedness was part of what made an individual a *patrão,* which is one of the reasons that rubber camp owners sought to be recognized as a "good boss" (*um bom patrão*), one who would help workers, or at least good workers, in time of need. Thus, assistance with medical care, sponsorship of festivities on saints' days, and other acts that showed a concern for individual tappers represented not only economic calculations, but also moral gambits aimed at maintaining a sense of loyalty in the workers which complemented their monetary debts. Bosses were concerned not only with rubber production, but with their "face," in the sense that Goffman gave to the term, as something that is "cathected" to the individual, but which depends upon social judgments for its value (Goffman 1959).

However dominant their position was, rubber camp owners did not want to be known as a "bad boss" (*um mau patrão*), for reasons both affective and instrumental.

The qualities of a bad boss resided not merely in the inequities of his contractual arrangements with his workers, or his failure to fulfill the fair terms of an agreement; they were also interpersonal. To be sure, making and honoring fair contracts was indispensable to being a "good boss," but it was not the only consideration. It was important, too, that a "good boss" receive people well, which in practice meant to treat men in face-to-face encounters in ways that preserved the honor of their "name" or the integrity of their "face" in Goffman's sense. This was particularly true in the negotiation of arrangements, such as rubber tapping, that highlighted the dependence of the tapper upon the boss. A simple slight, even if it did not lead to violence, was certainly no foundation for establishing a relationship of mutual trust and loyalty. Speaking of the figure of the "bad boss," one Acrean man told Santos and Muaze (2002:52):

> If a tapper shows up at his company store [*barracão*] and he [the boss] is brutish with the tapper, doesn't receive him well, the tapper takes a disliking to him, right? Then, next day, he doesn't want any more, asks for his account and takes off. Not so with the good boss. Guys stick with him and work for him their whole life. Their whole life long, no complaints, right?

Workers in the rubber camps were thus subject to a production scheme that put them in a position of dependence and made it hard to exercise their autonomy, as studies of the rubber trade have long made clear (and not all of them Marxist). But what governed

life in the *seringal* was not simply an economic system in the narrow sense, but social relations with roots in quite familiar Brazilian forms. In particular, the relationship that the tapper established with the *patrão*, with its mix of benevolence, encompassment, and oppression, recalled the mutually dependent patronage relationships of colonial Brazilian plantation society.

Labor and life in the seringal

The focus of any *seringal* is the *barracão*, built at the camp's "margin" near the main waterway, either on high ground or else on hardwood stilts to guard against flooding in the rainy season. This structure, a combination of company store, trading post, owner's residence, and fortress, is the primary sign of patriarchal authority in the rubber camp landscape (Tocantins 1979:163). It separates out a clearing in the wilderness, often surrounded by a bit of pasture for milk cows and chickens, beyond which lies the forest, or "center,"[19] in which the huts of the workers spread over the expanse of the camp, sometimes a distance of several days' travel.

[19] The same term, *centro*, is commonly used in Brazil to designate the "downtown" or city center in urban contexts. The notion that the "center" of the rubber camp lies in its more remote parts, while its "margin" abuts the watercourse that is the point of contact with the outside world, suggests a forest-centric perspective on the *seringal*. This seems to be in tension with dominant views, which figured the camps as the antipodes of civilization, but it may be related to a shift in the way tappers understood their relationship to the forest, as I discuss below.

The texture of authority on the seringal shows continuity with social forms developed in Brazil's colonial endeavors on the coast. The patrão and his family, ensconced in the relative comfort of the barracão, "rehearsed certain principles of the patriarchal civilization of the Northeast," in the words of Tocantins (1979:164). As the center of this patriarchal power, the barracão was "a fledgling copy, in wood and tile, or wood and zinc, or wood and thatch, or even wood and shingles, of the big-houses of stone and whitewash of the sugar mills" of the Northeast (ibid.:156). In contrast to these "lords of the mill" (*senhores do engenho*), the rubber camp owners were sometimes called, ironically, "riverbank colonels" (*coronéis de barranco*)—a moniker that alluded to their provincialism and the vanity of their *nouveau riche* purchase of military titles.

Santos (1980:63) identifies two distinct factions on the *seringal,* the "exploitation personnel" and the "administrative personnel"—that is, those directly involved in the extraction of latex, and those who oversaw them. The owner sat at the top of the hierarchy, delegating much of the responsibility for maintaining order in the day-to-day operations to the manager of the *seringal*. The bookkeeper kept track of the workers' debts, while the cashier was responsible for the merchandise in the company store. To *seringueiros* with a surplus of rubber production, cashiers extended credit for food, drink and European goods. For those who owed excessively or were otherwise in disfavor they restricted access to the bare necessities (Tocantins 1979:164-5).

Between the laborers and the administrators there were several other positions, notably the *comboeiros*, whose mule trains worked the forest paths, carrying the precious latex from the *estradas* to the *barracão*, which could be several days' journey from the huts of the more peripheral workers (Tocantins 1979:165).

The production routes of the *seringal*, called *estradas* or roadways, were meandering, roughly circular paths which led through the forest from rubber tree to rubber tree and back to their starting place, usually near the worker's hut. According to Tocantins (1979:163-4), each *estrada* would link about 150-200 rubber trees, and it was not unusual for a decent-sized *seringal* to boast 200 estradas, grouped in clusters, which would require perhaps 65 or 70 rubber tappers. Some of the Acrean rubber camps had hundreds of tappers (Bakx 1988).

During the dry season from May to October, before daily rains make tapping impossible, the tapper's day would begin before dawn. Lighting his head-mounted *poronga* lamp, he walked his trails, making careful and patterned cuts in each tree's bark and affixing small tin cups below the cuts to collect the white latex that oozed out. Later he returned to collect the cups, emptying their contents into a container carried on his back. Arriving back at his hut in the evening, the tapper still must smoke the liquid rubber to coagulate it. Over an oily palm nut fire, the tapper turned a stick, upon which he slowly poured the latex, always rotating it to expose it to the hot smoke, until a large ball of rubber, a *pela*,

has built up. These balls were then marked with the owner's stamp, which "had the effect of reinforcing the notion that the pelas belonged to the seringalista and not the seringueiro" (Bakx 1988:147).

The remove at which the rubber tapper found himself, having left behind home and family[20] to steam thousands of miles upriver, "reduced him, in the most remote places, almost to a servant, at the mercy of the capricious domination of the *patrões*. Justice is naturally delayed or null" (Cunha 1976:261).[21] The rubber tapper is a person, to be sure, who "works in hopes of one day returning to his land with money," but who, "the more he works, the more he becomes a servant of the forest and of the patrão," the economic regime conspiring to reduce his significance to a mere "machine for making

[20] According to Coêlho (1982:74), "future seringueiros in the golden era of rubber almost never brought families" with them. Likewise, in the early days women were scarce in the rubber camps and objects of much jealous dispute (ibid.; also Tocantins 1979:166), but clearly there were women in rubber camps, as tappers themselves or wives or concubines of tappers; sometimes these women were captured Indians (Souza 2002:37-38; Iglesias 2008; Wolff 1999).

[21] Indian slavery was apparently rather common, especially during the early phases of the rubber boom, and continued into the 20th century. The most infamous example of enslavement of Indians is that reported by Roger Casement (1912) in the Putumayo district of Colombia, where he estimated 30,000 Indians had been killed by the rubber camp owners, particularly Júlio César Arana. While Brazil was supposed to be less prone to such atrocities, there may be a degree of wishful thinking involved in this view. Edwin V. Morgan, the U.S. ambassador to Brazil, explained in 1912 that the giant South American nation was reluctant to get involved in the investigation of the Putumayo atrocities because crimes like those described by Casement "have occurred throughout the rubber zone of the Amazon and its tributary streams, irrespective of the nationality of the territory" (cited in Stanfield 1998:167). Furthermore, according to José Veríssimo, writing in 1892, Indians were commonly captured in the boundary regions between Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru and made to work. "If black slavery had almost disappeared from Amazonia in the era of the general emancipation of slaves, with it existed concomitantly Indian slavery which, I affirm, continues to exist" (cited in Santos 1980:63).

rubber" (Tocantins 1979:166). In the notorious phrase of Euclides da Cunha, the seringueiro was a man "who works to enslave himself" (1976:109).

The Acre, "Champion River of Death": Health and Disease in the Rubber Country

If the social relations of the rubber camps put seringueiros in an inferior structural position, the lack of value accorded to their lives had serious consequences for their nutritional and health care needs. The generally rapacious attitude of private enterprise and public officialdom meant little concern with developing infrastructures of sanitation, disease prevention education, or adequate treatment facilities.

In 1912-13, as the rubber boom was beginning to go bust, the federal government commissioned a study of health in the rubber region of the Amazon basin. This study (Falcão 1972:301-58), headed by the famous Brazilian epidemiologist Dr. Oswaldo Cruz, was co-sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Superintendency for the Defense of Rubber, with the goal of determining what could be done from a medico-sanitary perspective to help the region maintain competitiveness in rubber production.

"The specter of the Amazon," concluded the commission's report, "is malaria. Walking by its side…killing little, but disabling enormously, is leishmaniasis [an infectious condition caused by parasitic protozoans] in its various manifestations" (Falcão

1972:306). The commission noted very high mortality rates in some of the communities it visited. In Canotama, for example, a settlement of 350-400 persons on the lower Purus, the official records for the years 1909-12 showed 145 deaths, versus 70 births (Falcão 1972:317).

Upon leaving the Purus for the Acre river, the so-called "Champion River of Death," the commission recorded its impression of "labor activity incomparably greater than that observed on the Purus," along with a much larger population:

> One sees on the other hand, however, that if the work is more prosperous on the river Acre, the morbidity here also far exceeds that observed in the work zones of the other areas so far studied, the Acre being one of the rivers of highest endemic index and lethality of malaria and other morbid entities. (Falcão 1972:319)

In certain areas, nonetheless, there was at least some medical treatment available to those who could afford it. In Rio Branco, capital of the Acre federal territory and a burgeoning city of 2000 residents in 1912, the commission found two pharmacies well stocked with "all the medicines typically prescribed, the drugs used being of good quality, especially the quinine" (Falcão 1972:322). These resources surely benefited the monied classes of Rio Branco and the surrounds, such as the owners of the *seringais* and whatever others had found a way to accumulate capital. Among the rubber tappers, however, the commission noted that "affluence is not common… As a rule, the sick *seringueiros* remain at the *barracões*, where there are no means of treatment, dying

there without any medical or medicinal assistance" (Falcão 1972:319). There were exceptions: the commission noted one doctor in Rio Branco, Dominguez Carneiro, who often treated *seringueiros* from the outlying areas at little or no cost. Still, even to leave the *seringal* to seek such treatment was not easy. Under *aviamento*, such leave was the privilege of those with a positive balance in the running account of their debt to the *patrão* (Falcão 1972:323).

Studies like the commission's tend to give the impression that there were no other options. Particularly as the rubber economy aged, however, those who could not leave the rubber camps, or even reach the *barracão* for treatment, had increasing recourse to "the [curative] teachings they brought from the land of their birth, and those they learned from the natives with whom they came into contact" (Santos and Muaze 2002:45).Attitudes toward forest remedies, as with other things marked as indigenous, were ambivalent. Cabral lends them little credence, writing of the "many crazy brews that were used where there are no medical resources" (1985[1949]:95). He recounts a case he observed firsthand in the first decade of the 20th century, in which a very sick man drank a purgative made from tree sap; when he subsequently died, the "Peruvian" (which, in this context, would normally indicate a mestizo or Indian) who had recommended it was angrily blamed for causing his death. Cabral's account is all the more relevant to my concerns here because the "Peruvian" who recommends the

purgative also made a number of dietary recommendations that recall Peruvian mestizo *vegetalismo*, curing practices centered on the use of ayahuasca to access spiritual powers and realms.[22]

> The 'doctor' had recommended that the sick man avoid eating pork (*caititu* and *queixada*) for one year, other 'rheumic' game [*caça 'reimosa'*]..., and that he eat bland for forty days, without touching salt.
>
> Now, in Amazonas the individual finds himself forced to eat what he wants and what he doesn't want... With the purgative the illness worsened and the sick man could no longer make it to the *barracão* on foot. (Cabral 1985[1949]:95)

It is interesting to note Cabral's metadiscursive positioning in this text. He invokes a whole complex of indigenous medical knowledge, through his indexing the system of food classifications and avoidances implied by "'rheumic' game" and abstinence from salt, only to render it suspect through the use of quote marks. At another level, the folly of these indigenous ways is marked in the narrative by the outcome: weakened by a treatment that was supposed to help, but didn't, the man could not escape the forest to the *barracão*, where he might have found biomedical (read: real) treatment. One is free to wonder how Cabral, who was not trained as a physician, can be so sure in placing blame on the prescriptions of the "Peruvian" who arrived in the camp. Whatever the accuracy of his assessment of the man's decline and death, the narrative fits into a

[22] These forms are also indexed in Alto Santo discourse about the origins of Mestre Irineu's mission, as I discuss in the next chapter.

pattern in which indigenous medicine is recognized and devalued as another sign of *caboclo* anti-modernity. All too often, the bearers of such knowledge were personally blamed for negative outcomes.

This was exactly the charge feared by one of Wolff's contemporary informants, a half-Indian woman known for her healing knowledge who took great care with whom she treated with "bush remedies," lest the treatment fail, and people say "It was the *caboclo* woman who killed him! She gave him a bush remedy and poisoned him!" (Wolff 1999:189). Despite recent changes in attitudes toward indigenous knowledge in Acre, such ambivalence remains.

In its summary of the conditions in the territory of Acre, the commission noted that chronic malaria had affected the internal organs of nearly every *seringueiro* they observed. Despite the common incidence of swollen spleens and "deep visceral lesions," such people did not even consider themselves sick: "they adapt somehow to the chronic illness and only say they're sick when they experience acute incidents of the disease" (Falcão 1972:324). Such patients exhibited a curious reluctance to accept medicines such as quinine, preferring instead "purgative pills or the use of tonics with no specific action on the malaria parasite" (Falcão 1972:324). The commission explained this reluctance as the result of the folk experience with the poor-quality quinine that

had been sold at elevated prices to *seringueiros* by the *regatões*, or itinerant traders of the fluvial highways, in the past.[23]

Among the measures to reduce the incidence of disease in the Acre-Purus region, the commission highlighted the necessity for more agriculture, noting that foodstuffs cost 60 to 70 percent more than in the downriver cities of Belém and Manaus (Falcão 1972:317).[24] Planting was a risky enterprise on the *seringais*, however; tappers had to cultivate what they could without the knowledge of the *patrão*, who typically forbade any type of agriculture, since it diverted tappers' efforts from rubber collecting, just as it lessened their dependence on the supplies furnished by the *barracão* (Souza 2002:104). Many *seringueiros* subsisted on a high-fat, protein- and vitamin-deficient diet that came from canned goods bought there (ibid.:135).

The conclusions of the Cruz Commission shifted the responsibility for the high mortality of the rubber country from the environment itself—which has often been portrayed as a "green hell" (Rangel 1908), by its very nature inimical to human life—to the social

[23] In my experience at Alto Santo, it was common for "conversion" narratives to allege "disillusionment with the [biomedical] doctors" as a motive for seeking healing from Mestre Irineu. What is figured in the commission's report as a curious sign of ignorance may, in fact, have been the result of a tension between local phytotherapy and biomedicine that is itself an expression of regional identity (see also Wayland 2004).

[24] Coêlho (1982:87) gives a table showing that the various charges added to foodstuffs such as sugar or manioc flour as they made their way upriver often increased their price to 200-900% of their cost in the downriver cities. Aquino (1977) provides a similar chart.

relations operative within it. They noted the injustice of an economic enterprise that gave great value to the product of extractive labor, but which accorded little worth to the lives of those whose labor produced it. Malaria was commonly found in tropical regions, the report observed, but the means were available to lessen its effects dramatically. The problem in Amazonia was not the inherent hostility of the jungle:

> What exists there, causing immense hecatomb and bringing notoriety to the natural conditions of all Amazonia, is the most absolute absence of medical assistance and medicines; it is the complete ignorance of individual prophylactic measures against malaria; it is the abandonment of the proletariat to an easily alleviated morbid state or to death from a perfectly curable disease. What, finally, constitutes the greatest fatality in the Amazon valley is the depreciation of human life on the part of the public powers and of the owners of the *seringais*—there not existing there, where the riches brought by the results of an extractive industry depend on human labor, the very notion of the value of an existence! (Falcão 1972:341)

The commission's recommendations went unheeded. Of the nine 100-bed hospitals the commission advised building not one was constructed, nor were the agricultural projects undertaken until after World War II (Santos 1980:252); Rio Branco, capital of the Acre territory, did not open its first hospital until 1918 (Souza 2002:191). In sum, the health conditions in the rubber camps were precarious, and what little help was available was inflected by the political economy of rubber extraction. Tappers were mostly unable to get "modern" medical treatment, or at the least were dependent on good relations with the camp boss for access to it. Partly because of their marginalization before the system of cosmopolitan medicine, but also as a sign of

growing cultural exchange, rubber tappers sometimes turned to indigenous forest remedies to treat illness, although these remained controversial.

The Acrean revolution

As Northeastern emigrants flowed steadily into the Purus and Juruá watersheds, opening and working new rubber camps, their efforts were reflected in production increases. Between 1850 and 1890, exports of "Pará fine" from Belém leaped tenfold, from 3.2 million pounds to almost 34 million pounds (Pearson 1911:214-5). By the last decade of the 19th century, the land that is today Acre was a key prize in a border region that was proving more and more important to the rubber economy, an industry which, by century's close, was second only to coffee in Brazil's export portfolio. Bolivia was overextended in the Acre territory, but its legal claim enabled it to tax the rubber being sent downstream for overseas export, and the high prices and increasing volume of the rubber trade made worthwhile its costly maintenance of customs houses backed by armed troops (Tomán 2006).

Concerned with their profit margins, local rubber barons forced the Bolivians to leave Acre in 1899. They were supported in this by the government of Amazonas state, which hoped an independent Acre would yield an advantage for the rubber merchants in the capital, Manaus, over those in Belém do Pará, who had controlled the Purus rubber

trade to that point (Tomán 2006). The governor of Amazonas sent a force led by the Spaniard Luis Galvez to prevent the return of the Bolivian customs officials, and in July 1899 Galvez proclaimed the Independent State of Acre. Acre stayed independent for less than a year, however, as the Brazilian federal government refused to recognize it and, citing the Ayacucho treaty, in March of 1900 sent a marine unit to end the revolution and restore Bolivian control. Later the same year a second independent nation of Acre was declared, but it was defeated in less than a month by Bolivian forces.

Amidst this unrest, a significant turn occurred in 1901, when the Bolivian president, General Pando, sought to leverage the United States against Brazil in the struggle for control of the rubber country of the Upper Amazon by agreeing to cede control of the Acre area—including police power—to an international consortium known as the Bolivian Syndicate. On top of this, General Pando sent a greedy and officious governor to Acre to prepare the transition. The threat of North American and European control over the best rubber lands, combined with bureaucratic harassment under the new Bolivian governor, led to widespread antagonism toward the Bolivians. Capitalizing on the opportunity, the Amazonian governor sent another leader to foment rebellion in Acre in August of 1902, this time a native of the far Brazilian south, José Plácido de Castro. A charismatic leader and capable strategist, Plácido de Castro took advantage of popular nationalist sentiment to gather armies of rubber tappers, but was able to

capture the Bolivian leadership without firing a shot. This time the Brazilian federal government supported the claim of independence from Bolivia and sought to incorporate it into the Brazilian nation. Bolivian troops marshaled for an offensive, but diplomatic efforts averted major combat. In 1903 Brazil and Bolivia signed the Treaty of Petrópolis, which transferred Acre to Brazil in exchange for millions of British pounds, some Brazilian territory in the state of Mato Grosso, and a Brazilian commitment to build a railroad between the Madeira and Mamoré rivers to circumvent falls on the Madeira and thus help Bolivia move forest products more easily downstream for Atlantic export.

With Acre in Brazil's possession, there arose the question of how to incorporate it into the national territory. Interests in Manaus wanted to make it part of Amazonas state, a move that many Acrean revolutionaries opposed (Tocantins 1979:365).The federal government, in a demonstration of its supremacy, in 1904 created the new category of *Território Federal* to regularize Acre's situation, and in so doing inaugurated nearly sixty years of official marginalization that would last until 1962, when Acre was designated a full-fledged Brazilian state. As a Federal Territory, Acre suffered a kind of second-class status in which its political autonomy was severely constrained, with governors and other officials sent from Rio de Janeiro to oversee affairs there. This situation structured a division between "autonomists," who wanted Acre to become a state, and "unionists,"

who favored continued federal tutelage, that organized local political life for several decades. More generally, it added force to Acrean constructions of identity based on oppositions, now with "foreign powers" beyond Brazil, now with the Brazilian federal government itself.

Rubber bubble bursts

During the first decade of the 20th century, Brazil provided one-half to two-thirds of the world's rubber, with much of the country's contribution coming from the Acre territory. In 1900, for example, Brazil produced almost 27,000 tons of rubber, about the same amount as Africa and Central America combined; by 1909 Brazil's production had increased to 42,000 tons, supplying over half of global consumption (Santos 1980:236). The increasing demand for the rubber that was revolutionizing transportation in the industrialized countries was reflected in the prices paid on the international market. While a ton of natural latex could be had for about £275 or $1,277 in 1900, by 1909 it cost more than £780 or $1,850 (ibid.).

The extraction of rubber from uncultivated trees was doomed, however, by the rapidly developing British plantations in Asia. As early as 1860 the British colonial government in India had floated the idea of making rubber plantations in its colonies (Santos 1980:229), but early efforts produced no significant results. In 1876 Henry Wickham,

working with the British government, the Kew Botanical gardens, and the Royal Botanical Gardens of Indian, removed some 70,000 seeds of *Hevea brasiliensis* from Brazil. Germinated at Kew and transferred to Ceylon, these seeds led to the great British plantations of the East, preeminently those in Malaysia, but also in Ceylon, India, Borneo, and a few other colonies (ibid.:230-233).

The British plantations in Asia took some time to begin producing rubber for the international market. As late as 1906 their contribution to the international demand was as small as 1%; by 1910, when the price of a ton of rubber reached its all-time peak of £965 or $2,267, Asian rubber production was still only 8,753 tons of a worldwide total of 71,453 tons (Santos 1980:236). Over the next two years, however, plantation production nearly doubled, then doubled again. Asian production passed Brazilian output in 1913, and by 1915 it represented more than two-thirds of the world's total (ibid.). It kept pulling away, until by 1919, the Asian plantations were producing nearly ten times as much rubber every year as Brazil had produced in its best year (ibid.).

The advent of plantation rubber devastated the economies of the Amazon. In 1912, although Acre produced more latex than it ever had before, the total value of its product was one-third of what it had been two years earlier, when prices were at their peak (Coêlho 1982:72). By 1922, rubber was trading at just ten percent of the peak price of 1910 (Bakx 1988:149). In the words of Roberto Santos (1980:237): "There would be

no more happenstances, felicitous inventions, or wars capable of returning Amazonia to its semi-monopolistic position of the past." There was simply no comparison in efficiency between the elaborate system of forest extraction, processing, and shipment required to produce Amazonian latex, and the "rationalized" plantation production in Asia.

As a result of the fall in rubber prices, businesses failed throughout the Amazon at all levels of the production chain, and thousands of unemployed people moved to the cities as *seringais* closed. The region's cities were hardly able to absorb all the labor, all the more so because of the narrow economic base. Insufficient food was another issue, as the closing of the steamer lines made clear the problems associated with the lack of agriculture in the region. Rubber tapping continued to be the main means of access to the market economy for many Acreans, as it is to a limited extent even today, but never again on the same scale or with the same single-minded focus.

II. 1912-1962: The Crisis, "stagnation," and the "caboclization" of Acre on the way to statehood

In its first four decades of settlement, Acre transformed from *terra incognita* to the object of fierce contestation by Brazil, Bolivia, and to a lesser extent Peru, all aiming to profit from the rivers of rubber going to supply the industrializing world with a key

commodity. Global and national policies conspired with local circumstances in Brazil's Northeast and North regions to produce a massive dislocation of workers who entered into a new kind of production system, the *seringal*, which, despite its novelty, was based on the patriarchal relations established in the colonial sugar plantations and later adapted to various industries, including rubber but also coffee and sisal. The remoteness and spread-out nature of the rubber camps added new elements that would prove decisive in shaping Acrean society, however. Most important among these were contact and exchange with indigenous peoples, a process in some ways analogous to the "caboclization" (Weinstein 1983) of Amazonian society in the lower and middle Amazon. Even as the rubber boom gave birth to Acre, its end threatened economic and demographic collapse.

The crash in global rubber prices inaugurated a period of economic "crisis," "stagnation" and "retrocession" that saw a shift away from rubber monoculture in the forest and the beginnings of urban settlement in Acre. It also began a long goodbye to the rubber industry, in which tappers and former tappers increasingly relied on indigenous knowledge for their livelihood, even as they conserved the social forms of patronage associated with rubber extraction. The Second World War brought a short-lived renovation of the industry and more emigration. After the war, the seringal was still the dominant social form in Acre, but the territory grew ever more urban. The

establishment of agricultural colonies in Rio Branco sought to further root former rubber workers in the region.

The *caboclization* of Acre

The decline of rubber extraction after 1912 often meant, in practice, both a greater liberty for tappers to diversify their production through subsistence gardening, fishing, and hunting, and an increasing necessity to find ways to survive in the forest in the absence of imported food and medicine. Cultural exchange with indigenous peoples therefore assumed greater importance during the interwar crisis, when, "despite the physical and cultural destruction to which Indians were subjected throughout the region, the tappers assimilated much of their knowledge and technology for the use of forest resources" (Wolff 1999:131). From the *caboclos*, the *cariús* learned the best places to hunt and fish, the preferred foods of prey, and how to attract animals by imitating their calls, as well as the use of bark fibers and vines to make baskets and to fasten things; they learned which palms to use for house-building, which woods were best for canoes, and which fruits and herbs could provide nutrition and treat illness (Wolff 1999:133).

The straitening of ties between tappers and indigenous people took the form not only of knowledge transfer, but also of new household formations. Wolff's study of court cases

reveals “the most diverse patterns” in the formation of families that included Northeasterners (usually men) and native women. These were not only “nuclear” families but all manner of households in which commensality and cooperative labor, more than biologically-based kinship, were the basis of life together. For Wolff, these formations were part of a process of creating a new kind of society in the forest, a process initiated in response to the global crisis in the rubber economy, but whose details were determined at the most local of levels. “If before, the reproduction of labor on the seringais was accomplished almost exclusively by the migration of Northeasterners to Amazonia, now, although reduced migration continued, reproduction of domestic groups, as well as labor, had to be accomplished right there, in the most natural way possible” (1999:114). Today many, if not most, Acreans from families with three or more generations in the region can cite some grandmother from an indigenous group.

The cumulative effect of these changes was a certain degree of indigenization of Acrean society. The social transformation of the crisis, often seen as a regression, a “disappearance of the ‘modern and civilized world’ from the region, in truth constituted the original creation of a new way of life” (Wolff 1999:106). For Wolff, the changing economic and domestic forms of the interwar years also resulted in a general shift in many Acreans’ perspective on the forest, which “transformed for the tappers into

something more than the space, perhaps hostile, of the rubber trees: the forest came to be their territory" (1999:117).[25] From depending on the steamers and the outside world to provide everything, from food and tools to additional labor forces, those who remained in the forest following the rubber price crash came to experience the forest as the center of the world.

This sense of being at home in the forest, which Wolff credits for the "instrumentalization" of the rubber tappers' struggles, beginning in the 1970s, to defend the forest from clear-cutting, is also important to understanding Alto Santo practice as it came to be constituted in Rio Branco. If the *Doutrina do Mestre Irineu* is a doctrine of, and from, the forest, it grew up on the outskirts of Rio Branco and depended on the contrast between the forest and the city for much of its sense. I turn now to a discussion of that city's origins and its place in the Acrean landscape.

The Birth of Rio Branco

Throughout the era when its economy was based primarily on rubber, say 1880 to 1965, Acre had a very rural population and few large settlements. First towns were merely

[25] I am aware that Wolff may be reading the Acrean past in terms of the present, in which the center of gravity of development discourse has shifted to accord a new centrality to the forest and to a process of ethnogenesis that created a new type of Acrean, rooted in relationship to the forest. If the process was less clear-cut than Wolff seems to suggest (one can imagine tappers before the crisis who learned indigenous techniques or took Indian wives, for example, or who saw the forest as something other than the mere "space…of the rubber trees"), it is no less real for the fact.

groups of stores and a few houses on the rubber rivers, often at the confluence of two waterways. During the height of the rubber boom, towns such as Xapuri and Cruzeiro do Sul boasted amenities like electric light, and were visited by luxury steamers with their own orchestras (Almeida 1992). At the same time, little infrastructural investment was made. Today, Rio Branco is the undisputed metropolis of Acre; its population of more than 300,000 accounts for half of the state's residents, and it is several times larger than Cruzeiro do Sul in the Juruá valley, the next most populous city.

Rio Branco rose to prominence because it was selected as the administrative capital of the new territory. It was founded at a site known as Empresa Bend (*Volta da Empresa*). The seringal Empresa and a cluster of merchant shops had been established on the Acre's right bank in the 1880s by Neutel Maia, while the opposite bank was chosen for the new seat of government because its position on rising ground made it less prone to flooding in the rainy season.

In contrast with the optimistic colloquialism of seringal names (besides Empresa, or "Enterprise," they included Good Future, Good Destiny, New Hope, and Conquest, among many others), the new administrative center followed the patriotic naming practices that have assured the presence of certain streets—such as "Getúlio Vargas," after the great and controversial modernizer of Brazil—in virtually every Brazilian town. First named Penápolis, after Afonso Pena, the Brazilian vice-president at the time of the

Acrean drama, by 1912 it had adopted definitively the name Rio Branco, in homage to the Baron of Rio Branco, the foreign minister who had negotiated the Petrópolis treaty with Bolivia (Bezerra 2002:20).

The same year, when the Oswaldo Cruz Commission visited Rio Branco, it found a small town of about 2,000 inhabitants. Noting its abundance of high ground and potable water, however, they saw its potential as the site of a large city. At the same time, the residences and offices of officials and the military installations were simple wooden buildings, often covered with palm thatch roofs and, in the commission's opinion, "leaving a lot to be desired as Government installations" (Falcão 1972:322).

With the rise of Asian plantations in the 1910s, the subsequent price crash, and the global economic crisis of the 1930s, the Acrean economy entered a period of serious decline. The effects of the price collapse "took several years to make themselves felt in the areas of production" (Santos and Muaze 2002:47), but eventually people began to leave the seringais, especially after 1920. Net migration into Acre slowed in the 1910s, and in the interwar years between 1920 and 1940 the territory experienced an overall decrease in population, from over 92,000 to less than 80,000 (Coêlho 1982:73). Some individual seringais were virtually abandoned; Father Tastevin traveled Acre's Riozinho da Liberdade river in the late 1920s and found that the seringal Ceará, which had had a population of more than 300 during the boom, now had a skeleton crew of just thirty-

five (Tastevin 1928:214). Some of the people who left the seringais returned to the Northeast, while others migrated to Acre's towns. Those who stayed on the seringais were sometimes able to plant gardens, as owners relaxed the restrictions on subsistence agriculture that had prevailed during the peak of the boom. This period is often viewed in Acrean historiography as one of decadence, stagnation, or "regression" into subsistence, when it is discussed at all. In fact, however, the interwar years oversaw not so much the recuperation of a decadent Acre, as the real beginnings of the development of permanent urban settlement and of a more robust state presence, especially in Rio Branco.

Océlio de Medeiros, a lawyer and writer who wrote the novel *A Represa* ("The Dam"; Medeiros 1942) as a *roman à clef* of Acrean society, imagines the social side of this stagnation when he depicts Brazilian settlement of Acre as "human rivers" that ran against the water's current in the boom's upstream expansion. With the rubber economy's collapse, these "rivers"

> …started flowing outward, draining the plain of men. Not all, however, were able to return to their sources. Some stayed, forming cities like lakes hidden in the bush. They are the rivers that missed their destiny. Rio Branco, with its swamp of men, in a region where no one ever thought of building a city, is thus a river that missed its destiny. It suggests a dam: an enormous human dam, where repression and passion agitate themselves in a drama of isolation. (Medeiros 1942:108-9)

Medeiros depicts a city composed of people forgotten by history and fate, left behind to fester and squabble amongst themselves in grandiose insignificance. Writing before the Second World War reinvigorated the Amazon rubber industry temporarily, Medeiros sketches a social world deprived of its reason for being, like sections of the river that become separated from the main channel and stagnate. Compared with the glory days, when the industrial revolution clamored for Brazilian latex, the heroes Galvez and Plácido de Castro declared Acre's independence, and the world's major papers discussed the "question of the Acre," the interwar period must have seemed decidedly unglamorous. Even in a region with barely half a century of Brazilian colonization, Medeiros has a couple of old-timers pine for the martial glory of the past. As they hear schoolchildren sing patriotic hymns, Major Isidoro and "seu"[26] Lúcio share a cigarette and remember the battles of the revolution. "In those days Acre was Acre!" Lúcio says. "And today it is a land of has-beens…" (Medeiros 1942:14).

The notion that Acre "missed its destiny" contributes to a sense that nothing much of importance happened after the decline of rubber extraction. Such a view, however, presents a problem of scale when it presupposes the primacy of national and global economic demands and uses them as the measure of the region's worth. As both Mark

[26] "Seu," often written in quotes, is a rural designation of respect placed before the first name of a man, usually middle-aged or older. It appears to be a variation of the word senhor, "sir."

Harris (2000) and Stephen Nugent (1993) have argued for other Amazonian contexts, such broad strokes are ethnographically inadequate, since they obscure everything but the formal activity that appears in an economic balance sheet. A decrease in economic exchange with Brazil's commercial centers perhaps signals a particular type of stagnation, but to broaden this characterization to Acrean society as a whole would be to ignore the social processes that, as we would expect, continued to constitute the "inside" view: the ways people living in Acre understood what was happening; the forms through which they responded to their life situation; and the shifts in population and livelihood that shaped the new Acre of those who, by choice or necessity, set down roots there.

If there is more to understand about Acrean society than its economic history, Medeiros nevertheless seems to have understood something about how Acreans saw (and see) themselves. As an internal colony of Brazil, Acre shares with other colonized places a territorial identity strongly marked by the relationship to the colonizing power. It is a relationship of considerable ambivalence, mixing pride in being, as is commonly heard in Acre, "the only ones who fought to be Brazilian" with a nagging sense of inferiority. Similar ambivalence is found in other parts of Brazilian Amazonia (see Nugent 1993 on living in the "asshole of a turkey" [*o cu do perú*] vs. local pride for Santarém), but in Acre it is conditioned by several factors that give it a particular character. Among these are,

on the one hand, the history of armed conflict over the national borders there, which gives Acreans a special claim to patriotism, and, on the other hand, the uniquely extreme dependence on its rubber monoculture and its officially subaltern status as a Federal Territory, both of which implied that sources of value were located elsewhere, in Rio de Janeiro, New York, London.

Local initiatives to overcome Acre's inferiority and make it worthy of being part of a modern Brazilian nation combined concerns about moral order with visions of economic and civic development. This complex of issues already had sufficient resonance by the late 1920s for Governor Hugo Carneiro to entitle a report trumpeting his administration's achievements "The Rehabilitation of Acre" (Bezerra 2002:32).[27] There was little to foreshadow the official concern with Acre's *caboclo* roots that would come later: Carneiro's "rehabilitation" emulated national design trends, radiating from Rio de Janeiro, which sought social progress through the creation of "clean, beautiful, orderly, and harmonious" public spaces (ibid.). Indeed, Carneiro is remembered today for having built the first public masonry structures in Rio Branco, most prominent among them the Governor's Palace, a neoclassical edifice overlooking the Acre River and a key site of Rio

[27] On the other hand, skepticism about the relationship between such government platforms and popular perceptions of life in Acre may be justified. After all, governors like Carneiro were federal appointees, so they were perhaps not as beholden to the local citizenry as they might have been in a direct vote system.

Branco civic ritual up to the present. Carneiro's symbolic intent for the buildings is evident in his touting them as "solid constructions of masonry, which will affirm an era of true consolidation of the Territory's city metropolis" (ibid.). If the qualities of order and harmony evoked by these buildings were insufficient by themselves to produce a reformation of Rio Branco's moral character, Carneiro promulgated in 1929 a code of 319 municipal regulations governing life in the city that would do so more directly.[28] Together, he hoped, these interventions in the civic landscape would alter Acrean society to bring about worthiness of first-class citizenship, radiating out like a beacon of light in the dark forest. In Carneiro's description, the capital figures as the center of a wave of moral reform, originating at the Governor's Palace, which would ripple outward and be "reproduced with slight variation in the other cities and villas…extinguishing the traditions that do not serve [Acre] well, making it worthy of tomorrow being a State of the Brazilian Federation" (ibid.).[29]

[28] "The Rehabilitation of Acre" reports the success of these measures thus: "There began to be justice in Acre. The crimes that cast a pall on the region diminished immediately..." (Bezerra 2002:31). Justice, like economic prosperity or social rehabilitation, is for many a receding horizon in Acre, constantly announced but never quite arriving. These words might equally well have been written in the late 1990s, when the "Death Squads" within Acre's Military Police forces were being investigated by the Public Ministry. Then, too, politicians hoped to receive credit for having made Acre safer.

[29] The notion of a decadent Acre that needs revitalization, either to regain its former glory or continue its march toward destiny, continues as an important trope in local politics right up to the present. In fact, one of the key public signs of the reinvigoration of Acre's public institutions promised by the Workers' Party as it rose to power in the governor's office in the late 1990s was the renovation of the Governor's Palace to its former glory.

Such uses of urban architecture are common, but this case is particularly interesting here for two reasons. It represents, first, a project with certain important parallels to the trajectory of Mestre Irineu, which I will examine in detail in chapter three. As a vision of monolithic civilization, second, it offers an invidious comparison of the city and the forest in which the "traditions" belonging to the rural areas had to be submitted to urban standards for approval and possible extinction if they were found wanting. This unidirectional vision of social and cultural reform was probably never an accurate depiction of Acre's reality, and it coexisted, increasingly, with official recognition of Acre's indigenous influence. The early 2000s conversion of the Governor's Palace into a museum highlighting the region's indigenous peoples (discussed below) spoke this truth in the same architectonic idiom used by Carneiro.

The "Rubber Soldiers" and the Agricultural Colonies

Acre returned to a kind of international prominence during the Second World War, when Axis powers seized the Malaysian rubber plantations and the United States rushed to reinvigorate Amazon rubber out of wartime necessity. The Banco da Amazônia (BASA)[30] was created in 1942 at the United States' behest to channel credit to seringal

[30] The bank was founded under the name *Banco de Crédito da Borracha* in 1942 and renamed *Banco da Amazônia, S.A.* (BASA) by the military government in 1966. Although this name change involved a

owners and revive the industry. BASA quickly had a virtual monopoly over the functioning of the aviamento system, largely replacing the roles of the *casas aviadoras* and the export companies. With BASA funding, tens of thousands more Northeasterners migrated to Acre. The regional economy, which had diversified between the World Wars, again narrowed its focus to rubber, and many rubber bosses re-imposed the restrictions on gardening and trading rubber outside the camp that had characterized seringal operation at the height of the boom. Something fundamental had changed, however: the experience of the crisis “had already shaped new ways of living and of understanding the world” in which the forest assumed, for many Acreans, a new value within the territory’s landscape (Wolff 1999:148).

Immediately following the war, Acre had an "economy still based on extractivist production with the vast majority of its population living captive on the seringal" (Bakx 1988:151). As the temporary nature of the rubber industry’s reprieve became apparent and the “Rubber Soldiers” streamed into the towns, Acre’s leaders worried that the territory could suffer severe depopulation if it did not develop agricultural production sufficient at least to supply the urban areas. A few agricultural colonies had been created near Rio Branco during the first rubber crisis, such as the Sobral farm west of

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significant change in the bank’s mission, as discussed below, for convenience I use only the name BASA here.

town, and more ambitious plans had been in place since the early 1940s for agricultural colonies to ring Rio Branco, providing food for the city and access to cash for ex-tappers turned farmers (Guerra 1955). It was not until after the war, however, that they gained new momentum under the administration of Major José Guiomard dos Santos, who was both Irineu Serra's most important political ally and a pivotal figure in Acre's history.

Guiomard dos Santos was typical of Acrean politicians in several ways: he was a military man from southern Brazil, a graduate of the military academy in Rio de Janeiro, and a federal appointee as Acre's governor. Yet he came to office in 1946 with a populist promise to govern all Acreans and to see Acre through to statehood, a goal he accomplished sixteen years later while representing Acre in the Federal Senate. This made him an ally of Acre's "autonomists," as members of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) were known, and placed him in opposition to the "unionists," led by Oscar Passos (PTB), who argued that Acre needed to develop more before it had the capacity for independence from the federal government. Today Guiomard dos Santos is celebrated as Acre's great modernizer, a reputation symbolically condensed in one act: the completion of construction on the governor's palace begun by Hugo Carneiro, which had sat idle through the Great Depression as a sad reminder of Acre's failure to reach its ambition. Guiomard dos Santos also initiated construction on the first highway in Acre, a 100-kilometer road from Rio Branco to Plácido de Castro which foreshadowed the much

larger efforts of the 1960s and 1970s to connect Acre to the Brazilian South. His key achievement as governor, however, may have been the implementation of plans, laid by his rival Passos, to support the creation of agricultural colonies.

Under the agricultural colony plan, the old seringal Empresa was split into lots with the aim of enfranchising the "'veterans of the Rubber Battle' who wandered through the streets of Rio Branco looking for work" (Bezerra 2002:81). Federal funding, channeled through local agencies, was to provide assistance for agriculture, including tools, seeds and plants from government facilities, and facilities for processing crops, as well as rural schools, adult literacy programs, highways to bring crops to market, and even electricity. Two of the most important goals of the colonies were attaining agricultural self-sufficiency and developing an economic alternative to the rubber monoculture. But they were based on a vision of modernity in the forest that had other implications as well.

One of these was that the exploitation of rubber tappers under the *seringal* system was creating a class of disenfranchised citizens. In his 1947 annual report, Guiomard dos Santos cited the "degree of tension and profound social imbalance between the rubber tapper/consumers and the owner/exclusive suppliers" as one of the key issues his policy sought to address (cited in Bezerra 2002:83-4). Holding out the promise of aid and the possibility of permanent title if certain productivity conditions were met, the program "aimed not only to fix man to the land, but also to awaken his interest in being an owner

and in forming a patrimony for himself and his family, assuring a future different from his life to that point" (Bezerra 2002:81). Thus the agricultural colonies had a material aspect, in that they were intended to increase Acre's internal self-sufficiency, but they also had an explicitly social-psychological aspect, in that they sought to transform the seringueiro class into independent producers, and from marginalized laborers to householders. They sought, in sum, a moral and psychological transformation of the tappers into an Amazonian yeoman-farmer class on the border between the city and the forest, a project that was—perhaps not coincidentally—similar to Irineu Serra's work in a number of ways.

In the years 1946-1950 a dozen agricultural colonies were established around Rio Branco in the old seringal Empresa. The fields and clearings that were opened for them would later become boroughs of the city, some of which still have their old names (São Francisco, Apolônio Sales). Other important neighborhoods of the contemporary city also conserve traces of this period in their names, such as *Estação Experimental*, where crops were tested for use in the Acrean environment, or *Aviário*, where bird-raising programs were undertaken. These colonies helped lay the groundwork for a more rational, and perhaps a more humane expansion of the city than might otherwise have occurred (and which did occur in the 1970s, with the advent of shantytowns on the urban periphery).

This is not to say that the colonies were a perfect success. Antônio Teixeira Guerra, a geographer whose study of Acre (Guerra 1955) is a key source on its postwar development, noted that promised support for the colonies often failed to materialize, especially outside the Rio Branco municipality. Nearly a decade after the implementation of the colony program, manufactured products and even foods continued to be imported on a large scale. The colonies seem to have adopted a diversified economy aimed less at the production of food for the market than at sustaining themselves through the exploitation of game and products that could be gathered from the forest, such as Brazil nuts (Guerra 1955:33). This diversification may have reflected a turn toward the forest like that suggested by Wolff and others, based on ex-tappers' bitter experience of dependence on the vagaries of the international market. But to those charged with the duty of ensuring that the Acrean economy continued to expand, it made the colonies appear unsuccessful. Rural outreach agents sought to police the efforts of agricultural colonists to make certain they fulfilled the vision Guiomard dos Santos brought to the development of Rio Branco, which was "based on the traditional country / city relation, as opposed and complementary spaces where the country's role is to supply the consumer necessities of the urban population" (Bezerra 2002:76).

Like others who had visited the region (notably Euclides da Cunha), Guerra saw the future of Acre in cattle ranching and large-scale agriculture, both of which depended on the construction of an alternative to fluvial transportation. He thus envisioned a system of highways that would link Acre to the rest of Brazil and to its Andean neighbors to the west. Achieving self-sufficiency was not enough; expansion was necessary if Acre was to play its part in the national economy. Wrote Guerra: "Isolationism does not generate cultural and economic progress; on the contrary, it leads to stagnation and even regression" (1955:34). In the simplistic dichotomy between isolationism and pell-mell "development" along the lines imagined by da Cunha, Guerra, and others, postwar policy toward Acre and the Amazon more generally took the latter path, often utilizing the seemingly endless tracts of land as a "safety valve" to relieve the pressure of social discontentment building in the agricultural south of the country as it underwent mechanization and job loss.

Beginning around 1950, Rio Branco entered a period of vigorous demographic expansion that would take its population from 9,371 in 1950 to 36,095 in 1970 and over 300,000 in 2009. At the same time, the state was becoming more urban, as Rio Branco's share of Acre's total population rose from 8.2% in 1950 to 16.2% in 1970 (Bakx 1988:151). By the late 2000s, more than half of Acreans lived in the capital. While this trend was already underway when Acre was made a state of the Brazilian federation in

1962, it certainly accelerated following the militarization of Amazonian development policy, discussed below. Some authors have suggested that Acrean development in the period of the agricultural colonies represented a special balance between the city and the forest. I have already mentioned Wolff's contention that the tappers' reinvention of the forest as the center of their world was the basis for their subsequent resistance to deforestation. Almeida Neto (2004) makes a point more directly relevant to urban development. He argues that there existed, prior to the elevation to statehood and the federal push for Amazonian development, a "modernity in the jungle" (*modernidade na selva*) that "did not deny the popular classes" and was based on relationship between city and forest (2004:81). This kind of revisionist view of Acre's history, while perhaps too idealistic in its representation of the relationship between the state and the early agricultural colonists, such as Irineu Serra, does capture an important aspect of the political situation in Acre which arose following the advent of the "Paulistas" in the 1970s. What was at stake, according to Almeida Neto, was which version of modernity would prevail in Acre: the "modernity in the jungle" that developed following the crisis, or the new, invasive view, characterized by "the rejection of the jungle, which is seen as a great emptiness," and which is marked as "archaic" compared to urban modernity (2004:81). This, presumably, was what provided the ideological warrant for the development plans that transformed Acre in the 1970s.

III. 1962-2010: A world turned upside down: Statehood, the military government, and the demise of aviamento

Acre was made a State of the Brazilian Federation in 1962 through a law signed by João Goulart, the democratically elected president who would be deposed by the military in 1964.[31] Acre thus gained, according to one line of discourse, the full legitimacy the autonomists had sought for so long. Such an interpretation is certainly the one promoted by the Acrean government today. Some scholars suggest that federal authorities consented to Acre's elevation to statehood only because they had given up on rubber as a significant source of national revenue. According to local historian Carlos Alberto de Souza, were Brazil's rubber prospects still good, the federal government "would never have given up the gold mine" of the once-prosperous industry (Souza 2002). As it was, Acre's statehood was muted by the military coup, which inaugurated a period of centralization of political authority and top-down development in which Amazonia played a key role in plans for the country's economic modernization. The federal government granted Acre the autonomy of statehood with one hand, but took it away with the other.

[31] There is some irony in the federal government's giving Acre autonomy in name, while at the same time working to undermine the bases of the regional economy and imposing top-down development programs on it. The deforestation of parts of Acre, by corroding the means of production, made Acre more dependent financially on the federal government, so that by the 1980s 80% of Acre's revenues came from federal support (Bakx 1990).

With the installation of the military government came a fundamental shift in the role the Amazon played in national policy, called the “militarization of Amazonia” by Schmink and Wood (1992:59). This shift was part of a broader plan of authoritarian development that aimed to modernize Brazil. Extractive enterprises like Brazil nut gathering were shunted aside in favor of more “modern” forms of development, especially cattle ranching. At the same time, viewing the Amazon from a national security perspective, the military government became concerned about its unguarded borders and vast, apparently unoccupied forests. It advanced a new slogan: “Integrate [it] so as not to give [it] up” (rendered much more poetically in Portuguese as “*integrar para não entregar*”). In order to implement its plans, the military government first had to consolidate its control of Amazonian politics, “to wrest control from traditional Amazonian elites in command of state legislatures and administrative agencies” (Schmink and Wood 1992:59).

In Acre, even more than in other parts of Amazonia, it was the system of aviamento that sustained the elite class. Accordingly, in 1964 and 1965, on the heels of the military takeover, BASA changed its allocation of credit to virtually cut off funds to seringal owners, which made it impossible for most of them to “move” (that is, continue to operate) their rubber camps. When it called in outstanding balances at the same time, many owners had little choice but to sell their land to pay their debts (Aquino 1977).

Because of BASA's monopoly position, having replaced many of the intermediaries in the aviamento system during World War II, this policy change was felt more broadly and quickly than the slow decline of the rubber industry after the price crash in the 1910s. One seringal owner told Terri Aquino, "I was the rubber camp owner with the most credit in BASA. Credit fell from one minute to the next, production fell from one minute to the next, and I stopped being the largest producer of rubber in Brazil, from one minute to the next" (Aquino 1977:67).

Many seringal owners abandoned their properties as they ceased to be profitable, and once again former rubber tappers sought out the towns and cities of Acre. As a result, Rio Branco's population more than doubled, jumping from 17,104 in 1960 to 36,095 in 1970. Many people did remain on the seringais, however, diversifying their economic activities (by planting gardens, fishing, hunting, and collecting forest products such as Brazil nuts and tree oils) in ways that had been impossible under the camps' former regulations. What credit seringal owners still had was redirected toward providing imported merchandise for the growing city market (Bakx 1988:151). Increasingly, Acre was linked to cities to the south, such as Goiânia, Brasília, and São Paulo, as road building reoriented routes of travel and exchange from the fluvial networks to the highways.

The arrival of the 'Paulistas' and conflict in the countryside

Amazonia policy under the military regime contained a central contradiction. At the same time that it favored economic growth based on the concentration of land in large capital enterprises, the policy aimed to defuse social tensions by promoting smallholder access to land. The competing priorities of economic growth and land tenure reform generated the tensions which "lay at the heart of the 'agrarian question'" that emerged during the 1964-1985 military government (Schmink and Wood 1992:61).

The contradiction inherent in the military program was evident in the clashing agencies developed to carry it out in the Amazon. In 1966 the military government created the Superintendency for the Development of Amazonia (SUDAM) to administer funds from BASA to development projects. Then, in 1970, the military government created the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) to redistribute public lands and private *latifúndio* holdings that were found not to be in use. SUDAM, which favored large investment projects, was often at odds with the smallholder colonization programs developed by INCRA (Schmink and Wood 1992).

In Acre, if not elsewhere, federal policy was conflicted only in the abstract; in practice, what prevailed were credit and tax incentives for ranching and agroindustrial projects which motivated a wave of land speculation and deforestation, while land reform lagged

behind. Under the government of Wanderley Dantas (1970-1974), Acre, seeking to realize the old dream of a trade route west through the Andes—a dream still very much alive at this writing—extended the invitation to southern Brazilian and international venture groups to "Produce in Acre, Invest in Acre, Export via the Pacific" (Bakx 1990:52). The invitation was, evidently, accepted. Brazilian and multinational corporations, caricatured in Acre as *paulistas*—natives of São Paulo state—bought up seringal after seringal, accumulating holdings in Acre of over a million hectares in some cases (Aquino 1977). The first rubber camps to be sold were those in the vicinity of Rio Branco, which were made more attractive by their proximity to the Acre-Brasília highway, completed in the late 1960s as part of an ambitious plan to link the interior of the country to the new national capital in Brasília on the central high plain. By the mid-1970s, however, the sell-off had spread to the Juruá basin in the western part of the state; in all, more than 5 million hectares of land exchanged hands between 1971 and 1975, representing over one-third of the state's territory (Bakx 1988:153). Prices skyrocketed as land was sold and resold. Where one hectare cost 5-12 cruzeiros in the initial stages of the land boom, as speculation increased plots could command as much as 300 cruzeiros to the hectare, an increase of 2500% or more.

Land titles were a source of conflict as more money was invested in Acrean real estate. Particularly problematic were the overlapping claims issued by different authorities, as

well as the outright forgeries that were sometimes put forth in disputes. In some parts of the Amazon where settlement dated to colonial times, such as Pará, there might be seven to ten overlapping claims to the same piece of land (Schmink and Wood 1992). In addition, those who lived and worked on public or abandoned private land could establish a legal right of ownership after a specified period of time. Given the morass of conflicting titles and the possibility of claims by those who occupied the land, the best way for a “Paulista” owner to assert a claim was clearing the land of its forest cover. In the meantime, however, many rubber tappers who stayed on at abandoned seringais had a legal claim as *posseiros* to the land they had continued to work.

The actual situation in the forest was often unknown or ignored in real estate transactions, however. "In the majority of cases, the change-over was from an absentee rubber boss to an investor from the South who frequently did not realise, or was unconcerned, that the land was still occupied by posseiros” (Bakx 1988:153). Part of the process of “clearing” the land thus meant also clearing it of its human occupants. The new owners tried to get people to leave the land “using persuasion, offering laughable compensation, or, the majority of times, using violent methods on the families that had stayed despite the already long decadence of the region’s rubber industry” (Aquino 1977:64). Land owners hired gunmen to intimidate residents, whom they characterized as “squatters,” with threats, beatings, arson, and sometimes murder.

Many people were displaced from their homes in the forest. A substantial migration to rural Bolivia took place with the mid-1970s wave of expulsions, and urbanization reached a new level as evicted forest dwellers came to Acre's cities. In the decade from 1970 to 1980, as expulsions in the countryside increased, Rio Branco's population grew faster than it had since its first decades of existence, more than doubling its population to nearly 100,000.

Several authors have noted that the arrival of the "Paulistas" in Acre galvanized new formations of identity. Previously, greater emphasis had been placed on divisions between tappers and bosses, between *cariús* and *caboclos*, and even between "wild" and "tame" *caboclos*. With the advent of the 1970s land grab, there arose the possibility (*à la* segmentary opposition) of a unified identity of "Acreans" as opposed to "Paulistas"; insiders versus outsiders; those born in the state (or having migrated in earlier eras as "brabo" tappers or Rubber Soliders) against the newcomers (Aquino 1977). The practice of clearcutting the forest became a central point in the new discursive environment, as the Acreans represented themselves as the "defenders" of the forest who rose up to challenge its "destroyers," the southerners who had bought and cut their way to Acre through the states of Mato Grosso and neighboring Rondônia, only to find there, at the country's limit in Acre, a people rising up to resist them.

Rubber tappers began to organize themselves to oppose their wholesale expulsion from the rubber camps. The tappers in the southwest part of the state, where the richest *seringais* had been, near the towns of Xapuri and Brasiléia, were at the vanguard of the resistance. They formed labor syndicates to support one another and make their voices heard, and developed a form of demonstration-cum-resistance known as the *empate*. When the new owners of a seringal sent crews to force out the tappers by razing the forest, they would form lines to physically impede the tractors and chainsaws. Such standoffs could be very tense, as the owners would send hired gunmen to oversee the cutting, and they sometimes resulted in violence. Despite the threat, the tappers would reason with the crew members—who themselves had often been evicted from cleared rubber camps—telling them that the owner was exploiting them and would drop them as soon as the job was done, and sometimes they were able to convince them to switch allegiances.

Like the Acrean Revolution, the resistance to the Paulistas was not entirely home-grown, but depended on numerous alliances. The movement discovered a powerful activism in the blending of human rights concerns (labor and land tenure) and environmental conservation: at the same time discourses of pan-Acrean identity were emerging around the push to “save the forest,” the global environmental movement found common cause and a compelling story in Acre, where the resistance to

deforestation and cattle ranching put a human face on an agenda that could sometimes seem to value pristine landscapes over human needs (Conklin and Graham 1995).

The Catholic Church in Acre also played a very important role in the struggle over the forest. When the region lost its Bishop, Dom Giocondo, in a plane crash in 1971, he was replaced by Dom Moacyr Grechi, a proponent of Vatican II who was friendly to Liberation Theology. Under Grechi the Church would prove to be an important ally of those who sought to defend their continued access to land against the encroachment of the "Paulistas," as well as of those who, expelled from their lands, settled in the burgeoning shantytowns around Rio Branco (Bakx 1990). The Ecclesiastical Base Communities (CEBs), introduced in Acre in 1971, were an important part of the Church's community organizing efforts; in the countryside, its Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) monitored and publicized conflicts between large landowners and smallholders. During the early 1970s it was unusual to read in local newspapers about the violence in the countryside, particularly from a perspective sympathetic to the claims of rubber tappers and other forest dwellers, because the press (then as now) was funded by the governor's office, which did not want its invitation to southern investors to seem unattractive. In this context, the CPT was one of the few sources of information about what was happening.

The populist periodical *O Varadouro*[32] is important in this context because it is a very local manifestation of a new way of thinking, one influenced by the Brazilian counterculture. Locals or transplanted Acreans, educated in Brasilia or elsewhere and influenced by leftist activism against the military regime, used it to create a voice for themselves. They called attention to the existence of Indians in Acre, a fact far from the consciousness of most in the state. They also shone light on the rural conflict and violence. The kind of Acrean that they represented—educated, liberal, fluent in discourses of human rights, capitalist exploitation, and environmentalism—was to play a key role in the political transformation that grew out of the rubber tappers' movement.

In the early 1980s, a gradual political reform, known as "the opening" (*a abertura*) led to the re-legalization of party politics in Brazil, and leaders of the rubber tappers' movement came together with national representatives of the Workers' Party (PT), newly formed out of the southern Brazilian labor unions with the support of Catholic Church leaders steeped in Liberation Theology. The establishment of the PT in Acre gave the rubber tapper movement, initially a rural phenomenon aimed at preserving access

[32] The term *varadouro* refers to the paths that were cut through the forest between watersheds during the rubber era. Although they often took days to traverse, these paths could sometimes save the weeks or even months of travel that would be required to descend the fluvial network and re-ascend it in the other watershed. The image of these simple, yet important paths through the bush evokes solidarity with the rubber tappers and the "peoples of the forest" more generally.

to the land by fighting for the rights of tenants, a political arm through which it could attempt to influence land tenure policy by occupying public office.

Chico Mendes

Throughout the years following the rush of land speculation in the Amazon, hundreds of rural workers, labor leaders, ranchers, and hired guns were killed in violent confrontations. Some of them are well known, such as Wilson Pinheiro, the president of the Rural Workers' Syndicate in Brasiléia, on the Acre River, who was murdered by hitmen hired by ranchers in 1980. None, however, is as famous as Chico Mendes, the Acrean rubber tapper and labor leader. Mendes was involved in the founding of the PT in Acre and sought political office through it, unsuccessfully, in 1982. In 1988, after years of thwarting local landowners, Mendes was murdered.

The fallout from Mendes's murder catalyzed changes in development policy, at least temporarily. International monitoring agencies began paying closer attention to the fulfillment of environmental safeguards in Amazonian development projects, even suspending international loans to projects that failed to assess and mitigate environmental impacts.

At the same time, Mendes's death galvanized the creation of "extractive reserves" in Acre. This new model of land use was based on the idea that the "peoples of the

forest"—including in this designation both Indians and non-Indians whose livelihood depended on the forest—knew how to manage the land without destroying it. The murder of Chico Mendes, coming as it did in the context of broad alliances of environmentalists and labor activists both within Brazil and internationally, made it impossible to talk about development in the Amazon, and especially in Acre, without addressing the concept of sustainability.

At the same time Brazil was just beginning to re-establish democratic rule. In 1988, the same year Mendes was murdered, the Brazilian Congress approved a new constitution that encoded in law many of the populist ideas that were active in Acrean politics at the time, including the valorization of indigenous and "traditional" populations such as rubber tappers.

The PT began to see some success in Acrean politics. What began as a largely rural political movement gained an "urban face" in 1988 when Marina Silva,[33] born on a seringal, was elected to the Rio Branco city council. Two years later the PT mounted a campaign for the governor's office, picking the 30-year-old Jorge Viana as its candidate. Along with his training as a forestry engineer in Brasília, Viana had deep connections

[33] Marina Silva became one of the stars of the PT in Acre, and eventually served as Minister of the Environment in the administration of Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva before being forced out over her "radical" environmentalism. In 2009 she switched from the PT to Brazil's Green Party (PV) in order to represent the PV in the 2010 presidential race.

with traditional Acrean politics: his father, Wildy Viana, had been a Federal Deputy, and his mother's brother, Joaquim Macedo, had been Governor of Acre; both were members of the PSD and its junta reincarnation ARENA (Alliance for National Renovation). Jorge Viana lost the 1990 campaign, but became the first PT candidate in Brazil to take a governor's race to a runoff. In 1992 he was elected mayor of Rio Branco.

Despite the turning political tide, Acre was widely seen during the 1990s as again decadent. Government policy had undermined the credit structures and land base with the shift away from extractive enterprises, leaving the state dependent on the federal government for 80% of its budget (Bakx 1990). These federal handouts were distributed according to the ties of patronage and clientelism that pervaded state government, corruption was seen as widespread, and the state's generally decrepit condition was symbolized, once more, in the Governor's Palace, which lay in squalor, covered with creeping vines and tropical molds. "Death squads" formed within the Military Police, and officers within that corps, as well as the state governor, were reported to be involved in cocaine trafficking.

Vianismo, *florestania,* and the rise of the Noble Caboclo

In 1998 Jorge Viana won the governor's office on the PT ticket with promises to make Acre secure and prosperous. The notion of "florestania" was a key conceptual tool in the

PT discourse, signifying a form of citizenship (*cidadania*) that extended to the "peoples of the forest." This new symbolic politics leveraged the advent of the "Paulistas" in Acre to trumpet a renewed sense of "Acreanness" (*acreanidade*) that was simultaneously a return to, and the creation of, a shared Acrean identity. Based both in its own internal development and in the larger movement toward populist democracy at the national level, manifest in the 1988 Constitution, Acre's political discourse assumed contours that would have been unthinkable a few decades before. The new politics of culture essentially inverted the poles that guided thinking about Acrean society and development after World War II, valorizing the "traditional" knowledge of Indians and rubber tappers, not only as a source of identity, but even as a guide for economic growth with the ascendance of "sustainability" as a keyword in development discourse.

Like previous administrations that sought to define a moment when Acre turned the corner of some version of modernity, the PT government under Jorge Viana focused on highly visible public spaces, beginning with the Governor's Palace, that temple to civism, which had been rescued from decrepitude by the time of my first visit to Rio Branco in 2002. Many of the Viana administration projects were new constructions, such as the "Maternity Park," formerly an open sewer channel transformed into a greenway with bike paths, volleyball courts, and snack bars, and which not only serves recreational purposes for Rio Branco's population, but also provides a veritable commuter highway

for the many whose only form of transportation is the bicycle. (The park is so named because it passes by the Maternity Hospital, a Guiomard dos Santos-era investment in public health infrastructure.) Other projects were quite deliberate attempts to connect to Acre's past, by uncovering and burnishing its former glory: these included restorations of the municipal market building and others erected during Hugo Carneiro's 1930s push toward a modern urban landscape.

Just as important as the transformation of the urban landscape into a brighter, cleaner version of its former self was a culture project which sought to recognize and promote all manifestations of a traditional Acrean past. Thus part of the Governor's Palace became a permanent exhibit about Acre's "Forest People": one room featured basketry and dozens of portraits of Acrean Indians set in backlit glass pedestals; another was dedicated to oral histories of life after the rubber boom (this included a recording of an Alto Santo woman talking about her childhood in the rubber camp); a third honored Chico Mendes and the rubber tapper resistance. Behind the Governor's Palace were built a theater and gallery dedicated to Acre's "autonomists" (meaning its revolutionaries and, after its annexation to Brazil, those who supported statehood). New projects featured sustainably-sourced timber, showed a preference for traditional regional architecture, and incorporated indigenous geometrical forms.

Whether the rise of the PT to its current position of dominance in Acrean politics is a good thing is a matter of debate. Critics charge that the very visible nature of many of the "Forest Government"'s project inaugurations hides incomplete or shoddy work; that corruption may have lessened, but still exists; that nepotism and favoritism are also still part of Acrean government; that markers of the local PT brand, such as the Brazil nut tree logo, "Acreanness," and "florestania" are mere demagoguery, calculated to take advantage of the discursive environment for political gain; even that some version of "death squads" still operates in Acre's prisons. The alliance of the PT with a number of Acrean politicians who were formerly its competitors has raised charges that the party has lost its ethical principles in its quest to retain its hold on power; at the same time, critics now have less opportunity to voice these charges in the local print and broadcast media, since some of these are owned by the erstwhile rivals who have now been brought into the fold of the "Acrean Popular Front" (FPA), whether by ideological conversion or financial inducement.

Given the PT's very visible style of governance and debates at the national level surrounding the concept of sustainable development, critics have abounded in Brazil's mainstream press. In 2006, for example, a writer for the Brazilian version of *Rolling Stone* magazine compared the restored façades along the Rio Branco riverfront—and by

extension the PT government in Acre more generally—to the production lots in Rio de Janeiro where the Globo network films its television shows (Vieira 2006).

Conclusion

Acre's history has been marked by several important themes: the difficulty and suffering associated with the environment, experienced through the prism of the rubber economy; the compounding exploitation of rubber tappers; fraught contact between Indians and tappers; the condition of national frontier; uncertainty over national loyalty; tension with the federal government; a monoculture highly subject to price fluctuations; social relations based on patronage and clientelism, accentuated by the aviamento credit system; and, more recently, a turn toward broadly inclusive politics of culture and regional identity.

The social and institutional development of Alto Santo is intelligible within the context of these themes. Irineu Serra arrived in Acre just as the rubber bubble was bursting around 1912, and worked in the forest as a rubber tapper and employee of the commission charged with surveying the Bolivian border. During this time in the forest he learned of ayahuasca, and in the late 1910s Irineu Serra joined a group in Brasiléia, on the Acre River, that used ayahuasca in an (incipiently) urban, esoteric context. When the effects of the rubber price collapse began to make themselves felt, around 1920, Irineu

Serra settled in Rio Branco, where he worked in the Territorial Guard (the precursor of the Military Police in Acre).

As the crisis deepened during the interwar years, Irineu Serra left the Guard in 1932 and established his house in an area, west of the city center, where many ex-tappers were claiming parcels and planting subsistence plots. Thus began Irineu Serra's career as both small farmer and healer, receiving the sick and the curious at healing sessions in his home. Even as he embarked on this spiritual mission, Irineu Serra remained close to the friends he'd made in the military, several of whom became important politicians in Acre and helped him and "his" people, providing civil service jobs and protection from persecution by authorities who were suspicious of Daime. It is a point of pride in Alto Santo discourse to emphasize that the concession of the lands that became Alto Santo resulted from Irineu Serra's close relationship with José Guiomard dos Santos. At the same time as it appears as a personal favor, this concession was part of a push toward agricultural self-sufficiency that came after the temporary reinvigoration gave way to another crisis.

Control of this land, hundreds of hectares lying eight kilometers north of the city in the forests of the former seringal *Empresa*, was essential to Irineu Serra's realization as a kind of "big man" because it enabled him to invite his followers to bring their families and settle there. The Alto Santo brotherhood grew rapidly during the demographic

expansion of Rio Branco in the 1950s as rubber tappers abandoned failing *seringais* for the city. This growth seems to have peaked in the mid-to-late 1960s, when the Alto Santo center (like the newly promoted state of Acre) entered a new phase of its institutional existence with its registration in the public records office as a "juridical person," which followed on the establishment of a dedicated worship hall in the late 1950s, partly under pressure of government development agents.

Irineu Serra died in 1971, in the midst of Acre's transition to the ranching economy. His personal departure mirrored the exit of the old order based on the patron-client relationships of the rubber industry; fissures in the brotherhood widened in his absence, giving rise to the split that would eventually spread Daime to the Brazilian South and overseas. At the same time, the advent of the federal police in Acre during the military dictatorship's terrifying "years of lead" (1968-1974) brought serious threats to the use of ayahuasca in the state, threats which were more difficult to neutralize in his absence, particularly given the increased presence of the federal military government in Acre and its concern with social movements that might challenge its rule.

The gradual re-democratization of Brazil, which began in the late 1970s and culminated in the return to civilian rule in 1985, saw Alto Santo establish a new position in relationship to local politics under the leadership of Irineu Serra's widow, known at Alto Santo as Madrinha ("Godmother") Peregrina. Where Irineu Serra had always been a

reliable channel of votes for the party that fomented the 1964 coup, Alto Santo shifted alliances in the 1980s to the newly-formed, left-leaning Workers' Party (PT). As Acreans sought a common identity in the face of the "invasion" of the "southerners," increasingly they turned toward the historical experience of the rubber boom to find elements of a distinctively Acrean culture. Alto Santo enjoyed a special relationship to this political evolution because of the presence in its ranks of one of the key intellectual architects of the PT platform, the center's orator, Antônio ("Toinho") Alves. With his help, the PT harnessed a global and national rising tide of populist politics for regional and local ends, promoting *florestania*, a neologism for a government based in the concept of "forest citizenship" that held out the promise of "sustainable development" in the forest. The same dynamic increased the visibility and legitimacy of Irineu Serra and the use of Daime as part of Acre's distinctive cultural heritage, so that as the federal government has increased its scrutiny of the ever-expanding use of ayahuasca, Alto Santo has been able to claim a position of legitimacy as the oldest and "most traditional" center of its kind.

None of this should suggest that the relationship between Alto Santo and Acrean history must be characterized either as determinative, or else as merely rhetorical. The suffering and need of those who sought out Irineu Serra for healing and orientation was surely real enough. Rubber extraction in Acre was a dangerous and often quite

exploitative enterprise that involved physical suffering even under the best of circumstances, and many people died from illness or violence. Acreans were (and are) well acquainted with the "space of death" that Michael Taussig (1987) describes for the Putumayo River region in Colombia. And yet I hope to show that people at Alto Santo, like the tapper family in the forest portrayed by Mariana Pantoja, "don't attribute a tragic significance to their lives. Quite to the contrary: they fill their life with significance and are proud of it. … Who does not look at their past and try to make sense of what happened?" (Franco 2001:52).

To understand how people at Alto Santo make sense of their past is important to understanding their present. Thus, in the next two chapters I move from a broad view of Acrean history to a smaller-scale examination of a pair of central concerns for this dissertation. First, in chapter two, I focus on various non-indigenous Amazonian discourses around ayahuasca, with the aim of showing how they point toward the drink as an important marker of a divide between civilization and wildness. Esotericist discourse provided a means to theorize ayahuasca experience that paralleled the functioning of social theories like Comtean Positivism in offering a vision of universal forces wrapping all humanity in a single moral fabric. Following on that discussion, in chapter three I look closely at the constitution of the House of Mestre Irineu. One reason for this is that Alto Santo discourse focuses on the person of Mestre Irineu,

framing him according to Brazilian notions of a householder and patriarch, as a powerful man who gathers people to him and retains them by entering into mutually beneficial exchange relations. It is therefore important to grasp how people at Alto Santo view Irineu Serra in the context of Acrean history in order to understand the ways ritual practice becomes meaningful there. At the same time, by showing how discourse about Mestre Irineu's House draws on broader Brazilian notions of authority and social organization, I want to show how fully Brazilian Alto Santo ritual practice is, despite its stigmatization.

Chapter Two: Between esotericism and indigenism: contexts of ayahuasca in Acre and the Amazon

Ayahuasca, indigenousness, and civilization

In the Amazon, successive waves of colonization meant that hybrid forms of engaging the visible and invisible worlds were created and re-created, combined and recombined, from the European explorers of the 16th century down to the present. By the time that workers in the rubber boom encountered ayahuasca, they were already heirs to traditions that were influenced by indigenous and African ideas and practices. And the forms of ayahuasca use they encountered and adopted, as far as we can tell, had also been subjected to as much as three centuries of adaptation within the Catholic Church's missionary efforts in the lowlands east of the Andes (Gow 1994). Far from being an encounter of "pure" and mutually alien cultural strains, appropriations of ayahuasca like those undertaken by Mestre Irineu, his contemporaries, and his successors took place within a "middle ground" that provided a certain equivalence, or at least accepted the possibility of compatibility, between the cultural and spiritual practices brought by the rubber tappers, and those techniques practiced by indigenous healers and shamans, *pajés* who used plant medicines to enter into relationship with the invisible forces that govern the forest. In order to understand better how Mestre Irineu's work with

ayahuasca is both similar to, and represents a departure from, other uses that were being made of ayahuasca in early 20th century Acre, it will be useful to examine some of these other contexts. This chapter is dedicated to showing how scientific and esoteric ideas influenced Acrean emigrants' experiences of ayahuasca.

Acre, in the first two decades of the twentieth century—before the collapse of the rubber economy—shared with the entrepot of Manaus in Amazonas state, and with other boom economies, a certain characteristic mix of abysmal poverty and flashy wealth. The aesthetic values that governed the expression of this wealth came from elsewhere, which, in the cultural hierarchy of Brazil at the time, meant Europe (and especially Paris) by way of Rio de Janeiro:

> Situated (or as some thought, imprisoned) in the midst of a vast and alluring jungle, Manaus loudly boasted of all the amenities of any European city of similar size of even larger. An excellent system of waterworks, an efficient garbage collection and disposal system, electricity, telephone service, handsome public buildings, and comfortable private residences attested to the modernity of the city. (Burns 1965:401)

If such markers of modernity sought to reproduce European standards in the tropics, in a few of Acre's towns, such as Xapuri and Cruzeiro do Sul, efforts were made to emulate Manaus, including installation of electric light, and visits by luxury steamers with their own orchestras (Almeida 1992). Likewise, if Manaus was "joined politically to Rio de Janeiro...dependent commercially on London and partial culturally to Paris" (Burns

1965:404), the same situation applied, on a lesser scale, to Acre. In many ways, then, the flush of cash that accompanied the rubber boom aided the production of a paradoxical tropical cosmopolitanism.[34]

Just as rubber boom towns sought the technological trappings of the European metropolises, so too did they embrace (albeit in their own way) the philosophical and spiritual trends emanating from them. Analogous to the efforts of Rondon and others to integrate the backlands of the nation, esoteric organizations also began to build national networks of members, including in such remote places as Acre. Chief among these was Freemasonry, which established its first lodge in Xapuri in 1903; by 1913 there were four lodges in the Territory of Acre (Iglesias 2008:296 n. 365). By contrast, it would be another seven years before the Catholic Church made its first permanent mission in the area (Souza 2002).

From the Church's perspective, the expansion of such organizations was hardly a marker of the progress of humanity toward perfection; instead, it tended to view them as moral threats. Writing of Vila Seabra (Tarauacá) during 1924, the end of the period under

[34] This cosmopolitanism turned sadly decadent in Rio Branco in the years before the Second World War reinvigorated the rubber industry, as Océlio de Medeiros (1942:112) wryly points out in his description of the city: "The Rio Branco Cinema, on the left side, the only cinema in the city, fills the air with ancient sounds, playing upon its powerful Victrola songs already out of style in the most outlying boroughs of Rio de Janeiro."

consideration at the moment, Constant Tastevin noted, with admirable restraint, the spiritual promiscuity of the locals:

> By the bonds of habit and heredity, all the inhabitants of the town and its environs, with the exception of the Orientals, claim to belong to the Catholic Church. They do what they wish with dogma and morality: unabashedly they marry the Pope with the Freemasons, the Roman Catechism with Spiritism and so-called Free Thought, but they may all be found around the altar and at the feet of the statues for worship services. And this example is so influential that even the Druze and Muslim Orientals are drawn toward it. Tastevin (1926: 35-6 [cited in Iglesias 2008:296 n. 365]; my translation)

Positivism and Freemasonry were linked in the practice of many in Brazil's nascent professional classes, the result of France's increasing influence on Brazilian intellectual and cultural life toward the close of the 19th century. In this situation, writes Simon Schwartzman (1978:546), Freemasonry was ascendant among Brazil's elite, "and Comtian positivism became its preferred doctrine," although in Brazil its implementation tended toward authoritarianism. Whereas in Europe, positivism joined liberalism, republicanism, and evolutionism in transforming class relations, in Brazil it was one of the "banners used in political conflicts which shifted leadership from the north to the south, from the landed aristocrats to the urban bureaucrats, from civilians to the military, from the old to the new generations, in a society which remained strongly stratified and, for a long time, immune to deeper social changes" (ibid.).

As French intellectual culture became more dominant in Brazil, so did French philosophical and esoteric trends, which not only influenced elites, but also were taken

up in “popular” spiritual practices. While “Kardecist Spiritism” is the most famous example of this, there is a field of ritual practices and discourse in which French ideas are but one influence among many, and the whole is deeply Brazilian. The many different kinds of Umbanda, with their own, racially coded distinctions between “higher” and “lower” practices and spirit entities—including those of African, Native American, and European origin—together offer perhaps the best example of the ways Brazilians have reworked these European traditions.

While such cultural and religious miscegenation was surely not the ideal envisioned by missionaries such as Tastevin, in the Acrean context people were sufficiently “unabashed” in their integration of multiple religious frames of reference that mention of the fact might be made or put down in writing without too much hesitancy. Although Masonic lodges and Spiritist centers did sometimes come under fire from the Catholic Church (and literally so in the 1950s, when Spiritist and other sacrilegious texts, such as Protestant tracts, were burned in dramatic bonfires), they enjoyed enough prestige among people of importance in Acrean society that their open operation, including for example clearly marked Masonic buildings, appears never to have been in question (Souza 2002).

The use of ayahuasca presented a rather different case, for several reasons. One was the fact of it indigenous origins: ayahuasca has always been identified with

indigenousness, and in a way distinct from, say, rubber. (The use of natural latex was also an example of knowledge that passed from indigenous Amazonians to Euro-Brazilians, but its transformation into a raw material of industrial capitalism has stripped it of any indigenous connotation. With ayahuasca, such connotations have always been preserved.)[35] Another way ayahuasca use was different from (and seen as more suspect than) esoteric and Spiritist practices was in the fact of its brute materiality. Certainly communication with the spirits of the dead, as practiced in certain Spiritist contexts, incurred the wrath of the Catholic Church for its impermissible mixing of this world with the next. Ayahuasca, however, goes further in this mixing by virtue of its being a substance that aids in experiencing, and communicating with the *astral*, the spiritual dimension.

Amazonian scholarship suggests that widespread ayahuasca use in the Amazon is at least as old as lowland missionization.[36] Two authors, Michael Taussig (1980, 1987) and Peter Gow (1994) have written on non-indigenous ayahuasca healing in South America

[35] This is not to imply that there is any one-size-fits-all consensus about the way ayahuasca mediates relations between Indians and others, or that indigenous use is seen as the root, in more than a temporal sense, of contemporary practices with ayahuasca. For example, the UDV rehearses histories of ayahuasca in which it was re-discovered by Indians and so-called "Masters of Curiosity" (that is, non-Indian rubber tapper types) before the UDV was properly "re-created" by Mestre Gabriel, putting the Indians in a position somewhat analogous to some perceptions of the conservation of scholarly knowledge by Arabs during the European Dark Ages: they are seen not so much as pioneers as mere temporary caretakers.
[36] In fact, Gow (1994) argues against a perception, common to scholars and non-academic ayahuasca enthusiasts alike, that ayahuasca use has been generalized in the Amazon for so long that its origins fade into the mists of time.

in ways that engage the social history of their respective regions (southwest Colombia—especially the Putumayo—and the lowlands of eastern Peru and Ecuador) as a source of dynamism in the healing practices. Taussig argues that the healing "networks" are forms of shamanistic power that predate colonialism and index a mode of relations diametrically opposed to capitalist ones. Healing sessions with ayahuasca are efficacious because they mediate not only relations with spirits, but also the new class conflicts introduced by capitalism. Gow does not emphasize the pre-existing networks of shamanistic power that are important to Taussig; instead, he argues that ayahuasca shamanism, which he says is the dominant form of folk healing in the region today, is a product of the missionary history of western Amazonia. For him, even most of the indigenous groups that use ayahuasca have, with very few exceptions, adopted the "missionary" form of ayahuasca shamanism as the rubber boom spread throughout the region. By engaging and inverting the social, racial, spiritual, and economic hierarchies of the mission and of capitalist relations, ayahuasca shamanism "evolved to cure the disease of western Amazonian colonial experience, [and] is available to respond to the new ills afflicting those who are coming into the region from the Andes and southern Brazil" (Gow 1994:110).

Such descriptions of inverted hierarchies make ayahuasca sound rather dangerous from the perspective of non-indigenous authority, and add another reason for the relative

invisibility of ayahuasca in Acre's early history, and particularly of its use by non-indigenous people. In both Taussig's and Gow's descriptions, ayahuasca use is centrally concerned with the "moral topography" (Taussig) of the upper Amazon, and especially the value-laden spatial relationships between town and forest, as well as with the mediation of relations between "races" and the tracking of the *pas-de-deux* of civilization and wildness. Scientific reports on ayahuasca from the first decades of the 20th century bolstered this sense of danger, tending to suggest that it worked in direct opposition to the ordering influence of civilization.

"Ayawasco"

In 1923, for example, the New York *Times* reported on experiments to be conducted by Columbia University botany and pharmacy professor Henry H. Rusby with materials of "caapi" or "ayawasco," a "strange and powerful drug" which "was discovered last year…in the wilds of Bolivia, after scientists and explorers had vainly searched for it for more than seventy years" (New York Times 1923:n.p.).[37] With shades of Ulysses lashed to the mast, the article reported that one Dr. Albert S. Schneider of UC Berkeley was to take it, and would later "give the world the story of his sensations under its influence."

[37] The 'seventy years' mentioned likely refer to the time elapsed since the reports of the Ecuadorean geographer Villavicencio (1858) and the English botanist Richard Spruce, who encountered caapi / ayahuasca in 1851, but whose notes were unpublished until 1908.

According to the article, "ayawasco"'s power lay in its capacity to strip away the influence of the modern world and produce primitive aggression: "The drug is said to turn civilized man back into a savage and to kill all fear," being administered amongst the Indians only "on the eve of battle," to bring about "a superhuman courage that causes the drinker to have no fear of the enemy."[38]

Such views suggest that ayahuasca belongs firmly on the wild side of a simple opposition between civilization and savagery, but in Acre, where the contribution of Indian guides to the *processo civilizatório* was undeniable (if under-credited), and where the divide between Indians and rubber boom migrants was often bridged through kinship, there developed many kinds of practice with ayahuasca that challenge such an easy dichotomy. It is possible, in tracking some of these uses of ayahuasca, to glimpse its status as a marker of relationship between the autochthonous powers of the forest and the imported authority of the state. In Acre, concepts from esotericism provided an idiom through which to understand ayahuasca, and a system of motivations for using it

[38] While such reports likely reflect something of the ways indigenous people were using ayahuasca, they also clearly embody tropes from Western drugs discourse. Cannabis, cocaine, PCP, and crack were all depicted in the 20th century as agents of wildness, causing violent frenzy, fearlessness, and "superhuman" strength and daring, particularly in the bodies of those belonging to suspect racial classes, especially African-Americans but also Latin Americans in the United States (see Bonnie and Whitebread [1974] on the racialized journalistic discourse that supported anti-cannabis laws).

that fitted well with the more all-encompassing ideologies of progress and order that provided the rubric for Acrean colonization.

Castello Branco's *Gentio acreano*: The elsewhere Indian

The account of José Moreira Brandão Castello Branco is an ethnological summary of the ways of Acre's indigenous people, or "gentiles" (*gentio*) that, as the name implies, emphasizes the irreducible difference and contrast with Christianity (and all that it stood for) that were perceived as defining the Indians. Based on his reading of the ethnographic work of the missionary Constant Tastevin, Castello Branco's 1920 text outlined certain indigenous practices, including the use of ayahuasca and other natural drugs by Kaxarari and Kaxinawá Indians, both Arawak groups in the Acre River watershed.

> Narcotics—they know several of them, and the Cachararis (Iquiri) produce one, used only by the patriarchs of the tribe, made from a plant by way of infusion and trituration, until a thick, dark liquid is obtained. They take it in the quantity of one soup spoon, and within five minutes the old Indian begins to twist and become agitated, then begins to dream, picturing marvellous scenes or bloody combat, hearing the sound of horns... The crisis lasts for 15 to 20 minutes, after which he returns to his normal state.
>
> This narcotization is done on feast days, with the *tuchaua* [chief] studying all the revelations of the old ones who took it and reaching his conclusions, which are communicated to all those present, as well as the proper measures to be taken, then continuing the feast.

> Tastevin speaks of the *honé* (today spelled *uni*) used by the Cachinauás to discover the future, find the remedy for a certain illness, or divine the places where game is hidden.
>
> The body of the patient becomes so light that he does not even feel it owing to his intoxication. The first time, generally, the individual is fearful, sees serpents, spirits of armed people, as though they were Jaminauá, Kurina, soldiers, etc., but a true Cachinauá does not grow meek, little by little he gets accustomed to it, turns stoic, and sings. There follow the pleasant visions, as the spirit of the *honé* reveals the future, makes armed people appear, indicates infallible remedies, shows the place in which game is to be found, after which the intoxicated one returns to the normal state and sleeps. And, he [Tastevin] adds, on taking it for the first time, it is as if one had taken tobacco powder, being always the victim of violent diarrhea. (Castello Branco 1950[1920]:39-40)

Castello Branco's account is notable for its detached, objective tone and use of the ethnographic present. Reading his description, one might be forgiven for wondering about the relationship between these Indians and rubber tappers, given that substantial numbers of rubber boom emigrants had been in the area for decades by the late 1910s, when Castello Branco composed his text. In this sense, Castello Branco's writing typifies an attitude that came to prevail in Acre's towns over the course of the 20th century, in which Indians were increasingly seen as either vanishing or gone, so that educated Acreans like Antônio (Toinho) Alves Leitão Neto, the current Alto Santo orator, or the anthropologist "Txai" Terri Valle de Aquino, would tell me in the 2000s that they had to leave Acre for university in Brasília before they found out that, in the 1970s, there were still Indians in their home state! (See also Aquino 1977.)

The framing employed in Castello Branco's text is also reminiscent of the "bracketing" sometimes practiced by anthropologists seeking to reproduce native discourse without

making judgments on the ontology of the subject matter. This framing device is, in a sense, undermined by the use of terms like "*gentio*" and "narcotics," which locate the indigenous people, like ayahuasca itself, firmly on the side of paganism, and suggest a falsity to the visions and knowledge said to be obtained by the use of *uni* (a Kaxinawá term for ayahuasca; see Aquino 1977). Castello Branco's text is generally accurate in its description of ayahuasca's uses and effects, except for the foreshortened estimates of its time of onset and especially of duration, which, being considerably longer than reported—perhaps four hours for a single dose—suggest Castello Branco's lack of personal familiarity with ayahuasca. The sober, scientific tone of the text recalls desiccated cork-boards full of insect specimens, and evokes a display of the scientific curiosities to be found in the furthest reaches of the nation's territory. It supports a reading, in short, in which such practices exist in the past, or better, exist in an abstract timelessness that stands as a reminder of what has moved into the past so that civilization may occupy the present. Reading Castello Branco, one does not have the impression that, at the time of his writing, there existed in Acre a panoply of ayahuasca uses, involving not only Indians but also rubber boom emigrants, and not only ancient pagan superstition but also modern, quasi-scientific esoteric notions.

Given the religious miscegenation noted by Tastevin above, however, it is not surprising that ayahuasca should have entered into circulation as yet another spiritual technique.

Indeed, published accounts of contemporary ayahuasca shamanism in the upper Amazon, especially those based on studies in urban and peri-urban settings, tend to emphasize its eclectic character, and in particular the facility with which it mixed indigenous practices with Catholic iconography and esoteric concepts, including such elements from (east) Indian philosophy and European quasi-science as Mesmer's "animal magnetism" and *karma* (see, among others, Dobkin de Rios 1972, Luna 1986, Ramírez de Jara and Pinzón 1986, Taussig 1987). At the same time that these cultural elements influenced the ways ayahuasca was used and understood in the Amazon, reports of its strange effects were feeding back to the world's metropolitan centers (see the discussion of Rafael Zerda Bayón and the London *Times*, below).

The New York *Times* article mentioned above is but one example, and one heavy on scientism; its brief account offers a reductive and essentially negative explanation of "ayawasco" as merely "stripping away" the civilized layers of personality, and returning one to a violent, animal condition very much evocative of the Hobbesian "state of nature." (Perhaps a comparison with Stevenson's Mr. Hyde is more appropriate, given the rupture and temporariness that characterize the description of the drug experience.) It is a bit hard to imagine, from such a description, exactly why Berkeley's Dr. Schneider would want to experience the drug, other than for purely heroic scientific reasons. Castello Branco's account, by contrast, evokes much more marvelous

phenomena which extrapolate a materialist point of view with its references to foreseeing the future, finding hidden game, and learning to use plant remedies, even as its framing casts doubt upon the ontological reality of this knowledge.

These examples of early discourse on ayahuasca represent it in quite different ways, but they share the presumption that it belongs to a domain that is either inaccessible to modern persons, or else is inappropriate to have contact with. Rejecting this presumption would ultimately be a critical distinction of Irineu Serra's career with the drink, which came to be closely linked with his name and the house, or *casa*, that he headed, as we will see in more detail in chapter three. There were other situations, however, in which ayahuasca was the object of personal experience, yet did not make the transition to the "civilized" side of things. Felizardo Cerqueira's allusions to his contact with indigenous spiritual life are part of the discussion of esotericism below; in the case of Delfim Freire we have much more explicit discussion of his experience with ayahuasca, albeit colored by his indigenist-separatist point of view.

Delfim Freire and the "Secrets of Hiuasca"

Among the earliest documentary evidence for ayahuasca use in Acre is an article published in 1920 in the newspaper *O Futuro* in Rio Branco.[39] The author of the article was Delfim[40] Freire, who is identified in correspondence cited by Iglesias (2008:165) as having the position of "Sub-Encarregado" of the Indians of the Upper Tarauacá River. Freire worked for SPILTN, the Service for the Protection of Indians and the Settlement of Domestic Workers, which had been founded, with Rondôn at its head, in 1910. Several clues suggest that Freire aligned his sympathies with the Indians of Acre in the way that Rondôn modeled, with non-violence toward Indians as a watchword, a disdain for their exploitation, and a certain romantic conviction that, even as the progressive values of civilization must be extended to those still without them, there is a crude nobility and dignity to the Indian spirit which sometimes contrasts favorably with the depravity of which the civilized are capable.[41] This conviction most often took the shape of a desire to protect the Indians from the harmful actions of the *civilizados*, especially the practices of seizing Indian concubines and slave laborers. While there is a ringing note of paternalism in the notion that Indians should need a special class of government agent

[39] I am grateful to Rosana Martins de Oliveira for bringing this important text to my attention and providing me with a copy.
[40] Iglesias uses both "Delfim" and "Delfino"; in the serially-published *O Futuro* text, the author's name is given as "Delfim."
[41] See chapter three for more discussion of Rondôn and his role in "civilizing the backlands" of Brazil.

to relate to the society at large, for Freire and many others, the horrors of the *correrias* and other atrocities underscored the reality of the necessity for protection.

Physical violence was not the only evil he sought to guard against; there was also corruption. As Iglesias points out, SPILTN funding and honorific titles flowed through local networks of gift obligation, so that from the perspective of appropriate use of public monies, "occasional abuses were not uncommon on the part of the delegates themselves, and / or their network of relatives and clients who were interested in using indigenous labor" (2008:163). Letters Freire wrote in 1914 to the SPILTN Inspector General for Acre and Amazonas reveal something of the ways that control of Indians and their labor, legitimized through the establishment of SPILTN outposts and the distribution of official titles and resources, entered into local networks of gift exchange that were more concerned with the maintenance of moral ties amongst (and financial prosperity of) the non-Indians than with the welfare of the indigenous people. In one letter, Freire argued against a request by the prefect of the Tarauacá Department to establish a SPILTN outpost on a privately owned agricultural "colony" near Vila Seabra (now the municipality of Tarauacá) and to settle thirty Kulina Indians there who had supposedly "asked him for *aldeiamento*" (that is, concentration in a village). Freire's opposition to the project on ethical grounds had set him against the prefect, who was presumably servicing his own network of clients with his support for it. In apparent

retaliation, or perhaps to avoid Freire's denunciation of the situation to federal authorities, the prefect had cut off his access to communications equipment which, as *Sub-Encarregado* for SPILTN in the Tarauacá Department, he should have been able to use (Iglesias 2008:165). (Freire wrote his letter from Manaus.)

In a second letter, Freire—no longer signing with the title *Sub-Encarregado*—wrote that he had been replaced in his position by one Francisco Carneiro Sobrinho, who had been reappointed to the post that he "had previously occupied" because of action on the part of his "protector," the prefect, who had used his influence with Rondôn to further his plan to settle the group of Indians at the colony. Again Freire denounced the use of SPILTN resources on private land, and so near to the town, which he rated negatively as a "rubber tapper's haven, where *cachaça* abounds, where women are scarce, and where the possession of the 'little Indians' is coveted" (Iglesias 2008:166). He asked that the details of the situation be communicated to Rondôn, who he imagined must not know what was happening.

Freire ended his letter with a request for new orders from the Inspector General, stoically promising to go wherever he was needed, even if it were "far from settlements, where no one may say that I enjoy comforts, that I trade on Indian labor, or that I do the bidding of anyone whatsoever" (Iglesias 2008:166). Whether such accusations were leveled at Freire in the intrigue over his opposition to the colony is unknown, but his

statement suggests that this kind of allegation was current, and makes clear his principled opposition to the abuses of Indians within the patron-client networks that developed in rubber-boom Acre.

I want to draw attention to the spatial element in Freire's proud, exasperated request. In his discourse, settlements of rubber tappers are coded negatively, less as potential bulwarks of civilization and more as cesspools of the worst of urban life: drunkenness, exploitation, cronyism. The forest, by contrast, was a place of clean conscience, far from creature comforts and from enmeshment in relations of debt obligation. This is of course a familiar Romantic image, and not necessarily a good description of the indigenous peoples of Acre; debt obligations, at least, no doubt existed in their own form in indigenous society. In Freire's writing, however, the forest is the complementary opposite of the city, the space where the things that plague it are left behind.

"Free from distorted *pajelanças*"

In examining Freire's text, I want to suggest continuity between his principled, idealistic attitude toward Indians, as communicated in his letters, and his perspective on ayahuasca. Freire writes with the authority of an expert on Acre's Indians, signaling his familiarity with indigenous groupings and languages by a profusion of italicized native terms complete with footnoted glosses. For a reader accustomed to scholarly genres the

effect is a bit heavy handed in a newspaper article, and seemingly intended more to command belief in the author's knowledge than to inform the reader of terms central to the story's content.[42] His tale is set in the past and across the divide separating forest and city: Freire notes that he is recounting events that occurred 11 years earlier, in 1909, in the context of difficult river journeys undertaken to find the headwaters of the Gregório River.[43] Separating Freire's text from that of a Castello Branco is the fact that its originating premise is the narrator's movement across this "folkloric" divide in order to have firsthand experience of Indian ayahuasca use. The space in which Freire encounters ayahuasca is presented as one of authentic wildness, with the outstanding heroic element that Freire himself crossed over into it to bring back his tale.

From *correrias* to the rubber camps

"It was I," he claims, "who, for the first time, in 1909 revealed and discovered the marvelous effects of this mysterious drink, so celebrated today." The melodramatic,

[42] Newspapers in Acre have always had very small circulations, and historically have limited their field of view (excepting crime reporting) to the doings of the more powerful segments of the society. The vast majority of residents of Acre today get their news from the television, whether they are literate or not. It should thus not be assumed that Freire's text reached a particularly wide audience at the time it was published. (Indeed, the fact that it was published at all offers something of a mystery: why would the publishers of *O Futuro* have been interested in an article that pointed to the seams where Acrean society was stitched together?)

[43] Iglesias mentions Freire's having contact with Ângelo Ferreira, an important figure both in Indian "catechizing" (he was Felizardo Cerqueira's boss, and may have taught him some things about "pacifying" Indians) and in the Border Commission that surveyed Brazil's western boundaries. Freire thus may have been working for this agency at the time of this episode.

redundant style typifies Freire's text, but the claim is at odds with his own assertion that ayahuasca's "marvelous effects had already been revealed to various Peruvian explorers of the Juruá and Ucayali by some Kaxinawá and Yawanawá Indians caught in *correrias*." In Freire's account, knowledge about ayahuasca had been transferred to emigrants to the region through the same violent processes that brought Indian wives and slaves into rubber camps. It is a difficult fact that the *correrias*, even as they were instruments of genocide, also mediated intercultural learning, but the evidence suggests that one of the primary ways rubber tappers found out about ayahuasca was through captured Indians and those taught by them.[44]

This same pathway of knowledge transfer is explored by Mariana Pantoja Franco in her work on the oral history of ayahuasca use among residents of the Alto Juruá Extractive Reserve. There, one name recurred whenever she asked old-timers about ayahuasca (generally called by the Tupi-Guarani loan word *cipó* among rubber tappers, which means simply 'vine'): that of Crispim. She writes,

> According to oral tradition, this renowned healer was the son of Indians on the Envira River, and was separated from his people when he was captured in a '*correria*.' Adopted by whites, Crispim is said to have lived in several places, including outside of Acre, and

[44] Over and above the suggestion of a means by which knowledge of ayahuasca may have been transferred to rubber tappers, narratives such as this reveal the existence of a trope: it is the violent subjugation of *indigenousness itself* which is understood as the path by which ayahuasca comes to be used among the tappers. This trope suggests another, in which ayahuasca is made "tame" or civilized (cf. Gow 1991, 1994).

> arrived in the Tejo River basin around the 1950s. He lived for several years on the Dourado igarapé, where he raised a family. Later he moved to the upper Bagé river, among the Jaminawá, with whom his name is still associated today. Crispim was much sought-after; he used 'bush remedies' and *cipó*, which he prepared himself and administered to make diagnoses, give prescriptions, and achieve cures. (Franco 2002:381)

Through Crispim, others came to fame as healers using *cipó* in the rubber camps. Pantoja mentions Sebastião Pereira (known as "Sebastião of the Cipó"), who apprenticed with Crispim:

> Sebastião held nighttime meetings with neighboring rubber tappers, without the presence of women, to drink bottles of *cipó* that he himself prepared. 'He used that kind of music of Teixeirinha [a popular singer] that speaks of God' (Osmildo Silva da Conceição). It is said that Sebastião manifested extraordinary powers: 'A guy could be in whatever state, when Sebastião put his hand on his head, he'd get well.' It is also said that he sang and danced with the maracá to help those present to have visions under the effect of the drink. 'When it was time for the force to arrive, he'd go out singing and come back whistling.[45] Then it began.' (ibid.)

In the rubber camp context described by Pantoja, motives for drinking ayahuasca are very similar to those encountered in descriptions of its use by Indians, with healing near the top of the list. But rubber tappers had other concerns, as well:

> to discover cheating in the calculation of seringueiros' debts to their bosses, to check on the behavior of their wives on trips to the city or the loyalty of friends, or to find out the conditions of the river on the eve of a journey. Another motive was to see new or inaccessible places, and it is significant that the cipó is nicknamed 'caboclo television.' (ibid.)

[45] This theme recalls the whistled melodies, *icaros*, used in Peruvian *vegetalismo*; for a similar account of *cipó* use in the municipality of Tarauacá (Acre), see Prance and Prance (1970). It also resembles Irineu Serra's use of "*chamados*," or "calls," which are said to have been whistled melodies and carry connotations of indigenousness (see chapter three).

The secretive nature of ayahuasca ceremonies in the rubber camps—held at night with select (male) participants, away from the boss's *barracão*—fits with the view that the ceremonies helped access a hidden source of power. The notion that rubber tappers in their hammocks might drink *cipó* and transcend their stasis in the forest to see what was happening in other places, or that they might understand, in a vision, how the boss had been using their ignorance of mathematics to cheat them in the ledger book helps give a sense of what ayahuasca meant in Acre's rubber camps.[46] Strongly identified with the forest and its "savage" inhabitants, yet used among the tappers in their forest camps, *cipó* existed in an ambiguous space that lent it mystery and power, and pointed toward the places where relationships were fraught with questions of trust and exploitation. The power of ayahuasca, like that of "big man" figures of exceptional charisma such as Felizardo Cerqueira and Irineu Serra, derived from its movement into, and across, the spaces separating the domains of town and forest, civilization and wilderness. Such powers were all the more dangerous because of their origins, not in the authoritative

[46] Indeed, Franco reports that in the 1970s one patrão even forbade sessions, saying it would interfere with work; the tappers thought that the boss was afraid the cipó would reveal how he cheated them in their accounts in the company store (2002:382).

speech acts of the Apollonian city, but from within the chaotic, dank, and seemingly mute wildness of the forest.[47]

Whether he is referring to tapper uses of ayahuasca in the rubber camps, or to nascent rituals in the towns, Freire's text signals that what was once a mystery is now "celebrated," implying a recent and significant expansion of the use of ayahuasca in Acre to non-indigenous populations.[48] While we might expect, given the literature on mestizo and non-Indian use of ayahuasca from colonial times onward, that such uses were relatively common in Acre around the time of the rubber boom, still there is very little documentation of the ways ayahuasca was being appropriated by emigrants to Amazonia and taken up into their cosmologies and value systems. Nor is Freire particularly interested in describing such hybridized uses. As an indigenist, his ambivalent attitude toward Indian-*cariú* relations carried over to the use of ayahuasca by non-Indians. He trumpets the fact that he, encountering ayahuasca in a Katukina Indian encampment in the Tarauacá valley, had "the good fortune to drink it pure, free

[47] The theme of rubber bosses cheating tappers recurs in accounts of the rubber camps. Their power to do so is usually attributed, not just to their overall authority in the camps, but more specifically to their mastery of numeracy and literacy, skills the majority of tappers lacked. While these abilities were (depicted as) the instruments of bad faith (real or suspected) in tapper-patron relations, they also point more generally to the sphere of the rua, and the patron's domination of his workers through gatekeeping of that sphere. The great saving grace of the cipó sessions was that the contact with the forest made possible a settling of accounts through occult means (or at least knowledge of having been cheated).
[48] If Freire's suggestion is accurate, the expansion of ayahuasca use between 1909 and 1920 may be related to the crash of the rubber economy, though scarcity of data makes independent verification of the idea difficult.

of distorted *pajelanças*, among its very discoverers—the savages." Freire's reference to "distorted *pajelanças*" seems to indicate that emigrants were using ayahuasca in ways that involved some part of the spectrum of Afro-indigenous ritual known in the Brazilian North and Northeast as *pajelança*.[49] It is reasonable to suppose that a recent increase in these practices accounts for Freire's impression that "this now-celebrated drink…is slowly sweeping over the Acrean population." With remarkable prescience, Freire predicted that "in the near future," the use of ayahuasca "will invade the whole country and, perhaps, the Universe, triumphant over persecution and source of delicious dreams."

Among other things, this statement implies that by 1920 ayahuasca use was already the object of persecution, although it is not clear by whom. The Catholic Church was, at that time, still quite weak in Acre. In the northwestern part of the Acre territory, missionaries such as Constant Tastevin are remembered today for their ethnographic writing and surprisingly non-judgmental descriptions of practices such as ayahuasca healing and necrophagy. In the Rio Branco area, a permanent mission was just being established at the time of Freire's writing, and would have been hard-pressed to stop the expansion of a practice that tended to take place where the powers of the city and of "civilization"

[49] Whether the Katukina practice Freire encountered was "pure" in the sense that he imagined is an interesting question. Peter Gow (1994) has argued that the view of ayahuasca ritual as a pure Indian tradition overlooks its three centuries of incubation in Upper Amazonian Catholic missions.

were at their weakest.[50] Although Freire does not seem to oppose such expansion unequivocally, his word choice signals at least some ambivalence about the drink: the term I translated above as "sweeping over" is a form of the verb *avassalar*, which shares roots with the English term "vassal" and often includes connotations of overpowering or even enslaving its object. Moreover, his description of ayahuasca as "fascinating" suggests the older sense of taking hold of one's attention involuntarily, as does Freire's writing of "disturbing and bizarre visions that hypnotize and hold irresistibly in their fascinating chains" those who drink it. What is the nature of Freire's ambivalence about ayahuasca?

We know from Freire's letters to the SPILTN chief, cited by Iglesias, that he felt ambivalence about the mingling of Indians and emigrant Brazilians, ostensibly because of the exploitation that it might engender. Of particular concern to Freire were the ways that Indian people, once "pacified," were made objects of exchange in the maintenance of patron-client relations among the *cariús.* Indeed, such was the motive for writing his letters (although they can also be seen as self-serving, since they aimed to assure him

[50] In the decades before a permanent mission was established in the 1920s, Catholic priests moved up and down Acre's rivers like the itinerant *regatão* merchants, visiting communities of rubber tappers and performing religious functions such as marriages, baptisms, and funerals. These visits, called *desobrigações* ("dis-obligations") were so infrequent—often months apart—that the priest would have had little ability to monitor day-to-day goings-on that might have been objectionable from a theological perspective. This fact may partly account for some famously tolerant writings, such as those of Constant Tastevin.

continued employment). Again, Freire's understanding of Indian-white relations is spatialized: problems for the Indians come from their proximity to white men's settlements and things like sugar cane rum and *fisiologismo*, the maintenance of personal debt obligations by public servants to the detriment of the common good. In expressing his rejection of the white cronyism and greed that he saw behind Indian exploitation, Freire even offered to leave behind the comforts of civilization for a post in the forest, where, removed from exchange relations with other whites, he would also be free of intrigues involving trading on Indians and their labor, favoritism in political assignments, and tolerance of corruption. For him, the deep forest, being beyond the reaches of civilization's ills, was the proper place for Indians, for ayahuasca (of which they were the "true discoverers"), and perhaps even for himself!

For Freire, then, it is not ayahuasca in itself that is objectionable, but its association with other Brazilian spiritual practices in "distorted pajelanças." It would appear that for Freire ayahuasca stood for what was noble and truly different about Indian people, qualities he could only see as becoming corrupted through contact with non-Indian Brazilians. If Freire did not approve of culture mixing in this case, nor of trading on Indian labor, he did not seem to mind flaunting his "pure" experience of a decade before in a kind of pre-1960s psychedelic pornography as a way of gaining distinction within the context of burgeoning use of ayahuasca by emigrants.

Everything about Freire's account reinforces the reader's impression of travel outside the realm of civilization, in the heart of darkness:[51]

> My companions in that tortuous and unforgettable passage were Manoel de Souza, slaughtered in 1911 by Amahuaca Indians...and Marcilio de Bandeira Lemos, an excellent woodsman [*mateiro*] and a magnificent interpreter of the Kaxinawá dialect then prevalent among the resident tribes of this vast and opulent region, which has remained unexplored for many years.

As they travelled in the forest, Freire and his companions encountered "Around 30 Katukina Indians, tall, robust, reddened by the constant use of *machi* [urucum; annatto; *Bixa orellana*], with their bodies striped exotically with designs very similar to those of the ancient Egyptians..."[52] Freire notes that the Indians they encountered did not attack them, as they had been "briefly visited a short time earlier by the audacious catechizer Angelo Ferreira." Discovering, through his interpreter, that the Indians were making ayahuasca to "conjure the *vacá* ["spirit of darkness"] to leave the body" of "one of the chief's seven wives," Freire became very interested to try ayahuasca himself, or as he put it, "to verify the reality of its chimerical results, so wrapped up in fantasy and in legends of mysteries."

[51] Whether Freire was aware of Conrad's novel, which was published in 1902, it is not possible to say.
[52] Given Felizardo's mention of the Egyptians below, in a list of civilizations that cultivated the universal "magnetic force" most fully, it is interesting to note Freire's comparison of Indian geometrical body painting with Egyptian design. Freire may have been more influenced by esoteric discourse than I have understood.

Freire's text was published as a series of three articles in successive editions of *O Futuro*. The first installment ends dramatically as he drinks the ayahuasca, while the second and third accounts relate his visions and their aftermath. As he describes the ceremony, Freire's respect for its esthetic force is evidenced by his reaching for poetic language. The "savages" put out their torches, then drank the ayahuasca squatting around the sick woman's hammock, "intoning a lugubrious, wild, hair-raising melody, which resounded sadly in the vast hut, and whose aching echo lost itself far away, in the loneliness of the shadowy jungle."

The course of Freire's experience with the drink progresses from fantastical visions (colored lights flashing, entrancing flowers, then of cities full of people) to a horrifying sense of impending doom and attack by noxious creatures, culminating in the certainty of death at the hands of a Katukina warrior, who appears with "macabre adornments" of human teeth and a sharp, poisoned knife, "ready to run me through." Then an old Indian appears, singing a sad melody and burning *cainami* bark, which, Freire notes, "has the property of dissipating the effects" of ayahuasca. Freire loses consciousness, he writes, and awoke only at midday, surprised to see the previous night's companions from the ayahuasca session already going about their daily routines.

For all his footnotes of indigenous terms, it is evident from Freire's account that he understood little to nothing of what the Indians were doing during the ceremony,

remaining focused on his own experience, fundamentally pleased merely to have survived the encounter, and apparently uninterested in repeating it. If Freire ever drank ayahuasca again, there is no evidence of it in his text. The coda, likewise, adopts a heroic, distancing tone, and ends, bizarrely, with an attempt to link Freire to Indian settlement efforts, as though to reinforce his indigenist *bona fides*:

> I had verified the strange and mysterious action of the [ayahuasca], my courage had been put to the test by the Katukina with the acquiescence of my complacent companions. Nothing more interested me there. Thus reflecting, I prepared myself to accompany our young guide [provided by the chief], and bade fond farewell to these rude, but good, Katukina whose hospitality and pacific instincts were, from that time on, definitively proved.
>
> Later, in 1914, some savages were concentrated by me, 106 in number, in the indigenous magnet center of Pupú.

Ayahuasca and esotericism in Acre and the Amazon

Rafael Zerda Bayón and Telepathine

The story of Rafael Zerda Bayón, despite the fact of its taking place in Colombia, is relevant to the theme of Irineu Serra's life history because it reveals the ways discourse about ayahuasca's fantastical properties mixed with scientific inquiry, lending force to the quasi-science that marked the spectrum of esotericism in South America from Positivism to séance Spiritism to Afro-Brazilian-inflected Umbanda. Where reductive

accounts of ayahuasca like the New York *Times* article promise a simple reversion to savagery, and ethnological curiosities like Castello Branco's text point to fairytale realities on the other side of a temporal, spatial, and ontological divide, Zerda Bayón's story, similar to Delfim Freire's, threatens to collapse that distance and re-enchant the world.

In 1912, the London *Times* published, in its South American Supplement, an article featuring a letter from Zerda Bayón recounting his scientific work with *yagé* in the Caquetá district of Colombia (London Times 1912). (This was the same year that Roger Casement [1912] published his report on slavery and human rights violations in the rubber trade in Colombia's Putumayo district, but such concerns are notably absent from Zerda Bayón's text.) The story's drama turns on the apparent clairvoyance of a military officer in the jungle village where Zerda Bayón was conducting his experiments. Under the influence of an extract of yagé prepared by Zerda Bayón, the man reported learning that his father had died, and his sister was seriously ill.

> He took the tincture at night in a jar of water, and in the morning, at reveille, he came to me with the news of the death of his father, who lived in Ibagué, and of the illness of his little sister, whom he loved very dearly. All this he declared that he had seen during the night; no one had arrived who could have communicated such news to him, and the nearest post or telegraph office is at least 15 days' journey away. About a month after this strange vision a courier happened to arrive with letters which announced to him the death of his father and the recovery of his sister from a serious illness. It should be mentioned that Colonel Morales is a man of eminently nervous constitution, that he was very ill-fed, and that he is highly intelligent. (London Times 1912:8)

The paper's editors expressed some skepticism about claims of yagé's "curious effect in placing the patient in a condition where he is open to receive a certain amount of telepathic communication," and were perhaps more hopeful of its efficacy as a "specific for beri-beri" (a vitamin deficiency disease). Nonetheless, it was noted that "Dr. Bayon is vouched for by our Special Correspondent, who recently spent several months in Colombia, as a 'typical scientific man, whose only interest in life is research, and who is one of the very few educated men who have penetrated the utmost fastnesses of the Caquetá region'" (London Times 1912:8).[53]

No ethnographer in the contemporary sense, Zerda Bayón nonetheless offers a narrative in which he is thrust amongst Indians and learns their ways. In apophatic style perhaps typical of a rugged field scientist, Zerda Bayón promises that he will "not enter into the particulars" of his journey, then proceeds to detail the difficult and lengthy

[53] Zerda Bayón was in no wise a marginal figure in Colombian university life. A recent article, commenting on a didactic chemistry text written by Zerda Bayón, reasons that "by his surnames one knows that he belonged" to Bogotá's cultural elite, and notes these details of his curriculum vitae: Zerda Bayón was a "naturalist chemist of the Colombian Republic, scientific explorer of the Amazonian region, collaborator of the London *Times*, famed inventor of technical and scientific instruments, apparatuses, and procedures for the governments of Colombia, Britain, Germany, France, Belgium, Austria, Italy, Russia, Switzerland, Norway, and other European nations; ex-chair of Physical and Natural Sciences at the University of Cauca, of Chemistry at the Colégio de Nuestra Señora del Rosario, of Physics and Medical Chemistry on the Faculty of Medicine, current chair of Physics and Chemistry at the Republican University and an active member of the Society of Colombian Naturalists; ex-professor of the National Telegraphy School, etc." The author comments on this impressive list that, "according to this presentation, [Zerda Bayón was] one of the most important chemists of his time in early 20th-century Bogotá" (Bernal de Ramírez 2002:546).

travel required, first by foot along forest paths, then by canoe downriver, to reach the place where he encounters *yagé*. It is a journey away from civilization: After initial disappointment getting canoes and helpers in the Tolima department to continue his "search for industrial and medicinal plants," Zerda Bayón writes, **"**my three months' stay in that fine region, inhabited by whites, was not wholly wasted, for I succeeded in making an acquaintance with some Carijona Indians who accompanied me upon my first expeditions, instructing me as to their customs, life food, and dialects." A more intensive episode of forced cohabitation with another group of Carijona cements Zerda Bayón's field credentials. Recalling Bruce Lamb's apocryphal tale, a half-century later, of rubber tapper Manuel Córdova Rios's captivity and integration with South American Indians (Lamb 1971), Zerda Bayón reports a further expedition in which he was robbed by white rubber tappers, then rescued by Indians who held him captive for four months, until a boatful of tappers came through, returning him to his base in the village of Florencia.

A fascinating aspect of this story stems from Zerda Bayón's mingling of rationalistic aims and methods with belief in the transcendent powers of yagé to deliver extrasensory perceptions to those who took it. His own description of his working conditions plies our sense of the heroic scientist, working against the chaos and decay of the tropical environment to extract Knowledge from most finicky Nature. Writes Zerda Bayón,

> …I set up my laboratory in the loneliest hut of Florencia. It consisted of a few reagents, a camera (which proved to be useless, the hot and humid climate having destroyed the films and rusted some of the parts), some glass jars and some enamelled saucepans, which I used for cooking my meals as well as for concentrating my extracts and handling the precipitates that I collected in fine linen filters. Suffering from many privations in my retreat, and lacking all means of observation, I yet studied chemically something like 45 plants of the Caquetá district. (London Times 1912:8)

Zerda Bayón's coy descriptions of his travails in the jungle and his contacts with Indians pair with his briefing on his laboratory conditions (as well as comparatively minute accounting of his chemical manipulations of extracts from the yagé plant) to bolster the authority of both his ethnographic claims about Indian use of yagé and his pharmacological claims about its active principle, which he named *telepatina*, or "telepathine" in English.[54] The designation of a chemical compound with such a fantastical name well illustrates the way that Zerda Bayón's views on yagé brought together scientific techniques of investigation and classification with concepts of mental communication or sensing at a distance that resonated with Indian uses of ayahuasca, as well as with ideas current in Western esotericism. This is a recurrent connection in the multiethnic contexts of ayahuasca use in Acre and more broadly in the upper Amazon that constitutes a bridge, not so much of belief, but of ritual practice and

[54] Zerda Bayón's designation of *telepatina* for the active principle of yagé was accepted and used in scientific discourse until at least 1927 (e.g., Perrot and Hamet [1927], cited in Schultes and Hofmann 1980) when it was realized that the compound was identical to the already-known alkaloid harmine.

experience between persons of different cultures who came together to drink ayahuasca.[55]

The available documents are mute on the point of whether Zerda Bayón had personal experience with ingesting yagé. It is quite possible that his failure to mention it cloaked the crossing of a perceived line of scientific legitimacy which he was unwilling to admit. From his synopsis in the *Times* article of yagé's effects, however, emerge both an unsurprising assertion of the uniformity of yagé's psychopharmacology and a remarkably strong suggestion, particularly given the context, of the possibility of transmitting or obtaining objective information at a distance through its agency. The point of pharmacological uniformity supported the materialist notion that there was a particular substance responsible for it. Wrote Zerda Bayón:

> The savage tribes of the Caqueta, even those who do not understand each other's dialects and who live at a great distance from one another, **all agree in every particular** as to the physiological effects caused among them, and especially among their medicine men, by the beverage which they prepare from yagé.[56] **All describe the phenomena in**

[55] In contemporary times, the labor organization work of Antônio "Txai" Macedo in the Juruá Valley in the 1990s made explicit use of ayahuasca as a tool for uniting Indians, rubber tappers, and the various others whose existence shows that these categories are not exclusive. Macedo's work, it should be noted, took place in the context of that Acre described by Aquino (1977) as one in which new identities were emerging based on the polarization of those who lived in the forest—the Indians and rubber tappers, whose relationship historically was often inimical—versus those who would live from its destruction, the ranchers and agricultural corporations from the south who cleared millions of acres of Acre's forests in the 1970s and after.

[56] It is clear that Zerda Bayón's primary reference is to the *Banisteriopsis* vine used in making ayahuasca. Indeed, the vine is often used as an inclusive term for the drink, which may have led some investigators to underestimate the importance of additive plants, especially the DMT-containing leaves of *Psychotria viridis*.

> **the same way**--namely, that everything seen is of a blue color, that the drinker goes mad and believes himself a tiger, or a tapir, or a snake, and so forth, according to which animal has the most interest for him, and buries himself in the jungle to imitate the howlings of wild beasts and, like them, to tear to pieces anyone who crosses his path. (1912:8; emphasis added)

In its evocation of forest beasts, madness, and indiscriminate violence spurred by a return to naked animality, this account is not too different from the New York *Times* one discussed above. It adds another dimension of significance, however, with its insistence on the uniformity of yagé's action, and especially with the related suggestion that objective knowledge might come through its effects:

> During the mental alienation to which they subject themselves by the use of this beverage they see hidden things, hear mysterious music, and, savages as they are, who have never left their native wilds and consequently know nothing of what surrounds them, describe in their peculiar fashion cities, houses, castles, white men in thousands, the pleasantness of the music which they hear and everything that exists in the civilized world. (London Times 1912:8)

A subtle difference in framing is discernible here from that of Castello Branco's text. Castello Branco's Indians drank their ayahuasca in a narrative Neverland whose distance from the presumed location of the genteel reader—his being a gentlemanly survey of Acre's native tribes—renders moot the fact of the matter about the knowledge they claim to receive from it. Although "the spirit of the *honé* reveals the future, makes armed people appear, indicates infallible remedies, shows the place in which game is to be found," (Castello Branco 1920), there is nothing to alert a reader that such phenomena might enter into her own life, any more than she'd expect, after reading

Greek mythology, to see Icarus and Daedalus come flying by on their waxen wings. Zerda Bayón, on the other hand, insists that the Indians see, and "describe in their peculiar fashion" actual things that they could have only seen through ayahuasca: cities, castles, large groups of white people—"everything that exists in the civilized world." Whatever skepticism Zerda Bayón may have had, as a good man of science, about the reality of telepathy and clairvoyance, seems dissipated by the accounts of Indians and, crucially, his experience with the military officer who learned of his father's death and sister's illness under the influence of Zerda Bayón's extract of telepathine. Again, personal experience with ayahuasca may have been the decisive factor, suppressed by Zerda Bayón out of concern for compromising his reputation as a scientist. In any case, his firsthand witnessing of the officer's visions at a distance surely seemed to provide better, more objective proof of the plant's strange action than any subjective account might do. This strong implication of the scientific reality of yagé visions thus constituted a bridge to notions current to Western readers, suggesting that yagé's effects might be intelligible, even useful, to non-Indians. Underscoring this point, even while asserting the greater legitimacy of ostensibly pure indigenous uses of the drug, Zerda Bayón notes the spreading use of yagé among emigrant rubber workers: "Amongst certain *caucheros*[57] of our nationality the use of yagé has become a vicious habit, and all

[57] *Cauchero* is basically a Spanish-language synonym of the Portuguese *seringueiro*. However, it also

experience the same physiological effects." The suggestion that yagé might be a "vicious habit" invites its classification along with tobacco and liquor as "vice" substances, certainly an understanding peculiar to the Christian, industrializing West.

The pertinence of Zerda Bayón's writings on yagé to the present context follows both from the content of his text and from the path of translations and recontextualizations that his text took in the world. Interest in his report relates to his claim, as a man of science writing in one of the world's leading journalistic publications, that there was a plant drug in the wild "fastnesses" of the jungle with the peculiar chemical property of opening people to telepathic communication. The fact of publication in such an illustrious venue is significant; so, too, is the note of skepticism sounded by the *Times*, as the text pointed to an area of ideas that were then being purged from science: esoteric notions of animal magnetism, mesmeric fluids, and the communion of minds. But as I have suggested, such notions were common among military officers and more generally in the Amazon in the first decades of the 20th century. Perhaps the text's greater significance here is the way it helps us glimpse the networks of communication that moved ideas into the Amazon, exposed them to ayahuasca, then took them back to the metropolis, before reiterating the process.

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denotes those workers who, because of the Brazilian claim to Acre, where the best *Hevea brasiliensis* trees were located, had to work the inferior *Castilla ulei*, which was typically cut down and drained all at once, rather than bled a little at a time, as was the practice with *Hevea*.

For esotericist organizations in the metropolitan areas the existence of “telepathine” was of obvious interest. To the extent that such groups saw their esoteric activities as investigations of a universal philosophy of the true foundations of reality, they borrowed concepts from the same Enlightenment sources that informed scientific inquiry. If a particular substance had the property of inducing sensitivity to information beyond the bounds of what the senses could ordinarily perceive, then surely its investigation should help uncover the chemical and physiological basis of such knowledge.

The immediate impact of the London *Times*’s publication of the article in 1912 is unknown, but deserves further exploration. Perhaps the English public received the news of yagé’s potential uses for beri-beri with interest, but looked askance at the more outlandish claims detailed in the letter. In Brazil and France, on the other hand, the report definitely did generate interest among esotericist groups and scientists interested in parapsychology. Sometime in the decade after its initial publication, the text was translated, probably to Portuguese, and included in the newsletter of one such Brazilian esotericist organization, the Esoteric Circle of the Communion of Thought (*O Círculo Esotérico da Comunhão do Pensamento*), or CECP. From there, it appeared again, this time in French, in the magisterial tome *La Télépathie* by the French chemical engineer and parapsychologist René Warcollier (1921:90-96), who put the account in a

section entitled, "The artificial provocation of visual images," which also featured write-ups on peyote and the use of psychoactive plants in African witchcraft. Warcollier, clearly, did not believe that such images were mere hallucinations in the commonsense definition, although his discussion of them also makes evident the preference—which, in Brazil and elsewhere, sometimes marked the difference between respectable and dangerous practices—for the "purity" of exclusively "mental" forms of nonconventional communication. Summarizing such "artificial" means of inducing visions, Warcollier wrote:

> The artificial visual images, either by action of the organ of sight, or on the nerve center of vision, sometimes cause the emergence of telepathic messages, yet the process can be achieved purely mentally—perhaps less easily, but with fewer drawbacks. (Warcollier 1921:99)[58]

The preference for the purity of exclusively mental communion—as opposed to all sorts of more material engagements with spirits, especially "possession"—also typified the approach of the CECP.[59]

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[58] Zerda Bayón also uses the idiom of "nerves" in relation to telepathy when he writes, at the end of his account of the military officer who learned of his father's death and sister's illness through a vision brought by Zerda Bayón's extract of *telepatina*, "It should be mentioned that Colonel Morales is a man of eminently nervous constitution, that he was very ill-fed, and that he is highly intelligent" (London Times 1912). Such a statement only makes sense in the light of a theory in which certain conditions of the "nerves" might predispose a person to telepathic communication.

[59] According to the group's manual, *Instruções,*

> The experience of 'humankind,' related in many works, proves that existence beyond death is a fact, and that, by means of independent telepathy or mental communication, we can relate to those who are dear to us, without our having the necessity to cultivate mediumistic powers or

Warcollier's reproduction of the London *Times* article in his scientific study of telepathy, coming via the CECP publication *O Pensamento* ("Thought"), constitutes an example of the ways narratives about ayahuasca (or yagé) that originated in Amazonian experiences could be translated into scientific discourse. Significantly, such narratives contain elements of Amazonian ideas about ayahuasca and the nature of the world, although recontextualization of these elements often severely constrained their possible meanings to their intended audiences. In Warcollier's use of Zerda Bayón's example, it is possible to glimpse a process at work in which information from the borderlands of civilization is taken back to centers that radiate "culture" to participate in its further elaboration. Such discourse might then filter back into the Amazon, in the form of esotericist philosophies which would partly shape the understandings that emigrants to the region formed of their experiences with ayahuasca. This is not too surprising if we remember that the rubber economy began as a transnational phenomenon, and that places like Acre, for all their remoteness, have presented novel combinations of provinciality and cosmopolitanism throughout their existence.

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spiritism. Through the development of consciousness of the Self, each one may obtain proof of his personal existence on a plane superior to that of gross matter and, elevating himself to that level, may enter into contact with the beings dear to him, without being dominated by strange influences. This is the only recommendable way for those who desire real progress, supported by a positive base. (CECP 1959:52)

In addition to these considerations, Warcollier's inclusion of the Zerda Bayón letter in his study is also important in the present context because it reveals early interest on the part of the CECP in the ayahuasca phenomenon. The CECP, in turn, bears an important relationship to the ways Acrean rubber tappers encountered ayahuasca broadly speaking, as will become clearer. In particular, however, the CECP played a crucial role in the institutionalization of Alto Santo, and the consequent partial displacement of the idiom of the *casa* in ritual life there.[60]

The Esoteric Circle of Communion of Thought—CECP

The CECP was founded in in São Paulo in 1909 by Antônio Olívio Rodrigues, Portuguese by birth, and known to his followers as "AOR." The CECP was influenced by many of the same philosophical currents that informed Positivism, particularly the ideas of universality, progress through ordered social relations, the centrality of consciousness, and the vibrational character of human thought and intention. Some of its spiritual cynosures included figures of broad renown in international esotericist circles, such as Madame Blavatsky, Swedenborg, and Swami Vivekananda, as well as less famous American exponents of "New Thought" trends such as Prentice Mulford, a California

[60] Not to mention that the relationship with the CECP would, for the same reasons that it enhanced AS legitimacy, also be particularly bitter when it ended—ironically, over the use of ayahuasca, at least nominally.

writer and humorist best known for his book, *Thoughts are Things*, a foundational text for the self-help genre.

The eclecticism of CECP inspiration was not especially unusual or idiosyncratic, as a congeries of related movements that surged into being in the early 20th century combined many of these same sources. William James, writing his *Varieties of Religious Experience* just after the turn of the century, noted a trend toward "healthy-mindedness…which has recently poured over America and seems to be gathering force every day," which he called the "Mind-cure movement," even while noting it has various names for itself, including "New Thought." James characterized the sources of New Thought as follows:

> One of the doctrinal sources of Mind-cure is the four Gospels; another is Emersonianism or New England transcendentalism; another is Berkeleyan idealism; another is spiritism, with its messages of 'law' and 'progress' and 'development'; another the optimistic popular science evolutionism…; and, finally, Hinduism has contributed a strain. But the most characteristic feature of the mind-cure movement is an inspiration much more direct. The leaders in this faith have had an intuitive belief in the all-saving power of healthy-minded attitudes as such, in the conquering efficacy of courage, hope, and trust, and a correlative contempt for doubt, fear, worry, and all nervously precautionary states of mind. (James 1902: 94-95)

The CECP modeled itself on this New Thought or 'mind-cure' pattern. It sought to establish a communion of like-minded souls whose collective efforts, although dispersed geographically, might harmonize with one another, bringing positive effects into the lives of practitioners, and benefits to the human social world more broadly. In this way it

was similar to other groups, notably the Masons, Theosophists, and the Rosicrucian society, among others. The sense of transcendent connectedness valued by many of these esotericist organizations was conceived of with analogies to scientific wave theory, and through concepts such as *radiation*, *vibration*, and *harmonization*. It was not only intangible or purely mental phenomena which constituted the networks these groups established, however: their existence also depended on the use of modern media, such as newsletters, magazines, and books sent through the national mail system. In far-flung places such as Acre, receiving materials from these metropolitan groups in the mail instantiated a real and tangible connection to spiritual and social power; for some people, receiving a membership certificate from the CECP or the Rosicrucian Order may have been an event on a par with the issuance of identity documents from the government, in measure of its capacity to confer dignity through enacting membership in a "cultured" group.[61] Indeed, for some members of these

[61] Let it not escape notice that such organizations, with their universalizing proclivities and commitment to bureaucratic procedures, also had something to gain by increasing the number of their adherents and broadening their geographical reach, and not merely in financial terms. (It is like a patron-client relationship writ large.) With rapid growth, the CECP gained the recognition of groups based in North America—albeit embarrassingly distorted by Anglophone ignorance of Brazil:

> A report was received at Headquarters [of the International New Thought Alliance] this week of a large New Thought society in Brazil, which numbers fifty auxiliary societies, with a membership of seven thousand. This society was organized in 1907 by Antonio Olivio Rodrigues, who is also editor of a New Thought magazine, *O Pensamento* (The Mind), which is published in Spanish [sic]. The books of Prentice Mulford, William Walker Atkinson and other New Thought authors have been translated into Spanish and are in wide circulation among members of this society. (International New Thought Alliance 1916:143)

groups (including Irineu Serra, if we credit Alto Santo discourse), reading esoteric teachings from their publications, such as the CECP's core manual, *Instruções*, was an important step in achieving literacy, a skill which is still a tremendous dividing line between those able to exercise their citizenship, and those unable to do so effectively.

'Vibration to aid humanity itself': Felizardo Cerqueira, esoteric "force," and domesticating indigenousness

Having already introduced the figure of Felizardo Cerqueira in an earlier discussion of what would have been called at the time, without irony, Acre's *processo civilizatório*, I turn now to an examination of Felizardo's autobiographical sketch. Marcelo Piedrafita Iglesias (2008), whose work I rely on for information about Felizardo, used documentary evidence and oral history to explore the complexity of Felizardo's relationships as he navigated between Brazilian bureaucracy, the intrigues of Acrean rubber tapper society, and the social worlds of the Indians.

Felizardo and Irineu Serra were contemporaries, although they spent most of their time at opposite ends of Acre, and Felizardo's story parallels that of Irineu Serra in its general outlines. He was born in the Northeastern Brazilian state of Ceará in 1886, and left home for the Amazon with a group of fellow *cearenses* at 17 years of age (Iglesias 2008:199). After passing through Belém in Pará and Manaus, Felizardo arrived in Acre in

1904, and took to work as a rubber tapper. In 1905 he began working for Ângelo Ferreira, a rubber camp owner who later recruited him to work on the Border Commission as a *mateiro*, a backwoodsman.[62]

Felizardo wrote the text, by hand, in the mid-1950s, partly to support his appeal for a government pension by recounting his service for the Brazilian nation (Iglesias 2008). There is accordingly little about Felizardo's early life; the bulk of the text focuses, instead, on his movements through the various watersheds of Acre and his dealings with rubber camp owners and Indians. Suffusing the whole narrative is a grandiose tone of predestination with regard to Felizardo's work as an intermediary between whites and Indians, married to a pious, continually reiterated reverence for the Rondonian indigenist motto: "Die, if necessary, but never kill."

[62] There is no evidence that Irineu Serra and Felizardo ever met, though their common participation in the Border Commission may mean that they knew, or knew of, each other. Several different stories have emerged in Acre of young Indians claiming that it was their ancestor who first gave ayahuasca to Mestre Irineu; one of these does indeed link Sueiro Sales Cerqueira Kaxinawá, the Indian son of Felizardo, to Mestre Irineu. In any case, they shared a political patron in Guiomard dos Santos, the governor and senator of Acre who aided Felizardo's attempts to gain a government pension, and who helped Irineu Serra acquire the land to found Alto Santo. As I hope to make clear, they also shared the fact of deriving their power from their ability to transit between social worlds, an ability that found theoretical justification in esotericist-cum-nationalist currents of thought.

Call to vocation

Felizardo, owing to his bravado and familiarity with the Indians, was frequently contracted to help "pacify," "catechize," or "tame" (*amansar*) the "wild" Indians who were not yet in stable trade relations with the rubber boom emigrants, and who therefore complicated the operation of the *seringais*.[63] His career as an Indian catechizer is framed in the text not as mere mercenary work in the service of capitalist penetration of the periphery, but instead as divinely ordained labor, to which he felt called by God on behalf of humanity and civilization. As he tells it, this mission began shortly after his arrival in Acre, as his companions in Ângelo Ferreira's rubber camp deliberated over how to respond to an Indian attack. It was the start of a pattern that Felizardo would repeat again and again as he assumed his vocation: opposing the violent reprisal that seemed to his companions to be the only solution, Felizardo volunteers to try instead to "enter into contact" with the "savages." He explains his motivation in these terms:

> I, who had many times seen groups of Peruvians and Brazilians arrive, bringing with them Indian women and boys and telling of innumerable dead Indians left behind, did not feel good about such a tremendously inhuman scene. I felt within myself I know not what, a compassion for the poor prisoners of the jungle who were raised in such liberty

[63] In these endeavors Felizardo (in)famously used "his" Kaxinawá Indians as a private security force, hired out to help remove other Indians from lands desired for rubber tapping, or to help recruit them as workers.

> and then, at a given moment, had the happiness they previously enjoyed suddenly snatched away from them, to become the prisoners of their captors who, without compassion, threw at them the most brutal labors. (Iglesias 2008:200)

Felizardo's companions were skeptical of his proposal. Convinced there was no possibility of social relations with the Indians, they "did not believe that there was a single man capable of facing death before the dangers [the Indians] offered to the audacious one who tried to penetrate the virgin forest in search of the worst beast known by all the inhabitants of the Amazon valley" [Iglesias 2008:201]. Surprisingly, however, his efforts met with success: three brave rubber tappers accompanied him, and after two days' walk they captured an Indian, Maru, whom they brought back to the rubber camp to great fanfare. After two months among the tappers, Felizardo returned the man to his small group, which had been devastated by other Indians' attacks. Upon Maru's return, Felizardo wrote, his companions "were overcome with joy and toasted me like a god, as their own companion declared himself happy and [was] loaded with gifts. In this way it was easy to remove the others to the *barracão* [that is, to the administrative headquarters of Ângelo Ferreira's rubber camp], where the boss awaited them and gave them what gifts he could" (Iglesias 2008:201).

In Felizardo's recounting, this episode established a basic pattern of operation for his efforts as an Indian "catechizer": eschewing violence, opting instead for trade; using small scouting parties to make contact; employing Indians already "pacified" in further

missions, as translators and as evidence of non-lethal intent. This was incremental work, aimed at establishing contact with the Indians and transforming them in service of nation, humanity, and the divine. As Iglesias notes, Felizardo viewed himself as a man on a mission, and owing to his repeated safe transit between town and forest, rubber camp and Indian village, civilization and wilderness, he was viewed this way by Indians as well:

> ...Felizardo considered himself "predestined" to fulfill a "mission" given to him by God, with the objective of bringing "protection" and "catechesis" to the "Indians," wellbeing to the "civilized," and prosperity to the Territory of Acre. At the same time, it is worth recalling that Felizardo was, at various times, alternately considered "divine" and a "devil" upon arriving in the Indian villages, then later as a "protector," capable of ending the *correrias*, confronting *caucheros*, "taming" "wild Indians" [*índios brabos*], and escaping unharmed from the intrigues, threats, and ambushes against his life, both by the "civilized" and by the Indians themselves. (Iglesias 2008:299)

Along with the sense of predestination, the attribution of magical powers was an important part of Felizardo's fame, and placed him in the company of others, such as the notorious Indian hunter Pedro Biló, mentioned in the previous chapter, who were rumored to have superhuman abilities.[64]

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[64] A 1970s historical article quoted Indians who knew of Pedro Biló's fame:

> It was said that he appeared and disappeared during the massacres, that he had enchantments [*encantos*] and was on good terms with the devil. He could transform himself into a rattlesnake to poison his victims or into an anaconda to cross swamps while tracking. He turned into wind, was in several places at the same time, could strike down people at a distance with his devil-gaze, and whoever touched him might succumb to the weight of strange and terrible curses. [Varadouro 1977]

Felizardo and the Indians

Iglesias's study reveals the moral complexity of Felizardo's relationship with Indians, especially with "his" Kaxinawá. I have already mentioned the way this problematic, ambivalent relationship was typified by the scarification of his initials, FC, on the arms of many of them. According to Iglesias, who interviewed some of the Indians marked by Felizardo decades later, there was a quite positive aspect to Felizardo's dominion over them, and they even compared the markings favorably to baptism or the issuance of government identity documents (2008:301 et seq.). He was their "civilizing father," responsible for their more-or-less harmonious integration into Acre's rubber tapping society.

As Felizardo deepened his ties with the Kaxinawá he had numerous children with several Indian companions, including Sueiro Sales Cerqueira, also mentioned in the previous chapter, who became a rubber camp boss.[65] He also learned, with the Kaxinawá, "to appreciate *nixi pae* (ayahuasca), which he drank with them in rituals that included the consumption of *rapé* tobacco snuff" (Iglesias 2008:298). These aspects of Felizardo's life are, however, notably absent from his autobiographical account: even as

[65] Sueiro Sales's great-grandson is named Irineu Sales de Aquino, presumably after Mestre Irineu, given that the anthropologist Terri Valle de Aquino, a member of the Alto Santo brotherhood, is the young man's father.

he expressed great sympathy for the Indians' plight, the degree of his personal life involvement with them remained hidden. Given Felizardo's intention of detailing his life's work in order to receive a pension (which he did in fact obtain in 1959, the year after writing his manuscript),[66] it is easy to suppose that he was concerned with presenting himself in the best possible light, and thus thought the better of including some of the more sensitive details of his personal engagement with Indians. Iglesias's research with Indian people in Cerqueira's extended family puts us in a position to speculate on the way this concern influenced what Felizardo chose to present in his narrative, and what he chose to keep to himself. This, in turn, helps further understanding of how questions of propriety around white-Indian relations intersected with life projects in Acre, and the issue of ayahuasca in particular.

What is significant for my purposes in this chapter is not only Felizardo's intense and complex personal involvement with the Indians (though it was, in fact, mediated by many of the same institutions and circumstances that were relevant to Irineu Serra's case, such as patronage exchange relations, movement between the city and the forest, the consumption of indigenous drugs, military hierarchy as a model of social order, and even service on the Border Commission). Felizardo's story, as revealed by his

[66] Iglesias specifies that the pension was awarded "for his service as a 'catechizer of Indians' and 'Guide to the Brazil-Peru Border Delimitation Commission'" (2008:5).

autobiographical narrative and by Iglesias's work, is also worth exploring here because it suggests further ways that esotericist concepts helped organize rubber boom emigrants' experience of Amazonian mysteries, including especially ayahuasca.

Felizardo's narration of his life, moreover, through its conspicuous silences about certain of these matters (sketched in by Iglesias), delineates lines between civilized society and the daily realities of Acrean life which were, perhaps, unmentionable in polite company. Felizardo's reluctance to broach topics like his use of ayahuasca and his Indian children and wives makes sense in the context of his plea for a pension in official recognition of his honorable service on behalf of the nation, but only as long as we understand these things as incursions into wildness running counter to civilized order and honorable conduct. The rubric of Amazonian colonization was the civilization of the wild and Christianization of the pagan; it would not do to admit that the reverse had also occurred, even if the evidence is impossible to ignore. Such things can be overlooked more easily than they can be countenanced and accepted, which is one reason it is notable that Irineu Serra was able to stake his reputation on the use of ayahuasca, linking it to his name and his house, eventually even mentioning its use explicitly in the Alto Santo brotherhood's official statutes, which were registered with the state. (Not to mention more recent discourse on Alto Santo and ayahuasca use as cultural heritage.)

Esotericist and catechist

Felizardo Cerqueira was extensively involved in esoteric pratices, and these influenced his understanding of his life's work and his relationships with Indians and others. His sense of predestination and of having a personal, God-given mission to fulfill has already been noted. According to his daughters, he was "always profoundly religious," practiced daily prayer, and was "God-fearing" (Iglesias 2008:296). But he also used techniques derived from esoteric practice for healing and spiritual assistance: "Felizardo worked skillfully with hypnosis, individual and collective… [and] would use this technique even on his family, trying to help them identify and illuminate daily preoccupations and help them to progress along their personal spiritual trajectories" (Iglesias 2008:296 n. 365). He was "recognized as a good *rezador* [prayer healer], and exercised this 'gift' to treat, among both the Kaxinawá and the *carius* of all ages, 'prayer illnesses' (such as *ventre caído*, *peito aberto*, *quebrante*, *mal olhado*, *derrame*, *vermelha*, *tumor*, *caroço*, *inchação*, *desmentidura*, *dor de cabeça*, *cobreiro*, and toothache)" (Iglesias 2008:298).[67] According to interviews Iglesias conducted with Felizardo's Indian grandson,

> He was a healer, but not with medicines; he prayed. It wasn't quite prayer, it was a spirit thing. I didn't see it myself, but I heard about it. But, with my father, they say he was

[67] These syndromes are widely recognized in Amazonia, and several of them (such as the young children's illness *ventre caído*, "fallen belly," which is said to be caused by a shock of fright) combine physiological and psychological components that are often separated in Western medicine.

> sick and got cured. They say he was very sick. [Felizardo] said to him, "Man, I am going to cure you." They say that Felizardo was curing a lot of people, but my father doubted it. They say he started to pray and my father got sleepy. [Felizardo] sat there, looking like he was sleeping, prayed, and it turned out my father got well. (Iglesias 2008:296 n. 364)

Felizardo himself avows this gift when he writes, in his narrative, of a "force" that "has come since I was a child," but which he had "completely ignored…and only much later was I able to begin to see it" (Cerqueira 1958:n.p.).[68]

Within the frame of Felizardo's narrative, this "force" plays a key role. If a central theme of the text is the revelation that exchange, rather than violence, is the way to bring the Indians under the aegis of civilization, Christianity, and the nation, then Felizardo's ability to bring this revelation to fruition owes to his cultivation of this "force." In emphasizing a Rondonian, paternalistic benevolence toward the Indians, Felizardo drew on the idea that they were not evil sadists, but merely benighted souls who needed acquaintance with the proper ways of interaction. Such a view was in keeping with some trends of the time (if not the attitudes of Felizardo's erstwhile companions), and we may say, without impugning Felizardo's sincerity, that he would have anticipated that the bureaucratic audience for his narrative would react positively to a kind of framing that emphasized compassion and humanitarian treatment toward the Indians in pursuing

[68] Compare this with the feminine being said to have accompanied Irineu Serra from childhood (see chapter three).

more the general goals of harmonious social integration and the orderly progress of civilization. In my reading of Felizardo's text, there is a meaningful symmetry between Felizardo's account of domesticating this force and of his Indian "catechizing." As he portrays both the esoteric force and the Indians, both are vilified because misunderstood, while Felizardo defends them as natural and noble aspects of the world, albeit aspects in need of culture to reach their full potential in service of humanity.

Felizardo and the CECP

It is uncertain which social relationships first led Felizardo to join esotericist organizations, but given the broad sympathy of military men in Acre toward Positivism and its more exotic cousins such as the Freemasonry, he may have first been exposed to such philosophies during his time working on the Border Commission. In any case, Iglesias tells us that by 1925, when Felizardo was in his late 30s and still spending much of his time in the forest, he was designated a "Master" in the Masonic Lodge "Acrean Liberator No. 4" in the town of Seabra (now called Tarauacá). Clearly, Felizardo was one of Tastevin's unabashed marriers of "the Pope with the Freemasons, the Roman Catechism with Spiritism and so-called Free Thought" cited above.[69] By 1927, however, Felizardo would grow uneasy with what he felt was secret-mongering in the

[69] Four lodges had been constructed in the twelve years since 1913, when the first Acrean Masonic Lodge was built in Xapuri (Iglesias 2008).

Freemasons, and, switching esoteric "schools," began participating in the CECP, the same organization that would be of such importance to Irineu Serra and Alto Santo. Living more permanently in Cruzeiro do Sul during the 1930s and absorbing CECP teachings, Felizardo "developed a more esoteric consciousness and focused his studies, awakening to themes, knowledge, and practices that would demarcate his spiritual trajectory to the end of his days" (Iglesias 2008:298).

Felizardo's demonstration of animal magnetism

Much of what can be said about the relationship of Felizardo's esotericism and his "catechizing" in Acre comes from an episode in his narrative in which he uses his innate spiritual power and esoteric training to assist a rubber camp owner who asked his aid in dealing with Indians who had raided the camp, killing one man and carrying off his and two other tappers' wives. Felizardo narrates a conversation with Sr. José Lorena, the Spanish owner of the rubber camp, in which Felizardo proclaims adherence to the Rondonian maxim once more:

> Now he [Sr. José Lorena] asked, What help can my friend give me in this exceptional case? Do you, Sir, think it better to conduct *correrias* or to tame them? I think you will waste your time in trying catechesis, as these Indians are perverse without equal; besides killing, they pillage houses and set them on fire.
>
> I answered him, Sr. José, in no way will I agree to kill, first because we are prohibited by law from killing Indians, second because I don't have the heart for murder, especially of people worthy of our compassion. These people commit crimes because they lack understanding of the reach of their responsibility for their actions: I say, Poor people!...

> who would only have knowledge of their acts if they possessed enough knowledge, then they would deserve the name of cruelest of the cruel. But, in the state in which they encounter themselves, without the slightest bit of civilization, they will not see their true responsibility for their actions in reprisal for the merciless *correrias* conducted by the whites. (Cerqueira 1958:n.p.)

This is the classic position of defender of the indigenes that so fully characterized the efforts of the Indian Protection Service: compassion for Indians despite their offenses against tappers flows from the recognition that they lack the culturing influence of civilization and the conscience it engenders, and therefore cannot be deemed cruel. Felizardo's suggestion is that the Indians are not subhumans worthy of punishment because they are immoral, but that they, like children, need the instructive force of "catechism" because they are amoral and require development.

But how to bring morality to the amoral? Felizardo continues:

> Says Sr. José Lorena, Sir, how do you think you might resolve this, given what I have related to you? Do you, Sir, have no compassion for those poor women who are in savage hands, and the little children who cry out for their dear mothers? I imagine that you, Sir, as a father to your children, will understand the pain felt by those who cry for their help? According to the chronicles of your history that I have been hearing for so long—accounts of nearly unbelievable deeds—I judge you capable of solving this case, one of the most severe in Indian history. (Cerqueira 1958:n.p.)

Here the camp owner's speech points toward those feelings, grounded in a sense of kinship, that might make a man blame the Indians for the suffering of a white child and leave him wanting revenge. Felizardo's fame preceded him; surely he could find a

solution to this problem, just as he had others. But if not through violence, José Lorena wonders (as would, ostensibly, Felizardo's intended audience), then how?

Felizardo's account of this episode, and his autobiographical text more generally, is presented in a curious kind of language, which in many passages combines great concern with formality and propriety with the deeply aural influence of Acrean "caboclo" speech. There are inconsistencies of spelling that favor the spoken dialect over standard orthography as well as non-standard punctuation (some of it preserved in my translations), both of which make clear the author's late, uneven literacy and the primacy of spoken language in his life. The text's formalism fits with its persuasive aims and might be viewed as a stratagem, yet it also seems to me a sincere reflection of Felizardo's sense of having cultured himself, in multiple ways, through the esoteric studies that, so far as I know, were his only formal education, at least after leaving home at 17 years of age. In the account, it is this formative experience which has taught Felizardo that there is another option besides violence, as he himself makes explicit:

> Sr. José Lorena [writes Felizardo, quoting himself], I ask your forgiveness for the way I am about to act, as it is likely that even you, Sir, will find strange what I am going to tell you about the system I will use to secure the return of the three women. I, with the help of the study of esotericism, was able to discover in myself a force that is vulgarly called magnetism. This force has come since I was a child, but I completely ignored it and only much later was I able to begin to see it, but even so, in many cases, I, not understanding it, gave it the very vulgar name that almost all the ignorant apply (Devil). And, thus, all of humanity, or almost all, applies to this great divine virtue the most unjust and disdainful name, "Devil," when this force is nothing if not the true God. Vibration to aid humanity

> itself. Through this explanation and the demonstration that I will practice in your house with everyone present, you Sir will see the method that will be put to the test to win the release of the three women. (Cerqueira 1958:n.p.)

The rejection of violence and slave labor in dealing with Indians was a standard part of official government policy, and a frequent point of tension (and sometimes collusion) between local Indian Protection Service officials and camp owners. Here, however, Felizardo offers the reader something more, in the form of theorizing on the nature of the "force" that Felizardo used not only to bring back the three women in this narrative, but also throughout his career as an Indian "catechizer."[70] This "force that is vulgarly called magnetism" had been wrongly attributed to diabolical powers; significantly, Felizardo testifies that he himself made this misidentification until his program of study taught him the truth.

There is also a suggestion, in the narrative weight Felizardo gives to this episode—and especially his reproduction, within the reported speech of his conversation with Sr. Lorena, of discourse questioning the morality of esoteric practices—that Felizardo felt he was taking some risk in revealing his affinity for such methods. Tension between Catholic orthodoxy and spiritual miscegenation did reach a kind of peak in the 1950s,

[70] Iglesias comments on Felizardo's "powers," including his being an ayahuasqueiro, as the source of Indians' esteem for him. Also, Iglesias's interview with Felizardo's sons, who affirmed that he used hypnotism, prayer healing, and other esoteric arts amongst them. Iglesias recognizes that there is more to know about the role Felizardo's esoteric practices played in his relationships with the Indians. Certainly, it would be useful to know more about his relationship to ayahuasca itself.

when Felizardo composed his narrative, with Church-sponsored, public book-burnings of spiritist literature and denunciations of Freemasonry coming from Acrean pulpits (Souza 2002). José Lorena, in the text, stands in for the skeptical public, unsure of the efficacy and propriety of methods involving "magnetism," whom Felizardo aims to convince.

What he claimed must have sounded rather amazing to those who read his narrative: as he continues his tale, Felizardo details the use of hypnotism on the "more than 20 people" present to "conduct them, through auto-suggestion," to the Indian village where the women were being held. In this "somnambulistic state" they confronted the Indian chief, "a Peruvian mystic named Aságama," and "gave him resistance and made a series of threats, until he finally granted our request" to release the women. In the end, Felizardo writes, the application of "suggested magnetic action…yielded truly satisfactory results."

Having concluded the dramatic narration of the episode, Felizardo interpolates commentary emphasizing once more the importance of esoteric forces to his work, raising the context to a universal, global-historical level:

> When I had once obtained true knowledge of my internal forces, I tried always to be in direct contact with such frequencies as were coherent with them.

> Today I have a knowledge above all my sentiments[71] and I see as clearly as the light of day that the earth very much needs man to cultivate this luminous font, which will give all men a true illumination of the pure truth. Say those men who are already enlightened, "Know the truth, the truth will set you free."
>
> The splendor of the magnetic force, found accumulated in all of the bodies that gravitate in the cosmos, is the only cause of all the phenomena vulgarly called miracles or supernatural. Miracles or supernatural does not exist, never existed on this planet, there is no example that might verify such phenomena.
>
> What has always existed, and will exist, is a force which the masses always ignored and which has been directed by such men as Moses, Joshua, Zoroaster, Jesus, and many other great initiates. The places where it has been most studied and practiced were Egypt, Greece, Assyria, Phoenicia, Babylonia, Tyre, Alexandria, and many others, bringing to the earth admirable illumination. But, men have always kept it under terrorizing seal [that is, they have hidden its cultivation through secrecy], giving rise to brutal censures from the ignorance of those who don't know about it.
>
> Thus it occurred on the Javary River that, in the house of Sr. José Lorena, I was able to conduct 16 men to the true degree of somnambulism and, in astral body, we went into the presence of the Indians, who were at that time asleep, we had a dialogue in reference to the women, and, not without cost, they ceded us the said women and, as we were able to see in the hypnotism, thus we saw later the Indians come and place them out of danger. In a relatively short period of time we went in person and met the Núcú-inin Indians, who seemed familiar to us. Thus the Indians came into relations with the whites and I believe that until now there have been no unusual accidents. (Cerqueira 1958:n.p.)

Rather incongruously, Felizardo recapitulates again the story of his rescue of the women, as though to bring things back from the heights to which he had gone, and to make sure his readers didn't miss the point of the story: that he had used these powers for the good of Brazil's Indian-white relations. He concludes: "Thus the Indians came

[71] Cf. note 26 on the CECP differentiation of "spiritism" from its "spiritualism," in which, "[t]hrough the development of consciousness of the Self, each one may obtain proof of his personal existence on a plane superior to that of gross matter."

into relations with the whites and I believe that until now there have been no unusual accidents."

One might wish, in vain, to know more about this dramatic scene: how it was conducted, what the participants thought of Felizardo's efforts, how their own engagements with Indian shamanism and European esotericism colored their experience of the séance, what sort of communication amongst the participants organized the event. And one question asserts itself with particular insistence: did Felizardo employ ayahuasca in this episode, and in his other work as a healer? Iglesias notes that Felizardo did use esoteric techniques amongst the Kaxinawá, with whom he did "learn to appreciate *nixi pae* (ayahuasca)," but admits that important questions remain unanswered:

> The presence and participation of Kaxinawá people in sessions in which Felizardo made use of hypnotism, prayed, sang, and invoked "caboclo" spirits did occur... The contexts and the forms by which this knowledge and these practices were exercised by Felizardo, how they were interpreted by the Kaxinawá, and how they fit into the relations that certain [Indian] families then maintained with him are questions, moreover, that deserve greater attention and development in future research. (Iglesias 2008:298)[72]

[72] Iglesias found some reluctance to discuss these issues in detail when he interviewed Felizardo's sons about how the Kaxinawá viewed his esoteric practices. Responding to other questions, Romão Sales told Iglesias in 2005, "It was magnetism. Magnetism is like spiritism. He would concentrate, pray to go to sleep. He would really sleep. He would sing. He was really a *caboclo*, a warrior *caboclo*, an archer *caboclo*. He really did have a lot [of power]." When Iglesias pressed for more details, however, "Romão smiled and changed the subject." (Iglesias 2008 295-296)

Iglesias concludes that Felizardo's fame amongst the Indians was linked to his safe movement between town and forest, and especially between "tame" and "wild" Indian groups, "as well as to the religious and spiritist practices that they saw him exercise, and to his recognition as a good '*rezador*' and *ayahuasqueiro*" (Iglesias 2008:301).

What first drew my attention to the episode of the women's rescue were the striking similarities between what Felizardo accomplished with "suggested magnetic action" and the reported uses of ayahuasca in Amazonia. From Zerda Bayón's "telepathine" to Alto Santo lore, seeing at a distance (both temporal and spatial) is one commonly reported experience with ayahuasca.[73] Along the same lines, seu Nica, president of the Centro da Rainha da Floresta in the Alto Santo neighborhood, several times told me a story involving this kind of "astral travel": Everyone from Alto Santo had gone travelling into the countryside to the place called Limoeiro to hold a feast, but Nica, the Alto Santo carpenter, was rebuilding the worship hall (*sede*), and stayed behind with Mestre Irineu. In the evening Mestre Irineu invited seu Nica to drink some Daime and "see how our companions are doing." While seu Nica's reasons for telling the story went beyond this

[73] Recall the London *Times* article, which asserts that the Indians, who "have never left their native wilds and consequently know nothing of what surrounds them" nevertheless describe "in their peculiar fashion" their visions: "cities, houses, castles, white men in thousands, the pleasantness of the music which they hear and everything that exists in the civilized world"(London Times 1912:8).

fact, he treated the theme of spiritual travel with naturalness, as one of the powers of ayahuasca / Daime.

Knowing that Felizardo was acquainted with ayahuasca, and that his efforts on behalf of Sr. José Lorena fit with the kinds of uses of ayahuasca that did occur, we may speculate that he might have employed it in this quest to free the three women. This supposition fits with what we have been able to discover about the politics of representing spiritual practices in Acre, in which a whole range of systems developed with the most varied combinations, some of which were established openly and officially, such as Freemasonry, and others of which fell on the other side of a line of silence. Even the episode that Felizardo recounts here is the only one of its kind in his text, and whole parts of his personal life related to the Indians are left out, including the facts that he ever drank ayahuasca and that he fathered many children by Indian wives. Whether Felizardo was in the habit of using ayahuasca in sessions like this one, or in healing activities more generally, may not be possible to establish. But although his silences prevent us from answering this question, they also reveal certain things. Felizardo's silence about ayahuasca and the impact of his Indian sojourn on his spiritual development suggests, I think, that he found a basic equivalence between the contours of Indian spiritual reality and his own esotericist background, but felt constrained in how much he could acknowledge this. Perhaps there is some irony in the observation that

the very universalism of esoteric philosophy—insisting, as it does, that a "magnetic" force abides in every being—may have been what allowed Felizardo (among others) to be more open to culture-specific Indian spiritual practices.

If Felizardo chose to stake his claim to a good name (and the accompanying pension) on the centrality of his esoteric education in his life's work, it seems likely to me that he did so both because he truly believed in an innate force in all beings which, through cultivation, could work in favor of a generalized human harmony and the continuing perfection of society, and also because he felt that those responsible for evaluating his tale would feel some sympathy toward his point of view. Felizardo's triumph in this episode is also the triumph of his life: the taming of "wild" energy for the benefit of the nation, and the use of "magnetism" in service of civilization. Just as esoteric philosophy had revealed that what most people knew as the "Devil" was, in fact, a "luminous font" and a "vibration" to aid humanity, so too had Felizardo's close relationship with Indians convinced him of their value—if they could be brought within civilization's fold through "catechism."

Esotericism and Acrean contexts of ayahuasca

The foregoing discussions of contexts of ayahuasca in Acre and the Upper Amazon establish two key points relevant to the rise of Irineu Serra's fame as a healer and

spiritual leader. First, these examples help clarify the links between the Brazilian military ethos that was the leading edge of "civilization" in the Amazon, and a cadre of philosophical and esotericist movements, including Positivism, Freemasonry, and so-called "New Thought" trends. These movements tended toward spiritual-cum-social evolutionism and emphasized harmonious national integration, providing a theoretical backdrop to Amazonian colonization against which the peaceful integration of "the Indian" into the Brazilian nation appeared as a moral imperative. Military and para-military personnel like those contracted to work on the Border Commission, including Irineu Serra, Felizardo Cerqueira, and Delfim Freire, often served commanders who emulated Rondon's model of patriarchal benevolence toward indigenous peoples. For such men the construction of civilization in the jungle required putting a certain "order" to the wild forest and to social relations within it as prerequisite to universal "progress." Rondon sometimes sought to produce evidence of the successful conversion of Indians by the dressing Indians in pants, shirts, and dresses, or literally wrapping them in the Brazilian flag for photo opportunities (Diacon 2004). Felizardo, too, had before-and-after photographs taken of Indians in traditional and Western garb (Iglesias 2008).

Second, I have tried to represent various ways that ayahuasca was marked, above all, as a phenomenon of the forest and of the "savages" who inhabited it. In the texts discussed here, personal experience with Indian people and the question of position

with respect to the politics of Indianness seem to make a difference in the ways ayahuasca is represented. North American scientists on a short expedition seem to have reached the too-easy conclusion that "ayawasco," like some elixir containing the quintessence of savagery, simply dissolved the civilized veneer over brute human nature, provoking violence. For others, such as the chemist and parapsychologist Zerda Bayón, "telepathine" pointed the way to the physiological mechanisms of clairvoyance and similar phenomena, independent of its Indian discoverers. Delfim Freire, the Indian agent who derided emigrant uses of ayahuasca as "distorted *pajelanças*," was nevertheless proud of having survived being "put to the test" by drinking it "pure" with some Katukina in the forest during survey work in a remote watershed. Freire's portrayal of ayahuasca fits with his attitudes toward the Indians, as presented in his letters: noble and righteous in their own context, but easily subject to perversion through proximity to a tapper society governed by hedonism, intrigue, and the maintenance of personalistic networks of debt obligation to the detriment of the greater good.

The situations surveyed here give us some insight into ambivalence in the face of the politics of Indian miscegenation. Freire showed ambivalence about the appropriation of ayahuasca by culturally "mixed" ritual practices. Felizardo showed his ambivalence through his silence on his Indian wives and children and his participation in Indian rituals

with ayahuasca. In the context of a narrative argument for a pension, he seems to have judged that he could not reveal the extent to which he might appear to have been indigenized (to the extent of being described by Indians themselves as a "*caboclo* warrior"). Instead, he uses the vocabulary of esotericism, learned in his study of Masonic and CECP discourse. These European-derived movements provided a theoretical framework for interpreting ayahuasca.[74] They emphasized the existence of a universal "force" throughout the phenomenal world that could be focused and refined through study, and such thinking influenced the ways ayahuasca was understood, as Felizardo's case implied, and Zerda Bayón's investigations of "telepathine" made more explicit.

Irineu Serra's work with ayahuasca distinguished itself from what had come before largely in the degree to which he allowed it to be attached to his name as a citizen. Certainly others gained fame as *ayahuasqueiros*, but none before Irineu Serra had engaged in the cultural work necessary to bring ayahuasca to the town, and to make

[74] This is not to say that indigenous and mestizo uses of ayahuasca lacked their own theoretical points of reference, but to point out that mating ayahuasca to ideas of magnetic force helped bring it into the dynamics of Brazilian culture at play in Acre.

work with it the basis of a respectable *casa*. It is to the theme of Irineu Serra's conquest of the status of head of a Brazilian *casa* that I turn in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: “To bring a good name to my Brazil”: Raimundo Irineu Serra and the Rise of the Master’s House

It was with this type of [patriarchal] family as the basis of a social order and of an economy that were more private than public in nature that Brazil was formed. Viceroys’ palaces and cathedrals contributed, as expressions and symbols of other powers, to this formation. But it was decisively familial. The house was the symbol, the concrete expression, of this familism, especially the great house of the sugar plantation, the farm, or the ranch; or the patriarchal mansions in the city, projections of rural familism onto the urban space or environment. But so were the slave quarters, the shanties, the thatch huts; also the shotgun houses. [Freyre 1971:40]

The large plantation was, however, much more than just a basic unit in the agroindustrial process. It was also the basis of social life for the rural world in the first half of the twentieth century.The large estate was the place of residence of the large property owner—the "great house" (Freyre 1933). It was also the site of the homes of the resident workers…. The estate was where family life took place: procreation, births, marriages, and often burials. The chapels within the wealthiest great houses or on their grounds are reminders that religious practices grouped and ordered the estate's inhabitants... The annual calendar was marked by feasts, such as those of Saint John's Day and Christmas, as well as the *botada* and *pejada* [that is, the starting and stopping of the machinery] that signaled the start and end of the workday in the mills and plants. As social and cultural life were inscribed within the daily routine of the large estates, where almost everything took place under the watchful eye of the head of the big house, it is not surprising that these estates were also political centers—"electoral corrals," to use a term of the day. Accordingly, the resident laborers’ votes followed the landowner's prescription and were seen as a mark of loyalty to the "boss," to whom the most essential elements of daily life were owed: the dwelling, the plot of land for foodstuffs, wood and water for domestic purposes, and support in times of illness and need. Thus the hierarchical social structure was inscribed in all planes of social life, from work to family to home, from festivities to religious and political practices. [Garcia and Palmeira 2009:24-25]

> [The *casa*] is still the only permanent, trustworthy source of social identity in a country that has been a Kingdom, a Constitutional and Absolutist Monarchy, an Old Republic, a New State, a liberal democracy, parliamentary regime, military autocracy with a controlled congress, a New Republic, and today a nascent liberal State; a State that has been ordained by at least six constitutions in the past 45 years, and five currencies! [DaMatta 2000:360]

The Master's House

Alto Santo is one of two or three hundred houses in the neighborhood, now known as "Irineu Serra," where Irineu Serra settled in the mid-1940s and established the seat of his spiritual work, yet it is a house not quite like any other in its daily functioning. Dona Peregrina's current residence, where she has lived since the mid-1980s, is the hub of social activity for the whole brotherhood of the center, and receives daily visits from its members, who come to discuss personal problems or illnesses, make plans for upcoming festivals, weddings, births, and baptisms, or merely to pay a social visit. It sits to the side of Irineu Serra's original house (ca. 1945), often called the *Memorial*, which has been made into a very limited-access museum and archive, and is also still used to store Daime. At the time of my main fieldwork there was another house on the far side of the Memorial in which Dona Peregrina's sister and sister-in-law lived. All three of these structures were enclosed with a wire-and-slat fence, within which there grew a few fruit trees: *acerola* and sour *carambola* on the south side of Dona Peregrina's

house, and a sweet *carambola* on the north side, by the Memorial. The buildings sat on the upper part of a pasture that set them back at least a hundred yards from the highway; often, when I came to visit, the area between the outer fence and the residences would be filled with cattle, maybe a dozen head, through which I had to navigate. The upper pasture overlooked a pond down in the crease of the land, beyond which sat the *sede*, or worship hall. This area had its own entrance from the highway, but from Dona Peregrina's house there was a path inside the property that led down to it, following parallel to a promontory to the west that overlooked the city. Here and there in the pasture were structures built for handling animals. The whole property had the quality of a palimpsest: Dona Peregrina's brother had lived for several years in a small house behind hers, but in 2006-2007 this house had been torn down; the cattle that seemed like such a fixture to me were gone the year after we left, replaced by at least one crop of corn; a new house was built in the pasture to accommodate Dona Peregrina's brother Joca.

Like the property more generally, the residents of the house changed over time, creating combinations that recall the eclectic households formed in the seringais (Wolff 1999). When we arrived for our main stint of fieldwork Dona Peregrina lived there with her younger brother, Joca, and her adopted daughter (born to Dona Peregrina's sister), who spent part of her time away at medical school in Bolivia. During our year there,

however, a storage room off the verandah was converted into a room for one of the women from the center, who had a child with Dona Peregrina's nephew. This woman, Nelda, worked in the kitchen at Dona Peregrina's and studied social sciences at the Federal University. Her flexible residence, and that of others who have built houses around Alto Santo, points toward the spirit of assistential patronage that has characterized Mestre Irineu's house since its inception. Besides Nelda, several other women from the center were a near-constant presence at the house, cleaning, doing laundry, ironing, cooking. They lived in the neighborhood and tended to be married into, or to have children with members of, families with long histories in the *Doutrina*.

All this help around the house was necessary because it served the needs of more than just its few permanent residents. The children of the women who worked there, for example, often had breakfast in the kitchen before going to school. Sometimes men from the center who were doing some job around the property, such as cutting the grass in preparation for a festival, would "take coffee" in the morning before heading out to work. When there was heavy labor to be done, as for the St. John's day bonfire, or for the *feitio* of Daime, the women prepared large pots of food—rich stews, ground beef, rice and beans—to be sure of plenty of help. Sometimes visitors would bring bread, gathered in the early morning from one of the hundreds of neighborhood bakeries in the city, to share at the kitchen table, a practice I eventually adopted myself.

The kitchen, however, was a rather familiar space. More formal visits took place on the verandah, where Dona Peregrina spent much of her time receiving visitors and praying. We spent many hours together, sitting and looking out toward the highway, trying to descry the identities of those who came walking across the pasture. A certain decorum, general to rural Brazil, attended entrance into the house: most houses have gates around them, and in the absence of electronic bells, hand claps are the standard means to announce one's presence. With repeated visits one might come to enter the yard around the house without clapping, but upon reaching the verandah, which is all enclosed with ironwork, it is proper even for dear and frequent visitors to ask for permission to enter the house: *dá licença?* ([will you] give license?). What would have been slightly old-fashioned manners in many Brazilian contexts was standard practice when visiting Dona Peregrina's residence. A man should not come into the house wearing shorts, I found out when I went running along the highway and stopped in to visit. Moreover, members of the brotherhood who visited invariably greeted Dona Peregrina, whom almost all of them address as *Madrinha* (Godmother), with a request for a blessing, bending their head to kiss her hand: *bença, Madrinha?* ([will you] bless me, Godmother?). (Her standardized reply: *Deus te abençoe* [May God bless you].)

Dona Peregrina lunches notoriously early, at 11 am, and whoever happens to be around is usually invited to eat. People at Alto Santo value the memory of Mestre Irineu as a

person who would share a meal with anyone who needed to eat, and who, through the loyalty of his followers and his own efforts, always enjoyed a plentiful table, *uma mesa farta*. Mestre Irineu would often buy animals raised by his followers for resale or consumption (he is said to have been especially fond of pork), or receive gifts from them. Although Dona Peregrina has suffered through some hard times, particularly during the congregational splits of the 1980s, when her resources were fewer and the material conditions of her house and the center were poorer than they are now, this kind of assistance has always been an important part of maintaining the house of Mestre Irineu.

The primary goal of this chapter is to show how the Alto Santo congregation is organized around the institution of Mestre Irineu's house. The notion of the house will help clarify the social organization of the contemporary center, the historical process of its institutionalization, and its ritual practice. Here, I move between the past and present to illuminate the central place of the house and related ideas, in constituting both the forms of exchange at Alto Santo and discourse about the center's place in Acre.

The casa at Alto Santo and in Brazilian culture

Raimundo Irineu Serra left his home state of Maranhão for Acre as a very young man. He embodied several kinds of Brazilian marginality as a very tall, very dark-skinned man

from Brazil's most African state. Illiterate and just one or two generations from slavery, he travelled alone to Amazonia, with no patrimony to speak of. By the time he was an old man, Mestre Irineu (as he was often called) was known as a great healer and spiritual leader both locally and regionally, and, to a small extent, nationally. Hundreds of faithful followers lived in the neighborhood that formed around Mestre Irineu's house, and thousands visited him each year for consultations, healing sessions, or to attend the celebratory feast days associated with Catholic saints. Politicians sought him out for advice and the support of those whose votes he influenced.

How did he achieve the transformation from marginalized migrant to revered leader? This chapter is concerned with the transformation of Irineu Serra's social personhood, and examines several aspects of the social formation of Alto Santo.

One of the most fundamental categories organizing social life at Alto Santo is that of the *casa*, or "house." Persons and things are connected by the house: the *casa* is primarily identified with the personhood of its owner, which extends over both the real property of the house and over the persons within it. The advent of the Alto Santo *irmandade* ("brotherhood") should be understood as the formation of a house, a social unit based on kinship relations but extrapolating them. We have already seen how the house became a flexible unit in rubber-boom era Acre, capable of including the most diverse kinds of relationships within its structure: single men living with married couples and

their children; groups of unmarried men forming a single domestic productive unit; rubber tappers and their Indian wives or concubines.

During our fieldwork at Alto Santo we were constantly impressed with the centrality, and salience, of the notion of the *casa*. It ran through discourse about Alto Santo, particularly in the way that members of the *irmandade* spoke about the beginning of their participation in Alto Santo ritual life as "arriving in this house." It appeared in the hymns sung in Alto Santo ritual, where the invocation of the *casa* through indexical reference linked it to the divine "house." It structured talk about ritual experience and encompassment by the *casa* and its owner, Mestre Irineu, as I will discuss at greater length in chapter five. It was evident, too, in the respectful ways people approached, entered, and moved through Dona Peregrina's residence and interacted with her, as mentioned above; in Mestre Irineu's physical absence, she personified the *casa*.

The logic behind such treatment of the *casa* involves a close identification of the personhood of the head of the house with the house itself, which is to say not so much its physical structures (though it includes those), but more properly the relationship of ownership and encompassment that is established between the householder and those who aggregate themselves to it. The classic cases of this kind of arrangement in Brazil include the great sugar plantations of the colonial era, with their *senhores de engenho*, "lords of the mill" whose names and whose personhood overshadowed those of the

individuals who came under their aegis. The social form of the *casa*, however, as Freyre suggests in the epigraph above, was not limited to the great estates, but rather became, as Brazil sought to enter modernity, an organizing principle of its social life in general.

This form entails the establishment of persons, reminiscent of the Pacific “big man,” who maintain large, diverse exchange networks, and who mediate the interactions of the individuals they encompass with other, similar groups or with the state. Perhaps Freyre’s key insight about this form of social organization was his recognition of its persistence beyond the colonial situation of “masters and slaves” in which it was established, and its centrality even within Brazil’s modern era. He "suggested that...the concentration of economic, religious, cultural, and political power in the hands of one person was the organizing principle of the social world re-created among the descendants of those masters and slaves, through a logic that presupposes complementarity and irreducible difference" (Garcia and Palmeira 2009:27). This principle applied to, or was embodied in, not only the rural *casas-grandes* and the urban mansions, but also, as Freyre writes, “the shanties, the thatch huts; also the shotgun houses” (Freyre 1971: 40). It was a general form across social classes, not one restricted only to the manors of the landed gentry. Certainly the discussion of Acrean rubber camps in the first chapter suggests that they functioned according to similar social principles, and that the “company store” or *barracão* represented a moral umbrella

under which were gathered all the individuals in the rubber camp, at least in the ideal. (In fact, there is a tension-filled dynamic: narratives abound of tappers' circumventing the authority of the patrão by trading their rubber with itinerant merchants, or *regatões*; similar frictions were related to the overarching claims to authority that were made by the *patrão*, but tempered by the vast physical dimensions of rubber camps.)

Moreover, discourse about the figures of the "good" and "bad" *patrão* illustrates the importance of the moral dimension of the relationships of "complementarity and irreducible difference," and in particular, the fact that a patrão who wished to be successful needed to care for his workers' sense of personhood and honor, lest his moral authority over them be eroded. Such a model of authority and social organization, I want to suggest, was generalized in Acre. While there were surely differences in the ways rubber camps, military outposts, and work crews operated, they shared a combination of explicitly hierarchical arrangements and a personalistic concern with management of affective relations. Bosses, commanding officers, *chefes* of all kinds were of a class superior to "their" men, and yet they sought the respect and kind regard of those under them, and took, to various degrees, responsibility for their wellbeing.

The casa and the rua

The hierarchical aggregation of individuals that is entailed by the Brazilian *casa* does not stand alone, but rather exists in considerable tension with the notion of the sovereign individual, whose free entrance into contractual arrangements is often seen as the basis of modern society. If we cannot say that this is the same tension identified by Sir Henry Maine as the historical movement from a social form based on position within a hierarchy ("status") to one based on individual choice of association ("contract"), it is nonetheless very similar. Scholars of Brazilian culture have long noted this opposition, which, despite the fact that it is sometimes subject to unilinear, social-evolutionary readings, seems to constitute a durable, if dynamic, relationship between notionally distinct spheres of social action: one, dominated by the idiom of the *casa*, in which "natural" ties such as kinship relations hold sway; and another, characterized by the image of the *rua* ("street"), in which formal rules govern interaction, and the favoritism of hierarchical, affective relationships gives way to impersonal application of the law (DaMatta 1990, 1997, 2000). While Brazilian discourse about "progress" (and its lack, or even its opposite) is often concerned with the unwarranted expression of *casa*-type values in public life, in practice, Brazilians also recognize and accept the temperance of impersonal rules according to relational criteria. The horizontal, volitional linking of deracinated individuals may be touted as the key to a "democratic State of laws," and

the persistence of *casa*-type relationships may be pointed to, repeatedly, as the source of much corruption and backwardness. Even so, a folk saying cited by DaMatta speaks an important truth: "For a friend, anything; for enemies, the law" (DaMatta 1979:217). This popular dictum points to what are, for DaMatta, analytical realities: the *casa* and the *rua* are part of a Brazilian "ritual system." These domains are spatialized in the sense that they are associated with distinct kinds of locations, modes of relationship, and experiences of temporality.[75] From certain perspectives, the operation of *casa* relations behind the scenes of public affairs is a kind of contamination, and they certainly enable many legally impermissible exchanges, as in nepotistic pacts wherein one public official employs family members of another, who returns the favor. But Freyre suggests that such a view is backward: in his discussion of the Brazilian house cited in the epigraph, the personalism of such relationships seems to be the background against which the ideal of impersonal public administration stands, given Brazil's creation out of "a social order and an economy that were more private than public in nature." DaMatta writes, likewise, of the difficulty of certain reforms of the Brazilian state, which, "owing to their

[75] DaMatta argues that in Brazil, to a much greater extent than in other countries (DaMatta's primary comparison is with the United States), social relations are embedded in spatial arrangements. A key contrast in spatial localization within Brazilian towns and cities, for example, turns on the concepts of "center" (*centro*, roughly the equivalent of the American 'downtown') and *periferia*, which, unlike the postwar American suburb, carries a highly pejorative connotation. Life on the "periphery" is removed from the center, not only in some purely geographical sense, but also socially, economically, and morally (DaMatta 1997).

‘modernizing’ nature (that is, their inspiration in the egalitarian, individualist Western agenda), …would have to break with hierarchical and personal paradigms that are active and important in Brazilian society, which...is not easy" (2000:359).

In the space between state and society emerges, not the tripartite scheme of European, African, and Indian that DaMatta has labeled “the myth of the three races,” but rather what he calls a “cultural mulatism.” This kind of social formation is the result of the same sort of thinking that accompanied Hugo Carneiro’s attempts to reform Acre through monumental architecture and moral codes, which, promulgated in the capital, would spread through the rest of the Territory. Such thinking, however, fails to take into account the fact that movement of cultural elements from center to periphery is not a simple process, nor is it one-way. For DaMatta, Brazil’s “cultural mulatism” is “an acculturative process in which a center of diffusion—the capitalist, individualist, and liberal west—radiates values and institutions that are adopted on the periphery under the pressure of ideas such as progress, civilization, economic development, and, today, the market or free trade.” The key problem, from the perspective of successful “reform” of society by the state, is “the puerile belief that these things enter or fall into a space free of relations, values, and ideologies.” Indeed, even hegemonic institutions (such as the military) that enjoy support across class-type boundaries between social groups are subject to the contingencies of local culture, and are susceptible to transformative re-

readings in the light of local realities. Such bedeviling of colonial, missionary, and other reform efforts by local reworking of dominant, imported ideas is a common theme in contemporary anthropology. In the particular case of Brazil, DaMatta observes,

> the system is typified by a curious and often perverse combination of an imported, individualist, civic egalitarianism with a personalistic and hierarchical form of social organization. This amalgam of holism and individualism, of equality and hierarchy, results inevitably in *caudilhismo*, authoritarianism, in the various personalisms (the belief that there is really a 'savior of the *pátria*')…performing the role in Brazil's social landscape of the uninvited guests of democracy. (DaMatta 2000:357-8)

Viewed in this light, the *casa* is a special case (and perhaps the originating example) of the general phenomenon of individualized, masculine authority as the organizing principle of Brazilian social units. The social form of the *casa* centers on a single individual (almost always a man) with the potential to combine in himself various kinds of authority (familial, political, spiritual, juridical) that are often separated, particularly under the banner of modernity. In exchange for their loyalty, the head of a *casa* takes on the responsibility to mediate relations with the larger society for "his people." This focus on the *dono de casa* helps explain Daimistas' preoccupation with Mestre Irineu's biography, and especially with the honor of his name. They are "his" people, just as Felizardo Cerqueira, the "Indian catechizer" cited in the last chapter, had "his" Indians. As such, the "good name" of the people of Alto Santo rises and falls with that of Mestre Irineu. This fact not only provides the motive for elaborating on the positive aspects of

Irineu Serra's life history in Alto Santo discourse, but it also determines the range of themes from which this discourse is drawn. In the next sections I examine some aspects of Alto Santo narratives of Mestre Irineu's life history, with the aim of illuminating the basis of these themes in Acre's social organization.

From Maranhão to Acre

For people at Alto Santo, Mestre Irineu's life history is more than mere biography; his whole life is seen as the fulfillment of a fated *missão* that he received at the hands of the Forest Queen. Crucially, while this mission was grounded in contact with the wild space of the forest, it did not dictate the abandonment (or even, what is more realistic, the reactive rejection) of the values and categories associated with the civilized space of the city. What narratives of Mestre Irineu's life history reveal, instead, is preoccupation with, and positive valuation of, very Brazilian notions of personhood and social organization. Chief among these notions is the patriarchal house, the *casa*. In accordance with the implication that every house must have a man at its head, much of the discourse on Mestre Irineu's life is concerned with episodes that demonstrate his character as a kind of Brazilian "big man" fit to lead such a group. In examining the ways Alto Santo discourse reflects this cultural order, it will be interesting to ask about the role of the *floresta* as the source of Mestre Irineu's moral authority and spiritual power. Given the insights DaMatta's *casa / rua* division can offer into the ascension of Mestre

Irineu and the formation of Alto Santo, I speculate on the significance of the three-part scheme including the forest as a source of transcendent value.

Like many stories from the Amazonian rubber boom, those told about Mestre Irineu are narratives of dislocation followed by adaptation. In scholarly accounts, motives for Amazonian migration are often charted at a macro level, where the principal factors were the push of chronic Northeastern Brazilian drought and generalized poverty, and the pull of a promised new life and improved social station to be gained as a rubber tapper. In a region of such intensely concentrated land ownership as the Brazilian Northeast, it is easy to see the allure of new territory where a man (for they were mostly men who came to the Amazon in the rubber boom, and certainly much of the propaganda of getting rich as a rubber tapper was aimed at men and presented from their point of view) could begin again, and do better this time. In the face of such broken promises—broken, first, by the deceptively enticing ads circulated in the Northeast, and second, by the collapse of the rubber economy itself—the theme of adaptation dominates Amazonian narratives. Such themes are also embedded within the life histories of particular individuals, which refract them according to other, more personal considerations. Followers of Mestre Irineu see his life story as an expression of this theme on a cosmic level: his coming to the Amazon was, like others', marked by the opportunity of transformation, but in his case this opportunity went beyond the merely

economic and this-worldly social to encompass a new vision of cosmic order that brought the *casa* and the *rua* in relationship with the *floresta*.

Many accounts of Mestre Irineu's life emphasize the connection between his sources of spiritual power and his integration into Brazilian society. At the same time as his Amazonian experience confirmed earlier signs of spiritual gifts, transforming him into a healer and spiritual leader, it also gave him renown, lending currency to his "name," even—especially?—amongst the military men who were Acre's leaders. In the eyes of his followers, Mestre Irineu's ascension to a position of respectability—contested though it may have been—was confirmation of the righteousness of his cause and the success of his moral transformation. His life provided a model they could hope to follow, and his person offered a "shady tree" (*uma árvore sombreira*), as was often said around Rio Branco, under which those castigated by their Acrean experience might gather. Under his aegis, they too sought a place in the world and in human society, and their stories about his life emphasized that fact.

Narratives of Mestre Irineu's early life are not often told formally at Alto Santo. Instead, they seem to be picked up, bit-by-bit, through oblique references sprinkled throughout the center's discourse. Since Mestre Irineu's death in 1971, however, there have appeared numerous written accounts of his life in the local press and in special publications produced by groups of his followers at Alto Santo and elsewhere. (This

trend is related to dual tendencies toward Mestre Irineu's beatification and his enshrinement as an icon of Acrean history and culture.) With the expansion of Santo Daime / CEFLURIS throughout Brazil and overseas, these narratives have reached ever-wider audiences as they are re-contextualized for English speakers, Europeans, and others with quite diverse (not to say distant) relationships to the rubber boom context in which Alto Santo formed.[76]

There are few unambiguous facts about Mestre Irineu's early life; from his reasons for leaving Maranhão to his age when he arrived in Acre, conflicting accounts create little sense of certainty.[77] Even the year of Irineu Serra's birth has been called into question through the consultation of baptismal records (Oliveira 2002). Nevertheless, there is a thematic coherence to these narratives which belies the mismatched accounts. Centered on the fulfillment of Mestre Irineu's life's purpose through the "ordination" of his mission at the hands of the Forest Queen, Alto Santo narrative gives a sense of inevitability, or at least predestination, to his life. It was this encounter that changed

[76] The ways elements in these narratives receive differential emphasis based on the concerns of their various audiences was the subject of my MA thesis (Meyer 2004).

[77] This does not mean that people at Alto Santo feel doubtful about the truth of Mestre Irineu's biography. Dona Peregrina once admonished me for talking to different parties about disputed episodes in Alto Santo history, insisting that "you talk to so-and-so over there, and get one story, then come over here and get another, then go over there and get still another…and they don't fit together." For her, to undertake such a project was clearly bound to increase one's confusion, not one's knowledge. For that, the thing to do was "drink Daime and pay attention."

everything, making sense of what had come before and giving purpose to the future. Around the figure of Mestre Irineu as a charismatic individual who had been charged with a special task by the divine there gathered a sense of a resource for Amazonians battered by disease and official disdain. Alto Santo discourse has objectified this sense as, simply, "the Doctrine" (*a Doutrina*). Etymologically related to "doctor" in the older sense of teacher, the term asserts fixity and orderliness, but it also implies ownership: when there is some need to be more specific, people at Alto Santo readily refer to the *Doutrina do Mestre Irineu*, linking it to his person as the mediator, if not the originator, of divine teachings. The metaphor of teaching and of indoctrination is one of the pillars of the song texts performed in *hinário* rituals (which are discussed in chapter five), structuring the hierarchical relationships amongst Mestre Irineu, his followers, and the divine beings addressed (and heard from) in the hymns. In this chapter, I want to focus less on the way these teachings are objectified in the doctrine, and more on a related aspect of Alto Santo social life: its intelligibility as a *casa*, a "house"—the house of Mestre Irineu.

Departure from Maranhão: "A true man in the dominion of the forest"

Published biographical narratives depict the young Raimundo Irineu Serra as either fleeing trouble or just needing to see the world in order to become a "man." They parallel the general trajectory described in chapter one, of conversion from a state of

anonymity, wildness, and animality to one of name, civilization, and humanity. This general idiom frames much discourse about modernization in Acre, applying equally to the land, its indigenous residents, and to the migrant workers who were brought to tap rubber. (As I will suggest below, indigenous technologies such as ayahuasca were also drawn into this discourse.) Irineu Serra, as a black man and either the son or grandson of slaves (at least in narrative),[78] was himself an appropriate target for this kind of culturing process, which is to say that his identity as a young man tended toward marginality. Of course, such narratives are told in retrospect and with a tone of inevitability, so that the possibility of his having remained that way is obviated.

Recent research among the relatives of Raimundo Irineu Serra still living in Maranhão suggests some quite prosaic motives for his move to Amazonia; rather than the fulfillment of a divinely ordained destiny, in these narratives the journey begins with chafing at the authority of Paulo Serra, his mother's brother. In one version, told by Eugênio Serra, the grandson of Maria Serra (Irineu's sister) it was a question of being made to work:

> Paulo told him to fetch some hay for the horses to eat. Paulo raised him, you know. Irineu's father was not around, so his uncle took care of him. So he went, but

[78] I know of no documentary evidence to support either of these assertions, although both are plausible, given that Brazilian manumission occurred in 1888, and Raimundo Irineu Serra was born either in 1890 (according to baptismal records) or 1892 (according to his personal documents, such as his identity card).

> complaining, right? So Paulo pulled his ear and yelled at him. In those days no one talked back to their uncle, not like the craziness today where no one respects anyone. Irineu didn't like it and went away. (Labate and Pacheco 2004:308)

Another version, collected from the children of Paulo Serra, echoed the theme of conflict with the maternal uncle, and also suggested a tempestuous side of Raimundo Irineu Serra. In this narrative, the future Mestre Irineu goes to a traditional Afro-Brazilian *bambaê* festival, where he drinks and is involved in a fight. The shame of being reprehended by his uncle is too much for Irineu, who packs up and decides to leave (Labate and Pacheco 2004:309).

A very similar, but more detailed narrative was published in a local newspaper supplement to in 1992 to celebrate the centennial anniversary of Mestre Irineu's birth. It also turns on the notion of a disobedient Irineu Serra going to an Afro-Brazilian festival:

> He went to the festival, but at that time the children without fathers were raised by their uncles. Irineu ran away from his mother to go to this 'tambor-de-crioula' together with Casimiro, a cousin who was the same size. Around ten or eleven at night they began a commotion, started a fight and sent everyone running. Then they decided to grab a big knife and cut all the rigging of every hammock in the house, knocked over the door and everything. [This according to Aprígio Antero Serra, Irineu Serra's cousin.]
>
> They sent word to his mother, and at nearly one in the morning she went knocking on the door of her brother, Paulo Serra, to tell what had happened. He said that in the morning, when he went to give water to the cattle, he'd come by her house." [...] "When he arrived he asked, where is that *preto*? And his mother, who was filling the gourds with water from the cistern, said 'he's here.' And padrinho Paulo, with a double-headed whip with eight studs on each side, called his nephew to fight. It was three smacks on

> Irineu's head. When his padrinho left, he grabbed a pair of sackcloth pants and a linen shirt, stuffed them in a wheat sack and took off: he only came back forty-six years later, no one knew if he was alive or dead. (Bayer Neto 1992:3)

In comparison to these narratives collected from relatives in Maranhão, the discourse of Mestre Irineu's followers in Acre around the question of his motives for leaving Maranhão takes on a more fateful tone, one perhaps seen as more befitting the legacy of a healer and spiritual leader. Some of their narratives present points in common with those from Maranhão, but invariably they include also a sense of the necessity of Raimundo Irineu Serra's going out into the world in order to be transformed into a "man." In the same centenary supplement just cited, Francisco Granjeiro Filho, a very close and longtime follower, told this version:

> When he was 15, the Mestre was thinking of getting married. He had a bride in mind, it was his cousin. (...) So, his mother (...) called his attention:
>
> "Look, you want to get married, you're dating your cousin. But forget about it, because you are young and she is not even a maiden [i.e., a virgin] anymore. The people are already talking about her."
>
> "Mama, if she is a maiden, I'll marry her. If not, I won't." (...) And he told the story to his uncle, whom he usually obeyed. (...) They were in the field working when his uncle asked, "Raimundo, do you want to be married?" (...)
>
> "I do, uncle (...)"
>
> "That's good. Because if you marry young, you'll soon have a family (...). You know, Raimundo, for a man to marry he should first go out in the world. When he comes back, he knows how much a kilo of salt costs, what a kilo of sugar costs (...). Then, a man can get married." (Bayer Neto 1992:3)

Similarly, Sandra Goulart (2004:28) gives the following version, collected from longtime Alto Santo orator Luiz Mendes:

> He came here [to Acre] following his [maternal] uncle Paulo's advice; he was the one who raised the Mestre. This uncle said that, for him to become a true man, he had to travel the whole world, get to know the things of the world (...) And that's what he did (...) But it was already the hand of destiny, his own path...God's... That's why he took this trip to Amazonia, because here he would receive his treasure...which is this doctrine (...)"

These narratives oscillate between a portrait of a boisterous youth with difficulty accepting authority, and that of a respectful young man who did what his mother's brother counseled him to do. Two very different images, certainly—one of selfish rebellion and the other of harmonious obedience—and yet they are reconciled in narrative. As Bayer Neto's text in the commemorative centennial supplement figures the story, it was in fact Uncle Paulo's discipline that set in motion the entire process of Mestre Irineu's becoming the "man" that he was. When Irineu Serra returned to Maranhão in 1957, writes Bayer Neto (1992:3), "[h]e re-encountered his old padrinho Paulo with great joy (his mother had already died), telling him he'd come just to thank him for the whipping, since *through it he became a man, a true man, in the dominion of the forest*" (ibid.; emphasis added).

Irineu Serra's military indoctrination

If Mestre Irineu's life story centers on a process of transformation to "manhood," including the establishment of a proper *casa*, what were the means by which this process unfolded? I think there are basically two primary aspects to it. One of these has to do with Irineu Serra's relationship to the temporal powers of the city, and centers on his participation in military and civilian service, as well as the relationships this official service helped him to create with persons of importance in Acrean society. People at Alto Santo are tremendously proud of the ability of Irineu Serra to transit between contexts, demonstrating his personal power in multiple domains, and to gain favor for them by this mediation. The other facet of Irineu Serra's constitution as the householder responsible for Alto Santo points toward his connection to the forest and the mission as a healer and prophet bestowed upon him by the Forest Queen. Much discourse at Alto Santo is concerned with configuring the relationship between these two bases of Mestre Irineu's power, and I hope to show in this chapter that it is their relationship in a system of social space that lends coherence to Mestre Irineu's life project, as reflected in such discourse.

Accounts of Mestre Irineu's travels assert, variously, that after leaving Maranhão and before arriving in Acre, he travelled to São Paulo and to Rio de Janeiro; that he spent a year in Manaus on the way. Some of the accounts offer fairly precise chronologies of his

movements in Acre, with longer or shorter stints in the Acrean rubber towns of Xapuri, Brasiléia, and Sena Madureira. Some sources, such as Jaccoud (1992) claim arrival dates for Irineu Serra in Acre as early as 1903,[79] though the year of 1912 is most commonly given (see also Goulart 2004). This uncertainty or lack of precision may be partially the result of imperfect record-keeping and collective memory, but for all that it still points to what is most important about this period in narratives of Mestre Irineu's life: he was moving around, gaining experience, not yet rooted in a homestead. Just as important is a sense that his first decade or more in Acre took him between town and forest, both as a rubber tapper and in the service of the Brazilian project to delineate the borders of the new Federal Territory of Acre. In Alto Santo narrative, this period is when Mestre Irineu is steeped in direct experience of the forest, learning its secrets and mysteries, and it culminates in the reception of his mission.

The following brief biographical summary, published in 1984 on the 13th anniversary of Mestre Irineu's death, well exemplifies the emphasis placed on his peripatetic life before settling in Rio Branco. It also gives a concise summary, from an official perspective, of Irineu Serra's life, seemingly in the style of a military *curriculum vitae*:

[79] This may have been related to efforts to claim a pension for Mestre Irineu's heirs related to his supposed service in the Acrean Revolution.

> Raimundo Irineu Serra was the son of Sancho Martinho Serra and of Joana de Assunção Serra. He was born on 15 December, 1892, in the municipality of São Vicente de Ferret, in the state of Maranhão. At 12 years of age he moved to the capital of the state [that is, São Luis], where he resided until 1911. He travelled then to Manaus, where he lived one year before continuing on to Acre. He arrived in Xapuri on March 14, 1912. He spent two years in Xapuri. Following that he moved to Brasiléia, where he lived for three years. Then [he moved] to Sena Madureira, where he lived for three more years. He arrived in Rio Branco on January 3, 1920. On the 5th of that same month he was placed on active duty with the Military Police, which at that time was commanded by then-Captain Calazans. Irineu served in the company of friends such as Manoel Fontenele de Castro, and captains Pedro de Vasconcellos Filho and Eugênio Becco Bezerra. He entered the competition for access to the rank of corporal [*cabo*] together with Manoel Fontenele, with both having been fully approved. Irineu served under the command of three illustrious officials: Captain Calazans, Major Armando, and Captain Florêncio. During the command of the latter, Irineu was discharged from military service by request. He began to work as a laborer in the administration of the then-governor of the ex-Federal Territory of Acre, the late Dr. Francisco de Assis Vasconcellos. From 1932 onward he took up work as a farmer, establishing himself in the colony know today as "Alto Santo" on the highway to the Custódio Freire Colony. There he died, in 1971. (Alves 1984c:6)

This narrative situates Irineu Serra within the social and political geography of Acre, offering a kind of précis of the life of Citizen Irineu but telling little about the religious vocation of Mestre Irineu. It is, in fact, not unusual for narratives about Mestre Irineu to focus on one or the other aspect of his person, either his relationship to the spiritual powers of the forest, or to the temporal powers of the city. At the same time, the two aspects are seen as related, since it was while serving under the color of Brazilian national authority that he encountered the powers of the forest through ayahuasca. In the same article, Antônio Alves insisted on the importance of this experience:

> One of the most important moments in his life during this period was the work he did with the Border Commission, which was charged by the Federal Government with the

> demarcation of the new Territory [of Acre], and headed by Admiral Álvares de Carvalho. According to Major Holdernes Maia, who provided invaluable biographical details about Raimundo Irineu Serra for this report, 'Irineu had the special task, in the Border Commission, of transporting under his power all of the funds put at the disposal of Admiral Álvares de Carvalho, which were contained in a very simple coffer.' *His work with the Border Commission provided him great knowledge of Acrean lands, the forest, the rivers, various places, indigenous villages and rubber camps*, at a time when the largest Acrean cities were no more than small hamlets in the middle of the bush. (Alves 1984a:6; emphasis added)

It is significant that Mestre Irineu's contact with the forest took place (or, what amounts to the same thing, is said to have taken place) through his participation in the border demarcation project. For one thing, this was a nationalist undertaking, one which, at its heart, sought to carve out a notionally civilized space in the jungle. Recall from the discussion of Acre's history in the first chapter that Acre, while it is still remote from the Brazilian side, is much more accessible via waterways from the east than it is from the Peruvian and Bolivian sides to the west, where the Andean cordillera divides the coastal population centers from the Amazonian headwaters; even today, the other (non-Brazilian) sides of these borders are much more sparsely populated than is the state of Acre. "In Peru," in the context of early 20th century Acre, is therefore the semantic equivalent of "in the wild"; it was there, outside Brazilian national territory, that Mestre Irineu is said to have encountered ayahuasca and to have received his mission to bring it back to "my Brazil." (I will have more to say about this below.) Another point to note about this text is the way it also serves as testament to Irineu Serra's good character, as

he was reliable (and strong!) enough to be entrusted the task of safeguarding the Commission's funds during its travels in the jungle.

The Border Demarcation Commission and the Militarization of Acre

If the initial development of the Amazonian rubber trade was an entrepreneurial, wildcat endeavor, knowledge of the economic potential of the region quickly subjected Acre to the close attention of the national governments involved. One result of this was the proliferation of nationalist symbolism and the militarization of public order in Acre. We have already seen, in chapter one, concern that the crudely built military barracks—constructed not of noble stone but of lightweight native forest materials—was a poor representation of the state and of the civilization to be installed there.

The Mixed Commissions for the demarcation of the borders with Peru and Bolivia reflected an idea of civilization in which military order was central. The ethos that guided the border commission was "eminently military," in the words of Marcelo Piedrafita Iglesias:

> Beyond determining the command composition of both Commissions, their forms of organization, decision-making, interaction, and logistical operation in the field, military strategy would also condition policy and instructions established for relating to the indigenous groups considered "savage" encountered by the Mixed Commission and, later, for the recruitment of specialized personnel to carry out this task. (2008:326)

It is no exaggeration to say that the military represented the leading edge of "civilization" in the forest once the Brazilian state became involved. The demarcation crews were like microcosms of incipient Acrean society: composed of outside officers, technicians, and locals familiar with the socio-geographical landscape, these groups were supposed to be held together and made to operate in harmony through the social structure of the military. Both the heterogeneous nature of the Commission's work parties and their clear hierarchy are evident in Iglesias's detailing of the composition of one year's crew:

> In 1923, when work was initiated on the Envira, Tarauacá, and Jordão Rivers, the Brazilian commission, headed by then-Counter-Admiral Antonio Alves Ferreira da Silva, was composed of a Sub-Chief with rank of Corvette Captain; two Adjuncts, both Lieutenant-Captains; an Army Medical Captain; an Auxiliary, First Lieutenant of the Armada; with the same rank, a Commander of the Army Contingent, made up of a Sergeant and 24 troops, two marine radio operators, and two drivers, in addition to the "civilian personnel" contracted in the region itself for manual labor. (Iglesias 2008:326 n. 401)

The reader of these reports learns the name of the Brazilian leader of the expedition, and the ranks of each officer involved; when it comes to the locals contracted to help in the project, however, not even the number of individuals is given. These nameless, numberless "civilian personnel" had a role in the border demarcation project out of proportion to the brief mention they receive in such a list. They brought a bit of the

"caboclo knowledge" of the natural world with them to help mitigate the many impediments the forest presented.

There is no doubt that the assistance of local "caboclos" played a key role in Brazilian settlement of Acre; I have already mentioned the assistance given by Manuel Urbano da Encarnação to early explorers such as Chandless. Iglesias notes the use made of such people in the first days of the Border Commission:

> In this first two years of the Commission's work [1914/5], the primary qualification highlighted for the "práticos" recruited locally as part of the "civil personnel" was knowledge of the region then being demarcated…, which led to the contracting of old dwellers of the rubber camps, who had worked as woodsmen, rubber tappers, or *caucheiros*. Ties maintained with Indians through these activities would also be emphasized as qualities to be considered in the contracting of these "práticos," some of them of Brazilian nationality, others of Peruvian. (Iglesias 2008:329 n.405)

Official reports of the expeditions are filled with complaints about

> …the 'inclemency of the climate'; the difficulty of voyages to the headwaters during the dry season, owing to their obstruction by large tree trunks; the nature of the forest terrain; the impossibility of using mules to transport food and supplies, obliging their transport on the backs of the workers; the frequent illnesses and work accidents. (Iglesias 2008:328 n. 403)

While the local knowledge of former rubber tappers and others must have played a key role in overcoming these challenges, the Chief of the Brazilian Mission emphasized, not their decisive contributions, but rather a strong sense of attunement to the project's roots in ideals of nation and civilization. In his words, the commission faced "serious obstacles insuperable to all but those who have a clear comprehension of the

responsibility of their mission, allied with a firm patriotic will" (cited in Iglesias p. 328, n. 403).

A number of those hired to work on the Commission qualified because of their experience with Indians and the forests in general (Felizardo Cerqueira was one), which would have made such teams like virtual academies of *caboclo* knowledge for those who participated in them. Mestre Irineu may have been hired because of his familiarity with the forest; alternatively, his work on the Border Commission would have given him an excellent opportunity to learn the ways of the forest from people who'd had lots of contact with Indians or were Indians themselves. (It is not possible to say which is more likely, since we lack, at present, records that would clarify Irineu Serra's work for the Commission.) Without doubt, this is certainly how this period is seen by many at Alto Santo, and it fits with the words of Antônio Alves above, that work on the Border Commission "provided him great knowledge of Acrean lands, the forest, the rivers, various places, indigenous villages and rubber camps." Whichever was the case in fact, in telling histories of Mestre Irineu's life, people at Alto Santo link Irineu Serra's imbibing of indigenous techniques with the time he spent in the forest, and with his Border Commission work.

If Irineu Serra's work with the Border Commission connected him with sources of knowledge about the forest, it was also his entrée into the military world in Acre, and

set him on a path that would lead to future employment with the military police and the state government. Moreover, in the process he would establish relations with those persons most important to the civic and bureaucratic side of his life project. It is worth exploring something of the content of the military ethos Irineu Serra would have encountered in early 20th century Acre, given the prestige the military enjoyed, not only as guarantor of social stability, but also as the model of a universal ordering that transcended categories of family and nation.

The military ethos as model of civilizational transformation and social organization

Schoolbook histories of Acre have customarily focused on the military leaders of its formative period (say, 1894 to 1909). Luis Galvez, leader of the first revolution and president of the Independent State of Acre, and Plácido de Castro, who led an army of rubber tappers in the second revolution, are imposing military men in this historiography. Indeed, Acre's leaders have most often been military officers, and during its career as a Federal Territory (1904-1962), Acre had its governor and other leaders appointed by the office of the President of the Republic, who usually chose men from the south, especially Rio de Janeiro. The power of the Brazilian nation has thus tended to be represented in Acre by white men in uniform from the country's distant metropolis.

Even those who were not career military men valued the status conferred by rank. In Acre, for example, the owners of rubber camps were sometimes called, ironically, "river-bank colonels" (*coronéis de barranco*) because of their vain tendency to purchase military titles. But it was among the social classes to which the rubber tappers, woodsmen, farmers, and hunters belonged that the military exerted its magic most fully. Arneide Bandeira Cemin, who studied a Daimista group in Porto Velho, Rondônia, notes the transformational capacity these groups attribute to the military. For them, the army is “a civilizing agency, capable of taking man out of the state of nature—a ‘cabra’[80]—into a state of culture, making him a ‘man’” (Cemin 1998:222).

Military training and service brought enlisted men into formal relationship with their superiors and, though them, articulated a connection with the whole structure of military command, and by extension with a privileged aspect of the Brazilian nation. This connection to a network of valued social relations was expressed in the sense that the army was a "place to become a man." In Acre, the military was (and, to an extent, still is)

[80] *Cabra* literally means “goat,” but the term is used in Acre, and probably more broadly in the Amazon and the Brazilian Northeast, to refer to any male individual (usually in the third person). It covers semantic territory similar to the American English term “guy,” with a major difference being that it tends to connote, as Cemin emphasizes here, a kind of unsocialized wildness. In this sense *cabra* belongs to a class of terms dealing with the transformation of persons from a rougher or less civilized status (*brabo*) to one of tameness (*manso*); newly arrived rubber tappers were spoken of as making this transition, as were Indians. (This point may be much more important than indicated in this note; the notion of a “civilizing process” may be a bridge between discourse about the formation of Acre and about the personal moral reformation envisioned in the *Doutrina*.)

a strong source of value, and one of the few ways for the less privileged to assume a legitimate place in the social hierarchy; although they might not rise very high in it, they were part of the structure. In *A Represa* ("The Dam"), Océlio de Medeiros's 1942 *roman à clef* about Acrean society, the beautiful young Santinha is attracted to the uniformed pilot, Captain Donato.[81] Remarks Medeiros's narrator, "Acre is a land where the yellow uniform of the [Military] Police maintains its traditions of prestige in the sympathy of the women. To be soldier of the Police is the path of any young man who wants to make a career" (Medeiros 1942:118).

Military and civilian service were the principal employment for much of Irineu Serra's life, and the avenue that led to his closest relationships with high-ranking officers, governors, and senators such as Fontenele de Castro and Guiomard dos Santos. References to these relationships are one of the principal ways that contemporary Alto Santo discourse claims Mestre Irineu's place as an important person in Acrean history. Such discourse, more than simply giving Mestre Irineu status by linking him with persons in the upper echelons of the Acrean military, also reaffirms the value accorded to the military ethos itself as a means of personal transformation and as a model for sociality within Alto Santo practice. Thus, one follower, a woman who lived closely with Mestre

[81] Medeiros disguises some names in his novel and leaves others as is; this Captain Donato was a real person, perhaps the first Acrean aviator and father of the Bossa Nova composer and pianist João Donato.

Irineu for many years, saw his military service as schooling for his stewardship of the Alto Santo community, in which, through his modest ascent to *cabo* (just above the lowest rank), he "learned a little of the regulations in order to be able to maintain his sect" (Cemin 1998:212).

In this context, the military ethos provided a path to citizenship and legitimacy available even to those who were pushed to the margins of Acrean society.[82] A narrative Cemin collected from a longtime follower of Mestre Irineu is instructive in this regard. The man had refused to enter the army, and Mestre Irineu asked him why.

> I said, "because I, a poor young man, semi-literate, born and raised in the interior, have no knowledge of the things of the public square, I think I'd just suffer in the army."
>
> He [Mestre Irineu] said to me, "But it's temporary, right?"
>
> "Yes, sir, I'll have to present myself again next year."

[82] Also, I've invoked the sense that the military taught Irineu Serra, not only how to fit into society, but how to administer his own "people." The underlying notion is that the military reflects a kind of naturally righteous social order. Note in this context what DaMatta says about the "popular classes" and the naturalization of social relations:

> "the dominated, marginalized, or "popular" classes would tend to use, as the source of their worldview, the language of the *casa*. Thus, they always produce a fundamentally moral or moralizing discourse, where the classes or actors in conflict (such as bosses and workers) are almost always in complementary opposition and depend upon one another… Their point of view is, thus, notably "humble" and balanced, often founded in a truly fantastical naturalization of social relations, which are rarely perceived and pronounced historical and arbitrary; on the contrary, it is as though they were part of a cosmic moral order given by God." [DaMatta 1997: 49].

This point helps clarify the way an ideology like Positivism or its more esoteric variants such as the CECP might gain purchase amongst the "masses," since it offered a holistic vision that encompassed "family, patria, and humanity."

> And he said, "So go! Present yourself, don't make excuses, go serve your country, as it is in the service that we learn to be a man, it is in the service that you learn to respect men, in the service that you learn to converse with people."
>
> He taught me this lesson, and I went. I followed the rules and did well, so that to this day, even if the President of the Republic appeared before me, I'd know how to converse with him—from within my ignorance, as a semi-literate person, but I'd know how to get along with him. (Cemin 1998:222-3)

This report is striking for the way it affirms the potential of military experience to allow relationship between an uneducated person who knows nothing of "the public square" and the maximal civil and military authority of the state and nation. In other words, the military, in the conception espoused by Mestre Irineu to his disciples, offered otherwise marginalized (male) persons entry into respectable society, assuring them of a place in it, however humble, through transformational education. Moreover, by insisting on the possibility of relatedness between the downtrodden former rubber tappers of Acre and the highest officials of the state, the vision of militaristic order promulgated at Alto Santo suggested national unity. Ultimately, it also suggests a cosmos of perfect hierarchical order.

Rondon and Positivism

Mestre Irineu's respect for the capacity of military discipline to order society and provide a framework of harmonious relationships bears a more than superficial resemblance to the Comtean Positivism that was spread into the Brazilian hinterland through military expeditions in the closing decades of the 19th century and the first

decades of the 20th. Among the names most closely associated with Positivism in Brazil, only those of Benjamin Constant and Teixeira Mendes rival that of storied explorer Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon, famous for his insistence on non-violent relations with Indians and memorialized as the namesake of Rondônia, Acre's neighbor state to the east and south.

In historian Todd Diacon's functionalist reading, Positivism was another of those French intellectual efforts with policy pretensions:

> Positivism grew out of Comte's search for ways to ensure order and progress in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Comte's goal was to prevent social unrest, rebellions, and revolutions by convincing the proletariat to accept the domination of the bourgeoisie in exchange for material benefits, guidance, and improvement. (Diacon 2004:80)

Despite its overtones of class struggle, Positivism was not necessarily intended as an instrument of oppression. Quite to the contrary, Comte sought the progressive liberation of all people from ignorance and error.

> He believed that he had uncovered the natural laws of the universe and that this allowed him to develop an objective and neutral social theory. As Brazilian philosopher Lelita Benoit notes, for Comte the universe was 'the perfect paradigm of order,' which led to 'the fundamental tenet of positivist sociology: the notion of a natural social order.' (Diacon 2004:80)

The suggestion is that Positivism offered a vision of holism that included enduring hierarchical relations within a scheme of universal progress and denied human agency in

bringing such a system about, ostensibly in furtherance of real social harmony. In practice, of course, there is potential for significant tension between the notion that social classes are part of a hierarchy ordained by nature and the belief that all creation is engaged in progressive movement toward perfection.

Positivism was coming ascendant in Brazil just as the Republic was declared in 1889. Along with Rondon, Positivism was associated with the figure of Benjamin Constant, a military officer and firm proponent of the independent Brazilian Republic who, from the 1870s, had played "the key role" in disseminating Positivism across Brazil through his indoctrination of students at the national Military Academy in Rio de Janeiro (Diacon 2004:82). (A municipality in far western Amazonas state today bears Constant's name, as do streets in many Brazilian cities.) Like many Positivists, Constant understood its contradictions as a measure of how much progress there was yet to be made. A pacifist, he nevertheless forged a military career, believing that Positivist officers could serve the cause of peace if they would use their position, in the words of Positivist leader Teixeira Mendes (whose design, and the Positivist motto, "Order and progress," are featured on the Brazilian flag even today), to "strive to dissipate the passions, prejudices, and war-like habits of their [army] colleagues and the general public" (cited in Diacon 2004:90).

Rondon graduated from officer training school in 1888, the year slavery was abolished in Brazil, and the following year he participated in the bloodless Republican coup that deposed Emperor Dom Pedro II. The Positivist spirit of “order and progress” helped spur efforts to install a new form of government. In Rondon’s generation there was, then, a “growing Positivist group of officers and cadets” in the Brazilian Army, and as these soldiers were deployed throughout Brazil, they brought their Positivism with them (Diacon 2004:84). By the 1920s a backlash against Positivism in the Rio Military Academy was underway and its influence there began to wane, but it continued to characterize efforts to bring Brazilian civilization to the countryside, especially the Amazon.

Between 1890 and 1930, Rondon spent many years working on projects in the backlands to establish telegraph lines, roads, and borders with neighboring countries. In all this work, Rondon was guided by the notion of bringing progress and enlightenment to the countryside in the name of moral unity of the Brazilian people: Diacon’s book on Rondon’s work on the telegraph line in Mato Grosso is titled “Stringing together a Nation.” In light of the great influence of Positivism on the military officers who were charged with taking civilization into the backlands, Diacon writes that “what was under construction in the interior was as much a Positivist message as a nationalist one” (2004:87). There was thus little difference, given the way that Positivism tended to

collapse nature and culture into one, between promoting the nation's technological progress into its unconquered backlands and bringing salvation, of some sort, to its benighted peoples. For Rondon and other Positivists, civism and religious ritual merged in acts such as the raising of the national flag and the playing of the national anthem. During his time in the backlands, Rondon ordered the flag hoisted every night at camp, and played the national anthem on a gramophone brought for the purpose. He also staged numerous photographs featuring the national flag, often with the "Order and Progress" motto conspicuously displayed, and sometimes wrapped around the naked bodies of Indians encountered in the field (Diacon 2004).

For Rondon, the stringing of a telegraph line linking the hinterlands with the metropolis was an achievement in multiple registers: technological, nationalist, and spiritual. In a 1912 speech to his troops, Rondon assured them that their sacrifices would contribute to "Família, Pátria e Humanidade," the three levels of human social organization recognized by Positivism. Specifically, he celebrated the fact that more than 1,000 kilometers of telegraph line had been put into service, and had "already allowed us to connect the thoughts of those who live in the desert with those more developed on this

Earth" (Diacon 2004:85).[83] This is a very powerful image of the telegraph as a great network overcoming the distance between people. While it relies on a technological model, and is therefore linked strongly to a scientifically innovative aspect of modernity, Rondon's speech suggests links to a much broader field of esoteric thought, in which the key notion is one unified, hierarchically ordered Humanity, with the possibility of communication provided by fantastical means, whether technological or divine. For some Acreans, notions of mental communion and moral connectedness suggested by Positivism and related philosophies would dovetail with the powers attributed to ayahuasca, such as seeing distant places in visions, knowing the location of lost (or stolen) objects, and, perhaps most of all, connection to powerful spiritual forces.

Rondon represents a type of figure that is found repeatedly in Amazonian history: the "desbravador" of the wild for the sake of civilization and the pátria; the "Man's Man," physically vigorous, indefatigable, honorable; the one who knows how to deal with Indians, knows how to deal with Nature; the person of humble origins who achieves greatness through innate courage and moral effort. If he attained fame as a father of the Republic and stood on a national stage, other figures take their place in regional history.

[83] Here I want to know more about any esoteric side to Positivism, since Rondon's quote is strongly evocative of the "communion of thought" that allows us to tap into the minds of those more advanced to learn from them—and here in the form of a telegraph line helping in the nation-building project.

Irineu Serra's call to mission

The Circle of Regeneration and Faith

Alto Santo narrative about Mestre Irineu's life centers on an initiatory revelation: on a retreat in the forest, he encounters a female apparition that is simultaneously the Forest Queen and the Virgin of Conception, and she "ordains" his mission as a healer. This was the way that the transfer of ayahuasca from the forest to the city was understood, or explained, and it had a significant element of Christianization, in parallel with the "catechization" or "taming" of the Indians more generally. The introduction of ayahuasca to the city represents a significant counterpart to the movement of civilization into the countryside. If Alto Santo instantiated a Christianization of ayahuasca, it also implied an indigenization of Christianity and civilization. This is part of what made it appear dangerous, and also part of what made it a means of constructing Acrean identity as both fully Brazilian and uniquely affected by intercultural contact with Indians.

During the time of our fieldwork, we occasionally encountered references to the *Círculo de Regeneração e Fé* [Circle of Regeneration and Faith], which was said to have been an ayahuasca-using esotericist group in which Irineu Serra participated around the start of the 1920s, in Brasiléia. Not many people knew very much at all about this period (not

only was it very long ago, but it also seemed not to fit easily with the narrative of revelation in the forest and establishment of Alto Santo in the city); for most people the primary link to the CRF remaining today is the insignia stitched on the breast pocket of the women's uniform for the silent "concentration" session.[84] Thus, while many people had heard of the CRF, this part of Mestre Irineu's biography was, in our fieldwork experience, much overshadowed by the drama of his encounter with the Forest Queen and the ordination of his mission, and even by that series of narratives that celebrate his relationships with civic authorities.

Academics, by contrast, have been interested in the CRF as part of the investigation of the historical roots of Alto Santo and Daime more generally, and those at Alto Santo who are deeply interested in its history, including the orator "Toinho" Alves, also make it part of their discourse.[85] Several of these sources suggest that the group was the first "formal" or "official" society of ayahuasca drinkers in an Acrean town. It was led, apparently, by two brothers who, like Irineu Serra, were from Maranhão (Monteiro da Silva [1983] claims that they were even from the same small town). These "Costa

[84] Alto Santo talk about the stitched letters is in keeping with its esotericist preference for indeterminate mystery over clear dogma, so that it seems undecided whether the letters stand for *Círculo de Regeneração e Fé* or *Centro da Rainha da Floresta* [Center of the Forest Queen], both of which are attributed to it, often without choosing one as primary.

[85] Monteiro da Silva (1983) took an especial interest in this aspect of Alto Santo history, interviewing surviving family members of those who participated in the CRF with Irineu Serra. See also Cemin (1998), Goulart (2004), and MacRae (1988), among others.

brothers"—André and Antônio—may even have been cousins of Irineu Serra, and there is some suggestion that the group was composed primarily of dark-skinned emigrants, all men, from Maranhão (similar things are said of the very earliest days of Alto Santo). The CRF featured characteristics that showed its origins in the milieu I have been describing in this chapter: its members wore military-style uniforms to sessions, and a system of ranks, derived from the military, ordered the members in a hierarchy. It is an open question whether the members of this group did in fact serve together in the military, or perhaps worked with one another on the Border Commission. Similarly, it cannot be said with certainty whether this group took the key step of registering its documents of incorporation with the government, although the fact of its having a name implies that it might have done so. The precise role of ayahuasca in CRF meetings is likewise unknown, although the use of the term "Circle" in the name indexes organizations, such as the CECP, that used it to connote the social and, especially, the spiritual communion of its far-flung members. This suggests that the CRF may have been directly inspired by the CECP; in any case, the set of facts we have leaves little doubt of a general influence on the group of the military-cum-esotericist spirit of Acrean officialdom at the time.

It has already been suggested that many Acreans, and particularly the poorer emigrant workers, understood military order as a model of social order more generally, and one

which, because it was grounded in philosophies that aimed to encompass all of humanity in a regimented march toward progress, offered them a way to relate to the Brazilian power structure. Moreover, the military promised transformation, from a state of brute nature to one of national culture: it promised, in short, to make a *cabra* into a Man. An unnamed source of Clodomir Monteiro da Silva, an Acrean anthropologist who did fieldwork on the local ayahuasca centers in the early 1980s, offers some detail on the use of military-derived ranks within the CRF:

> …a person entered as a soldier, passing to sergeant, with officer ranks following that. Antonio Costa, his rank was Marshall [the highest title in the Brazilian military]…then there was a way that they didn't know the ranks well…because André Costa, as vice president should be second in command, with Alfredo Lins as secretary to the chief and assistant of orders…in the chief's absence he would also take his place…but the commander-in-chief was Irineu. (Monteiro da Silva 1983:113)

The puzzling claim that "they didn't know the ranks well" makes more sense in the light of Goulart's observation (2004:37): "In many statements I collected it is affirmed that Antonio, who apparently was the group's leader, established some hierarchical grades and 'degrees,' fixing categories of officer, but excluded Irineu from them." The suggestion seems to be that there was tension about leadership in the center, with Irineu Serra occupying a position of importance in practice that did not match with his exclusion from the group's explicit hierarchy. The tension seems to have caused some sense of rivalry, even jealousy, and perhaps to have played a role in Irineu Serra's

cessation of membership in the CRF. Against the claim that Irineu Serra was *de facto* "commander-in-chief," relatives of the Costa brothers interviewed by Monteiro da Silva affirm that his desire for a position of leadership outstripped his capacity to lead.[86]

If the system of ranks was supposed to move a person through the process of becoming a cultured "man," then tests were necessary to confirm one's progress, particularly when leadership roles were at stake.[87] The idiom of these tests sheds light on the ways experiences with ayahuasca, and narratives about them, became part of the process of disputing and legitimizing leadership claims. For example, one of Monteiro da Silva's sources, apparently a relative of the Costa brothers in Brasiléia, told him that "even though Irineu knew that Antonio Costa had more virtue, he wanted to be equal to the *chefe*." To do so, he had to undertake tests, which were "administered occultly" during sessions with ayahuasca. These sources' testimony tends to suggest that Irineu Serra ranked below Antonio Costa in question of manliness. Not that Irineu Serra was feckless, but at the crucial moment he lacked the courage to go alone, according to Monteiro da Silva's interview with Antônio Costa's brother-in-law:

[86] Such talk became all but impossible at Alto Santo, which was after all Mestre Irineu's own house, although it was leveled at others there; see the discussion of the CECP breakup below.

[87] On discourse about spiritual tests as the idiom in which leadership disputes are articulated in Amazonian emigrant uses of ayahuasca, see Cemin 1998, Goulart 2004, and Monteiro da Silva 1983, among others.

> …the truth is, he was quite well advanced, but did not succeed in passing the exam…he did not become the *chefe* through the exams…he failed on this point: when he went to take the first exam, he asked my brother-in-law [Antônio Costa]: "Can you go with me?" and my brother-in-law told him he would. (Monteiro da Silva 1983:120)

As Irineu Serra traveled in what Felizardo Cerqueira surely would have recognized as "mental vision" or "communion of thought," he came to a terrifying abyss which he must descend, using a ladder made of mere spider webs. Unwilling or unable to go on alone, "there he refused," Antônio Costa's brother related. "[M]y brother-in-law passed it and, arriving at the other side, was applauded spiritually…" (Monteiro da Silva 1983: 121). As a final test, Antonio Costa had "to go through a mill with a wheel of razors, stick his head in the machine while it was running, and come out the other side" (ibid.). The point of the visionary tests was not to be missed: "[H]e passed and came out in a great room, full of light, of flowers, and he started laughing, everyone clapped hands and hugged him, affirming: 'you shall be the *chefe* of our society…" (ibid.). Reflecting on the role of these visionary disputes in the CRF, Monteiro da Silva concludes that "[c]ourage is, thus, a celebrated virtue within the group. To be a man signifies withstanding the terrible physical and psychic tests, above all those 'experienced in the *astral*'" (1983:55).

What is most fascinating is how the visionary space of ayahuasca is populated by the military system of order and by Brazilian notions of masculinity that emphasize individual daring: visionary sessions with ayahuasca become, at least in part, contests of

masculine bravado. The statements of Monteiro da Silva's sources, which referred to events some six decades in the past at the time of their collection in the early 1980s, lack many contextualizing details of the particular sessions in which these tests were supposed to have occurred, making clarity of events difficult to come by. Several scholars, including Sandra Goulart (2004) and Edward MacRae (1992), have attributed this temporal and spatial confusion to a tendency toward mythmaking in narratives of the early days of Mestre Irineu's career.

Goulart (2004) identifies three "sets" of early narratives about Mestre Irineu's initiation into ayahuasca, all of which include Antonio Costa: one set relates to "diabolical" sessions with ayahuasca that are meant to evoke moral territory similar, I think, to Delfim Freire's "distorted pajelanças," and which end up figured as the paradigm transcended by Mestre Irineu's *Doutrina*. In these stories, Antonio Costa plays the role of mediator, introducing Irineu Serra to ayahuasca, but is then left behind by him as he progresses further into its mysteries. Another set of narratives, in Goulart's view, are those that describe Irineu Serra's encounter with the "Peruvian caboclo" Pizango, in which Irineu Serra communicates with Pizango, while Antonio Costa and the others present in the session do not see him. The third set of narratives involves Mestre Irineu's encounter with the Forest Queen, in which Antonio Costa is his helpful, if capricious, companion on a retreat in the deep woods. When Antonio Costa figures in

the narratives told by Daimistas, his role is overshadowed by Irineu Serra's; statements to the effect that he was spiritually more meritorious or powerful would be literally incredible to virtually all Daimistas today, be they at Alto Santo or elsewhere. The most compelling reasons for this, I suggest, are related to the narratives of transformation that drive Mestre Irineu's reputation, above all the Forest Queen's "ordination" of his mission, and the transformation of pagan ayahuasca into Christian Daime which it entailed.

Pizango and the Forest Queen

Two figures are particularly associated with discourse on the origins of Irineu Serra's work with ayahuasca: the "Peruvian caboclo" identified as "Don" Crecencio Pizango (or Pisango), and the feminine being known variously as Clara, a "Universal Goddess," Nossa Senhora da Conceição, and the Forest Queen. As Sandra Goulart (2004) notes, narratives about Irineu Serra's initiation into ayahuasca tend to work in two directions at once, establishing both continuities and contrasts with what came before. The primary point of contrast in Irineu Serra's use of ayahuasca is, of course, the transformative apparition of the Forest Queen, which effectively announced the Christianization of the drink.

The continuities are, I think, more subtly motivated and poorly understood. Moreover, the narratives which provide evidence for these contrasts and continuities are themselves disjointed. For example, it is unclear where Irineu Serra first drank ayahuasca, or with whom; likewise, given the evidence of Irineu Serra's participation in the CRF in the town of Brasiléia, it is odd that none of the narratives about his "ordination" that I found circulating in Alto Santo discourse takes place in a CRF session. On the other hand, CRF leader Antonio Costa does appear in these narratives. Let us consider this fact together with the suggestion above that a leadership dispute developed within the CRF, in which (depending on one's point of view) Irineu Serra either desired a position of superiority that it was beyond his "virtue" to hold, or else he showed, within the group's sessions, a practical aptitude as "commander in chief" that his jealous companions refused to recognize. If testimony gathered from Antonio Costa's relatives implies the former scenario, narratives long circulated in Alto Santo discourse (and more recently in scholarly work) make the latter supposition instead. Indeed, as I will suggest, despite an unwillingness to put too fine a point on it (as leadership disputes are considered to be in very bad taste, as well as unappealing because they may suggest that destiny can be eclipsed by contingency), these narratives may be read as the remnants of accounts of the struggle for primacy within the CRF.

Pizango and the gourd bowl episode

The tension between innate gifts of God and positions bestowed by human society is at the root of Daimistas' visions of Mestre Irineu. Wrangling in the *astral* over authority and legitimacy is a recurrent narrative theme that points to this tension, and where it is found the imposition of artificial human hierarchies on the actual differences created by God is akin to a crime against the cosmos. For Daimistas, Irineu Serra's status as an outlier made him a particularly robust hook for ideas of "natural" charisma. He was a very tall, broad, dark-skinned man from Brazil's most African state, Maranhão, in a region where the average male individual was more than a foot shorter, and the majority showed, in their hair and skin, fairly thorough miscegenation of African, European, and Amerindian genetics. These features are narratively deployed in such a way that Irineu Serra's exceptionality of physique and origins become the visible signs of an invisible election by God. They are the outward markers of the inward difference that explains why Irineu Serra was chosen for the mission of bringing ayahuasca from the forest to the town, with all that it entailed.

The gist of this transfer is evidenced in a narrative Monteiro da Silva collected from "JR," the "current secretary" of Alto Santo, who must have been João Rodrigues Facundes, "seu Nica," who is now president of the Centro da Rainha da Floresta (a name, incidentally, that purposely plays on the initials of the Circle of Regeneration and Faith).

He repeated the episode to me on more than one occasion, in very similar terms, including one time when he insisted that "in the face of all this controversy" about the propriety of Daime over the years, Nica "always steadied myself" upon these words, often repeated by Mestre Irineu. This is the version published by Monteiro da Silva (1983:111):

> He went far to get it [ayahuasca], it came from Peru. Historically this drink derived from King Uascar [that is, Huasca], passed to King Inca, from him to a Peruvian caboclo named Pizango, from the caboclo to Antonio Costa, from Antonio Costa to him [Mestre Irineu]. However, until then it was a completely wild drink [*uma bebida totalmente bruta*]. Only men had the right to drink it.[88] He made an effort to specialize in it, and truly dedicated himself to it. He subjected himself to a regimen…there, then, he gathered himself [*se firmou*], speaking to the drink itself: "If you are a drink that comes to give a good name [*dar nome*] to my Brazil, I will bring you to my Brazil, but if you come to demoralize my Brazil I will leave you." He never tired of telling us this.

The first part of this passage links Irineu Serra to a "historical" line that not only was grounded in a mythic past, but also, significantly, outlined connections from indigenous royalty to caboclo and finally to (Christian) emigrant. Only with Irineu Serra, however, would ayahuasca cease being a "completely wild drink," which included reforming its restrictions on age and gender so that women and children could drink it as well (in an act which, not coincidentally, resembled Christian communion). The passage's second part alludes to a period of initiation ("a regimen") culminating in what was, for Nica, the

[88] Gender exclusivity is a signal feature of ayahuasca among Amerindian peoples, according to the ethnographic record. See especially Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975.

key moment, where Irineu Serra addressed the “drink itself” with his concerns for what it meant for the Brazilian nation. This episode was compelling for Nica personally partly because of his general concern with what might be termed the “rua” aspects of Mestre Irineu’s legacy, as Nica, being literate and possessing some formal education, was closely involved with the registration of Alto Santo’s statutes in the local government offices, as well as having been, on occasion, the group’s liaison for government officials on questions of Daime’s legality. But it is also compelling on a broader plane as it indexes the question of Daime’s morality within the Brazilian nation. There is a sense of ambivalence, of the need for the “drink itself” to declare itself, to emerge from the shadowy forest into the light and order of civilization. “My Brazil,” Irineu Serra says repeatedly, affirming his awareness that his own “name” was linked to its “name.” This concern for the propriety of ayahuasca before the nation endures in different versions of the narrative; in one, which I collected in 2007, Nica uses *valorizar* and *desvalorizar* in his quotation of Mestre Irineu to express the same notion of bringing value and renown to Brazil. The purpose of the narrative, apparently, is to address concerns—and not only, I imagine, those of others, but also one’s own—that the mixture of “brute” ayahuasca and civilization might end badly. It narrates a pivotal moment, between Irineu Serra’s introduction to ayahuasca and the “ordination” of his mission, in which he dramatizes his primary commitment to the moral integrity and reputation of the

Brazilian nation, and affirms that whatever merits the drink might have are worthless if it should reflect poorly on Brazil's moral standing. (It is worth recalling here that Positivism conceived of three fundamental levels of human organization: *família*, *pátria*, and *humanidade* as a whole.)

It is in view of this kind of ambivalence about ayahuasca before the nation that Sandra Goulart (2004) identifies the three kinds of narrative that treat episodes from these early days: those that portray "diabolical" uses of ayahuasca; those that include the figure of Pizango; and those that depict Irineu Serra's encounter with the Forest Queen. Goulart's discussion, however, seems to me to make it clear that these narratives disclose not three, but two important moments—before and after Irineu Serra's ordination—and the transformation[89] that they entail:

> In the stories that speak of the "Lady," as well as those that describe the session where a "satanic pact" occurred, emphasis is placed on the idea that the context in which Irineu Serra was first acquainted with ayahuasca was negative or had aspects that had to be rejected. Those participating in such contexts—the caboclos, the Indians—made "demoniacal" and "primitive" uses of the drink, for purposes of "black magic" and so on…. The old context of ayahuasca drinking had to be abandoned and new forms of its use had to be adopted. (Goulart 2004:35)

[89] Felizardo identifies magnetism as a universal force that can be cultivated to the good of humanity. He laments that this force is often identified as coming from the "Devil"—a mistake that he himself had committed, in ignorance, before his study of esotericism, which came primarily through the CECP, convinced him otherwise. This presents a striking parallel to his view of Indians. For Felizardo, Indians are not evil creatures, but are ignorant of their responsibility for their actions. With catechism, they, too, are able to participate in civilization.

The narratives dealing with Pizango and those discussing "diabolical" or "satanic" uses of ayahuasca point to the necessity of its transformation, while the texts that center on the encounter with the "Lady" give specific content to the kind of transformation undertaken. The figure of Pizango, like that of Crispim discussed earlier, represents a bridge by which ayahuasca passed from the Indian social world to that of the emigrant *cariús*. And although Goulart is surely right that the origins of ayahuasca among the pagan inhabitants of the wilderness were responsible for the view that to work with it "was negative or had aspects that had to be rejected," if we look at the content of the narratives, it is evident that they are concerned, not so much with expressing Irineu Serra's disgust at the lowly origins of the practice, but rather more with showing that he was uniquely suited, by his innate gifts, to carry the line of work forward in the spirit of "order and progress," revealing it as a force, like Felizardo's magnetism, "to assist humanity itself."[90] If Felizardo viewed himself as predestined to "catequize" the Indians, protecting them from the depredations of unscrupulous rubber camp owners who would kill or enslave them, and delivering their benighted souls into the light of civilization, then life histories of Irineu Serra position him similarly with respect to

[90] The key point about this is that ayahuasca, seen through an esotericist lens, could be conceived of as a universal amplifier of magnetic force, not some essentially Indian devil drink. If people misused it to selfish ends, that was a manifestation of their intent, not of the drink's effects. Like magnetic force, ayahuasca was morally neutral; or, at the very least, if it was in reality intended to assist all of humanity, as Felizardo said he realized, it could easily be misread as diabolical.

ayahuasca, as the one chosen to evolve it out of a state of wildness into beneficence, in order to serve the nation and, from there, "humanity itself." As Cemin realized, Mestre Irineu offered "his" people mediation in two cardinal directions of Acrean moral topography: of relations with the spirit forces of the forest, and of relations with the political power structure of the *rua*.

This will be clearer if we consider an episode from Alto Santo oral history, in which Irineu Serra encounters Pizango while drinking ayahuasca (perhaps for the first time) with Antonio Costa and unnamed others:

> They drank Daime—there were about twelve people. (…) The caboclo drew nearer. The only one who saw was Raimundo Irineu Serra (…) At the height of the session, Pisango came and entered the gourd bowl that held the Daime (…) The caboclo Pisango turned to Irineu and told him to invite his companions to look within the gourd bowl and to ask if they saw something. (…) They each looked and said they saw only Daime. Then Pisango said: 'Only you have the constitution[91] to work with Daime. No one else is seeing what you are seeing' (Revista do Centenário 1992,p. 21; cited in Goulart 2004:34).

This version, according to Goulart, comes, once again, from João Rodrigues Facundes (Nica), a native Acrean who joined Mestre Irineu in 1957; the following version comes

[91] The original text in Goulart (2004:34) uses the cognate *condições* (conditions) to reference Irineu Serra's fitness to inherit some kind of ayahuasca mantle. "To have the conditions" to do something has connotations in Brazilian Portuguese that include the financial sense of "able to afford" certain purchases; I have also heard it used by Dona Peregrina to ask obliquely whether a person was "fit" to drink Daime, i.e., whether the proper period of ritual abstentions (including sex and alcohol) had been observed prior to the session. (See below and the next chapter for more on these abstentions, known as *a dieta* ["the diet"].)

from a manuscript written by Sebastião Jaccoud, a native of Rio de Janeiro state who came to Alto Santo in 1967, just four years before Mestre Irineu's death:

> Mestre Irineu drank with them for the first time. (…) On that night Mestre Irineu drank several times. The drink was held in one of the 18-liter cans that the kerosene used in the rubber camps would come in. "We'd drink it from large gourd bowls," [Mestre Irineu] used to recall about those sessions. One of the times when Mestre Irineu went to take another dose, he saw a being bathing in the can. That did not please him, but the being itself began to speak, introducing itself in Spanish. "I am Don Pizzon, the guide of this drink. Only you will learn as much as I—or more." And he vanished. (Jaccoud 1992:n.p.)

It may be that the differences in these versions, including the variations of name ("Pizzon" versus "Pisango") and the being's appearance in the can versus the gourd bowl, are the result of Jaccoud's later arrival at Alto Santo. In any case, the differences highlight the similarities: in both versions, the Peruvian caboclo appears within the drink's container and speaks to Irineu Serra in Spanish,[92] distinguishing him from his companions with the promise that he alone is qualified to take the work with ayahuasca beyond the point Pizango achieved.

In the context of a possible struggle for leadership of the CRF, the implications of this narrative include: 1) putting Irineu Serra ahead of Antonio Costa within the work they did together; and 2) cutting out Antonio Costa as mediator of Irineu Serra's contact with

[92] When Nica narrated this event to me, he would make a point of speaking "Portanhol," as Brazilians sometimes call the mix of Spanish and Portuguese spoken along the border, with the "Spanish" marked especially by Pizango's use of the pronoun "usted" in talking to Irineu Serra.

the spiritual powers of the forest. The first point is significant in light of Irineu Serra's exclusion from the ranking system in the CRF, in that its earthly hierarchy, subject to politicking and favoritism, is here contradicted by spiritual forces that recognize the true ordering, by God-given merit, that existed within the group. It serves, or could serve, to counteract the narratives discussed above that suggested Antonio Costa had passed tests, "administered occultly," that Irineu Serra lacked the courage to face alone. Dependency of one man upon another was, in those narratives, the sign of lower relative status and presumably a motive of shame for the person conscious both of a desire to be the "big man" at the center of the group, and of personal inadequacy for such an end. It is hardly the kind of narrative upon which to build a proper Brazilian *casa*! The second point is directed at the notion of dependency from a slightly different angle. Where Antonio Costa is elsewhere figured as Irineu Serra's link to powerful past masters of ayahuasca ("…from King Uascar…to King Inca…to a Peruvian caboclo named Pizango…to Antonio Costa…to him"), this narrative shows Irineu Serra in direct communication with Pizango, whose very presence in the session eludes Antonio Costa and the other participants.[93] Read as a salvo in an ongoing struggle over spiritual

[93] The way Pizango is discussed in Alto Santo discourse readily gives rise to doubts about his historical reality, a difficult habit to break. I once asked Nica whether this Pizango was a man of flesh and blood or a spiritual being. Nica told me he had indeed been a human individual, but one with mystical powers, who "knew where the swallows sleep," and for whom, like Felizardo and, later, Mestre Irineu, travel through "magnetic action" in the *astral* was nothing unfamiliar.

supremacy within the CRF, the episode suggests that Irineu Serra was able to perceive realities the others could not, and consequently that he might either learn directly from Pizango or succeed him in the ancient lineage of *ayahuasqueiros*.

We don't have to understand these narratives only in terms of their relationship to a possible CRF leadership dispute, however; how might they appear in a broader view? While such conflicting narratives are easily imagined as face-saving devices for men trying to preserve their masculinity, this kind of view does not exhaust the meanings of the texts. It remains something of a puzzle, for example, why connection to past uses of ayahuasca was important to maintain, if such uses were strictly diabolical and "had to be rejected."[94] In Goulart's account, the multiple versions of these narratives, with their various differences, still share a core of "…images, ideas, and associations that are repeated in the different narratives about Mestre Irineu's first experiences with the tea," such as "the image of the cross that always appears in opposition to the devil" (Goulart 2004:30-31). The contrast is certainly clear enough in accounts such as this one, elicited from longtime Alto Santo orator Luís Mendes for a special publication produced on the occasion of Irineu Serra's centennial celebration in 1992:

[94] This point is obviously connected to the argument I make below, that the "forest" comes, in Acre, to stand in for the "other world" of DaMatta's model as a transcendent space.

> He took the drink and when the others began to work, they started yelling and shouting, calling the Devil. He [that is, Irineu Serra] also began to call [the Devil]. Except that the more he called the Devil, it was crosses that appeared. He felt suffocated by all the crosses that appeared. The Mestre starting thinking: 'the Devil is afraid of crosses, and the more I call him the more crosses appear. Something's going on here.' … He asked to see a series of things. Everything he wanted, he could see (…) And that's how it was the first time. (Cited in Goulart 2004:30)

The trope of Irineu Serra's innate difference once again makes itself felt, as he does the same as the others do, summoning the Devil, but has the different, and paradoxical, result of evoking signs of Christianity. How are we to understand this narrative? We might suspect that emphasizing Christian symbols, particularly within the quite public context of a centennial anniversary publication, is a way to "whitewash" objectionable aspects of ayahuasca's use in Acrean history in order to further Mestre Irineu's reputation. However, Luís Mendes, the source of this citation, provides some framing details for this session that enable a slightly different interpretation. Writes Goulart:

> On one occasion, Antonio Costa told Irineu that there were some "caboclos" in Peru who drank a tea called ayahuasca. On this point, Luís Mendes clarifies that, in that place, "the people who took this drink had a satanic pact, to bring fortune and facilitate the life of each of them." (Cited in Goulart 2004:30)

While the notion of a "satanic pact" might seem to implicate the drink itself, there is also the suggestion that, as used in these dubious contexts, the real issue was that ayahuasca served greedy ends. It was not so much ayahuasca's association with indigenousness, and the latter's association with diabolic forces, that was at play; instead, it was the fact that ayahuasca was being used for ends, such as advantages in

one's personal business affairs, that were antisocial by definition, since they went outside the bounds of legitimate exchange. This narrative, rather than condemning the drink itself, shifts the blame to the intentions of those who took it in order to gain materially from its use. In so doing, it sets the stage for a major theme of Irineu Serra's work with ayahuasca / Daime: that he would become, through working with it, a great healer, but that he must not seek financial gain through his healing practices. In terms of the ethics observed by Delfim Freire, he must not simply take from the domain of indigenous wildness for mercenary gain; using ayahuasca in this way would be little better, from a moral point of view, than the actions of SPILTN agents who "trade on Indian labor." What he must do, instead, was participate in a more thorough transformation, one in which the potential beneficence of ayahuasca was properly recognized, domesticated, and turned to the service of the nation and humanity as a whole.

We have already encountered a model for this attitude, I think, in Felizardo Cerqueira's declamations about the "universal force" of magnetism, present in all things but commonly vilified because misunderstood. In his telling, condemnation as diabolical or satanic is figured as following from a lack of understanding on the part of the beholder. Felizardo, in and out of the forest over many years and in very intimate contact with indigenous people, found in the study of esoteric philosophy a means to reconcile his

participation in Brazilian official society and his extraordinary experiences in the forest as Indian catechizer, "*caboclo* warrior," and *ayahuasqueiro*. For him, CECP esotericism appears to have played a role similar to the one Positivism played for Rondon, filling a cultural need for a theoretical framework that opened a path to continued relations with the Indians (and continued expansion of the nation), and explaining their differences in terms of an inclusive model in which one, united humanity progresses toward cosmic perfection.

Such an attitude contrasts with that of others, such as Delfim Freire, whose spatialized critiques of *cariú* ways pointed a condemning finger toward the decadent rubber camps, clearly opposing the proper place of ayahuasca amongst the indigenous forest people to the "distorted pajelanças" arising in the settlements where emigrants gathered. Because his text is framed by a commitment to a separatist treatment of Indians, in which they serve as a foil to *cariú* immorality, Freire seems to leave little possibility of a felicitous integration of ayahuasca to the Brazilian nation. This is ironic in view of his quite prophetic prediction that ayahuasca might soon "invade the whole country and, perhaps, the Universe, triumphant over persecution and source of delicious dreams."[95] Yet it fits well with the tenor of Freire's text, in which his encounter with ayahuasca is

[95] It would be interesting to know how the editorial process changed the content and presentation of Delfim Freire's text, the better to disentangle his own motives in writing from those of the paper's editorial staff.

distant from civilization in every way: located in an even wilder past than the year he wrote (1920), in uncharted territory searching for the headwaters of an Acrean river, amongst forest Indians. While the intensity of the experience clearly impressed Freire, he closes his account departing the Indians with finality, for "Nothing more interested me there."

Irineu Serra's career with ayahuasca contrasts with both these situations. Far from disagreeing with Delfim Freire's position on the tendency of emigrant settlements to encourage immorality, Irineu Serra well knew the problems associated with immoderate drinking of *cachaça* (sugarcane rum), as well as the exploitation of Indians, not to mention the cardinal sins of the Ten Commandments. In the Alto Santo archives I found a record of Irineu Serra's military service, which noted that he had been disciplined in the 1920s, once for arriving to the barracks "a bit inebriated," and another time for disturbing the peace and fighting with his companions who tried to take him home.

Felizardo could not, or would not, bring himself to put on paper that the universalizing ideas of esoteric philosophy that he so emphasized in his narrative as being responsible for the success of his life's work were energized by his experiences in the forest, living and working with Indian groups, especially the Kaxinawá. No such qualms existed with respect to his discussion of magnetism, which, while it is confined to a small part of the text, is presented like a sort of key with which to make sense of the rest of his story.

Through the tale about rescuing the kidnapped Indian women, Felizardo offers a shorthand image of magnetism in the service of "catechism" and of the nation, establishing the relations with the benighted Indians that will allow them to assume their proper place in the nation, and to become in the process (Christian, civilized, Brazilian) moral persons by virtue of learning to be responsible for their actions. For others, such as Irineu Serra, ayahuasca became, within the context of critiques of emigrant morality, a gift to humanity which, despite its lowly origins (perhaps even because of them), could assist those seeking self-transformation.

The Forest Queen, Antonio Costa, and salt in the manioc

Irineu Serra's encounter with the Forest Queen / Virgin of Conception is the subject of the most fundamental set of narratives about Alto Santo's establishment in at least two senses: they are the most widely circulated, and they are the most clearly indicative of the Christianization of ayahuasca as Daime. Stories about Irineu Serra's encounters with Pizango and the Costa brothers constitute a kind of arcana at Alto Santo, known to those with special interest in the center's history but otherwise not much remarked upon. By contrast, the Forest Queen is frequently cited in hymns (none of which mention Pizango or the *irmãos* Costa) and is invoked in everyday talk, especially talk about Mestre Irineu. The depiction of rivalry between Antonio Costa and Irineu Serra that emerges from consideration of the ranking system and leadership situation within

the CRF contrasts sharply with the way Antonio Costa is portrayed in narratives of Irineu Serra's initiatory encounter with the Forest Queen, where Antonio serves as faithful—if capricious—auxiliary to Irineu's fulfillment of his destiny.

Irineu Serra, like Felizardo, traced in narrative a longstanding relationship with spiritual beings and forces. In one account related to me by Chiquinho, who grew up at Alto Santo in the 1960s and 1970s, Mestre Irineu revealed that a feminine being, whom he often called simply "my Mother," (*minha Mãe*) had been with him since he was a child. When he did things that were wrong, she would punish him "spiritually," causing him, in one example Chiquinho remembered, to feel as though he were kneeling on hard rice grains. A central drama of Irineu Serra's life history is the gradual recognition of the true identity of this being, despite some uncertainty and even doubt—at least on the part of others—about her legitimacy.

In the surviving narratives, the female being invariably comes during an ayahuasca session, announcing that she will soon return with a mission to give to Irineu Serra, but that he must first prepare himself with a special diet. There is some confusion about her identity, and when she does present herself, she challenges Irineu Serra to answer who he thinks she is. In some versions, the "Lady" comes to a session and tells Antonio Costa she wants to speak with Irineu Serra; in others, she comes to give the mission to Antonio Costa, who, realizing Irineu Serra's superior capability, asks her to give it to him

instead. Whether Antonio Costa is snubbed, or graciously defers to Irineu Serra, the encounter with the Forest Queen is invariably depicted as occurring during the time of their association, and as opening a new chapter, both in Irineu Serra's career, and in the use of ayahuasca more generally. Another invariant motif of these narratives is a period of isolation in the forest, during which an assistant—who is often (but not always) Antonio Costa—helps Irineu Serra with food preparation and to avoid contact with others. Sebastião Jaccoud's concise, written account (Jaccoud 1992:n.p.) picks up right after the session in which Pizango appears to Irineu Serra inside the gourd bowl / kerosene can:

> At the next session, the woman who wanted to speak with Irineu also presented herself spiritually, this time without the necessity of an intermediary. Mestre Irineu said that the woman told him that she had a mission to give him, but that it could not be in that environment.
>
> So he decided to go a period of time without frequenting the sessions led by the cousins. When he decided to take the drink for the third time, Irineu prepared it himself. The woman returned and offered him a mission—the mission of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ—but warned him that this would not bring material riches.
>
> "If it is for the good of humanity and to aggrandize my county, I accept. Otherwise, stay right there," he responded.

The problem with "that environment" (meaning the contexts of ayahuasca use that the Costa brothers showed to Irineu Serra) was at least partly the greedy intentions of those people who sought, through ayahuasca, to gain advantage in business affairs. By contrast, Irineu Serra is warned that he should not expect material wealth to accrue to

him from his work with the drink, and, facing the fraught question of using ayahuasca to serve individual versus collective ends, he undertakes a period of absence from the CRF. The same tension animates Irineu Serra's ultimatum to the "drink itself," sharpening the distinction between prior uses of ayahuasca in a selfish quest for material advantage, and a new commitment, under the banner of the Forest Queen, to "the good of humanity and to aggrandize my country."[96]

Sebastião Jaccoud's version has Irineu Serra in the forest, receiving his mission with the help of an unnamed companion, while the two "cousins" (the Costa brothers) stay in their own settlement. At the conclusion of Irineu Serra's reclusion in the woods, he returns to bid them goodbye:

> Irineu, days later, went to the settlement where the cousins lived to say goodbye to them and to return to Brazil. However, before he could say goodbye he heard complaints from the cousins because he'd stopped coming to the meetings with the purgative.[97] One of them explained:
>
> "Irineu, we founded an organization, but unfortunately you will not be able to participate in it because you were gone for many days."
>
> "There's no problem, because I'm already leaving. I came here to say goodbye to you all," the Mestre responded with resignation." (Jaccoud 1992: n.p.)

[96] In the Jaccoud text, there is the twist that Irineu Serra rather appears to be speaking to the "woman," where in other versions it is very clear that it is either the drink or the vine that is addressed—I recall Nica gesturing while performing this narrative, as though grasping an ayahuasca vine and speaking to it.

[97] *Purgativo* is a name for ayahuasca that is often used in Peruvian contexts that figure vomiting as spiritual cleansing.

This take on Irineu Serra's departure of from the CRF politely suggests a no-fault situation. The exclusion of Irineu Serra from the CRF is the legitimate result of his absences, which he undertook because of the Forest Queen's summons. Everything was in the hands of the divine, the narrative suggests, leaving no place for human pettiness to enter into the matter. Another version of the encounter with the Forest Queen appeared in a written text published in a special edition of the paper O Rio Branco in 1984, which was put together by Antônio Alves, the sometime journalist, political strategist, and present-day orator at Alto Santo, who was just beginning his involvement with the Doctrine at the time. It is a spare account, and minimizes any leadership conflict in the CRF (even while bringing up the issue) by pointing briefly to Irineu Serra's young age:

> It was during this period [of working with the Costa brothers] that Irineu received the mission to organize his doctrine. Once, while drinking ayahuasca with Antonio Costa, the latter told him that he saw a girl named Clara who wanted to talk to Irineu and asked that he take the drink again on the following Wednesday[98] so that they might converse. Irineu agreed. The next week, as planned, she revealed herself to him, introducing herself as the Queen of the Forest. She said to him that she had a mission to give him, and instructed him to undertake a 12-day diet, during which he should eat only cooked manioc without salt. He himself would have to make the ayahuasca that he would drink during the fast, and he should maintain himself in complete isolation, visited only by a helper who would take him manioc and water. Thus it was done. And thus Irineu received teachings, instructions, procedures that he must follow to organize a corps of disciples able to receive the teaching of quite advanced spiritual lessons.

[98] Wednesdays were "healing days" on which, at least in earlier decades, Mestre Irineu would receive the needy and drink Daime to assist them.

> After this, Irineu and Antonio went their separate ways. With little more than 20 years of age, the young Irineu did not obtain the confidence of the others to be part of the leadership of the society created by Antonio Costa. This society was later dissolved, precisely because of leadership problems. (Alves 1984b:7)

The focus on leadership debates within the CRF helps make sense of an oft-mentioned episode from Irineu Serra's period of initiation, in which his companion in the forest plots to sabotage his ritual fasting by putting a forbidden substance in his food. This is the version Clodomir Monteiro da Silva (1983:123) collected from Sebastião Mota de Melo, leader of CEFLURIS:

> [H]e was in the 'center'[of a rubber camp] cutting rubber, when a Peruvian taught him to make Daime and drink it. One day, he was cutting rubber with Antonio Costa and…Antonio Costa said, 'Hey, Irineu, there are two girls here saying we are working for nothing!'
>
> 'Tell them to come talk to me….' That day he made Daime and took it…every so often he heard a voice saying, 'drink Daime,' and he'd get a mug and tip it, saying 'Look here, I just drank a mug-full, how about you?'
>
> 'Man, I am already high' [responded Antonio Costa]
>
> 'Then you are no man.'
>
> So he'd grab the mug and put it to his mouth, and time passed, until the girls came and said to him:
>
> 'Look, you'd better get yourself ready, really get ready, because on such-and-such a day a woman will come to speak with you.'
>
> When the day came he prepared the Daime…drinking the Daime he saw the clarity, it started to illuminate everything, and soon a woman was standing in front of him, and said: 'Do you know me?'
>
> 'I know you, you're a woman.' She said, 'But you have never seen this woman here, it is the first time you have seen [me].'
>
> 'What is your name?'

She said, 'Clara.'

Then he imagined that he had left a girlfriend named Clara in his home country.

He said, 'Ah! You are my girlfriend…you're not, you are, you're not…'

Then she said that she was the Virgin and Sovereign Mother. She came and showed him everything, everything, and taught him…he learned.

'But you will only learn by fasting for eight days, your food will be only bland manioc with water, don't put sugar, nor salt, no tea, just manioc with water…go, and do your time.

So he took off, and when it had been eight days, he said, he was already swaying when he walked, he couldn't stand that cold manioc and cutting rubber…

While he was cutting a log in the stream, a voice said,

'Your companion was about to put salt in your pan today, in your manioc, to see if you knew anything.'

So he laughed and said to himself, 'Look, I'm already divining!'

Just then he saw a woman passing.

'But it wasn't that woman who said it, I divined it…it was she who said it, because if I say I am divining things, it's a lie.'

And he went on home. When he arrived there he said:

'Man, were you trying to kill me? You were putting salt in my manioc.'

Antonio Costa responded, 'That's it, man, now it's for real, I am happy because I know that you are learning something.'

After eight days she came and turned over everything to him. And the *Doutrina* went on and on from there.

Here is another version, collected by Vera Fróes (1986) from Luiz Mendes (former orator of Alto Santo and himself now leader of a Daimista community in Acre called Fortaleza):

He drank the Daime [ayahuasca] and from where he was lying he stared at the moon. It came, it came, it came, and the moon got very close to him. Now, inside the moon he saw, seated on a throne, a truly divine lady. Then she spoke to him:

"Who do you think I am?"

He looked and said, "For me, you are a Universal Goddess."

"Do you dare call me Satan, or this or that?" "No, you are a Universal Goddess."

"What you're seeing now, do you think anyone has seen it before?"

Mestre Irineu reflected and thought that someone could have seen it, since so many made the drink, and now he was seeing it. The lady then told him:

"What you are seeing now, no one has ever seen, only you. And I am going to turn this world over to you to govern. Now you will prepare yourself, because I am not going to turn it over to you now. You will undergo a preparation for you to truly deserve it: You will spend eight days eating only bland manioc, with water and nothing else. Also, you cannot see women, not even a skirt of a woman from a thousand meters' distance."

One day passed, two, three. On the fourth day he didn't need to drink the Santo Daime anymore, because he was constantly *mirando* in the wilderness. Even the sticks moved, surrounded by many colors, and *caboquinhos*[99] appeared everywhere…

He was returning on a rubber tree *estrada* [a path connecting wild rubber trees in the forest] when Antonio Costa at home said: "I am going to test Irineu to see if he is learning. I am going to put salt in his manioc." He grabbed the salt shaker, brought it to the lip of the pot, but didn't put it in.

There in the wilderness he saw—saw, no—they told him: "Hey! Antonio Costa grabbed a pinch of salt to put in the manioc pot. He didn't put it in, but he did it to test if you would know."

So when he got home, he made fun, saying: "So you were going to put salt in the manioc, but only pretended, eh Antonio?"

[99] *Caboquinhos* or *caboclinhos* ('little caboclos') are somewhat analogous to the forest sprites of European lore. The name underscores the breadth of uses of *caboclo*, which can be an ethnic classifier (with various contrasting referents), or indicate a class of forest spirits marked as indigenous that are engaged during ceremonies of Umbanda, Catimbó, and related practices (it can also mean Carnaval dancers dressed as Indians; see Câmara Cascudo 1972).

"Man, how did you know? Now I know you are learning." (Fróes 1986:23-5)

The "trial by salt" depicted here is interesting partly because Antonio Costa's motives are so poorly explained in the narratives. Both versions suggest that it was a "test" to see if Irineu Serra was learning, implying a friendly motive that seems to find confirmation when Antonio Costa is jubilant over Irineu Serra's prescience. Read in the light of an agonistic relationship between Irineu Serra and Antonio Costa, however, the latter's move to put salt in the manioc suggests an aborted attempt at sabotage, of which Irineu Serra was made aware because of his heightened sensitivity to the communications of forest beings. As Irineu Serra proceeded with his initiation, the episode suggests, the mysterious forest opened up for him, becoming a source of knowledge unavailable to others. Seen this way, the episode of the salt in the manioc, like Irineu Serra's glimpse of the *caboclo* Pizango within the gourd bowl, shows Irineu Serra besting Antonio Costa within the context of the mestizo ayahuasca practices that are understood as the background of emigrant uses of the drink. Crucially, the narrative has Irineu Serra called or chosen by the Forest Queen, and not choosing to undertake

the initiation as a project of personal power. In so doing, it preempts possible ambiguity about Irineu Serra's moral fitness to raise the banner of ayahuasca in his household.[100]

Chevalier and culturalist theories of ayahuasca diets

The emphasis the narratives place on salt, abstention from sexual and social intercourse, and seclusion in the forest keys a frame (Goffman 1974) in which mestizo *vegetalista* "diets" are a prominent consideration. Certainly fasting and ritual diets are widespread in European and African societies, but the particular set of hardships Irineu Serra undertakes bears an unmistakable resemblance to the *dietas* of *vegetalista* initiation. Jacques Chevalier (1982) identifies a number of initiatory proscriptions common to men's initiation into the Upper Amazonian healing traditions broadly known as *vegetalismo*: no sex, or even casual contact with women; isolation, especially in the forest; avoidance of the sun; no salt or other condiments; no sugar; no lard; no peccary (and certain other game animals); no "hot" foods (see also Luna 1986). These proscriptions, Chevalier writes, constitute a meaningful pattern of restraint from

[100] These two texts also treat the theme of legitimate and illegitimate sources of knowledge: in the first one, Irineu Serra is rather pleased with himself for having "divined" Antonio Costa's action, but then corrects himself: "...it was [a woman passing] who said it, because if I say I am divining things, it's a lie." Likewise, in the second version "he saw" is asserted, then corrected to "they told him" to indicate, presumably, that Irineu Serra was being helped by the spiritual beings of the forest. The emphasis placed here on receiving knowledge from spiritual helpers echoes a core assumption of Alto Santo practice that hymns and other teachings are not invented by individual persons, but rather are transmitted to them according to each one's worthiness (*merecimento*).

cultural exchanges (through social, sexual, and spatial isolation) and from the absorption of foods marked “cultural,” which means "anything that is cooked or is highly valued by men but is quite superfluous to other living species" (1986:346).[101] The sense of these “anti-cultural diets” (ibid.) is related to Amazonian notions of personhood, in which illness is caused by the tendency of human bodies and spirits to become disjoined (sometimes, perhaps, under the influence of witchcraft).[102]

Healing with plant medicines in this context, Chevalier insists, proceeds from assumptions distinct from those of Western medicine. Plants, rather than being carriers of pharmacological agents that impact a generic human physiology in ways that are determined by the laws of an inanimate nature, are instead the vegetal bodies of forest spirits with whom the aspiring *vegetalista* aims to enter into relationship. In Chevalier’s reading, “each plant has a *madre*, a mother... [A] cure is not caused by the absorption or external application of a given herbal preparation; rather it results from the mother's benevolent intervention through the intermedium of the chosen plant” (1982:344). Unlike the fraught, problematic human body-spirit connection, plants are "characterized by a stable conjunction between mother-spirit and plant-body," which makes them

[101] Chevalier is, to my knowledge, the only author who offers what might be called a “culturalist” reading of the dietary proscriptions of *vegetalismo*, by which I mean an interpretation that attempts to account for some of the specificity of the proscriptions by relating them to broader systems of meaning.
[102] For a classic Brazilian account of a kind of pan-Amazonian worldview in which these notions are explored in more detail, see Galvão (1955).

appropriate vehicles for healing disjoined humans. But to garner the favor of the mother-spirit of the plant in question, a *vegetalista* must be willing to forego human social contact, at least temporarily, as a demonstration of his affinity for the spirits of the forest. The "metonymic ritual of bodily assimilation," in which the plant medicine is ingested, is not enough; it must be accompanied by "a metaphorical imitation of spirits of the plant kingdom" (ibid.:347)—that is, a rejection of the human social world and an embracing of forest "mother" or "owner" spirits—if a patient is to benefit. Not only the healer-in-training but also the individual patient in ayahuasca sessions must undergo such a diet, whose purpose is to

> …imitate the behaviour of plant-mothers…by absorbing the liquefied plant body of aquatic underworld spirits, and by avoiding cultural space and time: sessions are performed outside the village, at night, and in total darkness. The patient is thus taken through a health-restoring simulation of a body/spirit reunification process, under the close medical supervision of an expert *purguero*. (Chevalier 1982:404)[103]

The emphasis here is on the relationships among the mother-spirits of the plants, the healer, and the client(s). If the humans involved violate the trust of the plant-mothers, (who "are also very jealous" [*celosas*]) they may withdraw their aid, rendering the

[103] Chevalier explains this process of symbolic healing in somewhat greater detail:

> Illness is produced by a foreign object penetrating the human body and forcing the person's spirit to withdraw from its body habitat. Healing rituals attempt to counteract this body/spirit disjunction by generating the opposite process: a simulated mother-spirit absorbing her own plant-body. A disjunctive disorder (illness) is thus neutralized by a conjunctive reordering performed by the patient himself; his spirit's propensity to depart from his body is offset by a simulated reunification of a plant-body and its mother-spirit. [1982:347-348]

remedy powerless; they may even “turn against the unfaithful patient and provoke his death” (Chevalier 1982:348, citing Dobkin de Rios 1972:70).

We should pause at this point to consider the salience of the *vegetalista* context for Irineu Serra’s followers. I have already indicated that the stories about Irineu Serra’s reception of his mission are not commonly rehearsed, and are probably known only in their broadest outlines by most people who frequent Alto Santo. It is worth bearing in mind that the discursive movement I am trying to characterize as the rise of the Master’s house has been constructed in retrospect and from within a position on the edge of the city, and that much of the ordering of the narratives has taken place in the last few decades, partly in the service of greater insertion of the Doctrine of Mestre Irineu and of Alto Santo into official Acrean culture discourse. This is not to imply that instrumental political concerns are the main motivation for producing and circulating narratives about Irineu Serra’s life, as that would misrepresent them by imputing to them an unwarranted, calculated duplicity. Nor are people at Alto Santo *vegetalista* shamans who happen to live near the city, and who have found ways to keep the authorities from persecuting them by telling nice, Christianized stories about their founder. Rather, these earlier narratives are about establishing the legitimate and complete connection of Mestre Irineu to the sources of forest power that energized *vegetalismo*, even as his life’s mission was to transform them to a civilized, Christian

form. For Irineu Serra's followers, the drink he used in his work was from "far away" in the Peruvian jungle, had been "totally wild," associated with suspect morality, and incompatible with use by women and children. It had belonged, in other words, to that dangerous domain that was the province of Acre's bravest men. Now, however, it has been repurposed for city life, offering a connection (through Irineu Serra's mediation) to the vitality of the forest, sans wildness. To put the matter this way is not quite right, since the suggestion of the narratives is that there was no act of intentional appropriation and retooling, but rather—and this is the tenor of the esotericist metanarrative, shared with Felizardo, of the progressive yoking of universal, telluric forces to the march of spiritual evolution—the achievement of proper perspective, through which what appeared unbefitting was seen for the boon it really is.

The foregoing discussion has highlighted some of the ways that various texts generated by Alto Santo disciples narrate the events surrounding Irineu Serra's call to mission. Some of the narratives seem to bear traces of a competition for prestige within the CRF hierarchy between Antonio Costa and Irineu Serra. While this dynamic has been noted before, I have explored it somewhat more thoroughly here because I believe it helps contextualize the kind of criteria that were relevant to leadership claims, such as a masculine-coded firmness in the face of existential threats encountered within ayahuasca visions (as, for example, the abyss Irineu Serra had to descend on a spider-

web ladder). This exploration helps shed light on the kind of person it took to command the sort of *casa* that Irineu Serra built. The disjunction the texts reveal between Alto Santo narratives about Irineu Serra's participation in the CRF and those of Antonio Costa's relatives provides important insight into the discursive construction of the fame of these Acrean "big men" of ayahuasca. One thing the difference of perspective reveals is that preeminence, while essential, must be phrased in the idiom of innate talents and gifts bestowed by the divine, lest it be seen as merely the outcome of successful politicking, the manipulation of debt relations, or out-and-out charlatanism. Individual desire for advancement over one's fellows is depicted as a fault, one which, while understandable—even expected, at least of lesser souls—makes plain the shame of attempting to occupy a position not rightfully one's own.

Mestre Irineu's symbolic closeness to indigenousness

Chamados

There is, as suggested by the work of Goulart cited earlier, a simultaneous sense of approximation to, and partial rejection of, indigenous things in narratives about the origins of Mestre Irineu's Doctrine. I think this speaks more to perceptions of Irineu Serra rooted in his role as a patron or "big man" than it does to attitudes held by people

at Alto Santo toward indigenous things, or to their management of others' impressions of them through the adoption of outward signs of moral behavior. If power is to accrue from mediation, the figure of the mediator must be in relationship to persons or sources of power that are not otherwise accessible to the followers. In Irineu Serra's case, the connection to the indigenous roots of ayahuasca is figured as being more complete than that of his followers, and his legacy is understood to include mediations that rendered their need for such close contact moot.

A good example of such readymade mediation can be found in discourse about the "*chamados*." This is the name given at Alto Santo to whistled melodies[104] that some old-timers remember Mestre Irineu using during sessions with ayahuasca. Such melodic performances are known more commonly as "*ícaros*" in *vegetalista* practice (Luna 1986; Labate and Pacheco 2010), where they are used by the healer to guide the session by calling particular spirit beings (hence the name *chamados*, from the verb *chamar*, "to call").[105] At Alto Santo, discourse about them is quite restricted in its circulation, and

[104] I did not hear the sound of these described by anyone who had actually heard them, although Jair told me that his father "heard some things" of this sort. He insisted that it was not exactly (or not only) a whistle (*assobio*), nor did he agree when I hummed; he said the form was *solfejo*, which the Houaiss dictionary of Portuguese (electronic version 1.0.5, August 2002) defines as "to read or intone a musical passage, vocalizing it or pronouncing only the name of the notes," or "to sing syllables, reproducing a melody."

[105] Similar musical performance occurs in the UDV, where they are called instead "*chamadas*" and are sung or intoned rather than whistled, but still maintain indexical links to the *vegetalista* tradition (see Labate and Pacheco 2010).

seems to me to belong to a quasi-genre of speech about practices that Irineu Serra kept, rather than teaching them to his followers. For example, in appointing Leôncio Gomes (Dona Peregrina's uncle) president of Alto Santo, Mestre Irineu, on the verge of "making the passage," is often said to have told him, "I give you everything, except the right to make *receitas*" (prescriptions; in this case, herbal remedies indicated by spirits contacted through ayahuasca). Such practices are integral to *vegetalismo*, as is blowing tobacco smoke over a cup of ayahuasca before serving it, another indigenous-marked practice that "stayed with the Mestre" and is present at Alto Santo today only in the memories and stories of the oldest people there (and those who make a point to speak with them of such things). If there is some reticence to discuss practices so strongly marked by indigeneity, it may be because the "proper" understanding of them is considered, by Daimistas themselves, to be quite elusive. The question of Mestre Irineu's relationship to the indigenous roots of ayahuasca is generally understood to be unproblematic, but it is not often closely analyzed, and in those contexts in which it is, such as the "chamados," what is most clear is that the subject is a mystery at its core.

Although the subject of hymns is not the central concern of this chapter, a brief exploration of the way the "chamados" are related to Mestre Irineu's hymnal oeuvre will help suggest the way this mystery is conceived. The hymnal, called *O Cruzeiro*, is

understood as a divinely given, self-contained unit.[106] (This, despite the fact that it was "received," hymn by hymn, over many years.) Self-referentiality within the hymnal bolsters this interpretation. One hymn, for example, contains the apparently prophetic line, "I completed my Cruzeiro[107] with one hundred thirty-two flowers." It appears prophetic because it is not the final hymn of the corpus,[108] and it contains a mystery because, according to most reckonings, there are actually 129 hymns in O Cruzeiro.[109] What became of the three "missing hymns"? For a small group of people at Alto Santo, this is an important question. According to Jair, a kind of native anthropologist keenly interested in such matters who has talked to many of the oldest members of Alto Santo as part of his own documentation project, these "missing hymns" represented the "chamados," which "were incorporated in the *abertura*" (the ritual opening of sessions). This comes as something of a surprise, since Christian prayer is the dominant leitmotif of the opening sequence. But that's why it's a mystery. Here we can glimpse something of how Daimistas understand their relationship with indigenous culture: the "chamados,"

[106] *Cruzeiro* is a polysemic term; usually interpreted as a reference to the two-armed cross used in Daimista practice—itself likely derived from a prayer book, *A Cruz de Caravaca*, published by the CECP's press arm—it is the same word used in other contexts to refer to a vacation cruise.
[107] Here the term suggests multiple readings: while "Cruzeiro" refers to the hymnal, it also may mean "cruise" in the sense of a military or maritime incursion. Such a reading suggests Irineu Serra's career as a "Soldier of the Queen," partly because the hymnal is already understood as a kind of spiritual autobiography.
[108] Asking about this, I was told that the number cited in the hymn changed as the corpus grew.
[109] The question is not as straightforward as it might be because of the existence of hymns that are performed only in certain contexts, such as masses for the dead, and not during the marquee hymnal performances in which the *Cruzeiro* is sung in its entirety, excepting such hymns.

one of the most striking performative evocations of ayahuasca's forest roots, figured in Irineu Serra's work with the drink, but were never taught by him to his followers. But these melodies, and the path-breaking connection that they represent, forged by Irineu Serra, are not merely lost with his passing, nor pushed aside; instead, they are said to be there still, implicitly, as a germ within the ritual procedures that were in fact handed down, taught, and made part of the "official" program of Alto Santo sessions with ayahuasca.

One way of looking at this situation is to see Alto Santo practice as progressively purged of indigenous influences under pressure to appear acceptable according to Acrean and Brazilian moral standards. This view, which is the default position in most scholarly work on the cultural politics of ayahuasca in Acre, is not entirely without reason, as "persecution" of ayahuasca use is a very common theme across numerous texts and contexts, including in the establishment of the Master's house. What is more, negotiations of a sort seem to have taken place between Irineu Serra and local authorities who sought to shape his group's practices according to their own ideals. To see things this way, however, from an "instrumentalist" or "accommodationist" perspective, is to take at face value the otherness invoked by indexes of the forest and of indigeneity in Daimista discourse, and then to understand the use of familiar—and hegemonic—Brazilian symbols, such as the divine persons of Catholicism, as so many

cloaks cast over the truly objectionable in order to lend it the appearance of acceptability, or to conceal its presence. It is, in short, an instantiation of the classic discourse of "syncretism," in which indigenous deities worshipped by the oppressed are repackaged so as not to offend the ruling sensibility. This may be an analytical mistake in the case of a culture, such as Brazil's, that values sincerity in speech and deed, since it implies conscious manipulation of symbols for political gain. The point is not that people at Alto Santo never do such things, or that they should not do so; rather, it is that instrumental takes on identity politics imply a bad faith that is itself objectionable within the culture under discussion, and therefore amount to condemnations of the morality of the persons involved.

Such a situation as I've just described is, by definition, "countercultural" or constitutes "resistance" to a dominant order, inasmuch as it implies (if it does not actually entail) commitments and loyalties that escape that order, or even mock it. I want to suggest viewing Alto Santo use of ayahuasca as critiquing certain aspects of Brazilian (really, in its own terms, Human) morality, but *doing it in a way that attempts to remake the unity of the Brazilian cultural world.* In doing so, I want to return to DaMatta's model of the house-street-other world to show how Daimista practice uses the grammar of the "Brazilian ritual system" to leverage the power of the forest, as a domain of alterity, in making persons whose Acrean-ness is as unique as their Brazilianness is ordinary.

Chevalier's "visions of silent despair"

Chevalier sees mestizo adaptations of ayahuasca shamanism from a Marxian perspective, as "a vision of silent despair," because they express a (merely) emotive response to sociopolitical conditions. Such practices, in his account, lead away from the places they ought to point toward, as lonely séances in the jungle attempt, with tragic futility, to alter what is done in the daylight of the public square and legislative chambers of the city.

DaMatta's reading of Brazil's ritual system suggests a different context for Daimista practice than does Chevalier's account of ayahuasca shamanism. Chevalier, noting that ayahuasca shamanism among the Indians is "relatively well adapted" to their (traditional) forms of sociality, laments its increasing popularity among emigrant workers. Alluring because it presents a promise of control over areas of social inequality and illness that would otherwise be beyond their power to affect, ayahuasca shamanism, in Chevalier's analysis of the Peruvian context, diverts the energy of peasant aspirations in a way that further alienates them from the sociopolitical processes responsible for their predicament. It is, therefore, "particularly well suited to the adoption of an overall strategy of counter-cultural subversion, which entails the virtual rejection of all western-inspired principles of unequal power—those of capital accumulation, state authority, scientific verity, civilized culture, and Christian hierarchy"

(Chevalier: 423). In other words, for impoverished Peruvian mestizos, *vegetalismo* was little more than the reactive rejection of all that was Western (at least, in Chevalier's view). Separation is its watchword, rather than communication or harmonization, and the scene of ayahuasca use becomes "the site of a constant rebellion led by the forces of a totally alien domain—those of the Campa universe" (ibid.).

Such forces, however, are "to a large extent detached from their context"—and here Chevalier is in the territory of cultural "authenticity"—in Campa forest life. They are re-purposed as expressive rituals: the "counter-cultural denegation of western schemes of economic, political, cultural, and religious domination, and a cathartic overcoming of the great many ills suffered by these destitute segments." Such an approach may have its merits, but it is problematic, in Chevalier's view, because it is misguided, as "much of this shamanic rebellion is hidden, lost as it were in the nocturnal silence of individualized rituals, none of which is adapted to the particular exigencies of popular democratic confrontations or real class struggle" (Chevalier: 423).

Alto Santo practice is not "counter-cultural"

The culturally-grounded dignity that Daimistas find in their practice should be contrasted with the "rebellion" that ayahuasca shamanism represents for the poor mestizo classes in Chevalier's account. For him, a practice well adapted to forest Indian

society becomes "distorted" when it is appropriated by the riverine peasantry (*vegetalismo*)—tragic even, because of the way that its rigors (the same ones that made such elegant sense in Indian society, serving to bring the healer into sympathy with forest spirit allies) now function to provide the disaffected Amazonian peasantry a cathartic outlet, even as they encourage what Chevalier, at least, sees negatively as merely emotive answers to questions of social iniquity. That is to say, this kind of shamanistic healing is meant to address problems arising from political mechanisms it never touches (says Chevalier). Moreover, it functions to further alienate mestizos from political processes, as it plays into animalistic images of "chunchos" (a term that seems similar, in some of its negative racialized connotations, to "caboclo") as subhuman, noncitizens. Chevalier's pessimistic view of Amazonian emigrants' appropriation of ayahuasca shamanism may be contrasted with the strong vein of nationalist optimism (Positivist fervor?) in Alto Santo practice.

Although Chevalier's reasons appear to differ slightly (given his Marxian perspective, his principal concern is with the "false consciousness" or illusory nature of the results achieved), his analysis evokes notions of "distortion" that echo Freire's sense of the impropriety of non-Indian uses of the drink.[110] Chevalier's take on mestizo shamanism is

[110] For Chevalier, the analysis involves a judgment about the ways ayahuasca has been decontextualized and recontextualized within mestizo culture. Where Freire's concerns seemed to be based in morality

that it is fundamentally "counter-cultural" because it focuses away from the places where decisions of governance are made, turning instead to the forces of Campa cosmology, the "totally alien" catalysts of a "constant rebellion" against Western modernity, including its modes of sociality and knowledge.

If by countercultural, we mean discourses and practices that are primarily reactive, taking the categories and values of dominant culture as what must be rejected, then there is a clear contrast between the situation described by Chevalier and the orientation toward paramount Brazilian values at Alto Santo. Chevalier's mestizos looked to *vegetalista* shamans as a kind of "influential godfather," with the "'spiritual power' to secure the health and welfare of his dependent (child-like) client." However, in giving their loyalty to such a person, he argues, they were not likely to be well served (at least beyond cathartic mediations with forest spirits), because such a "relatively poor compadre…enjoys the possession of very little wealth and holds an infamous title that brings on him constant harassment from civil authorities, the open scorn of the wealthy and 'learned' classes, and the repressive censorship of Christian dogma" (Chevalier 423-4).

(perhaps even afro-phobia), here the key point appears to be that mestizo ayahuasca shamanism is merely expressive ritual, apparently unconcerned with—or at least, ineffective against—the structural realities of political economy under colonialism.

Whether this is a defensible reading of the Peruvian situation or not, it points to the opposition between the “things of the city”—law, science, civilization, Christianity—and the “things of the forest,” a basically residual category consisting of the negation of “city” values: wildness, lack of civilization, paganism. Chevalier, because he is partly concerned with the effects of “civilization” on Campa culture, views mestizo “distortion of the shamanic system” as something *done to* the Indians, “accomplished by a process of repressive impoverishment, or the forced association of such 'primitive traditions' with the degrading attributes of chronic drug addiction..., superstitious ignorance, pre-scientific reasoning, uncivilized warfare, barbaric cruelty, and pagan idolatry” (423). In other words, shamanism was figured as metonymically related to the “Wild Man” (Taussig 1987) as the inversion of European ideals, projected upon the Indians in general and the shaman in particular. In figuring the city and the forest as mutually exclusive and antagonistic, Chevalier’s reading recalls characterizations of ayahuasca in Acre such as those of Castello Branco and Delfim Freire, who both saw it as properly staying in the domain of the Indians (albeit with very different emphases from one another). For persons classified to the “in-between” social categories such as mestizos, raised under the hegemonic influence of Western sociality and Christianity, ayahuasca shamanism ends up as a movement of rebellion, favoring the decentering energies of the forest over engagement with the dominant powers of the city. According to Chevalier, this

movement from city to forest has tragic results. At least in seeking patrons in the city through godparenthood, impoverished mestizos might benefit from the "attenuation or spiritual embellishment of rigid class tensions"; by seeking out forest shamans to treat the malaise stemming from their social position, on the other hand, they not only divert their energies from "real class struggle" but also, because of the coding of indigenous spaces in the region's moral geography, bring upon themselves "degrading treatment…as the living images of an undomesticated and quasi-infantile chuncho humanity" (423).

The basic narrative movement of ayahuasca at Alto Santo, by contrast, is quite explicitly phrased as being from the forest to the city. It is not just a matter of Irineu Serra's having brought ayahuasca to Rio Branco from the forest and adapting its use for the new environment; as I hope I have shown, narrative production around the establishment of the House of the Master emphasizes, not only the movement, but also the transformation of ayahuasca as it comes to the city. This transformation entailed, not leaving the city for the wilderness, peeling back the layers of civilization until only brute nature remained (à la The New York Times article on "ayawasco" cited earlier, or Chevalier's take on *vegetalismo*), but rather configuring Daimista practice, within the moral-geographical landscape of Acre, as an encounter with telluric forces that are, mysteriously, also transcendent. These forces are not separate from, let alone opposed

to, the pervasive powers of a European, quasi-scientific magnetism; indeed, a key aspect of the rise of the Master's house was to reframe the unruly energies of the forest as participating in the progressive unification of the Positivist trinity of *Família*, *Pátria*, and *Humanidade*. Where the path described by Chevalier leads from the city to the forest, cutting off exchange with the temporal powers of the state in favor of relations with radically other forest beings, the House of Mestre Irineu purports to bring forest, city, and house into relationship with one another, even into harmony. Where Chevalier's mestizo shaman makes a bad *compadre* because he is poor and draws infamy to his name, Irineu Serra never severed the links that joined him to the worldly power structure, instead using his relationships with important political figures to bring his people not only material benefit, but also moral cover. Daimistas, through the recounting of Irineu Serra's relationships with such persons, affirm the legitimacy and centrality of their place in Acre's history, and invoke the delicate balance achieved by this man who could move across boundaries that lesser beings found impenetrable.

Reworking DaMatta's triad

Arneide Bandeira Cemin (1998) recognizes Irineu Serra's multiply mediatory position, writing of an Acrean "dialogue between ayahuasqueiros and esotericists, mediated by

Irineu."[111] Adopting DaMatta's terminology, moreover, she argues that "Irineu, who was a client of politicians, was also patron to the poor, mediating between two intercultural models: the 'street,' access to which was mediated by Irineu through some politicians, and the 'bush,' also mediated by Irineu via the Forest Queen" (214). I want to make explicit an idea from Cemin's work, that the "bush" (*mata*) or the forest (*floresta*) is intelligible in DaMatta's model as a substitute for the "other world" (*o outro mundo*), the third leg of his model that includes the house (*casa*) and the street (*rua*). Exploring how this substitution works will shed light both on the success of the Master's House as a social institution within Brazilian culture, and on the particular role of the forest in the Acrean imaginary.

Much of DaMatta's writing in his book of essays on the "Brazilian ritual system" is aimed at exploring the house / street contrast. This pair, with its resemblance to Sir Henry Maine's familiar categories of "status" and "contract," sometimes seems, in DaMatta's work, to leave little room for another axis. Key to understanding DaMatta's point of view, however, is abandoning the strongly temporal sense that attached to Maine's

[111] Cemin dates this dialogue to the 1950s. However, the movement of Zerda Bayón's text, from Colombia to the London Times, then to an academic text on parapsychology and, finally, to a notice in the CECP newsletter, suggests the possibility of such an esotericist-ayahuasqueiro dialogue from the 1920s or even earlier. A similar possibility exists with regard to the CRF, in which Irineu Serra participated with the Costa brothers, as it seems to have included esotericist, and perhaps even specifically CECP concepts and forms (see above, this chapter).

thesis, in which contractual relations, freely undertaken, are held out as a new kind of personhood, superseding the nested, hierarchical relations of "status" that were said to characterize feudal sociality (and to be left behind by modernity). This movement from the encompassment of certain persons by others to an ideal system of egalitarian monads is characteristic of western European societies and the colonies they established, and bears a nontrivial relationship to the Reformed church's rejection of hierarchical mediation at the cosmological level. DaMatta sees a contrast with Brazil here, which he expresses in these terms:

> There did not occur among us [Brazilians]...a "revolution" that sought to harmonize these axes, or make one of them hegemonic in relation to the others. If this did occur, as I think Weber and Marx have taught us, in the cases of Western Europe and the United States, the time has come to consider that the Iberian and Catholic case has gone in the direction of preserving, in a relational mode, all of these "ethics," maintaining in consequence many possibilities of social classification. Such is the case of Brazil. (DaMatta 1997:20)

As with Chevalier's characterization of Peruvian mestizo ayahuasca shamanism, we do not have to accept wholesale the analysis offered in order to see the meaning of the contrast DaMatta is drawing.[112] The key point DaMatta is making here is that Brazilian

[112] Indeed, many of the generalizations DaMatta uses to support his comparisons of Europe and the United States with Brazil seem questionable in their general applicability, such as the notion that American city geography is always projected on a Cartesian grid, and is divorced from the coding of social and moral space. Had DaMatta further explored ideas such as "the wrong side of the tracks," the uptown / downtown contrast, or older towns like Charlottesville, Virginia, where dirt tracks evolved, without centralized planning, into city streets, he might have found more similarities with the Brazilian case. To

culture is internally differentiated into complementary spheres that each offer a standpoint on the world, and which may serve to orient a person differently depending on context, demanding "robust changes in attitudes, gestures, clothing, topics, social roles, and means of evaluating existence in all members of our society" (48). Rather than calling for a "single code of conduct," the Brazilian ritual system generates the expectation of difference, not only of outward behavior across these spheres, but also in the ordering of values and the application of categories to persons and things. Thus, he writes,

> any event may be 'read' (or interpreted) by means of the code of the *casa* and the family (which is averse to change and to history, to the economy, to individualism and progress), by means of the code of the *rua* (which is open to juridical legalism, to the market, to linear history and individualist progress) and by a code of the other world (which focuses on the idea of renunciation of the world with its pains and illusions and, in so doing, tries to synthesize the other two). (DaMatta 1997:48)

Yet, even while he emphasizes the partial (not to say fragmented) nature of Brazilian culture, DaMatta insists on its holism, and Brazilians' sense of at least a potential unity behind the multiplicity. While acknowledging that Brazil's ritual system is a historical product, DaMatta sees it, not as the serial replacement of one order by another, but as a joint sedimentation of diverse orders with tension-laden faults between them. These orders, each in its own moment, constitute "spheres of action and social signification

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point this out, it should be emphasized, is not to deny the validity of the insights gained through exaggerating the differences.

from which a whole cosmology is drawn, and glimpsed" (ibid.:147-8). The whole is merely glimpsed because none of the spheres can claim lasting dominance: "In place of alternatives, where one code dominates and excludes the others as an absolute or hegemonic ethic, we are faced with complementary codifications, which means that reality is always seen as partial and incomplete" (ibid.:48).

Notwithstanding this elemental incompleteness, in which "it is possible to 'read' Brazil from a *casa* point of view, from the perspective of the *rua*, and from the angle of the other world," these various possible readings tend to suggest a whole. They are, DaMatta writes, "institutionalized among us" (ibid.:19). It is not just that behavior shifts according to context, as is the case "in England, Spain, or Pasargadae." Instead, Brazilian culture teaches a certain self-consciousness about the relationship between these spheres, with their "systematic, predictable, and legitimized variation, which all adult Brazilians have learned and will be capable of predicting with reasonable precision" (ibid.).

Brazilians know that the multiple points from which to make perspectival valuations of Brazilian culture generate conflict and tension. Much of the sense of the popular, ironic saying that "Brazil is the country of the future…and always will be" comes from recognition of the frictions between, for example, the personal loyalties and the fiduciary duties of public servants. From a *rua* perspective, Brazilians know it is wrong to

grant favors out of the public coffers, or in general to mix one's duties as a public administrator with one's own personal debt obligations. ("That's why Brazil doesn't progress" is another common saying, particularly when discussing the mismanagement of public affairs because of their entanglement in personal relations.) When viewed from the angle of the *casa*, however, things look different. Few Brazilians would deny their sympathy to the dictum mentioned earlier: "For a friend, anything; for enemies, the law." The phrase is not without self-conscious humor or irony, but the truth it describes is serious. In a relational society such as Brazil's, to be without friends, to be at the mercy of the law of the *rua*, is a sad fate (DaMatta points to a genre of curses delivered in the *casa*, including "vá pro olho da rua" ["go to the eye of the street"], meant to reduce one to mere individuality, denying the fullest sense of personhood). The house / street contrast "joins, in intriguing fashion, the superficial equality given by juridical codes of external inspiration"—individualist ideals which are, DaMatta notes, "generally divorced from our social practice"—"with a hierarchical skeleton, refusing to take one of these codes as exclusive and dominant, always preferring the relation between the two" (DaMatta 1997:50).

In light of the partiality of these spheres and their potential to generate tension, DaMatta sees an important function for ritual—civic, domestic, religious—within them.

Through ritual, Brazilians generate the delicate, perhaps mysterious sense of unity that complements the differentiation entailed by these spheres. Writes DaMatta:

> It is my thesis that the Brazilian ritual system is a complex mode of establishing, and even of proposing a strong and permanent relationship between the *casa* and the *rua*, between "this world" and the "other world." In other words, the feast, the ceremony, the ritual, and moments of solemnity are modalities of relating separate and complementary domains in a single social system. Its importance, to which I have systematically drawn attention, is not a function of a festive, cynical, or irresponsible Brazilian spirit. It is much more a basic social mechanism through which a society made with three spaces can try to remake its unity. (DaMatta 1997:61)

Borrowing Weber's terminology, DaMatta describes rituals, in the Brazilian context, as "spaces to create a single ethic in systems divided by double or triple ethics." This is exactly what Alto Santo practice is about: the remaking of the unity of Brazilian society within the Acrean context.

Although DaMatta's argument is a defense of "a" Brazilian culture shared by all Brazilians, he notes a tendency of certain classes to ground their identity relatively more in the sphere of the *casa* or of the *rua*. The "dominant segments" of society, DaMatta argues,

> tend to adopt the code of the *rua* and thus produce a totalizing discourse, founded in impersonal mechanisms (the mode of production, class struggle, the imposition of international corporations, the subversion of order, the logic of the capitalist financial system, etc.) where laws—and never moral entities such as people—are the focal and dominant points. (DaMatta 1997:49)

By contrast, the "dominated, marginalized, or 'popular' classes" tend to create social groupings based on the "language of the *casa*." The discourse produced thus tends toward the personal and affective, and is a "fundamentally moral or moralizing discourse, where the classes or actors in conflict (such as bosses and workers) are almost always in complementary opposition and depend upon one another." At the root of such discourse is "a truly fantastical naturalization of social relations, which are rarely perceived and pronounced historical and arbitrary; on the contrary, it is as though they were part of a cosmic moral order given by God" (DaMatta 1997:49).

DaMatta's observation about the tendency toward differential emphasis on the *casa* or the *rua* depending on social segmentation points to a deep cultural motivation for Alto Santo, as a manifestation of "popular" culture, to take the *casa* as its central form and source of inspiration. Indeed, Alto Santo discourse, even today, emphasizes a divide between the congregation's neighborhood on the outskirts of Rio Branco, centered around the Mestre's house, and the city proper. In Dona Peregrina's absence, for example, an inquirer might learn that she "went to the street" (*ela foi para a rua*), referring to a trip to town. Many of the hymns sung in Alto Santo rituals mention "this house," qualifying it in various ways ("the House of Truth," "the House of Sincerity," "the House of the Virgin Mother"). If Alto Santo is positioned on an axis, running from the city to the Mestre's house, that points toward its members' use of the institutions of

the *casa* and of godparenthood in finding their "place" within society, there is another axis, running from the Mestre's house to the forest, that characterizes Alto Santo practice as transcending "this world," as Cemin (1998) recognized.[113] Let us now examine a little more closely what DaMatta means when he writes of the "other world."

Through the forest to the *astral*

Within the framework of contrasts DaMatta uses to model Brazilian culture, the "other world" has a special role with respect to the conflicts between *casa* and *rua*, in that it offers a transcendent vantage point that promises to make good on the deferred unity and justice lacking in "this world." The "other world" is set off slightly from the *casa* / *rua* contrast as a communicative reality "marked by the sign of eternity and of relativity"; moreover, it is "a locale of synthesis, a plane where everything can meet and make sense" (1997:151). The other world ("the world of the dead, ghosts, spirits, specters, souls, saints, angels, and demons") is a space upon which to project—or, perhaps, to realize, if only temporarily—"hopes, desires which could not yet be realized here, personally or collectively." It is in contacting the other world through ritual, DaMatta concludes, "that we [Brazilians] are capable of constructing the compensations that many times we are unable to realize when we confront the conflict of 'this world' of

[113] It is a sign of the influence of Positivist-type ideals of transformation of the lowly and useless into the service of collective evolution that the forest takes on this role.

casas and *ruas*, of friends and impersonal laws, of individual desires and collective moral demands" (DaMatta 1997:152).[114]

In bringing ayahuasca from the wild forests of Peru to Brazil, Irineu Serra was preoccupied with the drink's moral valence, with the question of whether it would "bring a good name to my Brazil." This confrontation with the (spirit of the) drink was made necessary by the identification of the forest as the complementary opposite of civilization, and the consequent suspicion of things derived from it. The key move of Irineu Serra's career, viewed as cultural work, was to confound the forest, as a geographical-moral space, with the esotericism-derived notion of the *astral* as a space of subjective experience within which to perform spiritual service. This fusion of domains is authorized by the revelation of the Forest Queen as an aspect of Our Lady of Conception, herself an avatar of the Ever-Virgin Mary of Brazilian Catholicism, and it had the effect of making the forest into an acceptable field upon which to project the transcendent aspirations proper to the "other world." With respect to the binary coding of the forest as the antithesis of civilized, Christian society, Irineu Serra's *Doutrina*, true

[114] The next chapter, on making Daime, is about how the links with the forest and the past are maintained. It is interesting that in making Daime we see the closest brushes with the *vegetalista* universe—that "wild" place from which ayahuasca came—including dietary and gender restrictions that are more rigorous than in other contexts. Although this ritual is about making and maintaining contact with the Forest Queen, it is significantly shaped by ideas of encompassment by the Mestre, and therefore by the institution of godparenthood and the *casa* more generally.

to Brazilian cultural style, puts its emphasis on relation rather than exclusion. In relating the forest to the *casa* / *rua* pair, Alto Santo discourse draws heavily on what I'd like to call "Positivoid" ideas of progress, evolution, transformation, and the unity of Humanity. Such ideas are radically inclusive: from Comte's goal of assuaging class conflict through Positivism to Felizardo's parallel vision of Indians and magnetism as the *materia prima* with which to forge a better world, Positivoid perspectives and practices seem to rise up to put limits upon the exclusions entailed by complementary oppositions. In the same way that Felizardo portrayed himself as withholding condemnation of the Indians' actions because he realized that they had not yet acquired the "conditions" to understand their moral accountability in the proper way, so too do narratives of Irineu Serra's introduction to ayahuasca suggest, not any essential maleficence in the drink, but a problem of perspective leading to misunderstanding. Where Felizardo frames magnetism as commonly (and mistakenly) viewed as a diabolical force—when it is, in fact, a "great divine virtue…" and a "[v]ibration to aid humanity itself"—narratives of Irineu Serra's initial encounters with ayahuasca similarly point to the presence of erroneous understandings of its nature, and improper intentions for its use. In the example mentioned above, the people with whom Irineu Serra drank ayahuasca in the forest "called for the Devil" and hoped, through their use of ayahuasca, to increase their worldly advantages. By contrast, the Forest Queen promises to make Irineu Serra a

"great healer," but admonishes him neither to expect earthly riches to result from his actions, nor to charge money for his work.

The "other world," being eternal, lies beyond the ebb and flow of earthly relations, the "trespasses" or "debts" against others that make the grist of Christian pleas for forgiveness. There, the temporal suffering and injustice caused by immoral action, however intractable in fact, are resolved in theory (and, perhaps, in experience). In a world of bosses who cheat rubber tappers, of politicians who abuse their authority over the common people, and of ordinary people from the "popular" classes who struggle to meet the demands of their roles in the *casa* and the *rua*, ritual assists the experience of a place beyond it all, in which disjunctions are bridged, injustices are seen for the temporary situations they are, and the humble inherit the grace of the divine. In this way, DaMatta views the "other world" in terms of moral accounting, a language of the contracting and forgiving of debts that would have been all too familiar to the ex-rubber tappers who became the first Daimistas. It is, he writes,

> a space that demarcates a zone of incredible moral equality, since in the "other world" everything "will be paid" and all accounts will be adjusted honestly. Such honesty is not always possible here on earth, where the rich and the powerful always escape and the "saints" are systematically "paying for the sinners." But in the "other world," of this other side of our humanity, there exists a true isonomy and all are viewed and judged by

> the actions for which they were truly responsible here in this world. (DaMatta 1997:151-152)[115]

In the "House of the Master" Acreans sought, and perhaps found, a ritual means by which to glimpse (and reaffirm the existence of) such a domain. That ritual feasts should perform this function is not surprising, if DaMatta is right about the tripartite nature of Brazilian culture. "The feast," he writes,

> is one of the most important mechanisms to relate these domains, segregated and separated from one another. Thus, in Carnaval, Holy Week, saints' feasts, civic rituals, sportive festivals, and mass political events, it is possible to try to reunite these domains again, realizing a basic experience of the totality…. [T]otalization…seems to be a clear function of a society divided in multiple domains and ethics." (DaMatta 1997:106-107)

Irineu Serra, with his special access to the realm of the forest and its spiritual power in ayahuasca, is situated by Alto Santo discourse as uniquely able to show the way to such an experience. In the next section, I explore some of the ways this discursive positioning gained broader currency in Rio Branco as Irineu Serra's fame grew.

[115] Lest it appear that DaMatta, with all his scare quotes, is dismissing the "other world" as somehow less real than "this world," it is a good idea to remember that his is an "internal" description of Brazilian culture that attempts to show how it hangs together, not an objectivist attempt to reduce it to the world's actual, basic realities and the delusions that people have about them. While is it a presence marked by its absence, the "other world" is a constant reality in Brazil, and especially within communities, like Alto Santo, organized around religious ritual.

From the forest to the city: Irineu Serra as "Pai da Huasca"

The thread of competition for recognition as leader of the CRF that I discussed above is, to be sure, only one element of these narratives, if perhaps an underemphasized aspect. This way of looking at things situates Irineu Serra within a milieu of "men's men," competing with one another for dominance, even in cooperation, in ways that aim to justify their status as householders and patrons to others. But what characterized the name of Irineu Serra as a public person in Acre was more than just the fact that he commanded the loyalty of a group of followers. Like Felizardo Cerqueira, Irineu Serra's fame was fed by narratives about his extraordinary powers, which were linked to his work with ayahuasca. As seu Nica told me, it was commonplace in Rio Branco to connect the man and the drink in one phrase: the "Daime of Irineu." He was, Nica said, known as the "*Pai da huasca*" ("Father of ayahuasca") and viewed as the "one who truly brought [ayahuasca] to Brazil."

Irineu Serra began holding sessions at his house in Rio Branco sometime in the 1930s, and by the time of Océlio de Medeiros's 1942 novel, he was already known around the capital for his work with the indigenous-derived drink. People came to him seeking not only healing, but also advice grounded in his esoteric knowledge. In one scene from the novel, Filipinho, a young man with literary pretensions, decides to found an Acrean

Academy of Letters. Before going to consult with the libertine poet Juvêncio[116] about his idea, however, Filipinho puts on "the clothes that he always wore when he was going to undertake something." The outfit was a cheap yellow suit ("which harmonized perfectly with his jaundiced skin") that had been recommended to him by "Pai Irineu, the chief of *uascar* [sic]," who counseled Filipinho that "yellow was the color that would bring him success in everything" (Medeiros 1942:168).[117] People in and around Rio Branco viewed Irineu Serra as a man who, as Nica said of the "caboclo" Pizango, "knew where the swallows sleep," with a range of powers derived from mysterious sources. Letters in the Alto Santo archive document some of the ways people who were not members of Alto Santo viewed Irineu Serra. Some wrote to him thanking him for healing their relatives; others asked for his intervention in affairs of the heart, such as the parents who wrote in the 1960s asking him to make their son fall out of love with his intended. Members of

[116] Medeiros's Juvêncio is obviously modeled on the historical figure of Juvenal Antunes, Acre's most famous poet and an infamous carouser and celebrant of all things bohemian.

[117] The CECP's manual, called *Instruções* ("Instructions"), includes a diagram of a cosmic star, representing the various aspects of human being, which includes color-coded points associated with particular qualities; in it, yellow signifies "experience." The reference in Océlio de Medeiros's novel shows clearly that he knew about Irineu Serra early on; his personal commitment to ayahuasca as a cultural phenomenon became more evident some 30 years later, in the early 1970s, when, after Irineu Serra's death, Medeiros offered his legal services *pro bono* as the Federal Police sought to shut down Acre's ayahuasca centers under allegations that they were ingesting dangerous drugs. Although the case was decided on procedural questions, given the inconsistent laboratory results delivered by federal agencies charged with testing ayahuasca to determine its constituents, Medeiros's argument was notable for its claim that ayahuasca use was a form of "phytolatry" that had become a legitimate part of Acrean culture. Even into the new millennium, the long-lived Medeiros, who died in 2008 at 91, continued to show interest in the role of ayahuasca in the formation of Brazilian Amazonian culture, writing a play in 2003, *Mirações Acres*, centered on the themes of ayahuasca, ecology, and state power (the title phrase is a pun combining the state's name, which also means "acrid," with the Daimista term for ayahuasca visions).

the Alto Santo community came to him with problems, and he always dispensed advice, acting as doctor, judge, confidant to people across the spectrum of Brazilian social classifications. The notion that Irineu Serra was the “chief” or “father” of ayahuasca alludes to this way that his use of the drink was mated to the forms of Brazilian social organization brought by Amazonian emigrants, and above all to the *casa* as the root of social personhood. If Irineu Serra was frustrated in his participation in the CRF, in Rio Branco he found an open road to fulfilling his destiny.

At the same time that such informal titles as “pai” or “chefe” index Brazilian social organization, they also highlight the fact that a major source of the mystique that powered Irineu Serra’s fame was his special role as mediator of Acrean moral geography. He was not just a “pai,” but the “Pai da huasca,” the one whose name attached to the coming of ayahuasca to the town, and the one who encountered it in the wilds and sought to test whether it would “bring a good name to my Brazil.” Wedding his own reputation explicitly to work with ayahuasca, as I indicated earlier, is a key difference between Irineu Serra’s self-positioning with respect to the drink (and to contact with wild forest powers it implied), and that of others, such as Felizardo, who left out mention of Indian wives, children, and ayahuasca drinking in his pension-seeking *bildungsroman*. In Felizardo’s case, experience with ayahuasca, *rapé* (tobacco snuff), and the forms of their use amongst the Indians seems to have been an important part of

his journey of self-development, which he elaborates in his autobiographical narrative in the idiom of universal magnetism, although he stops short of acknowledging the depth of his connection to Indian society and its importance in forming his views. Those aspects stayed in the background, even as he used the framework of CECP esotericism to make sense of his life's mission catequizing the Indians and mediating, in his own way, between the *cariús* in the towns and the *caboclos* in the forest. Texts such as Delfim Freire's, in which ayahuasca fascinates and challenges but still comes clearly across as a *coisa de caboclo*, a thing belonging to the Indians, contrast even more sharply with life histories of Irineu Serra in leaving disjoined the spheres of forest and town, wilderness and civilization.[118] Irineu Serra, on the other hand, made his *casa* on the outskirts of the city, locating it both physically and metaphorically between the *rua* and the forest, the better to mediate between them.

Political patronage: Irineu Serra and Guiomard dos Santos

In the course of discussing Irineu Serra's early life in Acre and the beginning of his mission I have emphasized the ways narratives about his career depict the forest as the

[118] Despite Freire's prescience about ayahuasca's spread, his narrative does little of the cultural work necessary to integrate it into city life, leaving it in the jungle even while identifying it as a curiosity too intriguing to be ignored. "Nothing more interested me there," writes Freire in his piece's outro, pointedly avoiding the moment of moral searching that accompanied Irineu Serra's encounter with the vine in Peru, in which he made plain that his decision to bring the drink to Brazil or not depended upon its moral impact upon the Brazilian nation.

place in which it all begins, as well as the influence of extant "Positivoid" ideas on the general shape of the trajectory, from forest to city, that the narratives suggest. This leads to the schematic notion of the "House of the Mestre" in a middle position, both geographically and semantically, between the *civitas* and the forest. I want to close this chapter with a closer look at the ways Alto Santo discourse—and Acrean civic ritual—constellate the person of Mestre Irineu within that more Apollonian, official side of Acrean society.

Although I have argued against viewing Alto Santo discourse as being fundamentally about asserting the legitimacy of Irineu Serra's work with ayahuasca against a tendency toward racialized persecution, it is nevertheless true that harassment by local authorities has been closely associated with emigrant use of ayahuasca throughout the upper Amazon, and Alto Santo is no exception. In the narratives of this type that I have witnessed performed (or have read; Cemin [1998] and Goulart [2004], among others, recount similar episodes), the key moment of the story comes when Irineu Serra is able to call upon his relationship with a figure of authority to "go over the head" of whichever rogue officer threatened him and his people (usually with the vague implication that personal motives such as jealousy were the root of the incident). In one such story, a cruel officer commanded his men to surround Irineu Serra's house—the one in the neighborhood known as Vila Ivonete, before Irineu Serra moved further out

of town to Alto Santo—and, rousting him at gunpoint, led him to the jail. In one version of this episode, as Irineu Serra walks to the jail a follower rides by on a horse, and is instructed to ride ahead and tell Irineu Serra's old military friend Fontenele de Castro (who is in charge of the jail) that he is coming. When Irineu Serra arrives at the jail, he is greeted with bread and coffee, and his jailers are given orders that he be made comfortable.[119]

Political leaders, especially those of the PSD, assisted Irineu Serra and his community of followers in a variety of ways, most of which never became the subject of the kind of narrative used to weave a richer sense of the Master's House. There is a process of selection at work in determining which stories are deemed worth telling, and in which circumstances.[120] The sort of story just discussed points to the strength of relationships created on the basis of personal ties—they might be called "house relationships," since they involve not only the individual but also the person, which is a product of house relatedness. Such ties celebrate the power of the *casa* as the base from which to act in

[119] Even today there exists a double standard in Brazilian penal practice, so that certain people, such as holders of public office, are granted, by virtue of their station, special, more luxurious conditions when accused of crimes.

[120] For example, Nica told me that the state government paid him to work as a carpenter for Irineu Serra in the 1960s, a situation that was surely related to the same relational dynamics between Irineu Serra and Acre's political class that are exposed in the arrest narrative. That Nica's story does not constitute part of the more widespread discourse on Irineu Serra's relationships with authority figures in Acre may stem from the way such a story, by revealing the use of public office in granting private favors, gets uncomfortably close to impermissible mixing of norms from the *rua* and *casa*.

the world, as we might expect, following DaMatta, from a "popular" movement like Alto Santo.[121] They also celebrate the vitality of Irineu Serra as a respected man. In these stories it is not shameful that Irineu Serra has been arrested (although it points to the issue of misunderstanding his work); it is just happy that he is treated well, as a person rather than a mere individual. If some jealous and capricious functionary was able to use the law to persecute Irineu Serra for personal reasons, these stories show, in the end this was exposed as illegitimate action. It is as though the point of the story is to indicate a moment when Irineu Serra might have been reduced, by being subjected to the undiluted norms of the *rua*, to bare individuality; instead, his personhood is recognized, and cared for.

No figure from Acre's political history was a more important ally of Irineu Serra than José Guiomard dos Santos. A southerner and outsider (like most of Acre's political leaders until the end of Brazil's military regime in 1985), Guiomard dos Santos nevertheless championed Acre's elevation to statehood, and sought to create a modern Acre that harmonized rural production and city life. I have already mentioned the Agricultural Colonies, begun before Guiomard dos Santos but greatly expanded under

[121] Irineu Serra's followers and clients were always predominately members of the "popular classes" of society, but they were never limited to such people. There were always a few more educated or "cultured" people around, and it fell to them to engage with official processes, such as registration of the group's bylaws.

his plan, which saw them as the key to finding productive work for displaced former tappers following the rubber boom's collapse. More than that, Guiomard dos Santos's plan aimed to create a sense of enfranchisement on the part of the emigrant workers by giving them a stake of ownership in the society. In spite of the heated rivalry between political factions at that time, Guiomard dos Santos seems today to enjoy wide acclaim as a leader who cared about Acreans and their future. It is thus fitting to end this chapter on the formation of the Master's House with a discussion of a particular narrative performance we witnessed, in which a recounting of the beginning of Irineu Serra's friendship with Guiomard dos Santos becomes an enactment of Acrean cosmogony, conjuring and constellating many of the themes that have been the focus of this chapter.

Governor's palace speech: Irineu Serra and "his" men serving the social good

In 2006, shortly after we arrived in Rio Branco for our main period of fieldwork, a ceremony was held at the Governor's Palace, that preeminent symbol of Acre as a State of the Brazilian Union. It was September 5th, "Amazonia Day," and the prefect, governor, and officials in the nascent state culture industry gathered with leaders of Acre's ayahuasca centers and, under the approving eye of the local media, commemorated the

event, at which, in the words of the prefecture's press release, "the doctrine of Santo Daime was registered as historical patrimony of the Acrean people" (Timóteo 2006).

It was a fitting venue for political theater tying past and present, given the palace's central place in narratives of Acrean modernity since its 1930 groundbreaking, and especially given its role in PT branding since Jorge Viana was first elected governor in 1999.[122] The ceremony took place on a dais in the main hall of the building, below an enormous mural by noted Acrean painter Sansão Pereira. (The foreground shows revolutionary leader Plácido de Castro, literally larger than life, riding under the Acrean banner, while clouds, red from fire, billow in the background; in between, a mass of people streams toward a settlement, perhaps as combatants, perhaps as ex-rubber tappers abandoning the forest for the town.) Below the painting, an old brass plaque, made nearly illegible by a dark patina, hung to one side in commemoration of the palace's construction, while a much newer dedication, painted on the other side, marked the building's refurbishing, concluded in 2002. In typical Acrean style, carried to new heights by the PT, the name of governor Jorge Viana and the PT's red-star logo featured very prominently along with the slogan, "An homage from the State

[122] See the discussion of the Governor's Palace and the rise of the PT in Acre in chapter one.

Government to the Acrean people and their revolutionary heroes who succeeded in making a free and sovereign Acre."[123]

Under PT leadership, the Governor's Palace had been refigured as a symbol of the new Acre. In its narrative, the PT emerges as a force of popular justice, symbolically rescuing the rule of law through the renovation of the building itself. Credit for PT achievements has accrued largely to Jorge Viana, its most telegenic candidate for statesmanhood and the personality around which the PT and its alliance, the "Popular Front of Acre," have gravitated for more than a decade. The palace renovation was the centerpiece of restoration efforts in Rio Branco's historic city center that also included very visible updates of the Old Market building and the façades of businesses along the riverfront, and eventually added a grandiose, cantilevered pedestrian bridge—the third bridge over the Acre River in a quarter-mile stretch. While the PT's public works stressed the re-establishment of state power gone decrepit in the dirty corners and tangled vines of the

[123] The similarity between the PT's red star and the Acrean flag has been a source of controversy since the PT's 1999 ascent to power, drawing charges that public monies have been spent promoting the party. For example, when term limits prohibited Jorge Viana from running for a third consecutive term in the 2006 elections, he joined the board of directors of Helibras, South America's largest helicopter corporation. A helicopter bought from Helibras by the state government sparked accusations both of inflated charges to benefit the former governor's company, and of improper use of state property for campaign purposes. The latter dispute hinged on the size of the red star painted on the *Esquilo*-model helicopter, and the dramatic flyovers and landings made with the helicopter at PT rallies. As of this writing, Jorge Viana's handpicked placeholder candidate, Arnóbio "Binho" Marques, who succeeded him in 2007, has himself now been succeeded by Viana's brother, Tião Viana, while Jorge Viana was elected in the 2010 cycle to the federal Congress as a Senator.

neglected Governor's Palace, its branding also reflected its populist, and especially what might be termed its "culturalist" emphasis. In the new Acre, the government was to serve the people, and to recognize their value; the people, likewise, would recognize the authority of the state. Ceremonies just such as this one were intended as demonstrations of the capacity of the state to recognize the source of its moral authority in the *povo*, and of the unproblematic attitude with which these bearers of culture were to come under the aegis of the state. In this context, the palace stands both as a monument to Acre's cultural and ethnic diversity, and as a reminder that the state encompasses the creative vitality of the people, containing, preserving, and divulging it.

This is nowhere more evident than in the permanent museum installations that have been made in the ground-floor rooms surrounding the central chamber where the ceremony was held. (I mentioned this museum in chapter two.) Entering visitors recapitulate the history of Acre in air-conditioned comfort, beginning with a room featuring prehistoric fossilized remains, followed by an exhibit on the massive earthen forms, known as geoglyphs, that have been discovered in Acre's forests in the last couple of decades. Another chamber is filled with rectangular pedestals, each topped by a backlit glass plate with a full-color photograph of a "typical" Acrean indigenous person in traditional regalia. The effect is akin to a kind of time travel: from fossilized dinosaur

bones, one passes on to the area's first human inhabitants; leaving the traditional Indians, the visitor to the museum passes into another room, related to Acre's colonization in the rubber boom. There, the walls are covered with enormous portraits of ordinary (that is, non-indigenous, non-elite) Acreans, and headphones affixed to the wall allow visitors to hear interviews in which these people narrate their family's history in the state. A final room contains assorted items associated with rubber tapper life, such as rifles, specialized knives for cutting rubber trees, and the rudimentary, oil-powered headlamps known as *porongas*. In a bizarre condensation, the walls and floor of the room are covered in enlarged reproductions of the world's papers of record, reporting on the December 1988 murder of rubber tapper, and labor leader, Chico Mendes.[124] This final room has an enigmatic, incomplete quality, but not because it leaves out many aspects of rubber tapper life. (These are adequately covered elsewhere in the city; there is an entire museum devoted to the rubber industry, complete with a mock-up of a rubber tapper's residence, as well as a park with similar installations *in situ*, outdoors.) Rather, what strikes a visitor to the Governor's Palace museum is not so much the lack of detail as the disconcerting sense that Acrean history ended in 1988,

[124] Notoriously, Mendes's death was more widely reported in the global press than in Acre itself, where the media were (and, perhaps, still are) beholden to the powerful interests that opposed the organization of rubber tapper labor. (The international coverage of his murder was also amplified because of what was, at the time, an incipient global network of local labor leaders, Brazilian anthropologists, and international NGOs concerned with environmental and human rights issues. See Conklin and Graham 1995; Hecht and Cockburn 1990; Revkin 1990.)

and the absence of a clear message about Mendes's murder. What is included in a museum exhibit and what is not are the outcome of processes involving multiple actors and varying agendas, but like PT takes on Acre's history in other venues, the palace museum exhibit sought to finish on a tonic note, as it were, reworking the paid murder of a labor leader by the landed oligarchy into the birth of a new way. In this new vision, Chico Mendes appears as an environmentalist, and he is made to represent the conviction that the forest is more valuable standing than cut down, in multiple senses. Moreover, in the new political branding brought by the PT, it was not modern science (alone) that would provide the techniques for sustainable forest use, but the "traditional culture" of the Indians and the rubber tappers.

For the state and municipal authorities (which is to say the leadership of the PT in Acre), the designation of Mestre Irineu's doctrine as a component of Acrean cultural history and contemporary identity was another example of their project to bring dignity to Acreans by recognizing the value of *cultura popular*. More particularly, it exemplified the PT brand of ecologically-tinged populism. In the words of the official municipal press release, "The prefect emphasized that Daime is a genuinely Acrean doctrine, and that it represents the roots of the people of the forest, who are constituted through their particular beliefs and values" (Timóteo 2006:n.p.). According to PT marketing, the "Government of the Forest" would champion the cause of these "Peoples of the Forest,"

a term coined in the late 1970s to mark the alliance of previously inimical Indians and non-Indian rubber tappers as the "defenders" of the forest against those who would destroy it (see Aquino 1977; also Hecht and Cockburn 1990). Under its tutelage, Acre was to achieve a new kind of balance between rural and urban life, summed up in the neologism *florestania*, which melded *cidadania*—"citizenship"—with *floresta*. Thus, the PT offered new dignity to those covered by the umbrella of "Peoples of the Forest," valuing their rural ways as elements of regional culture and history and promising to alter past imbalances that deprived these people of full citizenship. The *Doutrina* of Mestre Irineu, with its symbolic appropriation of the forest drink ayahuasca for use in the town, seemed like a natural fit for the PT's agenda of *florestania*.

Criticism of the PT political project in Acre has centered, on the one hand, on the ostensibly naive idealism of *florestania* and related concepts such as Extractive Reserves, and, on the other hand, on the instrumental political use to which the PT has put such imagery. Thus, there are specialist debates about the economics of sustainable development in the Amazon that attempt to quantify the productive potential of Amazonian forest land under "traditional" extractivist and agroindustrial regimes (see, for example, Coomes and Barham 1997; Posey and Balée 1989); there is also much discussion, both regional and national, about PT politicking itself. For example, a 2006 article (Vieira 2006) in the then-recently-launched Brazilian *Rolling Stone* magazine

lauded the PT and Jorge Viana, agreeing with the heroic vision according to which "Viana was elected from the PT in 1998, at 39 years of age, to govern a ruined state in the grip of organized crime. Eight years later, he enjoys the approval of 83% of the population for having transformed this forgotten end of the world into what is perhaps the most successful PT administration in country" (Vieira 2006: pp.). Such concessions, however, lent force to the article's criticisms. Viana, the article claimed, had a grandiose vision of himself as "the fourth great hero in the history of Acre"; moreover, "Projacre," the article's very title, implied that the quite noticeable projects of the PT were like a Potemkin's village, concealing poverty behind a neat façade of prosperity. (Projac is the abbreviated name of the famous Rede Globo studios in Rio, perhaps the largest production site of televised media in Latin America, and therefore a well-known symbol of fictional imagery.) At the time, moreover, the Rede Globo was in Acre for the filming of a miniseries about the state's history, and the article cited rumors—later confirmed—that public monies had been spent on the production in order to lure Globo to the state. Criticism was rampant that the PT had entered into this partnership with the network in order to project its take on Acre's history, which ends with a turn toward green development, onto a national and international stage.[125]

[125] International, because Brazil's soap operas and miniseries are rebroadcast in Latin American and Europe. The close PT relationship with Rede Globo was also revealed in the notorious project, sponsored

At the time of the event at the Governor's Palace, these criticisms were still some months away. It was a smorgasbord of environmental-cultural ceremony; in addition to the recognition of Santo Daime, official praise was bestowed upon work done by the Chico Mendes Foundation and by local government for an Environmental Protection Area on the outskirts of the city, the Lago do Amapá.

All of the leaders of local ayahuasca centers were there. But the focus was not so much on these various institutions in themselves as upon the person of Irineu Serra, as the originating figure of a field of valuable cultural activity. While the ceremony at the Governor's Palace was without doubt a ritual belonging to the domain of the street, it looked toward, and honored, the sphere of the house as the matrix out of which popular tradition emerged. Thus Dona Peregrina, as Irineu Serra's widow, had a special place of honor, and the main speech was given by Toinho Alves, the orator of Alto Santo. Alves's participation is noteworthy because, as a longtime friend of key figures in the PT in Acre (including Jorge Viana and Marina Silva, who left the party to run as the

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by Jorge Viana's brother Tião Viana (then federal senator, now governor of Acre), to alter Acre's unique time zone to bring it into synchrony with a much broader swath of the Brazilian public. The measure was said to have saved Rede Globo the more than US$ 1 billion that it would cost to launch another satellite to comply with a new Brazilian law mandating that television programs be broadcast at the same local time throughout the country. Pushed through the legislative process with extraordinary alacrity, the measure was approved, without ever consulting the Acrean people, just before a deadline that would have made it moot. The "time zone question" became a serious issue in the 2010 election cycle, nearly costing both Jorge and Tião Viana their elections, and continues to have repercussions as PT dominance in the state's politics begins to undergo serious strain.

Green Party's presidential candidate in Brazil's 2010 elections), he has had an important role mediating Alto Santo-government relations. In fact, Toinho Alves was responsible for the elaboration and greater divulgation of the idea of "florestania" (if not its actual invention), as well as having created the ubiquitous, cartoonish tree logo stamped on public projects executed by the PT.

Toinho Alves is an abstract thinker, yet has great appreciation for narrative. His choice to tell a story on this occasion must be seen as such: a choice made to fit the circumstances of Alto Santo's *tombamento*—the word shares roots with both "tomb" and "tome"—as part of Acrean culture. From the outset he highlighted the quasi-mythic context of the story:

> I once heard a story that I share here at the risk of reproducing it without complete fidelity to the facts, since the person who told me told it from memory and I am going to tell it as I heard and remember it.
>
> But, if it is not completely true, it is fundamentally true; the essence of this story is of a singular moment in the history of Acre, of Amazonia, of Brazil, and of the world.

By explicitly questioning the accuracy of the narrative, Toinho Alves called attention to the patterns of relationship that it instantiates, recognizing that their importance overshadowed questions about the truth of events. Keying the frame this way, he prepared the audience to hear a familiar tale of rapprochement between black and white, between the "fine people" and the "popular classes," between the gritty

wellspring of culture amongst the masses and the ordering, civilizing mission of the state.

> It is told that, at the beginning of his administration, the then-Major Guiomard, José Guiomard dos Santos, came to finish this palace that was begun in the administration of Hugo Carneiro. And beginning his administration, his work, he observed that the area around the palace still needed a lot of work to make a government seat worthy of the name.
>
> He noted especially that the part of the city most used by the public was precisely this stretch along the riverbank between one stairway and another, the two stairways next to the commerce street and here at the palace—the commerce street of the First District and the palace.
>
> There was very heavy traffic in the city center, but the riverbank was very dirty: overgrown brush, trash, rubble…attracting insects and all kinds of vermin and even threatening the health of people who passed through.
>
> So he observed this and said, "I have to clean this stretch of river all up, from the market here to up above the Gameleira [tree; a famous landmark on the right bank of the Acre River], take this whole stretch and clean it on both sides."
>
> Colonel Fontenele de Castro, who was one of the primary aides to Guiomard Santos, and was one of the builders of Acre, said to him: "Governor, I know just the person to do this job."

Alves's narrative here establishes metadiscursive links to narratives of Acrean history, figuring Guiomard dos Santos as the one who came to complete the work of civilization in Acre, symbolized by the Governor's Palace. The narrative suggests that there was something more that needed to be done, however, as the profusion of unruly vegetation threatened, not only the serenity of the landscape, but even the health of the public. I read this motif as pointing toward "another side" of things, toward the super-fecundity of the bush that had constantly to be conquered, proving that the work

of civilization was not done with the mere construction of a building. Something more was needed, and Fontenele de Castro, gazing across the class gap toward his friend Irineu Serra, found a solution. Working literally in between the Gameleira, a buttressed-root *Ficus* featured in narratives of the Acrean Revolution, and the Governor's Palace, symbol of Acre's links to the broader nation and to discourses of civilization and progress, Irineu Serra and his men step figuratively into Acre's official history. While the point was to recognize a cultural phenomenon (which, from a rigid sociological perspective, has no owner), it was all done through the idiom of Irineu Serra as a kind of "big man" or *patrão*. The recognition of Alto Santo's validity and propriety within Acrean society was synonymous with writing Irineu Serra into the "official" narrative.

> And then he sent a message to Mr. Raimundo Irineu Serra, Mestre Irineu, who led a community that was a bit distant, near the Colony Custódio Freire, near what would be the Colony Custódio Freire, halfway between there and the city, and who was settling himself on that high ground with his community, of which he was a spiritual leader. And Fontenele, who had known Mestre Irineu for many years, then ordered that he be called.

Irineu Serra and "his" men were not a part of the city, but rather lived outside it on an escarpment that gave a clear view over the several kilometers that lay in between. At that time, as one woman who had lived her whole life at Alto Santo told me, the whole area was "bush"; it got dark in the afternoon, owing to the dense forest, and people feared being out after nightfall because of jaguars. Thus, an intriguing proposition of

Toinho Alves's narrative is that these relative outsiders, who lived in close contact with the forest, should be especially suited to stem the influence of uncontrolled nature on the city.

Alves continued the narrative:

> The Mestre came with about forty men. They began at five-thirty in the morning, with the sun just beginning to show its first rays, and they worked the whole day without rest.
>
> When evening was coming, in the late afternoon, they finished their work with everything clean and the brush cleared, the trash collected, and the riverbank on both sides clean, offering easy passage and a prettier and cleaner landscape for the people.

The language emphasizes the physical vigor of Mestre Irineu and "his" men, who, through the exercise of their masculinity, help rid the public space of impediments and disease vectors. Their activity, complementary to the construction of the Governor's Palace, tamed the natural forces that threatened to overrun the city despite the efforts of those who would implant civilization in the jungle. This division of labor reflects the deep senses of complementary opposition and interdependence that characterize social classification in Brazil, in which the lower classes take responsibility for engaging directly with nature, while the buildings and texts that represent and guide civilization are the province of the more "refined" people. The story is thus, in its essence, a tale of the compact between social classes, played out between Guiomard dos Santos and Irineu

Serra, but meant too as a portrait of harmonization within Acrean society. It is an origin story of the most important single relationship between Irineu Serra and a government official, and it turns on this moment when the men had finished with their work:

> So they came to present themselves, saying "Governor, the work is done."
>
> Guiomard walked down the steps to meet that troop of men led by that man, a black man nearly two meters tall, and strong. They were all tired from the work but showed joy at completing their duty.
>
> And Guiomard thanked them then and said, "How much is the work?"
>
> Mestre Irineu then responded, "For me, you don't need to pay anything; I did it to help. But, if one of the men would like to receive something, just say so."
>
> So everyone said, "No, no, I don't want anything, no."
>
> So the Mestre spoke again, saying "However, Governor, if you will allow us, I want to make a request. We are already tired, and the place we live is very far. If you will give us a ride from here to the Vila Ivonete, to the entrance of the road, the path where we can cross the São Francisco [creek] and go up to our land, we thank you."
>
> Guiomard, then, provided a truck that transported the men to the Vila Ivonete and from there they continued to the Holy Cross Heights [Alto da Santa Cruz], a place that was later known as "Holy Heights" [Alto Santo], the residence of Mestre Raimundo Irineu Serra and of that community of his disciples that he was settling there around his own house.

This dense moment emphasizes two things with particular force. One of them is the (voluntary) encompassment of Irineu Serra's men by his person. He answers first, refusing payment, but gives them an opportunity to demand it for themselves. That they do not do so signals their loyalty to Irineu Serra and their alignment of purpose with him: none wishes to step apart from the group and require payment on his own.

This motif has the effect of highlighting the exchange between Irineu Serra and Guiomard dos Santos. Second, while appearing selflessly to contribute toward the greater good—which is synonymous here with Guiomard's modernization project—Irineu Serra also makes what must be considered the opening prestation in a gift-exchange relationship with the governor. By deferring payment (with the exception of transport back toward Alto Santo), Irineu Serra invites continued reciprocity; it would probably not be too much to say that he makes Guiomard dos Santos indebted to him. Giving a gift to someone unable to reciprocate it can be a source of shame for the recipient, but in the context of the *solenidade* held that day at the Governor's Palace and of Toinho Alves's speech, the fact of Guiomard dos Santos's long-term patronage of Irineu Serra and Alto Santo was not in doubt.[126]

Moreover, the idea of a gift, with its implication of doing a favor to the person beyond what is formally required, also entails a shift in the relevant cultural lens from that of the *rua* to that of the *casa*. Were Irineu Serra to operate according to the dictates of the street, it seems safe to say, with its foundation of individuals, rules, and contracts, he

[126] There does seem to be some ambiguity in Toinho Alves's narrative regarding the timing of Irineu Serra's move to Alto Santo. In my experience there, the notion is very widespread within the community that "Guiomard dos Santos donated the land of Alto Santo to the Mestre." The present narrative, however, implies that the move to Alto Santo was already underway when Irineu Serra met Guiomard dos Santos. This lack of clarity may be one reason for Toinho Alves's disavowal of the story's facticity at the outset.

would have accepted immediate payment for services rendered, the debt would have been instantly liquidated, and that would have been the end of it. As it happened—along lines that "all adult Brazilians have learned and will be capable of predicting with reasonable precision" (DaMatta, supra)—the relationship is remembered as founded in the mutual respect of two honorable men. Their relationship, while entwined with the "official" history of Acre and its very creation as a state, was not (merely) that of a citizen and his governor, but a bond between two persons of flesh, blood, loyalty, and passion, as only the Brazilian *casa* can create. Toinho Alves drove the point home in his speech's conclusion:

> From then on a partnership was established, a friendship that would last the rest of their lives between Mestre Raimundo Irineu Serra and Guiomard dos Santos, who was governor, then federal deputy in charge of the project that created Acre, that moved Acre to the status of a state, and later a Senator of the Republic.
>
> And always when Guiomard, living in Brasília, would come to Acre, he would stay at Mestre Irineu's house, visit there days and nights, talking, and they were great friends and did many things together.

Conclusion

I have tried in this chapter to show how Irineu Serra's use of ayahuasca shared themes with other regional contexts in which emigrants took it up, as well as the important ways Irineu Serra's "Doctrine" diverged from those other contexts. The main argument is that his career as a healer and leader followed the lines of Brazilian culture in a way that transformed the range of meanings it was possible to attribute to ayahuasca.

Where its use in other contexts was characterized (rightly or wrongly) as diabolical, pointing away from the world of the “street” and everything it indexed, in the hands of Irineu Serra ayahuasca, as Daime, became a potent force aimed at synthesizing the disparate domains that DaMatta describes.

Chapter Four: Making Daime

Spatial aspects of the feitio

At Alto Santo, persons and things move through three main spatiotemporal zones: the forest (*floresta*), the house (*casa*), and the street (*rua*). Alto Santo identity is predicated upon a series of mediations: between incipient urbanites and the surrounding forest; between civilization and wildness; between Christianity and paganism; and between migrants to the region and Acre's indigenous people. The movements involved in the *feitio*[127] define the contours of these relationships, both demarcating and crossing the boundaries between them.

Oral narratives about the origins of Mestre Irineu's spiritual mission emphasize his divine mandate to bring ayahuasca, a "brute" drink proper to the wild, pagan forest, to Christians in the city. Taking these narratives as their charter, in the *feitio* ritual a select group of men commemorate Mestre Irineu's foundational trajectory by going once more into the forest to bring out the raw ingredients of ayahuasca and transmute them into Daime for use in the church. These plants, the *jagube* vine (*Banisteriopsis caapi*)

[127] Derived from the Latin facere, "to do" or "to make," the term includes a nominalizing suffix that can carry a sense of action and/or collectivity that is semantically harmonious with its use to describe this group activity. The word is not a neologism, but its most usual senses (the noun sense of "tailoring," as well as "mien" and "form") are not common in colloquial Portuguese and are but indirectly related to its use at Alto Santo. In the church, I only ever heard the term used to refer to the ritual of making Daime.

and the *rainha* leaf (*Psychotria viridis*) are mixed in water and cooked over a fire. The accounting of the *feitio* presented to the congregation after each production cycle requires, as a matter of genre, saying that the men "went to the forest" (*foram para a mata*) to retrieve the plants for making Daime. This is equally true whether the plants are actually wild, as was apparently more often the case in the past, or if they are from the semi-cultivated plots on Dona Peregrina's or another church member's land that are common today.[128]

The care taken with the qualities of persons and things that go into making Daime is reflected in the spatial relationships of the sites involved in its production, which are located in areas where entry is easily controlled. Significantly, the *feitio* is held not in the church itself, but in a special house (*casa do feitio*) tucked in the wood behind Dona Peregrina's residence on a hillside sloping down toward the igarapé São Francisco.[129] The church's principal patches of semi-cultivated leaves (called a *folhal* or *reinado*) and vines (the *jagubal*) are located in another part of this wood. Thus both the source of the ingredients of Daime and the place where it is made are well buffered from the road

[128] Many members have a few vines growing in their yard or near their house, and some also have areas planted with leaf to contribute to the feitio. While I have heard such vines referred to disparagingly as "foot-of-the-fence jagube," one suspects that tended vines, grown in more sunlight, might grow quite well. What is more, in the case of a feitio involving a jagube planted by the man said to be Irineu Serra's biological son, the fact of its cultivation and its connection to his person gave it considerable symbolic value.

[129] An igarapé is an Amazonian stream smaller than a river, and which varies greatly in depth according to the season.

and, by extension, from the public and the world of the "street." To reach these areas one must cross the pasture in front of Dona Peregrina's residence and go behind the group of houses belonging to her family members. The *feitio* house is accessible only by descending a curving staircase set into the hillside; outsiders are unlikely to be aware of these important places, and even most members of the church who are not involved in the *feitio* never go into these areas, and in fact should not visit them, particularly the *feitio* house.[130]

Perched at the edge of the bush, the *feitio* house mediates between the world of the "street" on the one side and that of the "forest" on the other. These configurations are not mere accidents of history: the preservation of the forest that serves as the source of Daime is the result of purposeful action stemming from a desire to maintain contact with the Forest Queen and the powers she granted to Mestre Irineu. Even as many of the hundreds of acres around Alto Santo that he originally controlled have been converted to pasture or lots for members' houses, the wooded area around the *feitio* house has been preserved in order to protect the autonomy of the church in its access

[130] This was made clear on the occasion of the inauguration of the renovated feitio house. Before the event Dona Peregrina discussed the proceedings with her closest advisers, and there was some discussion about whether to visit the feitio house at all. Finally it was decided that a small party, including the Workers Party governor Jorge Viana, whose administration had contributed public funds to the renovation, could descend down there for a photo opportunity. It was suggested that this was acceptable because the feitio house had not yet been inaugurated, implying that once it had, such a visit would not be possible.

to the sources of its spiritual power. This pattern is sufficiently robust to have been repeated by all three of the centers in the neighborhood that are historically connected to Alto Santo. In each of them, the *feitio* house is placed in a similar position behind the church, and in a wooded area (where it is possible to do so; one of the centers is surrounded by houses in the back). The spatial relationship of the *feitio* house to the church thus resonates with the general movement of ayahuasca from the forest to the city that is charted in Alto Santo foundation narratives. Just as the keys to Mestre Irineu's initiation were the Christianization of ayahuasca as Daime and the divine authorization to bring it out of the forest, so too in the *feitio* there is a parallel movement: first, into the forest to make/receive Daime; second, to the church with the Daime for use in spiritual work.[131] To understand the significance of this movement into and out of the forest for Alto Santo ideas of morality, we need to examine the process more closely.

The "Bush Crew"

Different from indigenous and mestizo use of ayahuasca, in which a single shaman or healer most often makes the drink, sometimes with the aid of an apprentice, the *feitio*

[131] The movement out of the forest should not be seen as stopping at Alto Santo, since the spiritual work done there is intended to benefit "all of humanity" [*toda a humanidade*] as well as the individuals physically present at the center.

is, like other Daimista rituals, a congregational activity, albeit one defined by the fact of its being always guided by a designated Daime maker (*feitor de Daime*). At Alto Santo the responsibility for the work of the *feitio* lies with a group of 30-40 men called the Bush Crew (*Equipe da Mata*) (women are not allowed to participate directly in the *feitio*; see below). The importance of the *feitio* in the church's ritual life is underscored by the expectation that the members of the Bush Crew exemplify Alto Santo moral ideals. To be a member of the Bush Crew is a privilege, and reflects a judgment on the part of Dona Peregrina that a man has the qualities most central to Alto Santo notions of a good "brother" (*irmão*): fortitude (*firmeza*), loyalty (*lealdade*), obedience (*obediência*), and unity (*união*); as Dona Peregrina's brother Joca told me, these are the men whom she "can count on in the day-to-day." In the *feitio* these qualities are objectified in the confection of Daime, so that communion with Daime indexes the brotherhood's moral unity.

The emphasis placed on the Bush Crew's commitment to the everyday as well as the otherworldly aspects of Alto Santo life means that there is substantial overlap between its membership and that group of men who show up for regular maintenance tasks at the church and who rotate in the church's all-night watch detail. Many Bush Crew members have day jobs in sectors that entail manual labor, such as carpentry, house painting, landscaping, and woodcutting, though a handful of them work in office jobs

(one is an accountant, and another is a political adviser to the Workers' Party). They also tend to be experienced in church ritual and to dance in the front rows of the senior men's side, though many newer Bush Crew members are unmarried young men from the junior men's quadrant, and one is a very old member who contributes a lot financially to the church, and whose work in the *feitio* is largely *pro forma* (or, at least, other than physical). The work is intergenerational: pounding *jagube* vine is an intense activity for younger men in their physical prime, while an older man with a lot of experience in the *feitio* might eventually become a maker of Daime. To join the Bush Crew for the first time is a mark of a young man's arrival in the church, and often boys would have to ask for several years to help in the *feitio* before Dona Peregrina deemed them ready.

Although a *feitio* may be held at any time of year as required by the necessity to maintain the church's stock of Daime, it must follow the lunar cycle, as the *jagube* vine must be harvested within the three days following the new moon,[132] and be used as

[132] Planting and harvesting according to the lunar phases is a common practice throughout the world and is widespread in the Amazon. I was told, for example, that wood for construction purposes should be harvested around the new moon, while wood for burning should be taken near the full moon. Kane (1994) discusses the importance of lunar phases to canoe construction in indigenous Panama; there, she writes, harvesting at the new moon helps minimize insect infestation of the wood. Within the Alto Santo tradition lunar symbolism is extremely important. Narratives of Mestre Irineu's initiatory encounter with the Virgin Mary/Queen of the Forest often describe her appearance to him out of a full moon, from which she descended to speak with him, or else they mention an eagle seeming to land upon the moon. In addition, Mestre Irineu's hymnal, O Cruzeiro, contains numerous references to the moon, which seems to be part

soon as possible after that.[133] In one of the few concessions to the weekly rhythms of the "street" world outside the church, the main work of the *feitio* begins on Saturday night, when many (but not all) members do not have to work the next day; thus, sometimes the harvested *jagube* sits, covered, in the *feitio* house until the first Saturday after the new moon. (The church's calendrical rituals, such as the festivities of Christmas and St. John's Day, are held on their proper dates, regardless of the day of the week. This is one point of difference from Daimista centers in Brazil's urban south, where rituals are sometimes held on weekends or split into two parts.) As is the case with other church matters, Dona Peregrina is the ultimate arbiter of whether and when to hold a *feitio*, but she does so in consultation with Joca, who keeps charge of the stock of Daime, and with seu Nonato, the current maker (*feitor*) of Daime at Alto Santo. When a *feitio* is imminent, the Bush Crew is "convoked" (*convocado*) at the preceding concentration session by an announcement of the official speaker. Following the session's close, while others go on their way, the Bush Crew gathers in the center of the hall. Roll is called, and the times and dates of the harvesting of the plants and of the

of the set of referents that includes the Forest Queen. The very first hymn is a paean to a female "protector" and "advocate" (both terms also used to characterize the Virgin Mary) called "White Moon" (Lua Branca); many others testify to the moon's telluric power (e.g., "It is the moon who gives force / to the creator earth"; "the moon has three passages / all three are contained in one / it must be understood / that it is she who dominates the earth").

[133] Several church members remarked to me that Mestre Irineu recommended against holding the feitio ritual during Carnaval because of the danger that the Daime made at that time may be compromised by the wanton atmosphere prevailing in the city during the pre-Lenten festivities.

feitio proper are divulged. This brief procedure serves to coordinate the group's activities by sharing information, but it also underscores the special role the Bush Crew plays as an exemplary subset of the congregation, and the stringent expectations to which it is held: absences of enrolled group members at this meeting and in the subsequent phases of the *feitio* are noted and announced at the accounting given before the whole congregation at the first concentration session following the *feitio*'s conclusion. Dona Peregrina is known to express great irritation with unexcused absences from these meetings, and a series of such faults can mean expulsion from the Bush Crew.

The testimony of many old-time members of Alto Santo makes clear that the *feitio* has changed in some ways over time. The special uniforms used for the job, for example, are a relatively recent innovation, one which fits with a more general pattern of standardization of ritual accouterments that has come with increased financial stability during the 1990s and 2000s. But the emphasis Dona Peregrina places on qualities such as obedience, service, and dependability in evaluating members of the Bush Crew corresponds with the historical origins of the group in that inner circle of followers of Irineu Serra who could rightly be called, within the contexts generated in the last chapter, "his" men. Historically, these men were close companions of Irineu Serra, some of whom had formal godparenthood ties with him, or headed families that intermarried

with each other and with Dona Peregrina's family, the Gomes clan.[134] They would have been the ones summoned to work at clearing the riverbank, in the story related in the last chapter: there, they worked to control the forces of natural exuberance that threatened to intrude upon the city; in the *feitio,* their labor is likewise aimed at transmuting the wild plants into a form that can be brought into the Master's House and used for spiritual work.

Seeking the jagube and rainha

When the time comes to find and harvest the *jagube* vines, a subset of the Bush Crew is directed to go into the forest to look for them. A twining liana, the *jagube* vine usually twists as it grows in a spiral pattern and can climb quite high in its host tree. Sometimes the tree is cut down, but when it is left in place, the harvester must scale it, carrying a machete and confronting ants, wasps, and the sheer height of the tree in order to bring out the *jagube*, which he cuts into sections about eighteen inches long as he climbs.[135] Looking for *jagube* is like going on a hunt for an elusive forest creature; the men who do it must cultivate the favor of the powers of the forest by observing sexual abstinence

[134] Sandra Goulart's PhD dissertation is a good resource on this point, emphasizing it in the text and also including a useful kinship chart (Goulart 2004).
[135] Seu Nica told me of an epic ordeal he once underwent to bring a jagube vine out of a Brazil nut tree (*Bertholletia excelsa*), climbing more than fifty meters up in the tree (which could not be cut down because of protection laws) on the jagube vine itself, with but a thin rope to use on the descent.

(the *dieta*) to have success.[136] (This was especially true in times past, before planted vines became the church's main source of *jagube*.) There is, in fact, a whole "science" (*ciência*)[137] to working with the *jagube* that depends on establishing a personal relationship to the forest and maintaining a respectful attitude toward its denizens and their spirit "owners." Only those who are worthy (*quem tem merecimento*) can find the *jagube* vine; it can hide within the forest and reveals itself only to those whom it chooses. Jair, seu Nica's son and a principal interlocutor during my fieldwork, told me of Alto Santo lore he heard as a child, according to which the vine sometimes makes a pounding noise (*bate*) in the deep forest to reveal its presence.[138]

At Alto Santo, Mestre Irineu is considered to have a special and mysterious relationship to the jagube, nearly to the point of identity. This affinity meant that he could find

[136] Seu Loredo, one of Mestre Irineu's most trusted makers of Daime, told me a story of going to find jagube with a younger man who had not adhered to the dieta: the truck the men were riding in broke down on the way to the part of the forest they wanted to search; when another vehicle came to rescue them, it too broke down. This narrative echoes the misfortunes that befall hunters who are panema (cursed) because of disrespect for the spirit guardians of their prey (e.g., Clastres 2000).

[137] In the Amazon, the popular notion of the "science" of the things of the forest connotes a way of knowing that depends upon experiential familiarity (conhecimento), but which does not lack for a kind of theoretical background in which the forest is known as a place of mysterious phenomena (mistérios) and beings (encantes). This caboclo science is closely related to Amerindian concepts of "owners" (donos) of plants and animals, and more generally to the personhood of forest phenomena (Viveiros de Castro 1998; Carneiro da Cunha and Almeida [2002] is an ambitiously inclusive attempt to harmonize scholarly and "empirical" or "folk" knowledge).

[138] Mysterious pounding noises coming from the forest are widely attributed to magical forest entities in Amazonian lore, such as the *curupira*, a kind of hairy dwarf with backwards feet. According to folklorist Luis da Câmara Cascudo, the *curupira* was wont to strike the buttressed roots of the *sapopema* (*Sloanea* spp.): "It strikes with its heel on the Upper Amazon, with its immense penis on the Lower Amazon, and with an axe made of a tortoise shell on the Tapajós River" (Câmara Cascudo 1972:333).

jagube vines where others did not see them, and that he knew from a distance where they were. Note, too, the similarities to the forest knowledge attributed to caboclos, who also have a special sympathy with the forest. According to seu Cipriano, an old-time maker of Daime, sometimes when Mestre Irineu would send his men to search for jagube in the forest they would return, unsuccessful, only to have him send them back to a particular spot, insisting that, despite their protestations that they had already looked there, now they would find a jagube vine.[139]

Accordingly, a hymn of Mestre Irineu's, said to refer to the jagube, conflates his point of view with that of the vine:

I am a son of the earth	*Eu sou filho da terra*
I live in the shady forests	*vivo nas matas sombrias*
Imploring the Eternal Father	*Implorando ao Pai Eterno*
And the Ever-Virgin Mary	*e a Sempre Virgem Maria*
Here I play my drum	*Aqui eu toco meu tambor*
In the bush I beat a tattoo	*nas matas eu rufo caixa*
Everyone goes after [me]	*Todo mundo vai atrás*
Seeking but not finding [me]	*procurando mas não acha*

[139] This kind of story, in which one of Mestre Irineu's followers would try to do something without success until he told them to try it again, seems to constitute a genre, or at least a motif, of tales about him. What links them seems to be the insistence that the authority of Mestre Irineu's words transcended impersonal and universal laws of the world: if he said it was so, so it was, even if it hadn't been that way before. (Other examples include stirring a boiling pot of Daime with his arm; knowing in advance all about a stranger who had come to see him; making the rounds to his followers' houses in spiritual form during the night; and knowing the future vocation of newborn babies.)

I will save more detailed discussion of the multiple layers of meaning manifested in the performance of hymns for later, but even in this decontextualized form it is evident that this hymn can be read as a poetic juxtaposition of Mestre Irineu and the *jagube* vine. In the first stanza the one, growing in the heart of the forest, wild and yet oriented to a Christian vision of the divine, coincides with the other, the humble human toiling prayerfully at the edge of civilization. The possibility of the double reference only made sense to me once I became aware of the lore that attributes to the *jagube* the ability to broadcast pounding sounds through the woods.

Such readings are not only possible, but are actually made by people at Alto Santo. For example, another hymn, called "*Flor de Jagube*" (Jagube Flower), declares:

I come from the forest	*Eu venho da Floresta*
With my song of love	*Com meu cantar de amor*
I sing with joy	*Eu canto é com alegria*
(It was) my Mother who told me to	*A minha mãe quem me mandou*

In this hymn, I was told explicitly, Mestre Irineu "speaks as the *jagube*."

Realizing the personhood of the *jagube* vine is an important, if uncodified, part of being in the Bush Crew, but to do so one must learn, through experience, with whom one is dealing in seeking out and handling it. Once, while walking through the forest with seu Vítor, one of the senior men of the Bush Crew, we came upon a *jagube* vine growing low

to the ground across our path. Rather than step over it, seu Vítor lifted up the *jagube* to pass under it. When I asked him why he had taken the trouble to do this, he said it was to show respect to "him."[140] More than a rule, he told me, this was something he had learned by his experience drinking Daime.[141]

If there is a clear but implicit parallel drawn at Alto Santo between Mestre Irineu and the *jagube* vine, the vine also becomes the middle term in a syllogism linking him with Jesus Christ. According to seu Nica, the first *jagube* vines grew from the spots where the blood of the crucified Jesus fell to the ground. In the narrative repertoire of seu Nica, the association of Christ's blood with *jagube* suggests the spiritual identity of Christ and Mestre Irineu. When seu Nica was negotiating the purchase of a lot adjoining his property which belonged to a member of Alto Santo, he told the story of an accident that Mestre Irineu once had while cutting wood on that very hill. As Mestre Irineu

[140] While it is true that Portuguese, with its gendered pronouns, does not distinguish grammatically between persons and inanimate objects in the same way that English speakers do by using "it," still there often seemed to be an extra emphasis put on the pronoun "ele" in discussing the jagube vine, its habitat preferences, and so on, which implied personhood.

[141] Seu Vítor's insistence on this point seems related to a contrast between the house and the street, where the street, despite its chaos, is also the space of bureaucracy, full of rules, regulations, and *de jure* statuses. If the house is orderly, by contrast, its orderliness comes not so much from a set of explicit rules as from the respect and deference "naturally" paid to its owner (*o dono da casa*). This line of thinking also links to Joca's and others' insistence on the ad hoc, even natural allocation of authority within Alto Santo ritual: if one person seems to be leading other people, it's not because he's designated leader, it's because he's dedicated, he has the ability to present a model to follow. This sense of natural charisma, separate from any status conferred by human institutions, is an important part of images of Mestre Irineu.

brought his axe down on the tree he was chopping, the blade caromed and struck him, nearly severing part of his foot. Alone, he wrapped his bleeding appendage and hobbled home. “Whatever you do,” seu Nica said Mestre Irineu told him later, “don’t let that hill be sold off; I lost half my blood there.” Today the hill is the principal site for planting *jagube* to be used in *feitios* for seu Nica’s church. By evoking an image of the hill as sacred ground, saturated with Mestre Irineu’s blood, the story explains both seu Nica’s desire to ensure that it remains preserved for church use and its appropriateness for planting *jagube*.

The personalization of the vine and its identification with Mestre Irineu and Jesus Christ show that seeking *jagube* is part of a process that is at once technological and spiritual. At the same time that it is a material prerequisite to making Daime, harvesting the *jagube* vine entails entering into a properly moral relationship with the divine on behalf of the Alto Santo community. It is an encounter with Mestre Irineu and Jesus Christ in vegetal form in the bush. The community takes pains to insure adherence to the proper standards of conduct in seeking the *jagube* because, as the cornerstone of the *feitio*, it is the key first step in the brotherhood’s spiritual work.

Once harvested, the sections of *jagube* vine are put into nylon sacks, of the kind used to hold rice or other food commodities, for transportation to the *feitio* house. The number of sacks of *jagube* gathered is the standard measure of the size of a given *feitio*. When

members of the Bush Crew gather, conversation sometimes turns to *feitios* of historic proportions whose daunting grandeur is recalled in terms of the number of sacks of *jagube* that were pounded. The amount of *jagube* gathered also tends to determine how much leaf is required, and both numbers constitute part of the accounting that is given in the church at the next concentration session meeting following each *feitio.* Picking the *rainha* leaf is less intense than cutting *jagube* but more repetitive, as hundreds or thousands of leaves must be plucked, one by one, from this relative of the coffee plant, which can attain a height of five meters or so. Unlike most of the work directly involved in the *feitio*, this task may be done by women, though as a practical matter, at Alto Santo a group of men from the Bush Crew usually harvests the leaves. While care is taken in handling the leaves to remove excess dirt, spider webs, or other foreign matter, the *rainha* leaf does not receive the same level of symbolic elaboration as the *jagube* vine in Alto Santo cosmology. Its name certainly seems to imply a connection with the Forest Queen (*Rainha da Floresta*), but this link does not seem to be well developed beyond a general sense that it is the feminine complement to the masculine *jagube*.[142]

[142] The greater emphasis placed on the vine at Alto Santo echoes its predominance in other contexts where ayahuasca is used. The word ayahuasca itself, from the Quechua language, is a compound of *aya* (dead person, spirit, or soul) and *huasca* (vine, rope, or cord), and serves as a metonym for the whole drink, composed of both elements. In like fashion, in Brazilian Amazonian popular culture in general,

The Bush Crew must attend to several preliminary tasks in the period leading up to the *feitio*, including scouring out the residue left in the empty bottles[143] with gravel and a wire brush, and cutting and splitting sufficient firewood to keep the ovens burning at the right temperature for many hours. The sections of vine must be cleaned as well, a job that, along with putting firewood in the ovens, is one of the ways that boys who aim to join the Bush Crew can cut their teeth on the *feitio.* With dull-edged hardwood knives, they gently scrape the vine segments to take off dirt and lichens without removing the outer layer of the alkaloid-rich bark. This preparatory work is usually completed the day before or the morning of the marathon session in which the *jagube* is macerated and the drink is actually cooked.

Beginning the feitio proper

On the designated evening members of the Bush Crew, wearing special uniforms, begin arriving at Dona Peregrina's house, where they have a meal before "descending" to the *feitio* house to begin the *feitio* proper, which lasts all night and often well into the next

ayahuasca is often called simply "vine" (*cipó*) (Franco 2002). There have apparently been some indigenous contexts in which a drink is made from the vine alone, but these seem exceptional; most commonly, admixture plants, including *Psychotria viridis*, are used in making the drink (McKenna et al. 1995). This botanical fact has been used to explain the predominance of the vine in naming and cosmological elaboration, but it is tempting to interpret the situation in terms of gender symbolism.

[143] At Alto Santo, Daime is stored in various kinds of bottles, usually made of glass. Often these bottles are reused wine bottles, despite the fact that few Daimistas drink alcohol. In fact, a popular measure of Daime is a carneiro (lamb), a bottle of approximately five liters, apparently so named because of an old brand of table wine whose label depicted a lamb.

day, or even longer. During this time a group of women gathers at Dona Peregrina's house to provide support for the men, cooking food for them but also singing and praying, and sometimes drinking Daime. An important exception to the prohibition on the presence of women in *feitio* house is made for Dona Peregrina, who, as the church's supreme authority, has recently adopted the role, previously her late brother's province, of general supervisor of the *feitio*, and begun to spend time in the *feitio* house while the Daime is being made,[144] sometimes accompanied to the *feitio* house by one or two women of her inner circle. Otherwise, the women stay in the main house, assiduously avoiding going near the area.[145]

Morality in the feitio

[144] For some traditionalists, such as seu Nica, this situation is tantamount to heresy, as is the serving of any food other than unsalted manioc during the feitio. For many at Alto Santo, however, Dona Peregrina's presence in the feitio is comfortable and even a source of strength. Among the churches in the vicinity of Alto Santo, the question of Dona Peregrina's identity and basis for authority is a subject of continual debate. For seu Nica, one of the leaders of a group that established an independent communion in 1983, Dona Peregrina is merely another member of the brotherhood, who happened to have been married to Mestre Irineu. Dona Peregrina's brother Joca, on the other hand, seemed to express a position widely held at Alto Santo when he told me that Dona Peregrina and Mestre Irineu "are of one body." In this sense Dona Peregrina's presence in the feitio does not create an exception to the rule against women's participation there.

[145] This situation is reminiscent of narratives of Mestre Irineu's initiation (see chapter three), a period of eight days of dieting and encounter with the Forest Queen during which he ventured out to drink ayahuasca and cut rubber during the day. Upon returning to his companion at camp each day, Mestre Irineu would pound on a buttress root (*bater sapopema*) to advise his partner he was coming, and thus avoid any chance of encountering a woman.

Like many other church rituals, the main part of the *feitio* is ritually "opened" by praying three pairs of the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary, following which each member of the Bush Crew drinks a dose of Daime. Where commodity drug production, with its assumed profit motive, is generally concerned with efficiency in the transformation of raw ingredients into concentrated drug products (at least within the technological constraints imposed by clandestine activity), the *feitio* emphasizes moral qualities in the transformation of *jagube* vine and *rainha* leaf into Daime. Reflecting the value placed on hard work, obedience (*obediência*), and loyalty (*lealdade*) to the spiritual lineage of Mestre Irineu, many of the techniques used in the *feitio* thus eschew innovations that would make the process more efficient. While today it might be possible to cook ayahuasca using gas burners, for example, Daime should be made using firewood harvested by the Bush Crew on Dona Peregrina's property and burned in simple concrete ovens.[146] Some innovations, such as using chainsaws to fell trees for firewood, or wiring the *feitio* house for electricity and playing recordings of hymns to accompany the work, have been accepted without qualms. In processing the plants used in making

[146] The designation of the area around Alto Santo as an "Environmental Protection Area" in 2006 has made the extraction of lumber and firewood more difficult in the area, and has also increased the pressure on the churches in the neighborhood to adopt more sustainable practices. One way this has been done is to obtain firewood, both for the feitio and for the traditional bonfire that is built for the St. John's eve celebration, from trees cut by the city in clearing lots for housing developments. Some of the churches, such as seu Nica's, have been leaders in this movement; Alto Santo has been resistant to some of these ideas, particularly with regard to the bonfire. Cosmo told me, however, that he has seen the use of trees felled for pasture clearing in the feitio at Alto Santo.

Daime, however, great value is placed on the traditional methods taught by Mestre Irineu. The use of machines to triturate the *jagube* vine, for example, was one practice often mentioned as completely incompatible with working in his spiritual "line."[147]

Before the *jagube* and the *rainha* leaf may be cooked together, the vine must be pounded into fibrous bits. This maceration (*bateção*) of the *jagube* vine with hardwood mallets is among the most important tasks involved in the *feitio*, and is certainly the most intense physical labor. There is a special partition of the *feitio* house, set off by a short wall and a tile floor, which is reserved for the purpose. Inside this "pounding room" (*sala de bateção*) twelve sections of tree trunk are set vertically in the ground, and serve as blocks upon which to pound the *jagube*. No shoes are worn within the hall, and one should avoid stepping on the pieces of *jagube* that inevitably fly about the chamber. Each of the twelve men participating at any given time sits before his trunk on a long bench beside a stack of vine segments. Like Alto Santo practice more generally, the work is intensely collective, but the men I spoke with about the *feitio* often also

[147] Clear criteria for the acceptance of technological innovation within the *feitio* are not available. Are particular items retained because of their ability to symbolize some particular theme? Why would chainsaws be adopted without comment, while using metal hammers to smash jagube, or a machine to grind it, would not? Sometimes technological innovation is deployed in discourses of distinction, meant to confirm the authenticity of a given group's practice. For example, the use of machines for triturating jagube vine, as well as disregard for the lunar cycle in timing the feitio, is an important element in Alto Santo discourse on its differences from other churches, particularly the expansionist denomination CEFLURIS. I have heard these differences used to denigrate a group's preparations as merely a psychoactive drug, not true Daime.

discussed the very individual and personal challenge they experienced in pounding their share of the vine, of which each one is expected to 'take care' or 'give account' (*dar conta*). When there is a lot of *jagube* to process, this can be a daunting task. For many of the men who participate in it, the *bateção* is the quintessential activity of the *feitio*, and even of the *Doutrina* itself. As Cosmo told me, the *bateção* is the situation in which one's faith is most fully tested. The mallets used to pound the vines are often made of very dense *bálsamo* wood (*Protium heptaphyllum*) and weigh up to 5 or 6 pounds, and even the men who are accustomed to heavy daily work grow tired after several hours of raising them above the head and bringing them crashing down on the vine atop the stump. If one's attention falters, and the mallet hits elsewhere than its 'sweet spot,' an extremely painful vibration may travel into the hand and arm. Even in the best of circumstances, one's hands become sweaty and bits of *jagube* fiber work their way into the palm, creating large blisters on the hands of all but the most seasoned laborers.

In such situations, discouragement is a constant threat, named in the verb *esmorecer*.[148] Against this temptation one places one's faith in the divine and one's sense of the

[148] During my fieldwork, one particularly large feitio was held in which the Bush Crew spent more than 24 hours pounding jagube. Afterward there was a lot of talk about the challenge of pounding this vine, which was special because it was a few decades old, enormous (some sections were 8-10 inches in diameter, compared with the 1-2 inch diameter of typical vines), and had been planted by a man, by then deceased, who some said was Mestre Irineu's son. In one conversation I witnessed, a man named Sebastião told about his struggle in the feitio. At one point, he said, when blisters began to break open on his hands,

importance of the task at hand. Men who told me about working in the *feitio* put great emphasis on the meaning of these tests of fortitude (*firmeza*) and faith (*fé*) that it involved. They know that it is important to maintain a good attitude and to really demonstrate one's commitment to the work to make good Daime. Here, Cosmo told me, the Daime is an essential aid; it helps (*o Daime ajuda*) those who ask it to, and it gives strength (*dá força*) to continue with the task.

Although the *feitio* has an intensely individual, even solitary aspect, the challenges of purifying one's own moral being are not separate from the goal of collective unification before the divine. The atmosphere in the *feitio* house should be harmonious and solemn, so that each individual's communion with the divine is complemented by the presentation of collective unity (*união*). To this end, recordings of hymns are played throughout the *feitio*, with members of the Bush Crew joining in singing, or at least listening, to help focus their thoughts and intentions. Casual conversation can sometimes be heard, particularly among those taking a break from pounding *jagube*,

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Dona Peregrina examined them and asked him if he could make it through. "With your help, I can," he reported telling her. Later, when he felt tempted to give up, it was his recollection of his promise to her (and presumably his sense that she was, in fact, helping him spiritually) that pulled him through. In the context of the conversation, which included members of another of the churches in the Alto Santo neighborhood, Sebastião's story was clearly a statement about the importance of Dona Peregrina's spiritual leadership. For at least some members of Alto Santo, Dona Peregrina has a special relationship to the Forest Queen / Virgin Mary that is analogous to the relationship more widely postulated between Mestre Irineu and Jesus Christ. This is a key point of contention in debates about the schisms between churches in the Alto Santo neighborhood, which otherwise share many perspectives that distinguish them from CEFLURIS.

but it is generally discouraged. This is because the individual and collective intentions brought to the *feitio* redound upon the finished product: Daime is said to absorb the moral qualities of those present at its production, so that the demonstration of virtues (faith, fortitude, humility, love, and unity) results in a Daime that will allow the congregation to perform pure and powerful spiritual work. Conversely, if even one of the participants is not properly prepared (if he has not, for example, adhered to the sexual abstinence demanded by the *dieta*), the whole community will imbibe the traces of his failure when the Daime is used in rituals in the church, and their spiritual work will suffer.[149]

The feitor: Agency and lineage

When a sufficient amount of *jagube* has been pounded, the cooking process can begin. The job of "arranging the pots" (*arranjar as panelas*) is one of the key duties of the Daime maker supervising the *feitio*. In large, 100-liter capacity aluminum pots, the Daime maker supervising the *feitio* arranges the plants, alternating layers of *jagube* vine and *rainha* leaf. He measures the pounded *jagube* in old kerosene cans of several

[149] The necessity of moral purity is sometimes invoked to explain the prohibition on the participation of females in the feitio. One longtime practitioner of the *Doutrina* and maker of Daime told me that he once asked Mestre Irineu about the reason for this rule. His response was that if a man pounding jagube were seated across from a woman his gaze might wander to where her legs have parted around the stump on which the jagube is pounded (here he spread his legs wide, mimicking the motion and provoking laughter from the men present and a disapproving look from his sister), and in this way allow "impure" thoughts to enter his mind and compromise the process.

gallons' capacity, one can for each layer. Especial silence is called for during this stage. Each pot is then filled with water from the well next to the *feitio* house (said to have been dug by Mestre Irineu) and carried to the fire by two assistants, who slide a hardwood staff through rope loops threaded under each of the pot's handles and heft it in the crook of their arms. The oven is similar to those used in the traditional processing of cane juice into raw sugar products, consisting of a concrete channel about twelve feet long in the floor, covered but for three holes into which the pots fit snugly, and open on one end to the side of the *feitio* house for the insertion of firewood. The assistants walk, one on each side of the oven, and carefully lower each pot into place. As the pounding of *jagube* continues the Daime maker tends the pots, bringing them to a rolling boil that is maintained for several hours, occasionally turning their contents with a naturally pronged staff (*cambito*) to stop the plants from burning. Once each pot-full has cooked sufficiently, it is removed from the fire and carried to a special chute, where it is laid on its side with a screen wedged against the top while the liquid drains out of the plant material and into a tile-lined tank. Another pot with fresh plant material is prepared, and the liquid from the first round of boiling is poured into it from a spigot at the bottom of the tank before the pot is returned to the fire.

When the liquid has been cooked a second time until it reaches the proper "point" (*ponto*), it is Daime. Knowing the "point" of Daime is considered the pinnacle of the art

of the Daime maker, but it is as much a matter of being in communion with the divine as it is of technical skill. “We do the brute work,” seu Nica told me, “but the one who makes Daime is God.” A competent Daime maker has learned his craft over many years by participating in countless *feitios* as an apprentice and knows how to assess the temperature, cooking time, and appearance of the plant material so that the Daime turns out properly. Still, “God determines the point of Daime,” as I was often told (*Deus dá o ponto do Daime*). As with the mysterious, divine transformation of bread and wine into the literal body of Christ in some Christian churches, there is said to be a particular moment of transformation in which the ayahuasca in the pots becomes Daime. Despite this similarity, there is an important difference: the bread and wine used in the Eucharist are mundane products until their ritual transformation, while the plants used in making Daime are already divine. Given the over-determined theme of Christianization running through church origin narratives, the “point” of Daime is best understood as the moment in which the spiritual force of the forest is revealed, not as something alien to the folk Catholic culture of the church’s members, but as the very essence of the Christian God, manifest as both spirit and substance.

Overseeing the making of Daime is also a matter of being a properly authorized member of the lineage of Mestre Irineu. The knowledge of the proper preparation of Daime is considered to be a gift given to Mestre Irineu by the Forest Queen and transmitted

personally by him to his most trusted disciples. This reckoning of the authority of the *feitor* in terms of proximity to the origin of the lineage means that today, a special cachet accrues to those few makers still alive who learned to make Daime directly from Mestre Irineu.[150] Daime "cannot be made from a recipe," I was told, but depends on the person of the *feitor* and his connection to Mestre Irineu and the Forest Queen. Alto Santo members understand that it is not only forbidden, but also pointless and dangerous, to drink ayahuasca made outside the "line" of Mestre Irineu or by unauthorized persons. Even within the church, Cosmo told me, he would only trust the Daime made by two or three of the Bush Crew members, despite the fact that they all knew the steps involved in the process. Such an attitude shows that making Daime is fundamentally about trusting one's fellows and respecting the patriarchal authority of Mestre Irineu. The substance produced is not considered apart from the context of its production, and especially the process of authorization to make it. Just as participation in ritual counts as assent to the moral system associated with it, to drink the Daime made at Alto Santo is an expression of trust and faith in those who made it, and in the

[150] In fact, the feitor at Alto Santo, seu Nonato, learned from the chief Daime maker at one of the splinter groups in the neighborhood and an important interlocutor of mine, seu Nica, who is one of those few remaining. In the context of intergroup rivalry, pointing out the closer relationship of Nica to Mestre Irineu constitutes a metapragmatic assertion of the greater quality of the Daime he makes, and by extension, of the greater purity of his church's practice in comparison with Alto Santo.

proposition that the Bush Crew has demonstrated the moral virtues—above all, the unity—necessary to gain divine favor.

The need for divine intervention to complement human agency is a characteristic theme in Alto Santo practice, as it is in Christianity more generally. With respect to making Daime, the importance of obedience to divine mandate and humility in the human condition is underscored by a story about "the Daime that wouldn't give visions." One of Mestre Irineu's stable of Daime makers, known for his independent streak, once decided to disregard the tradition of cooking the Daime just twice, and attempted to make an extra-concentrated, "stronger" Daime. The drink was served to the congregation at the concentration session following the *feitio*, as is customary, but as the church members began to talk to one another afterwards, it became clear that no one had any visions during the ritual. When the Daime maker told Mestre Irineu what he had done, Mestre Irineu poured out the bottles from that *feitio*. The clearest implication of this narrative is that knowledge of how to make true Daime (that is, Daime that is useful in Alto Santo's spiritual work) is a gift given to Mestre Irineu by the Forest Queen, and the continued production of Daime depends upon loyalty to the obligations that come with the gift. This point presents a forceful counter to the modern, materialistic conception of drugs as pharmacological agents whose effects depend primarily upon the actions of chemical compounds on the human body. For

those at Alto Santo, there is just one “strength” of Daime; either it is Daime or it isn’t, and humans have neither the right nor the ability to improve upon it by changing the way it is made.

Finishing the feitio

Once the liquid in the pots has reached the proper “point” and been transmuted into true Daime, it is put in another section of the tank to cool down. Traditionally Daime is cooled by scooping a large gourd (*cuia*) into the hot, greenish-ochre liquid and pouring it continually back into the pot. The conclusion of the main work of pounding the *jagube* signals a slight change in the atmosphere in the *feitio* house, and most of the men can relax while the head *feitor* stays attentive to the last few pots of Daime on the fire. As the last pot is removed and drained, the *feitio* can be formally closed as it began, with three pairs of Our Fathers and Hail Marys.

Having successfully gone into the forest to bring out from it the spiritual gift of Daime, the men climb triumphantly up the stairs out of the forest and back to Dona Peregrina’s house to rejoin the women there, to change out of their uniforms, and to have another meal. Tired but invigorated through their work, they head home. A few men remain behind at the *feitio* house to finish cleaning up and to bottle the Daime once it has

cooled sufficiently.[151] The full bottles are then carried up to Mestre Irineu's original house at Alto Santo, where the room that used to serve as Mestre Irineu's study now houses the church's main stock of Daime. Depending on the size of the *feitio*, perhaps one hundred to four hundred liters of Daime will have been produced, enough for several months of church activities.

Conclusion

The *feitio* is both the material prerequisite for Alto Santo's ritual activity, and the church's moral linchpin. It is the materialization of the core mystery of the *Doutrina* of Mestre Irineu, in which the spiritual force of the forest is brought out and transformed anew for the use of the congregation. At the same time, it should be clear that the production of true Daime depends not only on the material combination of the drink's ingredients, but also on the individual preparation of each member of the Bush Crew and on the group's collective unity. The essential participation of the divine in the confection of Daime depends upon overcoming social discord through the cultivation of Christian virtue in order to demonstrate the congregation's worthiness of blessings. In

[151] Unlike some of the other Daime centers in the neighborhood, such as seu Nica's, which maintain strictly traditionalist methods in Daime production but are less concerned with standardization, at Alto Santo the bottles and pots used in making Daime are all virtually identical; there, the bottles used for the storage of the main stock of Daime are all four- or five-liter jugs made of glass (Dona Peregrina uses a smaller bottle for the Daime she keeps in her house).

this way, the *feitio* serves as a tangible index of the congregation's moral health.[152] Its centrality to the church's ritual life means that the *feitio* constantly draws attention to church members' comportment, objectifying the moral dimension of Alto Santo social life and giving the congregation a kind of mirror in which to see itself. In making and drinking Daime, church members both demonstrate and produce their vision of ideal morality. The process is circular: as the church's orator reminded the congregation during a speech following one service, "We do this [spiritual work] because we are healthy, and we are healthy because we do this."

By preparing Daime with faith, fortitude, unity, and obedience to the teachings of Mestre Irineu, with each *feitio* the church renews its commitment to his mission and fulfills the obligations to the Forest Queen / Virgin Mary on which it was founded. It is the quality of this link to the spiritual source of the forest, and not the mere extraction of psychoactive alkaloids, that is the basis of Alto Santo's ritual work and identity. Where the profane production of drugs transforms raw materials into consumables which, entering the market, establish a strictly monetary relationship between points in the chain of production, the sacred confection of Daime creates personal, moral ties

[152] Compare the discussion in Robbins (2004) on the *Spirit disko* as an index of Urapmin moral standing.

between spiritualized nature in the forest and the congregation in the church, mediated by the work of the Bush Crew.

As a closed, guarded, and self-contained process, the *feitio* draws *força* (force) and *luz* (light) from the forest, rooting the Alto Santo congregation in its particular place. It sustains them, bringing health and joy; by rehearsing the *Doutrina*'s foundational movement into the forest and back to the Master's house, it highlights and reaffirms their obeisance to Mestre Irineu and, through him, to the Forest Queen. Viewed from a slightly greater distance, the making of Daime is just the first step in fulfilling the goal of achieving blessings and salvation for all humanity. It is through the group's spiritual work that this force and light, brought from the forest into the house/church, moves into the broader world of the street and beyond. Having examined the production of Daime here, in the next chapter I move to a discussion of Alto Santo conceptions of the spiritual work for which it is made.

Chapter Five: “Here within this Truth”: Hymn-singing and “spiritual work” at Alto Santo

> Live [pl.] in harmony with the spiritual forces, observing carefully their law, if you [pl.] want to become a *center of irradiation* of helpful energies. Thus, you [pl.] will work not only for your own benefit, but also for that of your siblings scattered throughout the terrestrial globe. [CECP 1957:17; emphasis in original]

As the communicants resume their places, now within the *corrente* by virtue of having drunk Daime, a low hum of chatter fills the room. It would not be far from Daimista ideas to say that there is electricity in the air, as perhaps two hundred individuals prepare to launch into six to ten, even twelve hours of hymn singing, dancing, and rattle shaking. But this is no marathon of random activity. Each *trabalho* sets out a clear path through particular, predefined sets of hymns which are always sung in the same order, and which themselves have an invariant and repetitive structure.

A moment before the music begins the chatter subsides, marking a shift in frame as the hinário is “opened.” In one hinário recording, from 2007, the musicians strum a quick arpeggio in the key of the first hymn and pluck a few strings to check their tuning one last time. Anticipation reaches a peak as a few people clear their throats, and the person

who will "pull" (*puxar*, meaning to lead) the first hymn—a front row dancer, usually on the men's side—looks to the musicians, who sit on a stage at the north end of the salon. All is silent for a moment.

In the next instant everything changes. Like the first sounds of creation, the lead guitar breaks the quiet,[153] cleanly articulating each of the first few notes of "Sol, Lua, Estrela" (Sun, Moon, Star), one of a pair of hymns from Mestre Irineu's *Cruzeiro* that are played, exceptionally, out of the order in which they were received, having been designated the official "opening hymns" (*hinos de abertura*) for all hinários, even when the *Cruzeiro* is not sung. The lead maracás pick up the rhythm with the first note still hanging in the air, and midway through the first exposition of the melody the salon is filled with sound. With the first few beats comes a swell of voices, singing in unison and growing stronger as the melodic line repeats.

[153] During my time at Alto Santo, the musicians played acoustic guitars exclusively, with one handling the lead, which tracks the melody very closely, and another playing a bass part. The guitars were amplified with microphones and broadcast over speakers positioned throughout the salon. In other centers it is common to see electric guitars, accordions, flutes, and percussion instruments. For Dona Peregrina, the ultimate arbiter in this, as in all other matters related to orthopraxy, the acoustic guitar is metonymic of the tradition and purity she seeks to maintain. When instruments were first introduced at Alto Santo in the 1950s the musicians, who were generally women, including Dona Peregrina herself, sat around the central table. (Today they are all men, although it is not clear that there is a restriction on women playing.) Musicians at Alto Santo customarily learn to play their instruments by practicing the hymns, rather than through formal training, and they do not read music. They do have the lyrics of the hymns in front of them, with an indication of the key in which to play, but they must know the song by heart.

The *hinário* is a multisensory experience, both inside and outside of the human body: manifested aurally are the rhythm, melody, and sung text; visually, the salon is dominated by the concentric quadrilaterals formed by the dancers in their brilliant white uniforms as they begin to rotate, first one way, then the next, with the dance steps; in the tactile mode, each individual connects to the common activity by grasping and shaking the maracá and stepping, first three times to the left, then three to the right.

Participation in the dances is reserved for uniform-wearing members of the center, so when we first arrived, I did not participate in the *bailados*. In March of 2007 I asked for, and received, permission to wear the uniform and participate in the *hinários*. As a novice trying to coordinate the activities of dancing, shaking the maracá, and singing, I was often overwhelmed and challenged to keep up. Although there was, at the time of our work, no formal process of instruction for newcomers, Cosmo and Jair graciously agreed to hold several practice sessions to help me learn to coordinate the dance steps and maracá-playing. They told me, as a future row leader (*pelotão*), to watch the men in the front row and to take my cue from them, joining their rhythm as soon as possible, and beginning the dance steps on the second measure. It is important for the *pelotão* to "grab" the emerging hymn right away, they told me, since the others in the row need to be able to look to the *pelotão* to coordinate their own steps and rhythm.

The dance is deceptively simple. It consists of two steps to the left, a pivot on the right heel, two steps to the right, a pivot on the left heel, and so on. This simplicity lends itself to contemplative activity, but it can also be difficult: the dancers in the hinário repeat these steps thousands of times in the course of a night in the salon, and keeping a crisp, steady pace becomes a challenge as joints and muscles tire and grow sore. The ideal in dancing, as well as in shaking the maracá and in singing (and, it might as well be said, in everyday life), is performing with the calm strength and focus known as *firmeza*. Daimistas, many of whom were in their 60s and 70s, yet could dance this way for hours with little or no rest, insist that "Daime helps us" to perform more precisely, with greater vigor, and with greater depth of feeling than usual.

Dancing also shares with other forms of Alto Santo expressive activity clearly marked gender differences. On the men's side, the dance steps tend to be more discretely articulated, with feet raised higher and a more percussive impact on the floor, while on the women's side, the apparently softer footsteps are concealed under long white skirts that create a field of fluid, swaying motion.

These differences notwithstanding, it has often been remarked by students of Daimista history that the hinário presents a certain militaristic aesthetic in its ritual use of space, in the presentation of the body, and in the use of certain terms from military contexts (MacRae 1992; Cemin 2006). Indeed, the most common rhythm, the *marcha*, in 2/4 or

4/4 time, recalls a group of soldiers marching back and forth. A frequent assumption is that these aspects resulted from Irineu Serra's time in the Acrean military. (Alto Santo narratives describe the introduction of dancing and of the contemporary “white uniform” [*farda branca*] worn in hinários as the result of further revelations of the Forest Queen that Irineu Serra received at sea on a trip to his home state of Maranhão in 1957, his first return home since leaving for Acre as a young man.) There is likely some truth to this idea, but I am more interested here in the kind of person such an aesthetic is used to produce, than in the origins of the cultural 'fragments' that constitute Alto Santo ritual and cosmology for their own sake.[154]

It is an important truth about the *Doutrina* that it aims to create citizens as well as children of God. In this regard it seems to drink from the same fount as the Positivist religion promoted by Cândido Rondon and popular among many in the Brazilian military at the turn of the 20th century (Diacon 2004). In both, spirituality and civic conscientiousness are seen as complementary aspects of moral personhood. Parents are urged, in the Alto Santo *Decreto* (“Decree”), read at twice-monthly silent concentration sessions, to “teach their children the rights and duties of a Brazilian

[154] What is more, this theme is hardly unique to Alto Santo; the notion that Christians are “soldiers of Christ” fighting a “spiritual battle” is old and widespread in Christianity.

citizen," and each participant should seek, in addition to divine grace, "the perfection of his personality within the principles of Civism and the Law."

As in a military formation, each person has a particular assigned place in the salon. Because Alto Santo has a rather low rate of membership turnover, some of the senior members have held the same spot for decades, always surrounded by the same brothers or sisters. During the concentration rituals, participants sit on wooden benches in the same arrangement they stand in for hinários. Within their spaces, members of the irmandade are expected to maintain control of their bodies in the lines, performing their work with great care and not being carried away by the "force" of the Daime or the seduction of their own vanities. The value of self-control implicates the development of *firmeza*, the firmness or fortitude that characterizes the "Man with a capital 'M'."[155] To channel the force of the Daime into working with joy (*alegria*) and love (*amor*), rather than to become confused, preoccupied with oneself, or otherwise deficient, is an important measure of ritual proficiency. Moreover, to a certain extent, the ability to drink Daime and to perform the spiritual work without errors is considered a mark of general fitness in one's moral bearings.

[155] That is, "*O Homem com 'H' maiúsculo*"; Dona Peregrina once told me on her verandah, with great conviction, that "getting to know" (*conhecer*) this *Homem* is the reason for the spiritual work at Alto Santo. The term, in reference to a "higher self" or "true nature" of humanity, is common in Spiritist literature. In the Alto Santo context it can be traced more specifically to the poem "If," by Rudyard Kipling, which is rendered in translation in the first pages of the CECP manual *Instruções* (CECP 1957).

If it is somewhat difficult for a novice to perform the ritual activities of the hinário properly at the start, before the Daime has begun to take effect, it can become even more challenging as the "force arrives" (*a força chega*). Throughout my time at Alto Santo, even as I became more practiced, it was occasionally very difficult to coordinate the bodily motions and the cognitive tasks required to dance, shake the maracá, and to sing the hymns, particularly toward to end of hinários when I had drunk Daime multiple times and the force was very strong. To succeed it was necessary to maintain a balance between focus on myself and attentiveness to my fellows—exactly the sort of task that makes of Alto Santo ritual a microcosm of ideal sociality. Dancing side by side in the lines, I had to maintain awareness of my own body, without ceasing to be aware of the *corrente*. I had to listen to those around me (it can be hard to hear people's singing over the sound of the maracas) and try to learn the parts of hymns I didn't know, or orient myself within a hymn when I'd lost the thread.

The constant shaking of the maracás was an important material manifestation of the irmandade's mystical connection in the *corrente*. As I drifted between awareness of the salon and inner contemplation spurred by the Daime, the maracás were a foundation to which I could return, time and again, to focus my efforts. Sometimes a couple hundred maracás would be shaking during an hinário, producing a nearly deafening cascade of steel bearings in tin (or heavy aluminum) cans. At times my own maracá seemed

animated with an interior force, seemed almost to shake itself, or to possess its own momentum, so that shaking it was easy. Other times my preoccupation would come ascendant: my arm would hurt from shaking the maracá so much, or I would follow some thought to distraction and slip slightly out of rhythm. Here one's fellows were like aids, shaking their maracás, doing their back-and-forth dance. If one continued to slide, inevitably the stepping would fall out of rhythm and feet would collide. Many times I had, if only mentally, to beg the pardon of Francisco, the man assigned the spot on my left, for stepping on his feet. Etiquette in such situations is for each one to take care not to violate the space of the others, but to forgive immediately trespasses into one's own space. Francisco was a model in this sense, and, in the hours and hours we spent dancing next to one another, he taught me a lot about how spiritual work at Alto Santo creates persons through creating relationships.

In these things we can glimpse one of the ways that the hinário places individuals within a probative subject position, testing them against the ideal models of personhood and relationship manifested in the dance and in the hymn singing. The hinário presents a microcosm of social relations, a model within which to explore, and "engrave into the heart" (*gravar no coração*) a Christian way of relatedness that is meant to apply, not only within the salon, but also (indeed, above all) to everyday life. This way of being with others emphasizes individual accountability to the divine, partly through the

assignment of each individual to "his" or "her" own place in the line, determined by the God-given height each one achieves.[156] There is a certain kind of individualism at work, in that each person has a proper place that is inviolable and permanently assigned.

And yet things are not merely static or endlessly repetitive; dynamism enters into the moral kinesis of the dance as the congregants' movements push the boundaries between these spaces, making either harmonious coordination or confused collision inevitable. The effectiveness of the hinário as such depends on framing the situation as bridging domains, for example by making the microcosm of people in relationship intelligible as such. As Urban (1996) might put it, for the sensible reality of the hinário to become intelligible as a lesson in what the *Decreto* calls a "School of Divine Wisdom," some discursive framework must structure its multilevel significance.

In what follows, I am concerned primarily with the intersection of discourse and experience in Alto Santo hymn singing. The chapter is divided into three main sections. In the first of these I examine some of the disparaging things that were said and written about Irineu Serra and the use of ayahuasca in Rio Branco as a point of entry to a key

[156] Many Daime centers (not including Alto Santo, but including some of the other centers in the neighborhood) have lines painted on the floor, clearly intended to assist people to stay in their spot. But as Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Edward T. Hall (1976), and many others have taught, this kind of regimentation has profound importance to the (re)formation of social persons. At Alto Santo the lack of painted lines might possibly enter into discourse about difference that asserted connections between fine details of ritual practice and broad judgments of moral character; I can imagine someone saying that at Alto Santo such lines are not necessary because people "know their place" already. (No one actually said this.)

issue in Alto Santo ritual practice: the need for experience to overcome prejudice against finding the divine in the socially marginal.

Of good and bad bosses: Moral imagery of Irineu Serra

Rio Branco's urban bus terminal sits at the bottom of a hill on the edge of the central business district, not far from the waterfront and the "people's market," dispatching buses labeled with the names of the dozens of boroughs in and around the city. There are newer neighborhoods like Tancredo Neves and Chico Mendes, populated mostly by recently-arrived migrants, and older ones with names like Aviário and Bosque that harken back to the experimental agriculture stations of Acre's earlier days. Since at least 2002, when I first visited Rio Branco, the bus to the Alto Santo neighborhood, formerly known as Custódio Freire, has carried the name "Irineu Serra" in homage to the group's leader.

One day in early June, 2007, I was waiting for the "Irineu Serra" bus when I saw Dona Dima, one of the senior women at Alto Santo, standing at the bus stop. Greeting each other, we chatted about the *embandeiramento* (flag-hanging) that was then taking place to decorate the *sede* for the June festivals, which would culminate in St. John's Day, with its great bonfire, on June 23rd-24th. While it was not uncommon to see younger people from Alto Santo "in the street" as they went to and from school, my encounter with

Dona Dima was a little unusual, as many of the congregation's elders seemed to eschew the city center, staying at home most of the time. The strangeness of seeing her in that context was compounded when, at a certain point in our conversation, she mentioned Daime, marking the utterance with hesitation and a hushed tone, and perhaps a quick glance around to see who might be listening.

By that point in time I had already had many experiences that affirmed the official legitimacy of Daime, including ceremonies both in the Governor's Palace and at Alto Santo in which state officials honored the "people of the Daime." To witness the governor and other representatives of the state sitting politely and attentively as a roomful of Daimistas performed a powerful and beautiful *hinário* showed me, in a quite subjective and experiential way, just how much Alto Santo practice had become an emblem of Acrean culture and something about which one might speak or write with pride in being Acrean.

Such experiences made Dona Dima's conspiratorial attitude stand out even more. The name of Irineu Serra was on buses, in newspapers and books, even celebrated as a kind of patriarch of Acrean culture. So why should a member of the Alto Santo congregation behave in public as though to mention Daime was to invite popular opprobrium?

Contemporary studies of Santo Daime in diaspora throughout Brazil and overseas run, inevitably, into the question of drug use. Modern drug discourse centers on ideas of morality, willpower, and materiality, such that drug-takers are often considered not to be rational consumers by virtue of their drug use (Grinspoon and Bakalar 1984). In other words, drug users are defective moderns, partly because the influence of drugs impairs their ability to choose freely to enter into contracts. The notion of addiction as consumption without meaningful choice, it seems to me, is thus an important means of defining modern autonomy through its opposite (cf. Acker 2002).

When Santo Daime is considered in the context of modern ideas of drug use, features of its history, such as Irineu Serra's relationships with regional political figures and Alto Santo's affiliation with the CECP, are often presented as responses to persecution stemming from the classification of Daime as a drug. Where drug use brought discrimination and negative attention, the idea runs, links to sources of formal power and social legitimacy served as counterbalances, keeping the group's reputation "above water," as it were.

There is, however, little evidence that drug discourse proper shaped Acrean perceptions of Irineu Serra and Alto Santo until at least the 1960s, when the congregation already numbered in the hundreds. What did exist was discourse about Irineu Serra and the personal influence he wielded over those near to him. Because participation in Alto

Santo life involved a relativization of individual autonomy under the patronly aegis of Irineu Serra, talk about his hold over “his” people may have shared certain features with drug discourse, but even the most suspicious and salacious talk involving Daime, as Sandra Goulart writes (2004:42), was not based on a pharmacological discourse of drug effects. Instead, it was a discourse that confounded Daime with the person of Irineu Serra and the (morally charged) social ambiance of Alto Santo, such that “the greater suspicion was with respect to the powers of Mestre Irineu, to his image, more than with respect to Daime proper” (ibid.). That is, his personality itself was seen as the organizing factor of the Alto Santo brotherhood, and from this fact followed the question of the fitness of his person and the propriety of his intentions in invidious depictions of the center’s social reality, as we shall see. This was true whether such depictions were laudatory or deprecatory; only the value assigned to his dominion over “his” people changed.

To view Irineu Serra this way, as an encompassing personality, is in perfect keeping with what has been said to this point about the role of the *casa* in the formation of Brazilian personhood. In a society where a person is who she is because of her relationships to other people, it seems natural to focus attention on the ways that greater personalities encompass lesser ones. Given the Brazilian emphasis on encompassment and its corollary, mediation across social distance (as distinct from the direct engagement

associated with ideologies of individual autonomy), it makes sense that locals might be rather more concerned, in assessing a social formation such as Alto Santo, with its adherence to principles of propriety in navigating the forms this encompassment takes, and rather less with questioning the rightness of encompassment itself.[157]

Let us examine the kinds of things that were reportedly said about Irineu Serra, in order to see more clearly the shape that accusations against him took, and to understand how the themes that emerge from these accusations relate to the moral alchemy of Daimista practice, and Brazilian culture more broadly.

Encompassment and value: Shady arbor or burnt Brazil nut tree?

Some of the imagery used in discourse about Irineu Serra makes it clear that the idea of encompassment is taken for granted, certainly by his disciples.[158] Consider the example of a hymn from the corpus of Maria Damião, an early follower of Irineu Serra whose hymns often take the perspective of Irineu Serra addressing the congregation:

Eu sou uma árvore sombreira	I am a shady tree

[157] This issue may loom larger for foreigners and southern Brazilians, as well as visiting Europeans and Americans—those who are relatively more influenced by conceits of individual autonomy.

[158] The narrative of Irineu Serra's initial meeting with Guiomard dos Santos, discussed in chapter three, dramatizes the honorable submission of one's will to another. Irineu Serra does not presume to know that none of his men would want payment for their work, but offers them the chance to emerge as individuals in demanding payment for themselves. That they do not do so serves as a testament to their loyal submission to Irineu Serra, which itself is a sign of the righteousness of the Alto Santo social formation.

Assim como um coqueiro	Just like a coconut tree
Eu dou valor a vocês	I give you (pl.) value
Valor que nunca ninguém teve	Value no one ever had
Mas não sabem me agradecer	But you (pl.) don't know to thank me
Quanto mais me compreender	The more you understand me
Se são alguma coisa	If you (pl.) are something [of value]
É debaixo do meu poder	It is under my power

The image of the shady tree has extrapolated its place in this hymn, appearing in other discursive contexts around Alto Santo as a way of depicting the relationship between Irineu Serra and the congregation.

Without attempting to make explicit all the entailments of this image, it is apparent that it evokes a sense of overarching protection, as well as the distribution of value to those under the "tree." There is a relationship of iconic resemblance between Irineu Serra's person and the shady tree that is reinforced by his unusual physical size. Just as a tree stands over a group of creatures—even, say, a flock of sheep—so this image places Irineu Serra above "his" people, protecting them and giving them value. Particularly important, in my view, is the reference to the relationship of dependency in the second stanza (I have omitted the third and final stanza because it is not germane to the point I am developing here): "If you are something / It is under my power."

Returning to the institution of the *casa*, let us recall that it is the network of relations that makes persons of the individuals within the house, and not a collection of pre-

existing individuals who come together (contractually?) to form the social unit. As DaMatta put it,

> [W]ithin my network of kinship, *compadrio*, and friendship, in the house, I am a person. I am a divided and relational being, whose social existence is legitimized by the links I maintain with other people in a system of transitivity and gradations. I live in this house because I am the child of "X" and I have the right to use the social resources allocated there because I am a member of family "Y." It is not I as an individual who form a family, but it is the family and the relations made through it that legitimize me as a member of that social space. It is relationship that transforms me from individual to person. (DaMatta 1997:91)

The image of the shady tree points toward the existence of just such a social formation at Alto Santo. There is little surprising or scandalous about the fact that a social unit should form this way, given the ordinariness of hierarchical encompassment in Brazilian culture. What deserves our attention, however, is the fact that discourse about Alto Santo tends to offer dichotomous evaluations of the moral foundations of Irineu Serra's house. If he was a "shady arbor" for those who gathered themselves to him—protecting them, giving them dignity, curing them, and reformulating and bolstering their personhood—others spoke invidiously of Irineu Serra.

Such discourse, as has been common in Brazil, was a hybrid of racialized fears. Arneide Cemin writes that some locals called Alto Santo a "black thing" (*coisa de nego*), which some scholars have linked to a supposed predominance of more African-looking emigrants from Maranhão amongst the early disciples of Irineu Serra (Monteiro da Silva

2004; see also Moreira and MacRae 2011). Another epithet hurled at Irineu Serra and his followers is perhaps more telling in light of the interpretation I am developing here: the "cult of worshipping the burnt Brazil nut tree" ("*o culto de adoração ao castanheiro queimado*"; Cemin 1998:146).

This image's mirror inversion of the idea of a shady tree deserves further consideration. The Brazil nut tree (*Bertholletia excelsis*) is among the largest trees in Amazonia, its strikingly gray-white trunk reaching up to 150 feet in the air, and its ample canopy spreading out to cover surrounding vegetation. It is a tree of great economic and nutritional value, with nuts rich in vitamins, minerals, and vegetable oils, making it an important part of regional subsistence patterns. With the image of the burnt tree, the same elements that make *B. excelsis* an appropriate, positive metaphor for Irineu Serra's personal encompassment of "his" people, the "people of Daime," are turned to a jeering caricature. Among the important entailments of this image, on my reading, is that such "stature" as is implied by the shady arbor image is naturally appropriate only to lighter (white) individuals. Moreover, a burnt Brazil nut tree is unnatural, not productive, and a degradation of the way things are supposed to be according to the cosmic order.

This image was one of the ways that detractors of Irineu Serra and the Alto Santo congregation sought to indicate the social formation of Alto Santo and, without denying

the existence of a house-type situation there, to reframe it in terms of racialized discourse meant to impugn its moral character. Such discourse relied on the idea that Irineu Serra used weird means to achieve his personal desires at the expense of his followers' honor. It also associated his work with Daime / ayahuasca with longstanding Brazilian "fear of witchcraft" (Maggie 1992). Speaking of the ways Irineu Serra was perceived by those outside the Alto Santo congregation, one woman told Sandra Goulart:

> That time was so hard! There was a lot of prejudice. We were misunderstood. The people said a lot of things about the Mestre, about Daime. I myself, before coming to know the Mestre…before coming to know Daime, was very afraid (…). We were afraid because they said that it made people crazy, bewitched (…). They said if you drank Daime you'd be just like a crazy person, that you would lose control…and would fall into his hands, the Mestre's hands (…). They said he did all kinds of "work" [*trabalho*] (Goulart 2004:42)

Though Daime plays a role in this account, it appears not so much as a pharmacological agent as a magical tool by means of which, "they said," a person would come under the thrall of Irineu Serra. Rather than express concern for negative effects of the substance on the human organism, this discourse goes to a sense of the eclipsing of individual autonomy through encompassment by a greater personality (one more powerful than oneself, if not more righteous). The crux of this kind of discourse about Irineu Serra, however, is not the loss of autonomy in itself; indeed, the grounding of Brazilian personhood in the domain of the *casa* implies "dividual" personhood (Strathern) in

which encompassment by paternal authority is the matrix (patrix?) out of which persons are formed. And as a relational culture, Brazil's emphasizes the formation of proper relationships of dependency and mediation in which individual autonomy quite often takes a secondary (or at least complementary) role.

Instead, the doubt and fear expressed by Goulart's interlocutor seem to stem from the prospect of being swept up in a collectivity based on improper morality. More particularly, the statement indexes discourse on Afro-Brazilian practices (especially through the use of the terms *enfeitiçado* and *trabalho*) that were often viewed as diabolical and primitive (Maggie 1992).[159] In the light of this context, I read the statement above ("They said if you drank Daime you'd be just like a crazy person, that you would lose control…and would fall into his hands") as grounded in a widespread fear, on the part of Brazilian "polite society," of the excessive materiality of African ways

[159] In a recent paper, Roger Sansi-Roca reminds us of the origins of the notion of fetishism in the Portuguese colonial experience of Africa. The Portuguese *feitiço*, a noun meaning "witchcraft," "sorcery," or "black magic," is derived from the verb *fazer* (meaning "to do" or "to make," it is also the source of the Daimista term of art *feitio*), and its application to African ritual practices led to a focus on "made things" (*coisas feitas*) thought to be imbued with magical powers, giving rise to the notion of the "fetish" as a sign of the supposed primitive confusion of subject and object (Sansi-Roca 2008).

of interacting with the unseen.[160] We can see this conflation of intoxicant and fetish in the statement of one woman interviewed by Arneide Bandeira Cemin:

> [E]ven today there are those who say that Daime is an intoxicant, and this intoxicant business isn't new, no; it comes from the beginning of the group. They also used to say that Mestre Irineu did whatever he pleased: married and baptized people; grabbed others' wives and took them into his study. All of this complicated things before the law, all those things he didn't do, until it reached the point of persecution. (Cemin 1998:212-3)

The use of the term "intoxicant" might easily be understood as an index of contemporary drug discourse, but this would be a mistake. Proper comprehension of this statement requires seeing it within the context of Brazilian medicalization of Afro-Brazilian ritual as psychopathology. This approach was reflected in Brazil's 1890 law criminalizing *curandeirismo*, or "quackery" and aimed at repressing "dangerous" Afro-Brazilian healing and religious practices (MacRae 2008). The law defined Spiritism, "animal magnetism," magic, etc., as affronts to public health, specifying penalties for their practice and singling out the use of "substances" that might cause the "privation, or temporary or permanent alteration of [a putative patient's] psychic faculties." If

[160] I point here to a racialized fear, but a similar argument can be made with reference to the tensions within Brazilian society between individual autonomy and submission to hierarchy. As DaMatta teaches, the former is valued but the latter is the basis for Brazilian personhood. Brazilians often experience tensions between the moral codes suggested by these competing values, so it makes some sense that accusations against Alto Santo, or other marginalized groups, might take the form of imputing an imbalance: too much submission, not enough autonomy. However, this does not explain why Irineu Serra and his followers were targeted in particular. Here, Irineu Serra's African appearance and the marked otherness of ayahuasca indeed seem relevant.

Brazil's anti-quackery law had outlines similar to those of later, international drug laws, this was likely because they shared the goal of controlling particular segments of society on the basis of medical claims about substances those groups employed. Here, Daime again appears, not as a toxic substance presenting physiological danger in itself, but rather as the tool with which Irineu Serra supposedly overcame resistance to the realization of his nefarious ends. Hypersexuality, relational impropriety, and usurpation of Church authority in matters of the Catholic sacraments are the key notes of these claims against Irineu Serra's work with Daime. These same complaints, it bears pointing out, could be made against a person practicing hypnotism or even one enticing corruption by payment of money: the leitmotif here is the moral decay of social formations, not the physiological degradation of individual bodies.

I think it is important to notice the role of the will here: what appears objectionable is that Irineu Serra was supposed to have run Alto Santo according to his own personal whims, and for the satisfaction of his private desires, and not, as was claimed, for the good of his followers, of the Brazilian nation, and of humanity. The charge, in short, is of arrogance in assuming a place above one's station and gathering people under false pretenses.

In sum, if Alto Santo discourse emphasizes the righteousness of Irineu Serra's mission in working with Daime, it is because the question of the moral valence of encompassing

authority is a recurring and insistent issue in Brazilian social relations. As a householder is, so goes the house, in which loyalty, belonging, respect, and patronly care are core concerns. Although discourse about Alto Santo has often addressed Daime and its effects in a negative light, these attacks have not been framed in the terms we would expect of a discussion of drug abuse. In such talk, and in Daimista self-representation, precious little is to be found that is particular to the discursive formation of drugs, except insofar as their materiality tends to make them suspect of excess Africanness in the context of Brazilian ritual practice. The focus is, instead, on the fact of hierarchy and on questioning the moral propriety of the group's patron(s), both earthly and spiritual.

The "good boss" and the "bad boss"

Earlier I suggested, following DaMatta's reflections on Brazilian culture in general and Marcelo Piedrafita Iglesias's more specific discussion of Acrean history, that the figures of the "good boss" and the "bad boss" provide a model of the ways moral authority intersects with hierarchy in Brazil and, perhaps especially, in Acre. Discourse about bosses, I want to emphasize, does not tend toward questioning their existence as an organizing social principle; instead, it focuses on the quality of their care for their workers' personhood (and, often, for men's sense of masculinity and honor). As DaMatta has observed, discourse originating with the so-called "popular classes" tends to be "fundamentally moral or moralizing discourse, where the classes or actors in

conflict (such as bosses and workers) are almost always in complementary opposition and depend upon one another" (DaMatta 1997:49). Such discourse takes these categories for granted, even seeing divine ordination behind the earthly creation of difference between them. In this "truly fantastical naturalization," hierarchical social relations "are rarely perceived and pronounced historical and arbitrary; on the contrary, it is as though they were part of a cosmic moral order given by God" (ibid.).

Part of the difficulty of Irineu Serra's career as a spiritual leader lay in resistance to the notion that such a person, so clearly marked by marginality, could legitimately occupy a boss-like social position. Thus, while criticism of Irineu Serra indeed pointed to his marginality as a tactic of moral disqualification, it was the implications of this discourse about the morality of social relations at Alto Santo, rather than Irineu Serra's belonging to marginalized categories in itself, that gave content to the scurrilous talk about town regarding the outsized prophet.

Complementary opposites require one another, and the good boss recognizes that fact and lets his people know that he recognizes it. For the whole to continue, the complementary classes must remain in relationship to one another. The bad boss is so concerned with selfish gain that he does not pay attention to the sustainability of the

relationship. Extracting what he wants in the short term, he spoils the possibility of long-term cooperation.[161]

The case of Irineu Serra isn't just a similar example, but tells us about the moral underpinnings of these relationships in general. Much of the critical talk and writing about Irineu Serra was intended to indict him as a bad boss. Not to question his "boss-ness"—which was, in any case, evidenced by the growing numbers of followers, which swelled into the hundreds in the 1960s—but to suggest that the forces that held the congregation together at Alto Santo were contrary to the proper functioning of things. In a cultural context where social inequality has a stamp of divine approval, and the Catholic Church has long claimed a monopoly on legitimate mediation of relations with God, one of the available discursive strategies was to link Irineu Serra to a line of patronage that led, not to the heavens, but to their opposite.

The Bumpkin Troubadour (*O Trovador Matuto*), the Church, and Daime

The period of the mid-1950s into the 1960s was a time of official Church intolerance toward heterodox practices in Acre, with book burnings of Spiritist literature and

[161] The complementary dependency of Irineu Serra and "his" people was acknowledged in Alto Santo discourse linking the health of Irineu Serra (or his willingness and ability to remain on earth with "his"people) to the unity (união) of the congregation; rebelliousness in the face of the Master's teachings was a primary obstacle to this unity, and, in later years, cast as a threat to Irineu Serra's health. At the time of our fieldwork, similar things were expressed with regard to Dona Peregrina, with members occasionally harangued for working to hasten her demise with their discord.

condemnations of ayahuasca use from the pulpit. Some of this ferment may have come from a desire to “clean up” Acre in preparation for its elevation from the status of federal territory to statehood, which occurred in 1962.

Among the forms taken by this orthodox house-cleaning, it seems, were several poems published by one Raimundo Nonato Messias, who called himself, in an apparent bid for populist appeal, the “Bumpkin Troubadour” (*O Trovador Matuto*). We know that Raimundo Nonato was a champion both of the Catholic Church and of the particularities of the Acrean Catholic landscape, as one of his poems makes clear: It relates the story of a sick rubber tapper, who, seeking help with his wife, died in the forest. Lighting a small fire, she went for help. Upon her return, she found the fire still burning, but not consuming the wood; neither scavengers nor insects had fed upon the husband’s body, which was perfectly preserved. Amazed at the providential result, faithful locals erected a simple bamboo cross, and as the story’s fame grew, the place became a pilgrimage site for the suffering and afflicted (Oliveira 2002).

The Bumpkin Troubadour’s awestruck approval in this poem contrasts markedly with his versified depiction of another local custom, the use of Daime at Alto Santo and other spiritual centers. In a text entitled “Nightmare” (*Pêsadelo*), he wrote of a disturbing encounter:

I dreamt: a deserted, yellowed field
A black man, with wide chest, thick neck
Svelte, strong, a real colossus
Barefoot, white teeth, a red eye

He asked me: "what do you want in my kingdom?
Go away, great imposter
I am lord of all you see here
This kingdom where you are is enchanted"

"It is of the Dumbanda people, Beelzebub dominates
I am his assistant, the Black Cayman"
I began to move and twist
I woke up then very tired
My God, what a tormented dream
Never ever will I go to such a session.
[Messias 1961:31]

There can be little doubt about the target of the Bumpkin Troubadour's wit: Irineu Serra's physical size and obvious African ancestry were quite distinctive, particularly in the days when Rio Branco was a town of only several thousand residents, most of them *cearenses* and therefore not particularly African in appearance. Like the "burnt Brazil nut tree," this text suggests sterility and a lack of value production, with the image of the "deserted, yellowed field" in place of the tree.[162] It dwells, in racialized language,

[162] The implication seems to be that Irineu Serra and "his" people, as participants in the agricultural colony program, were so completely enmeshed in their ritual life that they neglected the care of their fields. This theme is also taken up in a text written in the 1980s by Agnaldo Moreno, an agricultural extension agent, in which he described, in retrospect, how his rational handling of Irineu Serra and his community had helped bring its practice in line with respectability. He availed himself of imagery of social entropy and lack of productivity similar to that of the Bumpkin Troubadour:

upon the figure's physical appearance to the point of implied grotesqueness: the menace of his white teeth and red eyes are confirmed in his announcement to the dreamer that "I am his assistant, the Black Cayman." (The dreaded *jacaré açu*, *Melanosuchus niger*, native to Amazonia, is one of the world's largest species of alligator and one of the region's top predators.)

It seems to me significant that the figure encountered by the dreamer, for all his fearsomeness in his own right, makes reference to his own insertion within a hierarchy "dominated" by an unseen patron. The poet takes apparently squeamish delight in outlining the terrors of this "kingdom," which he says is "of the Dumbanda people." While "Dumbanda" is unfamiliar and not to be found in Portuguese dictionaries, the word resembles a contracted form of "*de Umbanda*" (*d'Umbanda*, i.e., "of Umbanda"),

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> In the ashes of the hearth slept the dog, the last friend to abandon the house; the cat had left already. He is the first to take off when crisis comes. No trace of small animals on the grounds. The garden beds small, and overtaken by weeds. The residents of the house were absent, they almost always went to the seat [*sede*] of the religious sect. [Moreno 1991]

Moreno's tone is less moralistic than social-scientistic, but still he blames the "consequences of fervent adaptation to the customs of *aiuasca*" [sic] for these problems. Many in the area, he explains, "belonged to the mystical organization of Mestre Irineu, of *aiuasca* [sic] tea and its ritual… and, because of exaggeration did not work more on their agricultural lots, leading them to economic failure" (Moreno 1991). He takes credit for influencing Irineu Serra, as a good "*Pai de Santo*" (a *candomblé* term for a spiritual leader) to rationalize his group's practice, registering official documents and removing ritual activity from his *casa* to a separate building—both moves meant to base Alto Santo more firmly in a *rua*-type context.

which is likely a poorly transcribed (or else lightly veiled) reference to the Afro-Brazilian religion, which found itself in a phase of expansion at the time of the Troubadour's writing in 1961. Umbanda's fusion of European Spiritism, African animism, and other cultural threads gave it appeal to many as a synthesis of the divisions implicit in Brazil's "myth of the three races" (DaMatta 1990), even as it seemed to the Catholic Church leadership to be an unacceptable mixing.[163]

The poet's horror stems from having found himself, in his dream, on the "inside" of a demonic "kingdom" that is "enchanted." While Beelzebub, to my knowledge, is not a part of Umbanda practice, his identification as the one who "dominates" the proceedings constitutes a metadiscursive strategy to associate Alto Santo practice with Christian demonology, as well as dangerous beasts and African witchcraft. Beelzebub, the "Lord of the Flies" of Hebrew and Christian iconography, has been particularly associated with the sins of pride and gluttony, appears appears as Satan's assistant in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Outlining this unholy hierarchy, with Beelzebub as the patron of the house, the poem asserts a negatively valued inversion of Daimistas' view of themselves as assisting in the salvation of humanity through spiritual work. It is an

[163] In this sense Umbanda would have been subject to the same kinds of complaints, cited earlier, that the missionary Constant Tastevin had about the religious promiscuity of the residents of Tarauacá. Indeed, many Umbanda practitioners also consider themselves devout Catholics, to say nothing of the many people who frequent Umbanda centers for consultation and healing but do not claim membership.

important facet of these descriptions that they acknowledge Irineu Serra's power, but give it radically opposed value and suggest that its source is illegitimate. Irineu Serra is still placed in a position of mediation, except that he is mediating contact with "Beelzebub," which makes all the difference. Rather than leading his people to healing and salvation, we might fairly assume, Irineu Serra is seen in the poem as an agent of damnation and perdition.

The key to this inversion, it seems to me, lies in the entailments of the claim that "Beelzebub dominates" the Alto Santo ambience, which reveal a certain equivalence between moral judgments of the propriety of social relations within a given social formation and the evaluation of the group's "patron" (or, as here, attribution of patronship to a notorious figure). This is a general and repeating principle in Brazilian culture, stemming from its "dividualist" emphasis in the formation of persons. In the classic example of the house, the patriarch sits at the apex of the hierarchy, mediating between the house, as the matrix of personhood; the formal space of the street; and the "other world" of the divine. The house constitutes a domain within which, under the principle of *patria potestas*, the interpretation and enactment of the cosmic moral order falls to its owner, a cultural truth recognized in the Daimista hymn that affirms: "Everyone orders in his own house / I also order in mine."

If the residents of a house are supposed to follow God's law, as administered, first and foremost, by the lord of the house, he bears responsibility for their conduct before the larger society. In a way analogous to Irineu Serra's concern about bringing a "good name" to the Brazilian nation, when the house model is emphasized, there is concern with the "name" of the householder and its value within the circulating social discourse. As I suggested earlier, a "good boss" takes some responsibility for preserving "his" men's sense of masculine honor; partly this is to ensure their loyalty and bolster morale, but it is equally true that disgruntled workers' complaints to their peers about "bad bosses" help constitute the value attached to those bosses' fame, and could have practical effects on their ability to gather people to them.

Attributing a "bad boss" to a given social formation was thus a viable way to contest its legitimacy, all the more so for the evocations of evil enchantment, witchcraft, and demonic selfishness that attended the image of Beelzebub's "kingdom." As is the boss (the thinking goes), so are the followers. "Never will I go to such a session," the Troubadour writes at the end of his "Nightmare," clearly hoping that people of goodwill would join him, lest they be led from the path of righteousness by maleficent forces.

The Troubadour used similar language of encompassing authority in another poem about ayahuasca in Rio Branco, this one aimed at the Barquinha congregation in Vila Ivonete, which, with its especially strong focus on charity, has long considered St.

Francis of Assisi the spiritual patron of its mission. Notice that here, the Troubadour reverses his rhetorical assault: rather than naming a demonic patron in order to imply an improper moral basis for the social formation, he instead mocks the claimed affiliation as being an absurdity in light of the terrible results he claims stem from Barquinha practice.

"Euásca"

It is in the Vila Ivonete: the Kingdom
Of the "Santo Dá me", ayahuasca
Whoever drinks this opiate is stupefied
And gets foolish for a long time

The Mundubixaba [Murubixaba] of the wicked men's division[164]
Thus so many are going crazy
Other wretches are even dying
Blindly they continue obsessed

It is a chapel, that cult.
They claim Saint Francis as their excuse
It is too much! … What horrible temerity!
We ask the Department of Health
Consider: Get serious,
It is high time to end the evil
[Messias 1961:28]

[164] The word given as "division" is *seção* in the original, cognate of "section." In my experience, however, this word is often written by Brazilians of limited literacy when the homophone *sessão* ("session") is intended. As neither reading makes perfect sense (seeming to lack a verb), I have kept the notion that references an idea of social organization, since that is the tenor of the Bumpkin Troubadour's versified harangue.

The Troubadour "knows" that the good St. Francis cannot possibly be the actual patron of the congregation because he judges the results of activity there as incompatible with the saint's influence. Such a patron, it is presumed, would never condone taking a substance to become "stupefied" (*se embasbaca*) or "foolish" (*atoleimado*), nor would he allow, within his house, "going crazy," "even dying" in his name. In the final stanza the Troubadour suggests that the state address the use of ayahuasca as a public health problem, linking it to insanity, death, and obsessive cult-centered activity.[165]

Behind the mask of St. Francis, the Troubadour finds "the Mundubixaba of the wicked men's division," a curious phrase that invokes a Brazilian commonplace index of Indian leadership. Usually written *morubixaba*, it is similar to the English *chief* in its connotations.[166] The primary aim of such language seems to be to invoke a parallel (and inferior) set of social orderings, one associated with Africanness and indigeneity as inversions of Christian morality and social relations.

[165] The global process of decolonization after World War II may have influenced Brazil to grant independence to this "internal colony" in 1962. This "elevation to statehood" entailed presenting Acre's best face to the world, and was probably part of the dynamic that influenced the Troubadour's call for repression of ayahuasca use in the name of "public health." Documentary evidence reveals that countervailing efforts were underway by an alliance of leaders of ayahuasca centers to obtain certificates attesting to a lack of "cases of intoxication" caused by ayahuasca. This period, I believe, marks an important transition to more contemporary drug discourse with respect to ayahuasca in Acre, in which the language of assays, chemical substances, and physiological effects gains ground.

[166] It is essentially equivalent to the term *tuxaua*, which is heard more commonly today in everyday and commercial speech, as in a regional brand of guaraná-root based soft-drink, Guaraná Tuxaua.

Discourse about Irineu Serra and his community of followers alluded to his identity in racialized, classist, and cosmological terms, all morally charged. It is evident from the earnestness of his followers and from his storied friendships with local leaders that Irineu Serra's fame in Rio Branco and the Acre region was not significantly diminished by such discourse, but rather existed in tension with it. For those close to the Catholic Church, such as the Bumpkin Troubadour, Irineu Serra's work with ayahuasca exemplified the excesses of a folk Catholicism too untethered from Vatican doctrine. In criticizing centers like Alto Santo and the Barquinha "Little Chapel" in the Vila Ivonete neighborhood, some strands of local discourse sought to indict Irineu Serra's relational propriety, pointing to negatively valued images of hierarchy and encompassment in doing so. These images tended to imply the negation of values held in common by Brazilians, including self-control, selflessness and charity, respect for social hierarchy and the relationships constituting it (including the divine and the divinely ordained social order, with its complementary oppositions and sacraments, particularly marriage). Such imagery, in sum, tends to imply that Alto Santo social life erodes Brazilian social norms. From the perspective of Daimistas, at least, nothing could be further from the truth.

Passage to knowledge from skepticism

In the bus-station encounter with Dona Dima related above, I was puzzled and intrigued by the very discreet, even conspiratorial manner in which she mentioned Daime. Given the degree of official acceptance and even celebration attained by Alto Santo and other ayahuasca-using groups within Acrean political culture, I asked, why might she behave in public as though to mention Daime were to invite popular opprobrium?

Once again, the easy answer is that Daime and Irineu Serra are still stigmatized in the minds of many Acreans because of their linkage to discourses about drugs, African fetishism, and magical compulsion. Perhaps Daimistas from Alto Santo, not wishing to attract negative attention, avoid public displays that would link them with the center.

There are two basic objections to this view, which have already been registered above in their general form. One is that it imputes a shame to Daimistas about their spiritual practice that is incongruent with both their discourse about Irineu Serra and his Doctrine as being in line with Brazilian (and Christian) values, and with official recognition of the man and the practice as elements of Acre's *patrimônio histórico e cultural*.

The other objection, perhaps less obvious but maybe even more serious, is that such a view portrays Daimistas as basically reactive to regnant social prejudice, and makes of

their identity a residual category, populated with little more than denials of the unkind things others said about them and their patron. If we accept that Daimistas stand for something positive—that is, that their practice is not solely, or even broadly, constituted by rejection of dominant social values—what might Dona Dima's behavior signal, other than the persistence, in a longtime member, of reactions to prejudices that have mostly been overcome?

I think the answer has to do with an "esoteric turn" in Irineu Serra's Doctrine. During our fieldwork, I came to discern a pattern in adherents' accounts of their "arrival" in the "Master's house" in which a great deal of narrative weight tended to fall upon a passage from *skepticism*—in the form of doubt about the moral valence of Alto Santo practice—to *knowledge*, in the sense of the certainty derived from personal experience that is connoted by the Latinate distinction between *conhecer* (to be familiar with; the "knowing how" of procedural knowledge) and *saber* (to know a thing intellectually; the "knowing that" of declarative knowledge).

This kind of knowing requires experience. They say, "Drink Daime and pay attention," and consider it the case that those who have had this experience are linked in an esoteric way, and those who have not had it could not possibly understand. (This is likely why it says in the Decree not to "speak of what occurs in the sessions with those who do not participate in them, though they be members of one's family.") This esoteric

experiential exclusivity balances with a universalist outlook, in which “here we are with open arms ready to receive those who come of their free and spontaneous will.”

The insistence on paying attention to the hymns felt at first like obfuscation. Indeed, it has been used in some instances that seem like justifications for the exercise of power. The center’s documents record one case from the 1980s, when Dona Peregrina declared the abolition of the center’s board of directors, telling any who would question the move that she would not accept it, and much less “inquiries directed at my own person.” In a statement read before the members of the center, she advised “those who wish to understand the reasons for this decision” to drink Daime and seek the answer in their experience.

The following two sections scrutinize this characteristic passage of Daimista initiation. The first of these sections is concerned with some of the formal features of Daimista hymns that assist the process of their entextualization, which in turn supports discourse about their divine origins and spiritual power. The second section examines these stylistic features in performance as contributors to a process of personal moral reformation.

"Written in the Astral": Entextualization of Daimista hymns

As palavras que eu disser	The words that I speak
Aqui perante a este Poder	Here before this Power
Estão escritas no Astral	Are written in the Astral
Para todo mundo ver	For everyone to see

Virtually every person to whom I spoke in depth about his or her "arrival in the Master's house" mentioned a period early on in their contact with the *Doutrina* in which they wondered about its moral foundations. They seemed, in their own ways, to recapitulate Irineu Serra's storied moment in the jungle, grasping the jagube vine and issuing an ultimatum, the crux of which was whether it would "bring a good name" to the nation or not. Accordingly, one woman told Arneide Bandeira Cemin that talk about Irineu Serra and Daime made her wonder, before she had experience with Alto Santo ritual, whether it was a "thing of God" (implying radically binary alternatives) (Cemin 1998). Similarly, seu Cipriano, a follower of Irineu Serra since the 1960s, told of hearing about Alto Santo while he was still in Porto Velho, capital of neighboring Rondônia: "It's a *macumba* [place of African witchcraft] that you'll never get out of again," a man told him there. "But you have to see the size of the *macumbeiro*!"

The ubiquity of this narrative trope seemed to indicate something significant about how Daimistas at Alto Santo understand the powers accessed with Daime. Across different contexts, from narratives of followers' "arrival" to the texts of hymns, Alto Santo

discourse emphasized an “esoteric turn” with these key notes: appearances are deceptive; official truths are partial; and experience alone can resolve the question of the moral valence of a social formation.

Certain of the hymns speak of a “force” that is everywhere and accessible to all, yet overlooked and underappreciated:

Esta força	This force
É muito simples, todo mundo vê	Is very simple, everyone sees it
Mas passa por ela	But passes it by
E não procura compreender	And doesn’t try to understand

Similarly, some hymns reference divine gifts through the metaphor of flowers, figuring them again as accessible to all but needlessly and foolishly spurned:

Todo mundo recebe	Everyone receives
As flores que vêm de lá	The flowers that come from there [the astral]
Mas ninguém presta atenção	But no one pays attention
Ninguém sabe aproveitar	No one knows how to make use [of them]

These hymns reveal the Daimista preference for finding the exalted in the lowly and the essential in what is commonly overlooked. They bear, too, a striking resemblance to Felizardo’s descriptions of magnetic force, given by the divine to help “humanity itself” but widely and tragically misunderstood, even viewed as diabolical.

If there is a cultural critique to Daimista practice, it is in this esotericist notion of misapprehension of the hidden forces of the cosmos. This notion is countercultural to

the extent that it emphasizes experience as the source of true knowledge, as opposed, for example, to the doctrinal teachings of the Catholic Church.

In Acre, Irineu Serra established his house as a center, shall we say, that radiates its own authority. Such activity may be seen to threaten extant sources of power.[167] Indeed, Brazil's history gives us numerous examples of the state's violent reaction to the development of centers of authority that it did not control, from the expulsion of the Jesuits by the Marquis of Pombal to the massacre of Antonio Conselheiro and his people at Canudos. Such social formations, however, are deeply a part of Brazilian culture, and are often viewed positively. Any situation of encompassment such as Alto Santo is likely to be subject to evaluation in terms of the good boss / bad boss dichotomy. In evaluating "good" and "bad" bosses, the notion of encompassment is taken for granted, and the question then revolves around the care the boss takes, or fails to take, with the personhood of his people. The moral fabric of the relationship is what is tested and at stake.

[167] It would be useful to revisit Irineu Serra's relationships with political figures such as Guiomard dos Santos with this notion of threat in mind; such a perspective would lend a sharper edge to what are portrayed, in idealized retrospect, as frictionless relations. If, as I assert throughout this work, the formation of Alto Santo is intelligible, in Brazilian cultural terms, as a kind of balancing of complementary categories (house / street, city / forest, world / astral), surely there is negotiation and tension involved in the creation and maintenance of these relationships.

The specter of drugs / macumba is that the collectivist / encompassment dynamic will dominate individual autonomy; rather than remain in their (ideal, if not actual) relationship of balance, autonomy is surrendered, or taken away, with only compulsive (and therefore undue) loyalty remaining. In this way fears of witchcraft and magical fetishes resemble drug discourse, in which the capacity to choose is progressively eroded.

Irineu Serra's sociological marginality, the liminal position of Alto Santo between the forest and the city, and Daimista recourse to indigenous spiritual technologies all seemed to invite the kinds of criticism the group and its leader received from the likes of the Bumpkin Troubadour: fanatical, diabolical, wanton. At the same time, these features lent themselves very well to the insistently humble ethos that seeks encounter with the divine in that which is devalued by society. DaMatta identifies humility as a characteristic mode of self-presentation for the Brazilian lower classes, but it also shares key elements of the nationalist esotericism that Felizardo distilled out of his CECP study and sojourn in the forests as an "Indian catechizer."

The following section on hymns is aimed mainly at showing how their formal features generate a sense of their "otherness"—that is, their divine origins in the *Astral*, from where they "come complete" and are "received" by humans. It is this proposition that ultimately justifies Alto Santo practice: the hymns, like esotericist "magnetic force," are

keys to access universal powers and to learn universal truths. Their origin apart from human intention is fundamental in the context of the good boss / bad boss dichotomy, as that is what guarantees that the moral root of the practice is a "thing of God" and not merely of the vanity of the person in charge.

The origin of hymns in Daimista practice

Florestan Maia Neto (2003:20-21) reports the following narrative of the origin of hymns within Alto Santo practice, collected from Luiz Mendes, a long-time member of the Alto Santo irmandade who left with seu Nica and others in 1983:

> In the beginning there were no hymns
> what there was were *chamados*,[168] which were whistled or hummed.
>
> One day, the Virgin Mother said to him [that is, to Mestre Irineu]:
> I will teach you some hymns
> for you to teach also to yours
> so as not to sing these things of the world.
>
> Instead of singing these things of the world that have no value
> sing these hymns that I will teach you!
>
> So he said, "Is that right?!"

[168] In Peruvian ayahuasca *vegetalismo*, whistled or chanted melodies called *icaros* are one of the *vegetalista*'s most important tools for navigating in the spiritual realm (see, e.g., Luna 1986). In the União do Vegetal, the chants that are used, even today, to "call the force" (*chamar a força*) or otherwise interact with the power of ayahuasca are known as *chamadas*. It is worth pointing out that, although the tenor of this narrative is the substitution of chamados by hymns, several people told me that Mestre Irineu continued to employ whistled melodies in his spiritual work even after he began receiving hymns (see Labate and Pacheco 2010). While these musical forms eventually dropped out of Alto Santo practice, Mestre Irineu reportedly indicated to some of his followers that the chamados were assimilated, in esoteric fashion, to the hymnal the Cruzeiro, rather than rejected as profane.

And she said, "That is right, and it has to start with you, you will learn."
He said, "But how, my mother? I have never sung anything in my life."
Then she said, "But I will teach you!"

He insisted that it was not possible because he had never sung, and so on...
She told him not to worry, that she would teach him.

In the middle of all that insisting
on one side as much as the other
she went and said,
"Open your mouth and say something!"

So he opened his mouth and started singing "Lua Branca"! The first hymn.
He was gazing at the moon, it was a moonlit night.

Later, he asked the Queen to grant permission
for the *irmãos* [brothers and sisters] to receive hymns also.

That is when it started:
Germano, João Pereira, Maria Damião, Antônio Gomes,[169]
and from there they gathered.

In this section I want to discuss the hinário as a site of entextualization processes. This requires taking care to recognize the emergent quality of hymns' textuality so as not to assume the categories of hinário, hymn, and others as given. As Silverstein and Urban point out, anthropologists have sometimes succumbed to the confusion between culture and the texts that result from entextualization processes, but to do so "is to miss the fact that texts…represent one, 'thing-y' phase in a broader conceptualization of

[169] These are the four early followers of Mestre Irineu known collectively as "*os quatro mortos*" ("four dead ones") because they all predeceased Mestre Irineu. While different Daimista centers define themselves partly by the hinários they employ, the hinários received by these four, together with the Cruzeiro, enjoy wide acceptance.

cultural process" (1996:1). Complicating things somewhat is the fact that the textuality of Daimista hymns, marked by their canonical treatment and discourse about their origins as divine gifts, rather than human compositions, is an important aspect of Daimista identity construction. Daimistas reliably insist on the distinction between mere songs ("these things of the world") and the divine, edifying gifts that are the hymns.

The approach I take is inspired especially by Joel Kuipers's (1990) book on Weyewa ritual speech. As I understand it, one important part of seeing entextualization at work in performance is identifying the various ways that discourse is marked, segmented, and given coherence. In ritual speech, such marking commonly makes use of contrast with "everyday" speech through variations in grammar (phonology, morphology, lexicon, and syntax), prosody (intonation, stress, and pitch), and other sensible aspects of communication, such as proxemics.

I start out by examining characteristic variations in some of these areas. At Alto Santo the textual organization of hymns is taken for granted, and the various levels of structure in the Cruzeiro (and other hinários) are attributed to divine design. I want to show how this coherence is manifested on the textual plane, constellating hymns as discrete entities with internal consistency at several levels, and creating intertextual links that join them together in larger wholes. In conjunction with this kind of textual coherence, I want to suggest ways that the other expressive modes present in hinários,

especially repetitive percussion, melody, and dance, assist the entextualization process. These parallel codes reinforce the sense that hymns "come complete" from the divine, as one Alto Santo musician told me.

Following discussion of some of the stylistic features that contribute to the hymns' poetic power, I explore an example in which their presence is particularly striking, aligning the several codes that are manipulated in hymn singing with impressive pragmatic effect. In showing how these codes interpenetrate one another, I want to illuminate the understanding, prominent in Alto Santo discourse, that the spiritual teachings of the *Doutrina* are made potentially available to experience in the performance of the hymns. ("Daime is the Bible of those who can't read.") People at Alto Santo drink Daime to experience an absolute and fundamental truth that transcends "this world" of perfidy and illusion.

Stylistic features of hymns

Hymn singing is marked as distinct from everyday speech by multiple genre features. It is metered, rhymed, and accompanied by coordinated semiotic expressions in other modes (e.g., the rhythm of the maracás, the guitars, and the rows of dancers moving together, as well as a "visually suggested deictic field" (Irvine 1996) oriented toward the table at the center of the salon, rather than a face-to-face dyad). These genre features

regulate vocal tempo and phrasing, as well as breath rhythm and intonational contour. (Sometimes this results in a singing voice startlingly different from everyday speech; Cosmo's hymn singing, for example, is characterized by nasalization and "metallic" overtones quite distinct from his usual speaking voice.) They also regulate turn-taking (everyone sings together). As fixed texts, furthermore, they regulate word choice by virtually eliminating variation (though there is some evidence that hymns are sung differently between Daimista groups, and even within Alto Santo by different individuals). Moreover, the hymns impose a particular grammar and lexicon on singers that has been characterized as a *caboclo* (Brazilian mestizo) speech variety.[170] Hymn singing also takes place in particular locations, most often in the salon, which are differentiated by their architectural features and landscaping from the "outside" and the "street."

In these places, no ordinary speech is required; in fact, it is mostly excluded from the hinário, made to play worldly counterpart to the hymns' divinity. Exceptionally, some situation may arise in the salon that requires ordinary communication, as when someone falls down or causes a disruption. Even then, things are handled discreetly, with a minimum of talk, so as not to destroy the ritual frame. From the time that the

[170] *Caboclo* Portuguese is quite similar to rural "caipira" dialects, exhibiting, for example, some of the same nonstandard usages of the plural discussed in Ribeiro (2001).

prayers open the hinário ritual until its conclusion, there is no place for ordinary speaking (though the house's orator customarily gives a short topical address on feast dates). Despite this (ideal) absence of ordinary conversational speech, however, language plays an important role in the hinário through the hymns themselves. Whereas ordinary speech is considered to express individual willfulness and, in the limit case of gossip, to lead to social discord, hymns at Alto Santo do not result from human intention at all, according to discourse about them; rather than being composed, they are gifts "received" from the divine. As speech for which its human animators are not ultimately responsible, hymns are powerful because they use the voice for sacred (and pro-social) rather than profane (and anti-social) ends—namely, the direct transmission of divine teachings.[171]

Alto Santo discourse about hymns and their origins connects the moment of singing both to the moment of reception of the hymn, and ultimately to the timelessness of the *astral* (heavens). Emphasizing each of these moments in turn can highlight the gap

[171] Ordinary conversation and gossip were often opposed to the proper conduct taught by (and manifested in) the hymns. Daimistas at Alto Santo, like many Christians, perform the sign of the cross; in doing so, they touch, with the right hand, first the forehead, then the solar plexus, then the left breast, dragging across to the right before finally touching the mouth. When I asked about this, I was told that the mouth is touched last as a reminder that it is "the greatest enemy." Similarly, Joca told me he'd often been counseled by his older brother to stay in the salon, doing the work of the session. "There outside," he told me, speaking of the common areas in front of the building where people sometimes gathered during hinários to talk and smoke cigarettes, "is where you get caught up" in interpersonal intrigue through loose talk.

between the hymn's source and the present circumstances, as may the ritual framing of hymn singing. But distance from ordinary canonical speech is also evident in the formal poetic features of the hymns. These features suggest patterns, and the coherence of these patterns is taken as evidence of their extra-worldly origins.

Writing of the repetitive character of poetic language, Roman Jakobson noted the tendency toward "recurrent returns" and "repeated figures" within texts as ways of building coherence (1966:399). Within entextualizing discourse, it is the multiple presentation of forms, either integrally or with slight alteration, that allows their recognition as potentially detachable and repeatable entities. Repetition, writes Kuipers, "forces comparison, on an auditory, semantic, and grammatical level, between linguistic elements" (1990:71). Discrimination of phonemes in ordinary speech also depends on such comparison; what distinguishes poetic speech, as Dell Hymes (1981) has taught, is its organization in "lines and groups of lines" established by equivalence and difference.

Lines, couplets, and stanzas

Perhaps because whole hymns are held to be monadic, fixed texts, discourse about units below the level of the hymn itself or the stanza is not as well developed at Alto Santo as it is, for example, among the Weyewa, who have a greater degree of freedom in combining couplets creatively in their ritual speech (Kuipers 1990). Yet it is at the level

of the line and the couplet that much of the coherence of the hymns as texts is developed.

Commonly, the unity of couplets is manifested as the second line provides missing grammatical elements to complete the first:

Eu devo pedir	I must ask
A quem pode me dar	The one who can give me

Other couplets contain two grammatically complete sentences, where coherence is achieved by reading the second line as adding information about the subject introduced in the first:

A Minha Mãe é a Santa Virgem	My Mother is the Holy Virgin
Ela é quem vem me ensinar	She is who comes to teach me

Here, presumed coreference of “My Mother” and “she” suggests the unity of the couplet.

Sentence completion and topical coherence connect the two lines of the couplet, marking it as a whole. But this whole is also divisible, as is made clearer by the transposition of units. For example, the appearance in one hymn of the couplet

Ensinar os meus irmãos	**To teach my siblings**
Aqueles que me escutar	Those who listen to me

and in another of the very similar

E ensinar os meus irmãos	**And teach my siblings**
Aqueles que procurar	Those who seek

and, in a third, of

Para replantar a Santa Doutrina	To replant the Holy Doctrine
E ensinar os meus irmãos	**And teach my siblings**

highlights the repeated line, solidifying it as a detachable entity. It calls to attention the fact that the line in question is one half of a pair, thus allowing the discrimination of both the line and the couplet as analytical units. At the thematic level, repeated lines link each couplet and hymn to the others with the same line, establishing tropes of central importance to the *Doutrina*. ("Teaching" is clearly one of these; there are at least 8 instances of some version of the line "to teach my siblings" throughout the Cruzeiro, and many more involving some form of "to teach.")

Although grammatical completion, coreference, and transposition of line- and couplet-size items are sufficient to derive the line and couplet textually, other features, such as the patterning of couplet repetition in performance, also suggest textual structures. For example, the supra-line patterns of repetition within hymns that I call types 1 and 2 (see Table 1) isolate the couplet and the pairs of couplets that form four-line stanzas.

Table 1: Couplet repetition patterns and their frequency in the *Cruzeiro*.

Type	1	1-mod.	2	2-mod.	3	3-mod.	4	Other
Tokens	64	8	32	3	11	2	2	4
Pattern	ABCD ABCD	-	ABAB CDCD	-	ABCBCD	-	ABCDCD ABCDCD	-

In the first, and most common of these patterns, four lines are sung through once, then repeated. In the second pattern, each couplet is sung and repeated before continuing to the next. The first type of repetition scheme makes clear the salience of the four-line units known as *estrofes* (stanzas), while the second demonstrates the couplet form through nested repetition. Together, they define both the couplet and the stanza as relevant levels of textual organization in the hymns. These two types, together with their variants (often one-offs), account for 107 of the 126 hymns typically performed in the Cruzeiro. A third type calls for the presentation of four lines with repetition only of the second couplet, while a fourth type adds to this an additional, complete iteration of each stanza. These patterns of repetition lead to concatenated nests of couplets that can, in the case of type 4, turn a 12-line, 3-stanza hymn, as in

Chamei lá nas alturas

A minha Mãe me respondeu
Sou humilde, sou humilde
Sou humilde um filho seu

A minha Mãe que me ensinou
Para sempre a Deus louvar
Para sempre, para sempre
Para sempre aonde está

Eu sou o Filho da Verdade
E do Poder Universal
Para sempre, para sempre
Para sempre acreditar

I called out up there in the heights
My Mother answered me

I am humble, I am humble
I am humble a child of hers

My mother who taught me
Forever to love God
Forever, forever
Forever where [implied subject] is

I am the Child of the Truth
And of the Universal Power
Forever, forever
Forever to believe

into 36 lines of a highly repetitive nature: the phrase "forever" (*para sempre*), for example, is sung 26 times in these 36 lines, which take about 2 ½ minutes to sing. The convention of repeating particular hymns in their entirety opens the possibility of even more repetitive forms, although at Alto Santo only type 1 and type 2 hymns receive this treatment.

Rhyme

Rhyming is another way hymns' performance suggests coherence above the level of the couplet. As indicated in Table 1 above, most of the hymns in the Cruzeiro follow an ABCB rhyme scheme common in Brazilian and European poetry, where the second and fourth lines rhyme and the first and third do not:

A Virgem Mãe me deu
O lugar de professor
Para ensinar as criaturas
Conhecer e ter amor

The Virgin Mother gave me
The role of professor
To teach the creatures
To know and to have love

Canonical rhyme schemes make coherence by creating expectation and fulfilling it, supporting a sense of completion and rightness.[172] They also suggest semantic links between repeated rhyming pairs, as in the following stanzas (each from a different hymn):

Firmeza, firmeza	Fortitude, fortitude
Eu recebo é com ***amor***	I receive it with **love**
A quem eu peço firmeza	The one I ask for fortitude
É a Jesus Cristo ***Redentor***	Is Jesus Christ **Redeemer**
Vamos todos meus irmãos	Let us go my siblings
Vamos cantar com ***amor***	Let us sing with **love**
Vamos todos nós louvar	Let us all praise
A Jesus Cristo ***Redentor***	Jesus Christ **Redeemer**
E eles pouco caso fazem	And they pay little heed
De aprender com ***alegria***	To learning with **joy**
Porque pensam que não é	Because they think it is not
Ensinos da Virgem ***Maria***	Teachings of the **Virgin Mary**
Cantei hoje, eu cantei hoje	I sang today, I sang today
Cantei hoje com ***alegria***	I sang today with **joy**
Porque tenho uma esperança	Because I have a hope
De ver a Virgem ***Maria***	Of seeing the **Virgin Mary**

[172] My own experience of certain hymns is that this sense of expectation and fulfillment depends upon multiple codes besides rhyme, including melody and rhythm, and that the kind of "rightness" that accompanies the form is experientially similar to solving a math equation, where diverse elements are arrayed, then taken through the necessary steps to an inevitable (because self-evidently true) conclusion.

Here, the repeated pairing of Mary / joy and Redeemer / love points to intertextual relations between hymns, aiding memorization while at the same time helping to associate a given emotion with a particular divine person.

Melody

Musical melody, for its part, enfolds (non-discursive) 'recurrent returns' and 'repeated figures' that accompany and help to structure the song text. In the most common melody-text type in the Cruzeiro, for example, there is a perfect correspondence in length between the whole melodic line and the stanza, so that the whole melody is fully presented with each stanza, and each couplet is paired with exactly half of the melody. In these cases, the couplets are linked by their association with the meaningful tonal relationships that join the middle of the melody to its resolution (most often with the tonic of the key). Just as the melody suggests a relationship of completion between its principal notes, so it also suggests a (semantic) relationship between the two couplets of each stanza.

In performance, the end of the first couplet introduces the initial half of the rhyme; at the same time the melodic arc reaches its point of greatest apparent tension. Together these features tend to create a sense of expectation, as of a problem heading toward a solution, or a dramatic scene reaching its climax. The fulfillment of this expectation with

the arrival of the second rhyme, together with the conclusion of the melody, may generate very powerful pragmatic effects. (Likewise, so may the failure to rhyme.)[173] As others have suggested of ritual speech more generally (such as DuBois 1986), the certainty and sense of movement toward completion suggested by the form of the hymn, both textual and melodic, can help motivate orientation to its semantic content, lending it an aura of self-evident truth. In this case, the tensing and release patterned in the hymns figure them as self-contained technologies, delivered from a point outside the world to assist those within it.

This summary of structural patterning in Daimista hymnals suggests the grounding, in linguistic forms, of the Daimista sense that the nature of hymns is transcendent ("received," divine, other-generated, gifted, otherworldly, self-contained, written in the *astral*). Repetition, rhyme, and melody are important resources in entextualization processes at Alto Santo. They help create a sense that the hymns have an existence and a meaning independent of their performance in the pragmatic present.

[173] This is one hymn that has long struck me as notable for the way its failure to rhyme calls attention to its semantic content:

Agora eu volto para o meu lugar	Now I return to my place
Sigo em frente, vamos trabalhar	I continue forward, let us work
Não pense em fazer o que tu queres	Don't think of doing what you want
Que Deus é o nosso Pai	As God is our Father

The use of deictic terms in hymn singing locates Alto Santo hymn performance in time and space, and is fundamental to establishing who is speaking to whom, about what they are speaking, and their stance toward one another. Deictics point the way toward discussion of semantic patterning and larger aspects of the process of spiritual work. Within Daimista hymns, deixis places the "action" in its setting, giving its foreground and background (i.e., humans interacting with divine beings), and, as I will try to show, aids with making hymn-singing into moral tests.

Personal pronouns and participation structure.

The use of personal pronouns is one of the most important ways that speakers and addressees are marked in speech. Some forms of ritual speech suppress the use of pronouns in order to accentuate the distance of the moment of speaking from everyday talk, thereby lending authority to the ritual speech. DuBois, in attempting to catalog the stylistic features of ritual speech, notes that such suppression is common, if not universal: "In much of ritual speech, shifters[174] are avoided, especially those which index the speaker as an individual, particularly 'I'" (1986:319). The logic of shifter avoidance seems to be that powerful words come from distant others, not present selves.

[174] "Shifters" are a subset of deictic terms, such as "this," "yesterday," and "you," whose reference shifts according to the context in which they are used. Their precise meaning in a given case thus cannot be determined analytically, but presumes the presence of the relevant context for decoding.

By contrast, Daimista hymn singing in general, and the Cruzeiro in particular, make extensive use of personal pronouns. In fact, the most extensively used personal pronouns in the Cruzeiro, by far, are the various forms of the first person singular. The subject pronoun *eu* ("I") is not only the most common pronoun, but *the single most frequent word in the Cruzeiro, including articles and prepositions*. The objective case of the first-person pronoun, *me*, is third most frequent. Together, the various forms of the first person singular pronoun constitute nearly ten percent of all word tokens in the Cruzeiro (see Table X).

Table X. Personal pronouns and frequency per 100 words in the *Cruzeiro*.

	1per. sing.		*1per. plu.*		*2p.s.*		*3p.s.*		*3p.p.*	
Subjective	*eu*	3.9	*nós*	.04	*vós* *tu*	.81 .23	*ele* *ela*	.22 .37	*Eles* *os / aqueles* *que*	.04 .12
Objective	*me/mim*	3.0	*nos*	.04	*vos*	.06				
Possessive	*meu(s)/* *minha*	2.9	*nosso/a*	.02	*vosso*	.15				
Total		9.8		.10		1.3		.59		.16

When people at Alto Santo sing hymns in unison, the "I" of the hymn is expressed by each one simultaneously. The indexical referent of the "I" is understood not to be the everyday self of the speakers, but its actual referent is ambiguous. The fact of ambiguity of speakers and addressees is itself an important part of the pragmatics of hymn singing.

Ambiguity, because it offers the possibility of more than one interpretation, invites choice, and choice implies moral deliberation.

In many hymns from the *Cruzeiro*, "I" is understood to refer to Mestre Irineu, as the person who received the hymn from the divine. Yet the hymns contain little information of an ordinary biographical sort about the life of the individual, Raimundo Irineu Serra. Daimistas acknowledge that hymns are both temporal, in the sense of arriving in the community at a propitious moment to help address some crisis, as well as eternal, inasmuch as they express truths about the foundations of existence.

In this way it is as DuBois observed, in that the "I" of hymns does not tend to refer to the everyday personhood of those present. Instead, the content attached to the "I" of the hymns tends to cluster around two kinds of footing: declaration of relationship to, or narration of interaction with the divine; and direct pleas for divine assistance.

With the first kind of footing, often there is no grammatically marked addressee in the hymns; textually, they appear as declamations to no one in particular:

Eu sou filho da terra	I am a child of the earth
Vivo nas matas sombrias	I live in the shady woods
Implorando ao Pai Eterno	Imploring the Eternal Father
E a Sempre Virgem Maria	And the Ever-Virgin Mary

Such hymns, while they may invoke persons besides the "I," on their face constitute descriptions or affirmations, rather than directly addressed speech. The other principal footing found in the hymns does, through pronoun usage, indicate direct address, nearly always of the divine:

O! Virgem Mãe	O! Virgin Mother
Vós sois Mãe do Redentor	You are Mother of the Redeemer
Perdoai os vossos filhos	Pardon your children
Pelo vosso Santo Amor	Through your Holy Love

Here the exclamatory "O!" signals address to the "Virgin Mother" in the first couplet, a conclusion made clearer by the use of the deferential second person pronoun and verb form (*vós* and *sois*) in the second line, and further reinforced by the second person directive "perdoai" and two possessive pronouns in the second couplet. Occasionally, too, the informal second-person pronouns "tu" (subject) and "te" (object) mark direct address to divine beings, as in the first hymn, "Lua Branca":

Deus te salve Oh! Lua Branca	God save you, O! White Moon

In a few other cases, "tu" seems contextually to point to a third kind of footing, involving a human interlocutor, as in:

Tu não deves esquecer	You must not forget
O amor que recebeu	The love that (you) received

Most of the hymns in the *Cruzeiro* adopt the first two kinds of footing: speech about the divine, and intercessory pleading directly addressed to divine persons. This third

category, much less common, is nonetheless important. In it, hymn singing may take the footing of an earthly, dyadic communication, in which some individual speaker (presumably Mestre Irineu) is in dialogue with another individual in the worship hall. These hymns' more terrestrial footing lends them a tone of admonishment, and tends to emphasize the space of transition between the Master's House and the profane world of the street. Completing the stanza just cited, for example, is the couplet: "When you arrived in this house / You came to know the truth." Not all hymns with a disciplinary tone adopt direct grammatical address, however; a number of them seem similar, on their face, to the hymns of relationship to the divine, in that they read like descriptions of the way things are, aimed at no one in particular. They differ, however, in their focus on earthly moral comportment. One of the sharpest of these hymns in tone, called "Professor," figures a teacher who is not listened to and threatens to stop teaching if his pupils continue to ignore his lessons. Grammatically, it is merely descriptive ("Here is a Professor / Who is going to stop teaching / He teaches and no one cares / They read everything backwards") but pragmatically it is understood to refer to tendencies within the congregation to disregard the teachings of the hymns.

Demonstrative pronouns.

Este ("this") and its various forms, inflected for gender and number, are demonstrative pronouns denoting proximity of a nominal construct, be it a physical object or not, to

the speaker and those considered conjoined, spatially or otherwise, to the speaker. It contrasts with the various shapes of the demonstratives *esse* and *aquele*, which denote, respectively, proximity to addressee(s) but not to speaker, and distance from both speaker and addressee(s).[175] (See Table 2.)

Table 3: Demonstrative pronouns in Brazilian Portuguese.

Grammatically feminine referent(s)	*Grammatically masculine referent(s)*	*Spatial relationship of referent to speaker and addressee(s)*
esta(s)	este(s)	Near both speaker and addressee(s)
essa(s)	esse(s)	Near addressee
aquela(s)	aquele(s)	Distant from speaker and addressee

Demonstrative pronouns appear frequently in Daimista hymn singing, clustering around such concepts as *força* ("force"), *poder* ("power"), *casa* ("house"), *verdade* ("truth"), *mundo* ("world"), *caminho* ("path," "road"). Animating speech laden with speaker- and addressee-near demonstrative pronouns, the singers invoke these key concepts of the Doctrine, declaring them present in the moment of performance.

Becoming a Child of God in the Mestre's House

In this section I explore hymn singing through the lens of Daimista notions about the kind of personal, moral reformation that is meant to take place through the practice of

[175] Nevertheless, it has been my observation that, in practice, speakers of Brazilian Portuguese often use the addressee-near demonstrative pronouns, in particular *esse*, for objects that are near the speaker as well; I am thinking especially of the colloquial expression *esse mundo* for "this world."

the Doctrine. It is in the performance of hinários that Daimistas experience the *Doutrina* as being fundamentally true, applicable to themselves, and a "thing of God."

If the poetic structure of hymns supports a sense that they are divine gifts to help humanity, their context of performance is equally centered on transformation of personal morality, expressed in such terms as becoming a "Child of God" [*Filho de Deus*] or a "Soldier of the Queen of the Forest" [*Soldado da Rainha da Floresta*]. These terms imply not just a transformation of self, but a reconfiguration of the relationship between the individual and the collective in a harmonious social order, as one of many "Children of God" or "Soldiers of the Queen."

The will is implicated in this transformation, inasmuch as Daimistas figure willfulness as the source of social disharmony, and make its subjugation to the divine order revealed in ritual a key aim of Daimista practice. The development of the will (*vontade*) is also a watchword of the CECP. In the initial letter sent in the early 1960s to the CECP central headquarters by Francisco ("Chico da Pipoca") Ferreira, he lamented the lack of a center ("Tattwa") in Acre and noted the positive prospects of opening one, given the "firm wills" (*vontades firmes*) of Irineu Serra and a couple of others mentioned by name as already holding CECP membership.

Here we should distinguish between the individualistic willfulness held to be at the heart of social disorder, and the positive moral quality coded by "firm wills." Scurrilous talk about Irineu Serra depicted his own selfish ends, embedded in disastrous allegiance to malevolent forces, as the hub of Alto Santo social life. Such allegiance and self-centered motivation were presented as being of a piece, the inevitable consequence of joining forces with Beelzebub. In contradistinction, Daimistas insist on the divinity and sanctity of their patron, and emphasize the development of an appropriately "firm" will manifesting pro-social intentions.

The Daimista conception of the will (*vontade*) intersects with esoteric CECP notions based on occult "communion of minds" (an alternative translation of the group's name would be "The Esoteric Circle of the Communion of Minds"); at the same time, it also partakes of Brazilian "folk" ideas of moral fitness. *Firmeza* is one such concept. In a structural study of the Brazilian folk poetry known as "*cordel* literature" (for the practice of hanging chapbooks for sale from clothesline-like cords), Candace Slater glosses the quality of *firmeza* as "constancy." It is, she writes, "the ultimate virtue in the world of the *cordel*. People who exhibit it by living up to moral and social obligations are inevitably rewarded. The opposite of *firmeza* is *falsidade* [falsity]" (Slater 1982:271).

Firmeza, *falsidade*, and similarly opposed pairs (such as *verdadeiro* [true, as of a person who is true] and *fingimento* [pretense, fakery]) are arrayed throughout the *Cruzeiro* and

other Daimista hymnals as signposts reminding congregants of the moral concepts most central to the righteous path.[176] Take, for example, the hymn that runs:

Eu ensino é com amor	I teach with love
É com firmeza e lealdade	With *firmeza* and loyalty
Mas quando vêm falar comigo	But when they come to speak with me
Sempre trazem a falsidade	They always bring *falsidade*
Isso é deles não é meu	That is theirs it is not mine
Eu faço por não compreender	I make like I don't understand
Depois eles saem dizendo	Then they go away saying
"O Mestre não tem saber!"	"The Master has no knowledge!"

It should be noted that here, *firmeza* is seen as a socially adapted form of the will, one whose exercise embodies the truth of the social order and entails the fulfillment of one's proper duties within that order. In this sense there is no contradiction between having a (certain kind) of "strong will" and also doing the "will of God," because in the person with *firmeza* these things coincide.[177] Slater's observations about *firmeza* in the folk universe of the *cordel*—centered, as it is, in the Northeast region of Brazil—are

[176] In the "hymns of discipline" something interesting happens with the participation structure implied by the grammatical forms of address: in one hymn, which asks "Why do all not fulfill their duty and obligation?" for example, no fingers are pointed, and the target of the speech is unspecified, leaving it to the singers to determine their footing in singing the line. It is thus a moral question whether one considers oneself implicated in the admonishment, or whether one adopts the role of admonisher of one's fellows.

[177] The sayings of Confucius offer a similar example: "At fifteen, I set my heart on learning. At thirty, I was firmly established. At forty, I had no more doubts. At fifty, I knew the will of Heaven. At sixty, I was ready to listen to it. At seventy, I could follow my heart's desire without transgressing what was right" (Analects II.4) (De Bary et al. 1960). The key idea here is the perfect symmetry of desire and propriety.

more evidence that Daimista concern with morality and moral transformation is meaningfully connected to broader Brazilian cultural values.[178]

Within the context of Alto Santo ritual practice, then, how does one develop the quality of general moral fitness coded by *firmeza*? In short, Daimistas look to the Doctrine to help them discover habits and particular actions they have committed that contravene the divine moral order, primarily through performing the hymns with a certain kind of intention. As I show in the next subsection, coming to grips with one's moral failings through the experience of suffering in the *hinário* is essential to Daimista ideas of moral reform expressed in the idea of "becoming a Child of God."

"To feel it on the skin": Daimista discourse on "karmic morality"

Seu Vítor was an Alto Santo stalwart, a front-line dancer on the men's side who lived just up the highway from the center with his wife and two daughters. Quiet and blessed with a youthful appearance, he seemed to me to embody many of the qualities valued at Alto Santo: in him, a calm firmness and uncomplicated humility coexisted with considerable, if unschooled, intelligence.

[178] *Firmeza* can be usefully distinguished from other ideas about the will that have less positive connotations. *Teimosia*, for example, connotes a foolish daring, while a person who is *cabeçudo* is (literally) "strong-headed" in a way that implies failure to conform oneself to the social order of things.

Like numerous others at Alto Santo, seu Vítor made clear when he received me at his house for an interview that it was only because Dona Peregrina had approved of my presence that he was willing to talk to me about Alto Santo and the *Doutrina*. Over lunch, we discussed his history with Daime, which included—as did so many similar stories I heard—a period of exploration of different Spiritist and ayahuasca-using centers in the region before his arrival at the Master's house.

After our meal, the rest of the family trickled away, leaving me alone with seu Vítor. As he talked about his understanding of the *Doutrina* of Mestre Irineu, he told me "I am always sick because I lack courage," apparently meaning the courage to go more deeply into the visionary space of the *miração*. This came as a surprise to me, as seu Vítor seemed healthy and, furthermore, presented himself in the worship hall as what seemed to me a very convincing embodiment of the attitudes enshrined in Daimista ideals: calmness, erect posture, a tendency not to call attention to himself. If I was able to categorize his puzzling statement provisionally as a slightly exaggerated modesty, the direction seu Vítor took the conversation next was even more bewildering.

If something happens to someone we love, seu Vítor told me, we feel it inside. If, "God forbid," something happens to our child, we feel it even more strongly. Even that feeling, however—and here, as seu Vítor leaned in, I sensed that he wanted to tell me

something very important about the *Doutrina*—is less direct, less intense than something we feel "on our skin." With that, he reached over and pinched my leg.

I felt a bit nonplussed. Perhaps it was strange for seu Vítor to emphasize what seemed like the irreducible exclusivity of individual experience. After all, popular depictions of ayahuasca often portray the transcendence of solipsistic individualism in moments of Turner-esque *communitas*, group visions, and the like. Indeed, for many who travel to the Amazon in search of ayahuasca, connecting with others by transcending the lonely isolation associated with modernity seems very much to the point. And yet, here was seu Vítor emphasizing the individual, the private, that which is known only to each one by his or her direct sensory experience.

Like many Christians, Daimistas value suffering as a means of purification and moral evolution. There is a hymn in the *Cruzeiro* that speaks of Jesus in this way:

Ele morreu neste mundo	He died in this world
Para nós acreditar	For us to believe
Para nós também sofrer	For us to suffer also
Para poder alcançar	To be able to reach [salvation]

Suffering, for Daimistas, is a necessary part of spiritual maturation, within the performance of ritual and outside it as well, in everyday life. The quotidian misery of the rubber camps has already been discussed within the context of an exploitative economic system; suffering was, in fact, omnipresent for most Acreans throughout the

20th century. For Daimistas, however, the injustices of capitalist rubber extraction were not the primary focus, although the wickedness of the world in general was an important theme. Instead, discourse at Alto Santo gradually limned for me a view about morality that might as well be called "karmic," not only for its formal resemblance to the Indian concept, but also because of the historical mediation of this very term through such avatars of international esotericism as Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant.

As illustrations of this view of cosmic justice, Daimistas told stories in which they noted the workings of karma in their everyday lives. These tales always emphasized that intentional misdeeds would be revisited upon their author through divine retribution. One example, told to me by Paulo Serra, Irineu Serra's adopted son, involved cruelties visited upon a horse when Paulo was young. Asked by his father to ride to town to retrieve some sack of grain, Paulo grumbled and, flicking a switch at the horse, hurt its eye. Later, riding through the woods on the way back from town, Paulo passed under a low-hanging branch, which scratched his own eye in a spot exactly analogous to the horse's injury. When Paulo arrived home, he told me, Irineu Serra knew all about it, and told Paulo that his eye would not heal until the horse's did.

Another story, well known at Alto Santo, involves an early follower of Irineu Serra, Germano Guilherme. Germano and Irineu Serra were so close that they used the very familiar *maninho* (little brother) to refer to each other. One of Irineu Serra's most

beloved disciples, with a beautiful hinário focused on the Virgin Mary, Germano had very poor health, and is remembered especially for some unknown affliction of the leg that limited his mobility, and may have contributed to his early death in the 1940s. As the story is told at Alto Santo, Germano asked Irineu Serra to help him understand why his leg didn't get better, despite his sincere desire to be healed and his assiduous spiritual work. Irineu Serra told him that "Daime cures everything, except divine sentences" [*sentenças*], and invited him to come for a special session with Daime to determine the cause of his disfigurement. Germano agreed, and when the time came he drank Daime and had a vision of a colonial sugar mill, where a white slave master cruelly whipped his workers. With a shock of recognition, Germano realized that the cruel slave master was himself, previously incarnated, and he understood in a flash that his health problems were the divine *sentença* that he must serve for those cruelties from a prior life. In his case, the wrongs were so severe that they could not be completely corrected within a single lifetime.

Narratives such as these helped me to understand seu Vítor's pinch as an illustration of a Daimista outlook on the relationship between morality and suffering: by an iron law of karmic causation, in the final accounting each person receives his or her true due, unbiased by the iniquities of a world that often exalts the wicked and punishes the just. Moreover, the mode of this retribution was, like a pinch, mostly intimately felt upon

one's own skin—not deferrable, transferable to a proxy, or otherwise avoidable. As in DaMatta's discussion of the "other world" where all intentions are revealed for what they really are, and all accounts are well and truly summed, as it were, by divine arithmetic, Daimistas affirm the principle of divine justice. For them, there is always a moral reason for one's suffering, whether identified or not.

Identifying the causes of one's suffering (that is, one's moral transgressions) is thus an important reason for doing spiritual work at Alto Santo. The space of ritual is framed as a "space of truth" in which one's misdeeds can no longer be hidden, but must be confronted, recognized, and atoned for. In this way Daimista morality draws a sharp contrast with notions of escape from conscience through artificial means, and insists on the fundamental relationship between Daime and moral accountability. Talk around this point suggests the irreducibly separate nature of each person's "account" with God, as the following story of a newcomer's experience indicates:

A man came to Alto Santo to drink Daime for the first time. He had beautiful visions of fantastic scenes that made him feel exalted, elated, enthused. Impressed with such results, he eagerly returned for the next session, only to have the opposite experience: instead of tranquility and beauty, he felt terror and disgust, believing his very existence to be threatened. After the session he approached Irineu Serra, demanding to know how he could administer a drink that caused such horror. Mestre Irineu responded:

“Those things you saw the first time, those were things of mine. The things you saw this time, those were things of yours.” Relating narratives like this is one way Daimistas remind themselves that, while they use the phrase “drinking Daime” colloquially to refer to membership at Alto Santo, mere consumption of ayahuasca is not the point; there is moral significance in “drinking Daime” as a way to submit oneself to being called to account for one’s actions in the world.

Dedicated Daimistas value the potential upset involved in their spiritual work. “I want to be turned inside out,” one woman, who had some six decades of experience at Alto Santo, told me of what she hoped for from a session. Sometimes, perhaps unsurprisingly, there is resistance to the process, so that one function of Daimista discourse is to remind congregants of the proper orientation to the spiritual work. A man told me, for example, of a conversation he’d had with his brother, wherein the brother complained that he’d had a “terrible” *hinário*: He didn’t feel at peace, he said, and “all I could think about was the problems I’m having with my family.” Relating the exchange to me, the man said he told his brother he should be glad: “That’s not a terrible *hinário*. A terrible *hinário* would be if you were having those problems and didn’t consider them at all!”

Learning to experience hymn singing as moral introspection is essential to developing ritual competence at Alto Santo. It is part of what Daimistas mean when they talk about "arriving in the Master's house" and "becoming a Child of God."

"Drink Daime and pay attention": ritual experience and divine text

I want to return now to the point I made above about the discursive authorization of the hymns as divine teachings. As a newcomer interested in learning about the *Doutrina*, I heard many times that if I really wanted to learn what it was about, I should "*drink Daime and pay attention*." But why? What sort of attention should be paid, and to what? Of course it is necessary, especially when first learning how to participate in the hinário, to monitor one's bodily movements closely in order to stay in time with the rhythm of the maracás and the guitars, and to move together with the body of dancers. But the hymns, and especially their words, were most often highlighted as the ideal focus of one's attention, even for experienced Daimistas.

One day in February 2007 I went to visit the home of Raimundo Sabino, a member of the *irmandade* since the 1960s who sold tapioca cakes from the back of his bicycle for a living. Well-liked and given to radiant smiles, he was known as a simple man with a great love for Mestre Irineu. Eager to help me learn about the *Doutrina*, he quoted advice that

he said Mestre Irineu had given him: “My son, when you take up your little maracá to work, pay attention to the words of the hymns, as that is where the teachings are.”

The primacy of attending to the song texts of hymns during the hinário is taken as axiomatic at Alto Santo and is insisted upon in multiple speech genres, in addition to the kind of everyday narrative of Raimundo Sabino. It appears, for example, within the hymns themselves:

Aqui estou dizendo	Here I am saying
Aqui estou cantando	Here I am singing
Eu digo para todos	I say (it) to all
E os hinos estão ensinando	And the hymns are teaching

And again, in the Decreto, one of the few instances in which moral precepts are made explicit as such, the claim is repeated that “[t]he hymns are clearly showing the Power of the Sacred Mission of the Divine Lord God.” If the hymns are teachings, their performance is edifying to the extent that it makes present the one who teaches within the *miração*.

The trope of the *professor* is textually present in, and strongly insisted on in discourse about, Alto Santo song texts; in addition, the concept of ayahuasca as a plant teacher is widespread in Amazonian indigenous and mestizo culture (see Luna 1983). This is an important feature of hymns as they are understood at Alto Santo, and one that is

sometimes used to contrast the Doctrine's experiential emphasis with "other religions" ostensibly based more on (written) textual authority. As Jair put it,

> Unlike other religions we don't have teachings that are accessible, that are in a book, a body of teachings. Even the hymns, our hinários, we don't obtain the meaning of them grammatically, we don't obtain it through language [*através da linguagem*]; you only learn what a hymn means [*significa*] with the *miração*.

This is an important aspect of how people at Alto Santo understand their practice: the hymns in performance *are* the Doctrine, but reading them as mere texts (in the narrow sense of words on paper) one misses the point.[179] If the notion of "the Book" is important in many Christian contexts as a material manifestation of the Word of God on Earth, Daimistas emphasize the immaterial nature of the hymn texts, which are, despite their spiritual nature, nevertheless objective: "written in the *astral* for all to see." In Daimista conception, the hymns require manifestation in performance to work properly. It may not be quite fair of Jair to impute such a focus on *langue* to "other religions," as even the staunchest text-based traditions have their rituals of reading and interpretation; it does, however, clarify his view that it is in the live, communal play of *parole* that the significance of hymns is made present.

[179] My experience tends to bear out this observation. For the first several months of fieldwork, I participated as a guest-observer normally would, sitting on a bench and following the progress of the *hinário* with a printed text. In this condition I was often frustrated by a tendency to apply a reader's gaze to the song texts, and found it difficult to predict the correct phrasing of the words within the rhythm and melody. Later, I was given permission to dance and shake the maracá in line with the others. This broader engagement with the system of coordinated codes made it easier to perform hymns fluently, with a corresponding enrichment of experience (and an increased sense of responsibility and investment).

Deictics appear in the song texts in support of this presence. Signs like “this force,” “this truth,” and “this house” evoke realities that are multivalent; at the same time that they are signs pointing to other signs, they also link the realm of linguistic intelligibility to the corporeal and sensible experience of the *hinário* (cf. Urban 1996). “This force,” for example, can be understood partly as referring to the ways people experience the effects of Daime in their bodies. The hymns, insofar as they are taken to refer to the “inner” subjectivity of the hymn singers—and making this kind of interpretive connection seems to be the point—are techniques of objectifying and shaping subjective experience of the hinário.

The instruction to pay attention to the words of the hymns implies a connection between public expression and private feeling similar to that which is at play in sincere speech. Daimistas don’t just sing the words, as with any profane song; they are supposed to enter into a hermeneutic embrace of some sort with them. But how to characterize the footing adopted (at least ideally) by hymn singers? Where sincerity normally entails the assumption of symmetry between a speaker’s inner state and what is said (Trilling 1972), in singing hymns things seem to work in the other direction. Instead of expressing a pre-existing inner state, the hymns are meant, through performance, to bring about a transformation of oneself and one’s relationships to other persons, both divine and human. It is as though one’s inner state is meant to

come into agreement with the hymns as a result of bearing witness to a cosmic drama in which one realizes one is implicated.

The hymns are the words of others, not of the everyday selves of the singers who animate them; at the same time, congregants expect them to speak to intimate details of their own personal lives. This has implications for the question of footing: what stance does one adopt when animating such powerful speech? Participating in an *hinário* is framed as work, albeit of a spiritual kind, and requires effort (as the emphasis on paying attention suggests); and yet, in an apparent paradox, at the center of this effort seems to be a renunciation of the will.

This contradictory dynamic can be seen in discourse about the proper way to sing hymns. As Cosmo told me,

> When we sing a hymn, in truth, we behave like a kind of apparatus [*aparelho*], a mere receiver and transmitter. The hymn brings the voice and the message from the divinity. We are just a relay instrument. However, the message should stay in our minds and hearts and serve in our lives.

According to Alto Santo metapragmatic discourse, in other words, hymns are not so much performed by those who sing them as they are channeled.[180] If this is the case,

[180] Alto Santo conceptions of the reception and performance of hymns are entirely in line with Brazilian Spiritist ideas of the human person as an "apparatus" (*aparelho*), analogous to a radio, that can receive messages from the astral. While the vocabulary of Spiritism and mediumship is much more commonly

how can the Daimista insistence on making an effort to pay attention be squared with Cosmo's articulation of the proper stance toward hymn singing as one of "mere" retransmission, as with a radio broadcast being sent through the mountains? Are we not dangerously close to the ideas of the complete eclipse of individual autonomy that are presented, as by the Bumpkin Troubadour, as the terrible truth about Daime?

We can better understand the Daimista orientation toward the apparently simultaneous renunciation and exercise of the will in the *hinário* if we consider a passage from the CECP manual, *Instruções*, in which this seeming contradiction is given a theoretical resolution.

> The most elementary and simple thing that this silent cooperation has suggested to you [pl.] shall be the first step you [pl.] take to put yourselves in spiritual communication with the mentalities that can comfort and feed your own. You must convince yourselves that each one of your thoughts is a most real part of yourselves, and that, when you [pl.] emit them with the intention to do good to other men, they will join together with some mental current [*corrente*] of analogous nature, and mix themselves with it. They augment this current, which constitutes a single mass proportional to the number of mentalities that emitted their thoughts with identical intention. In this manner you [pl.] contribute to the production of an invisible, yet true mental force, which constitutes a positive link of union and of communion amongst yourselves and beings of a mentality analogous to yours [pl.]. This link of communication is much more potent than any

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used in Cefluris, it was clearly present too at Alto Santo during my fieldwork. The phrase also appears in the hinário of João Pereira, in the hymn "Eu vim para este mundo" ("I came to this world"):

Vou dizendo e vão aprendendo	I keep saying and you (pl.) keep learning
E faça esforço de pegar	Make an effort to get it
Desocupar o aparelho	Free up ["disoccupy"] the apparatus
Para poder se trabalhar	To be able to work

> other, material link, as it is formed from a *living force*, which one day will produce in you [pl.] the most beneficial results of a material order. (CECP 1957:24-5; emphasis in original)

When Daimistas talk of paying attention to the hymns, it is against this background. Part of the point of the hymns is to help focus singers' intentionality; Daimistas are told to consider themselves "within the current" [*corrente*] by virtue of having drunk Daime, but that communal act constitutes a kind of outward sign of an idealized inner unity that is brought about, in theory, by each person's moral efforts to attune his or her thoughts as they are refracted through the hymns, confident that they will "join together with some mental current of analogous nature."

The use of terms from electromagnetic and radio broadcasting technology is telling, as it indexes the whole field of scientific-cum-esoteric discourse within which Irineu Serra, along with Felizardo Cerqueira and others, found a language to express their Acrean experience. The concept of radio waves—phenomena that are immanent, yet invisible, there to be perceived only by those who are able to attune themselves to them—provided an idiom in which to elaborate Daimista ideas about hymns. What is particularly compelling about this perspective from a Daimista point of view is that it draws on prestigious discourses of science and international esotericism, melding them with local experience of indigenous technologies from the humblest of sources. Dona Dima's conspiratorial tone reflects this thinking: while the Doctrine indeed represents a

path to God, it also requires experience to see the value within its apparently base origins, and it would be wholly unreasonable to expect a person who lacked that experience to understand the rightness of its moral foundations. Without the experience of drinking Daime to reveal the truth of the matter, things might appear very different to outsiders, who might commit the same mistake Felizardo confessed to, of taking the divine “vibration,” meant to help humanity, for a diabolical force.

In the hinário, the speakers who animate the hymns are the audience of their own speech. And yet it is perceived in important ways as the speech of another, while the everyday selves of the singers occupy a secondary position, figured mainly as overhearers to the speech they themselves animate. One's everyday self is neither the speaker nor the addressee of the speech, but is nevertheless one of its targets; indeed, it might be said that the main role of the everyday self in the *hinário* is to listen. Here Judith Irvine’s discussion of Erving Goffman's idea of "role distance" may help to articulate the significance of listening within the hinário. In this situation, as Irvine puts it, "a person subdivides, as it were, into the self who performs a line of talk or action and the self (or selves) who comment upon it" (Irvine 1996:134). In the *hinário* such “subdivision” is expected with the everyday self’s displacement by the hymn-singing voice. In the Daimista context, the subdivision is not so much between a line of talk and commentary upon it, however, as between the voice of a powerful other that comes

through one's body, and the morally reflective everyday self who must "pay attention," witnessing the lessons—sometimes devastating in their power—that are delivered within the experience of the hymns.[181]

In the chapter's final section, I use a discussion of a particular hymn to explore the way Daimista singing uses the coordination of formal features in various dimensions to generate a particular kind of experience of moral crisis. The commandment to "pay attention" encodes a way of reading the hymns as moral lessons in light of which to review one's behavior.

Coming under conviction: *Tucum* example

In her study of Evangelical Christianity in the American South, Susan Harding (1987) emphasizes the use of linguistic forms in generating an experience important to the conversion process, an experiential crisis called "coming under conviction." Harding focuses on communication situations used in Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church—"witnessing" and evangelistic preaching—to precipitate conversion:

[181] It is putting themselves in this position that enables Daimistas to "pay attention" to the hymns in the proper way, and to come "under conviction," which is to say, to animate the hymns in such a way that they "stay in our hearts and minds." As a general rule, I was told, one should avoid singing the hymns invidiously—as, for example, in singing "hymns of discipline" in a way meant to implicate others while excluding oneself.

> This crisis is the onset of the conversion process, what fundamentalists call "coming under conviction," and is based on a direct experience of the divine. You know when the Holy Spirit convicts you of, or "makes you see," your sins. Conviction effects a deep sensation of one's own impurity and separation from God, or one's "sinfulness," one's "sin nature," and a sense that "something has to be done about it." [Harding 1987:170]

In Daimista practice, everyone sings (or, in the alternative of the *concentração* sessions, remains completely silent), and there is thus little in it to equate formally to American fundamentalist “witnessing” or preaching. Viewed as a communicative situation, Daimista hymn singing is structured very differently. Nevertheless, the ways Daimistas speak about hymn singing make certain experiential parallels evident. Chief among these is the “deep sensation of one’s own…separation from God” cued, in the midst of rituals with Daime, by dramatically vivid recollections of one’s moral failings, particularly in relationship with others. More than once I looked out across the worship hall and saw tears streaming from the eyes of dancers at *hinários*, presumably coming from their engagement in this “work of conscience.” Such immediate and sharp experience of emotional and existential suffering (as well as occasional physical distress) is, I think, what seu Vítor was talking about when he so earnestly pinched me.

Daimistas view these uneasy confrontations with one’s own moral account as an important part of the spiritual work done at Alto Santo, a lapidary means of “perfecting” the personality, and a process which constitutes one way of drawing (and redrawing) the line between belonging and not belonging to the congregation. The tale of the man

who reacted angrily after seeing visions of things that were his “own” serves, in Daimista discourse, to illustrate the point that a proficient hymn singer knows how to connect the visions inspired by Daime to his or her moral comportment. His were, clearly, the protestations of a novice on the path of karmic morality.

I alluded above to an unofficial subset of hymns of admonishment or “hymns of discipline” [*hinos de disciplina*], as they are sometimes called. While most of the *Cruzeiro* is, in keeping with the esotericist creed that “thoughts are things,” unrelentingly positive in tone (repeatedly linking, for example, qualities like “love” and “joy” with particular divine persons), the “hymns of discipline” are notable for their invocation, albeit sparing, of negative qualities: “weakness of heart,” “falsity,” “pretense.” I want now to examine one example of such a hymn in order to clarify the ways that Daimista ritual constructs an experience similar to “coming under conviction” as described by Harding.

A very small number of the hymns in the *Cruzeiro* feature changes in rhythm within a single hymn. These hymns, three of them, stand out clearly in the corpus because of this fact. While it would not be true to say that these three are the most important hymns, their unusual features make them the object of special attention. When I traveled to Mapiá to drink Daime for the first time, one young man "warned" me about these hymns in particular being more difficult to perform. The quirks in these hymns are not

mere anomalies of form, but meaningful differences that link stylistic features and semantic content. The same kinds of connections exist between poetic form and pragmatic effects throughout the *Cruzeiro*; in the case of "Tucum," however, as I hope to show, the links are easier to specify.

What is more, "Tucum" is a hymn that is set apart by Daimista discourse as one of the most powerful "hymns of force" (*hinos de força*) in the Cruzeiro. These "hymns of force" are especially strong invocations, and this one in particular is singled out in Alto Santo discourse as a hymn that should not be sung casually because it invokes a powerful divine person. Outside the hinário, I was told, this hymn should only be sung in circumstances of great need, in order to exorcize evildoing spirits.[182] In the hinário, the hymn is always marked by a round of *vivas*, call-and-response cries enumerating and exalting the Daimista pantheon that precede particularly important hymns. One Daimista told me that certain people would purposely find themselves taking a break from dancing when this hymn was sung because they feared the discipline that it brought. Another related how his son mentioned to him that he always sensed, as *Tucum* drew nearer, that he must gather his strength, as a test was coming.

[182] Even then, as Percília Matos told Jair Facundes in a videotaped interview, one should first ask the permission of "Lord Tucum" before performing the hymn.

In this sense one might think of this hymn as a test of belonging, in that its purpose is to sort out those who belong to the “line” from those who do not (evildoers and liars). The kind of purification this implies may happen at any time in the *hinário*, but it does seem to be the case that this hymn receives special attention because its form seems to make the process visible. The most marked formal feature of “Tucum” is its alternation of rhythm within each stanza. Between couplets, the usual straight-ahead 4/4 *marcha* (consisting of three maraca beats down into the hand and one up in the air) changes to a single beat up and one down. The dance steps shift accordingly, from three steps and a turn, to a back-and-forth rocking, in which the dancers stay facing completely forward. This abrupt change is clearly visible when “Tucum” is performed in the salon, and anyone watching might easily see who follows the change in rhythm and who does not. Its visual salience makes the change in rhythm available as a sign of unity within the irmandade.

The possibility of signaling unity through coordination of rhythm and dance (or of revealing its lack through errors) does not stand alone, but points to the more general interpenetration of formal features of the hymns with their semantic content. “Tucum” exemplifies the tendency of hymns to align the codes through which they are expressed, including rhythm, melody, textual form, and semantic content, so that each code stands in relation to the other and their conjunction suggests a unified whole.

Eu canto aqui na terra	I sing here on earth	1
O amor que Deus me dá	The love that God gives me	2
Para sempre, para sempre	Forever, forever	3
Para sempre, para sempre	Forever, forever	4
A minha que Mãe vem comigo	My Mother who comes with me	5
Que me deu esta lição	Who gave me this lesson	6
Para sempre, para sempre	Forever, forever	7
Para sempre eu ser irmão	For me to always be a brother	8

The first two stanzas (lines 1-8) invoke God and the divine Mother. The deictic phrase "here on earth" (*aqui na terra*) locates the speaker in a terrestrial position, and in so doing emphasizes the transcendent origin of "the love that God gives me," rhetorically bridging heaven and earth. The parallel invocation of "my Mother" in the second stanza (5-8) underscores the pedagogical relationship between the "I" of the hymn and the female divinity variously identified as the Forest Queen, the Ever-Virgin Mary, and the divine Mother of the speaker. At the same time, the demonstrative phrase "this lesson" points to the hymn itself and its performance in the pragmatic present.

The rupture of the ordinary march rhythm in each stanza's second couplet, to the degree that it provokes self-consciousness in the hymn singers of their movements, also calls attention to the specific circumstances of a given performance. Alternating couplets are thus cast in especially sharp relief; each invokes a temporal frame of reference that attaches to the relationship with the divine just named, pronouncing it eternal. But the couplet in lines 7-8 also introduces purpose: it uses "para" in the

stanza's final line in the sense of "in order to," although temporally this reading does not become salient until "*ser irmão*" (to be a brother) alters the pattern set in the first stanza. "This lesson," pointing toward something in the present frame, has been passed from the divine Mother to the "I" of the hymn, and is intended as an eternal guarantee of the kind of horizontal relations with other humans that are indexed by the notion of brotherhood.

The third and fourth stanzas of "Tucum" (9-16) perform, at the semantic level, a separation of "evildoers" from the present frame, implying with the gerund form of *enxotar* an active and physically violent expulsion, which is signified iconically in performance by singing the line with especial vigor, particularly on the men's side.

Enxotando os malfazejos	Kicking out the evildoers	9
Que não querem me ouvir	Who do not want to hear me	10
Que escurecem o pensamento	Who darken thought	11
E nunca podem ser feliz	And never can be happy	12
Esta é a linha do Tucum	This is the line of Tucum	13
Que traz toda lealdade	Which brings all loyalty	14
Castigando os mentirosos	Punishing the liars	15
Aqui dentro desta verdade	Here inside this truth	16

Given the *Doutrina*'s orality, it is noteworthy that these despised referents are agents who refuse to hear, or to listen to, the "I" of the hymn. These same beings are assigned responsibility for "darkening" thought, and contrasted with the possibility of happiness. (Discourse about certain members' avoidance of this hymn suggests another level on

which "Tucum" expels those who don't want to listen to "this truth.") Likewise, another hymn admonishes, "Whoever wants to continue on with me / It is necessary to listen to me" (*Quem quiser seguir comigo / É preciso me ouvir*). Hearing the voice of the divine is of central importance, and the voice has a special role as the instrument of both perdition and salvation, since it delivers the corrosive, loose talk of gossip as well as the redemptive lessons of the hymns.[183]

In the final stanza, the hymn culminates in the unveiling of the "line of Tucum" (13-14).[184] The physical separation that potentially can occur in the ranks of the dancers as a result of failure to adapt to the rupture between couplets (and the switch back to march rhythm with each new stanza) is linked, in lines 15-16, to the semantic expression of the notion of punishment. Without changing the deictic framework, the text indicates that "this" is the "line of Tucum" and further asserts of this "line" that it brings "loyalty," a

[183] The opposition of loose, gossipy talk and hymn singing is reinforced by spatial arrangement. The courtyard in front of the worship hall, with its 5-meter double-armed cross and garden, is a common place for congregants to gather during hinários to smoke cigarettes and talk. (Mostly it is the men who use this space; the women tend to gather behind the building, in the pavilion built to hang hammocks for children to sleep in during the long rituals.) Dona Peregrina's brother Joca told me advice his older brother had given him: stay in the worship hall, doing your work; outside (*lá fora*) you are likely to become involved in some intrigue that will impede spiritual progress.

[184] "Line of Tucum" is generally understood to refer to a spiritual "line," (*linha espiritual*), a common means of expressing the "groupness" of sets of spirits and the humans who cultivate relationships with them in Brazilian Spiritism, similar to the "nations" of Afro-Brazilian religions. But there is also metaphor at work: "tucum" also refers to palms of the genus *Astrocaryum*, the strong fibers of which are valued for hammocks, fishing nets, bags, and other textiles in the western and northwestern Amazon. Just as tucum cord or twine (*linha de tucum*) holds strong, so does the spiritual "line" associated with it.

positive characteristic that indexes other hymns, where the quality characterizes the way the "I" of the hymn teaches [Eu Vi a Virgem Mãe], and which is called necessary "to continue in the spiritual life" [Todos Querem Ser Irmão]. The gerund form is again invoked in the final couplet, where the presumption of topical coherence implies that the "liars" are being punished by the "line of Tucum." The final line locates this punishment in deictic space, again pointing to the pragmatic present: "here inside this truth."

The text focuses on the moment of performance again, implying, with its use of deixis, the co-location of the referents "here on earth," "this lesson," "[this is] the line of Tucum," and "[here inside] this truth." In these ways the hymn refers to itself and to the context of performance: it is not a hymn *about* the line of Tucum; rather, its performance itself is made to constitute that line. In re-presenting the "line," the hymn presumes its presence within experience. Likewise, the punishment of liars is figured as part of the present context.

This castigation appears together with a rupture of rhythm that threatens to separate those who do not follow the change. In its performative alignment of codes, the text therefore connects the punishment of "liars" and failing to perform the hymn properly. For Daimistas this is not a mere equation of social acceptance and technical ability in the hinário; rather, it serves as an index of one's commitment to the Doctrine and one's

development of *firmeza* if one can “disoccupy the apparatus” and channel the hymn, yet also pay attention to it, leaving oneself open to the possibility of “coming under conviction.”

Conclusions

Santo Daime expresses and generates Brazilian (and Christian) values and forms of social organization. Its emergence is intertwined with Acre's history as part of a locally and regionally inflected discourse on civilized moral development, within which a significant feature is the domestication or taming of wildness. Alto Santo discourse on its history shows a symbolic movement from the forest to the city, and suggests changes in the moral valence of ayahuasca as it becomes "Daime"; nevertheless, the *feitio* ritual (for example) shows ongoing symbolic contact with the forest. This, together with the appearance of the Forest Queen as an aspect of the Virgin Mary, points toward a "caboclization" of Christianity in the Doctrine. This caboclization can be seen in the positioning of Alto Santo, as a *casa*, between the forest and the city, which was what led me to view the cosmological import of Alto Santo's location within the model suggested by Roberto Da Matta for Brazil's culture more generally. The forest, in Daimista discourse, functions like the transcendent, relativizing "other world" Da Matta identified as one of three complementary spheres of a Brazilian "ritual system."

This difference, while very important to Alto Santo identity, underscores the similarities it has to other rural Brazilian cultural contexts. Not very much about overt "resistance," Daimista practice reaffirms Brazilian class relations when it draws on Positivoid notions

of a cross-class social contract that stimulates a very general sort of “progress” for all. This includes the approving stance in Daimista discourse and ritual practice toward military organization as a means of personal moral transformation (and consequent social inclusion) for the lower classes. It also includes the discursive commitment to the Brazilian nation that was expressed in the episode with the jagube vine in Peru, where the crucial question was whether the force it represented would “bring a good name to my Brazil.” These marks of militarism and nationalism, I conclude, represent real values for people at Alto Santo, not mere stratagems to gain undeserved legitimacy.

It is a mistake to confuse the legitimizing discourse on the Master’s House with an attempt to counteract prejudices toward ayahuasca stemming from its association with Indians and, later, with “hippies” and their drugs. The hierarchical, encompassing nature of the Brazilian casa itself, it seems, demands the exaltation of the householder as a model of morality, masculinity, and the capacity to mediate social distance and across class lines. In such situations of encompassment, a crucial question is the moral valence of the “boss.” At Alto Santo I found lots of talk directed to these points, presented in contexts ranging from the intimate to the public (e.g., Antônio Alves’s story about Irineu Serra bringing his men to clear the riverbank). Likewise, I have also examined a number of instances of attacks on Irineu Serra’s morality, such as the libelous poems of the “Bumpkin Troubadour.” These suggest a twist on the Brazilian popular saying, “show me

with whom you walk, and I will say who you are": "show me whom you *follow*, and I will say who you are."

Ritual activity at Alto Santo is framed as "spiritual work." In its most visible form, this work consists of hymn-singing rituals that dramatize the encounter, mediated by the hierarchy of the Master's House, of sinful persons with divine authority. These rituals are mirror images of the labor relations found in the old *aviamento* rubber economy, with nested sets of workers, each under a *patrão* who answers to the boss the next step up the chain. While Daimistas see their practice as unique in its particular configuration, like Felizardo they have an ecumenical view of spiritual work, which, conducted with the proper intention, taps into and propagates a "vibration to aid Humanity itself." In classic esotericist fashion, similarly-intended efforts put forth throughout the cosmos sum themselves into a single common force that works to bring universal goods: health, peace, and even salvation.

From the individual perspective, formal features of Daimista hymns reinforce the sense of their thing-ness. Together with discourse that frames the hymns as gifts from the divine, this sense of thing-ness plays an important role in ritual experience of hymn singing. Using the concept of entextualization, I examined the hymns' role in Daimistas' practice of moral self-examination according to a concept I have called "karmic morality,"which implies the accumulation of moral debts toward those one has

wronged. This markedly Christian aspect of Daimista practice is singled out as a point of distinction from immoral or amoral prior uses of ayahuasca, where the goal (according, that is, to Daimista discourse) was not facing and settling moral accounts for one's actions in the world but, instead, short-circuiting the proper routes of social relations for worldly gain. By contrast, karmic morality implies scrupulous observance of the rules of social propriety and, in the case of their violation, prescribes redemptive suffering. Along with disseminating positive energies throughout the universe, this practice of accountability is at the center of Daimista ritual. In its psychological dimensions, it closely resembles the process of "coming under conviction" described by Susan Harding (1987). The catharsis of confronting one's wrongdoing and moral debt is prerequisite to "dis-occupying" the hymn-receiving "apparatus" in order to be able to do true spiritual work.

Alto Santo practice with ayahuasca / Daime, I have argued, is not so much a critique of Brazilian culture as it is an instantiation of it within a particularly Acrean context. The adoption, for peri-urban use, of the "light from the forest" has presented certain challenges from the beginning. These tensions, involving contact with "wild" elements, were met by a commitment to bring ayahuasca, as Daime, into conventional Brazilian social milieux through the founding of a "house" around its use. As wider interest in Santo Daime brought it into contact with the War on Drugs, this conventionality gained

new salience, being one of the main reasons Acre has recognized its ayahuasca centers as cultural patrimony, with special distinction for Alto Santo, as the oldest and, perhaps, most exemplary of them. In this way, Alto Santo practice with ayahuasca challenges the overly simple notions about “drugs” as agents of moral debasement that are enshrined in contemporary international law.

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