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I will make my point succinctly clear: The Santo Daime ritual is easily transportable or exportable thanks to its regimented organization, elementary forms of movements within a simple stage setting, completely scripted routine, and efficacy in the deployment of magico-symbolic repertoires. Whatever bodies in formation do in Mapia, Brazil can be replicated in New York, Miami or Tokyo. By definition, everything is the same; even the language, which is always Portuguese. Before continuing on with the next item on the list facilitating the internalization of Santo Daime, I will first discuss what is presently taking place on the ground regarding this matter.

### **CEFLURIS' Strategy for Global Expansion**

In many respects, the international expansion of CEFLURIS has generated similar



organizational challenges to those experienced during its initial movement beyond the Amazon region. As explained in Chapter Four, the number one challenge for CEFLURIS has been the lack of socio-cultural conventions for the tolerance of ritual *ayahuasca* consumption, a situation by now completely resolved in Brazil. Having said this, the Santo Daime Church has made not insignificant inroads in that regard. The church is currently present on every continent, boasting numerous currents and points of activity in approximately 40 countries worldwide. But the question remains: How is the church able to expand if *ayahuasca* continues to be regarded in the same way as cocaine and heroine? Or, more to the point, what is CEFLURIS' strategy for international expansion?

*Padrinho* Paulo Roberto and *comitiva* in March 2014 conducted a two-day "Illumination Work" here in Miami. They were finishing off their U.S. tour in Miami before flying back to their home church in Rio de Janeiro. We at *Ceu da Lua Cheia* hosted some fifty *fardados* and guests. They came from various states including Maryland, Vermont, New York and Texas. I was able to personally talk to *Padrinho* Paulo Roberto on the last day after the work. I began by telling *Padrinho* Paulo Roberto--who speaks perfect English and holds a degree in Psychology--that given the fact he was a pioneer opening up churches in the U.S. some people in the "current"--another name given to the church--likened him to Paul, The Apostle. I asked him to tell me how that had happened. I had sketchy information on the advent of Santo Daime in North America. At the very least I knew that in 1987 he had been invited to give a speech at Harvard University. Such event had led to the first Santo Daime work ever to be held on U.S. soil. I also knew of a meeting with some forty therapists and psychologists in Cambridge, MA to discuss another gathering later that year. An attorney joining that

group had been given the assignment to clarify whether it was even legal to proceed. I also knew the legal research already in existence had determined that under MA statutes and federal laws, *ayahuasca* was indeed legal. *Padrinho* Paulo Roberto's answer to my question was as follows:

*During a trip I made to the U.S. a very powerful female psychic approached me. She caused quite an impression on me. I had heard already of an impressive woman who had attended the Cambridge meeting. This woman told me she envisioned me opening several Santo Daime points of light throughout the U.S. territory.<sup>52</sup> She also told me about a premonition dream whereby she saw the world connected by points of light representing Santo Daime churches. This woman seemed to be very well connected. She travelled with me on this mission to establish churches.<sup>53</sup>*

I then proceeded to ask what most preoccupied me: What is Church policy regarding international expansion or globalization? I already knew that in 2006, according to Santo Daime records, there were thirty fully-fledged churches, points of light and prayer groups totaling some 350 *fardados/as* (including Canada and Mexico). To that figure, one can reasonably add another half representing regular guests or future *fardados*. I calculated some 500 people actively participating in Santo Daime rituals at least twice a month. Hence I wasn't surprised by the *Padrinho's* answer:

*We don't have an international expansion policy of any kind. We are not interested in cross-border ventures or looking to expand. We only entertain inquiries, but we as a church do not proselytize. When someone approaches us and shows an interest in opening up a Point, we listen and take it under advice. Back in 1987, individuals wanting to set up churches in the United States*

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<sup>52</sup> *Ceu da Lua Cheia*, a church with less than 30 *fardados* is referred to as a Point of Light

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Santo Daime *Padrinho* Paulo Roberto in Miami on March 8, 2014.

*approached me. I consulted Padrinho Alfredo and he answered that it was OK provided that we are invited. These efforts are therefore not initiated by us. Today, we continue applying this policy.*<sup>54</sup>

I personally believe this does not entirely settle the question surrounding CEFLURIS's international expansion policy. I understand--and it is reasonable to expect--that Church matters concerning expansion into territories where *ayahuasca* is illegal must be treated with great care. During my conversation with *Padrinho* Paulo Roberto, he did stress the requisite discretion, if not outright secrecy, regarding Church affairs abroad. Furthermore, very well-informed inside sources have told me that *Padrinho* Alfredo is actively pushing U.S. churches to build temples and grow their own *ayahuasca*. As a matter of fact, *Ceu da Lua Cheia* in Miami is presently looking to purchase undeveloped land in order to build a church. Hence, my conclusion regarding Santo Daime expansion policy with respect to the U.S. is inconclusive. I believe the unfavorable legal climate in the U.S. has much to do with it. This has led to confusion of sorts at CEFLURIS headquarters, as manifested by the contradictory messages coming from its leadership.

Having established that CEFLURIS cannot articulate and even less develop a coherent international expansion policy, seeing how it is faced with such a hostile international legal environment, I shall now continue with the exploration of those forces pushing for acculturation overseas. I will deal in this next section with late modern perspectives tending to accelerate and assist the transition of Santo Daime to other continents beyond legal constraints. The most relevant event in that regard has been the

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with Santo Daime *Padrinho* Paulo Roberto in Miami on March 8, 2014.

explosion of New Religious Movements (NRM) in contemporary culture. Of particular interest here is the post-modern trend of what is commonly referred to as the New-Age movement.

### **New Religious Movements (NRM) and the onset of New-Age Religiosity**

The overseas expansion of Santo Daime needs to be understood within the dynamics of a broader social-religious phenomenon. According to Dawson, there are three distinct elements combining to form the conditions of greater pluralization of the religious landscape and the ensuing rise of new-era religiosity. The first one is the appearance of new groups with novel organizational repertoires that have broadened the religious spectrum.<sup>55</sup> The second one is the development of an individualistic ethos of personal choice, which has emboldened seekers to explore new repertoires. The third element is the presence of macro organizational dynamics at an international scale such that the first two factors can materialize. The most relevant of these factors concern the onset of a “New-Age” religious orientation, the enduring cross-cultural secularization of the religious field and the forces of globalization (Dawson, 2011).

Briefly speaking, NRMs sprung in the mid 1960s and should be understood as a product of the counter-culture of that period. Sociologist Stephen Hunt describes how “the counter-culture offered a critique of technical rationality, a scientifically dominated culture, established social institutions, and dominant forms of morality “ (Hunt, 2003). Many of these movements developed at the end of the “hippie” era and attempted to

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<sup>55</sup> What comes to mind here is the proliferation of Native-American Indian worship instances in urban cities where peyote-based ritual practices occur. Seekers of plant-based oriented religiosity typically attend these gatherings.

restore a supernatural view of the world while offering communal and alternative lifestyles. These movements blasted onto the religious landscape as brand-new phenomena. They were and still are innovating forms of religion on the fringes of mainstream Christianity as well as other dominant forms of institutional religions. These new religions cannot easily be categorized because they display differing sets of attitudes toward the outside world. Some aim at sect-like organization and their teachings are in direct conflict with wider society. Others are world-affirming movements and may be thought of as “client” or “audience-like” cults. Adherents to these movements behave as consumers who are buying a service such as healing or realizing personal abilities.<sup>56</sup> A third group appears to display world-accommodating attitudes and could possibly be squeezed in between the first two groups. They often tolerate other faiths and are consequently more pluralistic in their outlook (Hunt, 2003).<sup>57</sup> In the next section where I will focus on the acculturation problems of Santo Daime in Miami, I will make use of some of the existing NRM research to illustrate the type of people that become converts, on the one hand, and the reasons why they may leave, on the other.

While the New-Age movement does not equate NRMs, it also could not have developed outside of its sphere of influence. Nonetheless, both movements are vastly different. In Hunt’s view, “many of its origins can be found in the esoteric culture of the

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<sup>56</sup> The automaticity to unquestioningly commodify anything of value in the Western neoliberal world is called “commodity fetishism,” to borrow a Marxist term. When a society is based almost entirely on the “production of commodities by means of commodity,” we then have a situation whereby market relations influence almost everything that people do, something that was not the case in pre-capitalist societies where commerce was much more restricted.

<sup>57</sup> NRMs derive from all religious traditions. Some derive from Christianity. Examples are “The Family,” “The Jesus Fellowship” and assorted messianic communities. Others derive from Hinduism such as “The International Society for Krishna Consciousness,” “Sai Baba” and “Shri Swaminarayan.” Others such as “The Unification Church” and “Rastafarianism,” are syncretic in nature.

mid to late nineteenth-century, when spiritualism and occultist practices flourished in Western Europe and North America. The great difference is that the various interrelated strands which constitute this movement display a profoundly eclectic and syncretic pattern of beliefs and practices.” (Hunt, 2003). This definition is remarkably close to the constitutive and eclectic elements found in Santo Daime. Not to get confused because while Santo Daime incorporates and folds into a single worldview elements of several traditions, New-Age religions do not. New-Age encompasses a cultic smorgasbord only insofar as people pick and choose from what is on offer. In other words, a new sympathizer chooses discrete pieces from a diverse repertoire of religious traditions and constructs his or her own spiritual platform. Having said this, however, New-Age and Santo Daime ideas are remarkably similar.

Hunt says that New-Age is cultist in the sense that “it frequently appears to be in tension with society and opposes many of its core values, not least of all a rampant materialism and rationalism.” (Hunt, 2003) Paradoxically, however, he claims New-Age is concomitantly most optimistic, celebratory and utopian. This idea of playfulness and celebration throws New-Age squarely into the domain of post-modernism; that is as system of organization and classification of culture. To be sure, and according to post-modern writers, religion in the emerging age frequently embodies individualistic religious “experience,” reflecting today’s culture and specifically its attraction to the fleetingly dramatic, titillating, and exotic. Such an emphasis on experience may be at the expense of codified beliefs that inform traditional religions (Hunt, 2003). According to Jean-Francois Lyotard--a foremost French thinker associated with post-modern theory--the collapse of social and cognitive structures has imbued post-modernism with a

willingness to combine cultural expressions from various symbols of frameworks of meaning. Again, what easily comes to mind is the Santo Daime flair for the exotic and the hybridity of its philosophical foundation.

New-Age and Santo Daime share another element, that is the effect of the speed with which social changes are happening in the modern world. One singular effect caused by the erasing from historical memory is a collective state of ignorance and the impeding subjective necessity it creates to produce new narratives with religious movements seeking to restore, reform or revive true spirituality. This is, again, one of the promises of Santo Daime: Finding truth and divinity at the heart of the plant, hence why it is aptly called “plant teacher.” Yet another similarity is that New-Age spirituality is millenarian. This perspective is tied to the end of the millennium and to the collective anxiety generated by the way economic activity is organized to confront an uncertain future. On the coattails of postmodern society, Santo Daime connects the crashing down of present cultural structures with the belief in the ushering of a New Age.<sup>58</sup> In Hunt’s view, “the New Age, then, offers a radicalized version of human potential, resting on spiritual rather than psychological foundations” (Hunt, 2003). By and large, New-Age sacred texts are “channeled” works. A Course in Miracles (ACIM) is a great example of this phenomenon.<sup>59</sup> Likewise, all Santo Daime *hinarios* are allegedly “received.” Finally and again in total congruence with Santo Daime attitudes and beliefs, New-Age places an unmistakable emphasis on the Self. The *Daimista* idea of finding one’s own true self and

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<sup>58</sup> Santo Daime has a millenarian quality. The *hinarios Nova Jerusalem, Nova Era* and *Nova Dimencao* sing songs of a new world.

<sup>59</sup> This book was channeled in the decade of the 1970s by Helen Schucman, a professor of medical psychology at Columbia University.

to liberate one-self from corrupted and socialized identities also finds resonance in New-Age religiosity. The focus of both Santo Daime and New-Age religion thus is to empower the individual within constituted ideas of a spiritual “Higher Self” who is perfect and claims, as it were, Buddha nature. This leads me to my last observation as I compare these two traditions. That is they both believe in reincarnation, albeit constituted in different forms such as past lives experiences and the like.

One can draw from my New-Age discourse that its core beliefs almost mirror Santo Daime positionality as a NRM. This situation renders New-Age a true ally for the Santo Daime need to expand internationally. To recapitulate, Santo Daime first and foremost is a doctrine emerging from a multiplicity of discrete and disconnected religious traditions, many of which happen to form the New-Age movement repertoire. Secondly and consistent with New-Age belief, Santo Daime worldview is decidedly millenarian in nature yet at the same time remains profoundly optimistic and life-affirming. Thirdly, Santo Daime shares with New-Age the idea of resistance to materialism while concurrently promising the delivery of true spirituality. Finally and in true New-Age style, Santo Daime presents with a theatrical singing ritual that is eminently exotic and performed with much flair. Close parallels between New-Age religiosity and Santo Daime beliefs and practices naturally work together to facilitate the expansion of the latter onto the world stage. From a practical point of view, the New-Age movement could be likened to a landing platform for the Santo Daime launching into the international orbit.

Dawson clearly confirms such perception. In his own words, “facilitated by the cultural flows of late-modern globalization, *ayahuasca* was being consumed by alternate



practitioners and non-main stream religionists as part of a broader new-age psychedelic regime by the mid-1970s” (Dawson, 2013). With regards to implications for Santo Daime international aspirations, he adds: “Whether using *ayahuasca* or not, the desire of a number of otherwise independent alternative practitioners to augment their existing ritual repertoires with practices informed by the daimista paradigm furnished one of the earliest platforms upon which Cefluris expanded beyond its native South American context.” (Dawson, 2013).

In their unlimited curiosity and thirst for new understanding, I have witnessed many New-Agers parade through the Miami Santo Daime Church in search of “The Next Experience.” Some of them are already familiar with “plant medicines” as well as other types of substances enabling one to reach altered states of consciousness. The variety of natural substances consumed by New-Agers passing through our church includes cannabis, San Pedro cacti, *kambo* (poison frog secretion), psychedelic mushrooms, and *mapacho*, an unprocessed Amazonian tobacco taken as snuff. Many of the New-Agers I have spoken to have indicated they are recurring participants in Native American Church peyote ceremonies as well as “sweat lodges.” Others have tried “Holotropic” breath works, a breathing technique developed by Stanislav Grof producing “outer-worldly” non-ordinary states of consciousness. Clearly, these types of New-Agers are attracted to the psychedelic and spiritual effect the *ayahuasca* brew promises. However, there is also another genre of seekers I would loosely connect with a non-traditional brand of Eastern spirituality and mysticism. Many of these follow gurus or claim to harness guru powers. They may combine with these occult practices such as crystals, assorted amulets and symbolic objects with which they may adorn their bodies. But the most important thing I

have noticed is how all of them seem to embody the idea the individual is the ultimate arbiter of religious authority and the primary achiever of spiritual self-transformation. Their strong experiential preoccupation is grounded on a strong individuality, self exploration and personal agency. These people in large measure embody an important core set of beliefs and practices lending support to the ability of CEFLURIS to establish a beachhead on U.S. coasts.

In many ways, Santo Daime expansion is very much a product of its time. According to CEFLURIS, estimates for the number of worldwide adepts of the Santo Daime lineage associated with *Padrinho Sebastiao* and *Ceu do Mapia* hover around 4,000. Meanwhile, followers of so-called Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions number approximately 20,000 (Labate et al., 2009). While the total number of actual participants in a Santo Daime ceremony is likely much higher, it remains comparatively quite small considering there are now churches in close to four dozen countries around the world. Santo Daime has gone transnational in the age of globalization while operating with a rather small scale of people, something that would be nearly impossible in earlier times due to geographic and communication restrictions. Having traced the contours of the ways in which Santo Daime has carved itself a place within the U.S. cultural context and how the external global system in turn supports its internationalization, I shall now delineate the U.S. organizational structure. I will then move on to *Ceu da Lua Cheia*, Miami, and the object of this thesis.

### **From CEFRULRIS to CEFLURIS-NA**

Before turning the spotlight onto the Miami Santo Daime Church *Ceu da Lua*

*Cheia*, it bears to briefly review the history and structure of Santo Daime in the U.S. at large. I narrated my conversation with *Padrinho* Paulo Roberto in the previous chapter. I pointed out the centrality of his personal efforts in such U.S. expansion beginning in 1987. What follows is a brief summary of the events through 2005, followed by a narrative pertaining to the creation that same year of CEFLURIS-NA, the umbrella organization encompassing the U.S. and Canadian Santo Daime churches.

A flurry of activity developed in 1988 as a direct result of the network of connections *Padrinho* Paulo Roberto personally established. That year, a man obtained permission from *Padrinho* Sebastiao to start a church and bring the *daime* brew to Cambridge, MA. Efforts by people to establish churches in the Big Island of Kauai, Hawaii also got under way. Initial legal inquiries with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and United States Customs Services concerning the importing of *ayahuasca* from Mapia, Brazil also happened that year. Concomitantly, by September 1988, the first shipment of *daime* landed in Hawaii and a piece of land was purchased to build a temple. The first ever work was held in Cambridge also in 1988 in the newly instituted church *Ceu da Beija-flor* (Heaven of the Hummingbird). By 1995, the church in Hawaii emerged as the leading Santo Daime church in the U.S. and began to map out its own production of *ayahuasca*. By 1996, *Padrinho* Paulo Roberto and his wife *Madrinha* Nonata, *Padrinho* Sebastiao's daughter, made several trips to the U.S. in an effort to establish churches on American soil. Churches opened later that year in Colorado and Los Angeles. In 1997, *Padrinho* Alfredo inaugurated the "Church of the Virgin Mother" in Maryland while *Ceu do Coracao do Texas* (The Heavenly Heart of Texas) started to hold works in Austin. Later that year, Ashland, Oregon and Sedona, Arizona also held their

first-ever works. *Padrinho* Paulo Roberto was the quintessential lightning rod behind this flurry of new activity. Between 1998 and 2001 more churches started operating, including *Ceu da Lua Cheia* in Miami. By 2006, thirty churches and 350 active *fardados* were reported in North America.

In 2005, twenty-one American churches including the Toronto one met in Santa Cruz, CA to discuss the setting up of a national church. Twenty-four Protectors (Canada, Holland and Japan also attended) signed in December 2005 in Hawaii a Proclamation creating the North American organization. CEFLURIS and the Council of Elders (COE) were in full support of such proclamation. The signatories included the Council of Elders, the Assembly of Protectors, the Synod of Protectors, the Plenary Body, and the Executive Governing Council along with various Committees.

Organizationally, the conglomerate of U.S. churches is a loose voluntary association. However, each individual church is established as a 501(C)3 or a tax- exempt nonprofit organization. Miami Protector Alberto told me he opted to join CEFLURIS-NA in order to “formalize and get several things done.” It is actually difficult to envision churches operating with any degree of efficiency without belonging to such a larger organization. To begin with, CEFLURIS-NA controls and distributes the sacrament in the United States. Secondly, they organize the annual road-show of *Padrinhos* from Brazil, events people excitedly wait for. Thirdly, the organization provides legal protection and via its Plenary Meetings it ostensibly provides guidance and orientation to affiliated churches. Also, pursuant to CEFLURIS-NA principles, churches become “official” when they sign a “Compact.” Miami’s *Ceu da Lua Cheia* signed its own Compact in April 2007, thus becoming an official CEFLURIS-NA church.

The average contribution required for attending a Santo Daime work is \$50. However, special works along with those led by *Padrinhos* and their *comitivas* (groups) are more expensive, usually running at \$150 per day or \$250 for two days. In addition to this, there are sometimes fundraisers of various kinds whereby jewelry or Santo Daime paraphernalia is sold. After subtracting a reasonable amount to cover individual church expenses, the revenue that works generate is sent directly to the Hawaii mother church. There it is further distributed pursuant to various collective understandings formalized during Plenary Meetings. Based on information I have been able to obtain, proceeds are allocated as follows:

a. Ceu do Mapia

To cover the construction cost for a new church under construction  
 To cover costs pertaining to the installation of an industrial kitchen  
 To cover Madrinha Rita's ongoing medical expenses

b. Hawaii

To cover the costs involved with *daime* production (*feitios*)  
 To cover administrative expenses and plantation costs  
 To cover costs associated with the delivery of *daime* to each church  
 To cover costs pertaining to the expansion of production facilities

c. Other

Legal costs  
 Administrative costs  
 Four days of Plenary Meetings once a year  
 Miscellaneous expenses

CEFLURIS-NA membership appears on the surface to be a logical idea. However, with the exception of *ayahuasca* control, distribution and legal assistance, this

organization does not provide affiliated churches with assimilation guidelines or any type of leadership concerning this matter. CEFLURIS-NA in reality is not a policy-making body nor is it consulted on civic and other matters. As a result, overall growth strategy for Santo Daime Miami, if one had to be articulated, remains timid and is steeped in secrecy due to the enduring illegality of *ayahuasca*. Though Church leaders from Brazil, namely *Padrinho* Alfredo, envision planting the *ayahuasca* flag around the planet thanks to churches that would harvest their own production, how to put this into practice remains a mystery. It seems the Brazil leadership is dreaming of an international grass-roots movement of self-sustaining and economically independent Santo Daime churches. This is despite seemingly empty coffers to carry out such dream. Could it be such a vision is merely a reflection of what the home community of *Ceu do Mapia* in Brazil was able to successfully accomplish, i.e. successful resistance to governmental or corporate intrusion?

## CHAPTER 7

### Summary and Conclusions

I conducted this study with the intent of deciphering and understanding the acculturation predicaments experienced by *Ceu da Lua Cheia*, the relatively young Santo Daime Church located in Miami, FL. Acculturation theory informs us that a church migrating to another country must necessarily adapt to local host-country conditions, all of which implies the original church culture by definition must change. It is disconcerting then to observe how ever so resistant to change *Ceu da Lua Cheia* has proven to be.

Given how this church has witnessed its membership steadily decline over the last four years, I have even questioned *Ceu da Lua Cheia*'s viability as an ongoing concern. This appears to be paradigmatic given Miami's pluralistic and liberal religious milieu. Several additional concerns, however, shaped my hypothesis some of which tend to hinder acculturation. I postulated that *Ceu da Lua Cheia* reluctance to let go of a deeply-ingrained Brazilian cultural identity-- including the use of Portuguese during rituals--was a hindrance to assimilation. Likewise, the Miami church adoption of the stern military culture transported from Brazil has also in my opinion hindered the likelihood for *Ceu da Lua Cheia* to potentially lure a more liberal constituency. With regards to this, I pointed out how New-Age religiosity works against the acculturation of this *Daimista* church given how it is driven by a late modern capitalistic market paradigm. That is because among many things such religiosity requires little personal commitment from New-Agers, all the while requiring the active marketing of religious services in a manner similar to private corporations.

Except for one single exception, I was hereby able to confirm my thesis regarding the acculturation issues affecting *Ceu da Lua Cheia*. While the illegality of *ayahuasca* use in the U.S. would appear to be a factor supporting the thesis of acculturation difficulties by the Miami church, the data did not totally support this view. None of my subjects in fact invoked the illegal status of *ayahuasca* as a factor in their decision to participate or not to participate in this church. One reason accounting for this could be that government authorities have never once raided the established facility currently churning out *daiمة* for all U.S. churches, implying perhaps a more tolerant climate for *ayahuasca* use in Hawaii at least. This facility produces some 2,000 to 3,000 liters annually as it supplies all U.S. churches. This claim, however, must be tempered by the situation on the ground. While the banning of *ayahuasca* consumption remains firmly on the radar screen of U.S. agencies charged with the enforcing of anti-drug laws, the illicit status of this substance by definition operates against acculturation. The stigmatization of *ayahuasca* has forced *Ceu da Lua Cheia* along with all other U.S. churches to operate in an underground and clandestine way.

According to my findings, declining membership at *Ceu da Lua Cheia* can also be attributed to the all-encompassing strong Brazilian identity and its “militarized” regimented ritual style. Many respondents who opted not to return to the church after a work all highlighted how the obvious “authoritarian” style wasn’t attractive to them. Furthermore, they regarded the powerful Brazilian culture shrouding the church as an unnecessary hurdle especially with regards to the singing of the *hinarios* which is conducted in Portuguese.



The prime reason invoked by those people who opted out was the sheer difficulty of the work. I have discussed at length in this thesis the actual drilling effect of the Santo Daime work on participating bodies. Suffice it to say here, the gargantuan effort and dedication of both energy and time a Santo Daime ritual requires does appear to be an obstacle for most people. In addition to the work demanding a super-human effort on the day of, one consequently needs at least one extra day to simply recuperate from it. Some people also feel a Santo Daime ritual in the end interferes too much with their regular lives and pressing schedules. Others feel that partaking in Santo Daime also ends up hurting their relationships or family life, particularly if they are the only ones participating in works.

It is obvious that partaking in the Santo Daime movement presents challenges far greater than those perhaps required by more traditional faiths. Vast time investment issues are such that one can easily assert Santo Daime is in fact nothing short than a way of life. If this is so, then individuals with families would need to involve their entire family in Santo Daime. For example, those *fardados/as* who have either joined the Church or regularly participate in Santo Daime ceremonies despite a lack of support from their spouses have consequently encountered serious marital issues. Last but not least, in this laundry list of objections to joining *Ceu da Lua Cheia* one also finds the not insignificant costs linked to actual church membership. It is not uncommon to have to spend anywhere between \$5,000 and \$7,000 annually for those intent on partaking in all official works.

### **The New Middle Class and New-Age Religiosity**

The seemingly “cut and paste” quality of the New-Age post-modern era renders it the leading competitor in the religious market place. One would think it would then make Santo Daime a virtual “shoe-in” for the spiritual audience in Miami. However, as previously stated, while New-Agers may always have been aware of the existence of Santo Daime, they would appear to dismiss it rather too quickly once they actually experience it in the flesh. There are many reasons why that is occurring, not the least of which being the fact that New-Agers by definition do not commit to any one religion. Another reason is that Santo Daime does not gyrate to the tune of the laws of market economics. Themes of discipline, duty and commitment don’t even register in the vocabulary of New-Age religiosity. Thus there is little *Ceu da Lua Cheia* can in effect do to counter-balance such blatant reality. The aforementioned situation is even more distressing for the Miami Church given that, contrary to New-Age tenets, Santo Daime religion does not openly market itself to the local New-Age public or to members of any other religious tradition for that matter. Consequences of this dual action are that repudiation is enhanced from the former and social lack of connectivity is cemented by the latter.

### **Organizational and Strategic Weaknesses in Miami**

The under-developed organizational framework of *Ceu da Lua Cheia* also bears a tremendous weight on church ability to “recruit” new members (I use the term “recruit” loosely as I’ve clearly established beforehand that proselytizing is not a hallmark of Santo Daime). Going by the Weberian dictum connecting the rationalization of

charismatic authority to institutional continuance, *Ceu da Lua Cheia* is clearly veering into the danger zone. Even though the Miami Santo Daime Church operates autonomously, real authority at the end of the day rests squarely with *Ceu do Mapia* in Brazil and with the *Padrinhos* who run it. Unfortunately for *Ceu da Lua Cheia*, *Ceu do Mapia* directives regarding overseas church consolidation do not provide an effective compass. What then remains points to weaknesses with regards to church bureaucracy and internal organization at *Ceu da Lua Cheia*.

Complicating an already delicate assimilation dossier is the fact that CEFLURIS, and by extension *Ceu da Lua Cheia*, are using a two-tracked approach when dealing with *de facto* overseas expansion. On the one hand we have external posturing by the Church and, on the other, a seemingly different set of internal goals even though they are not written in stone. With the former we encounter statements by the Protector of *Ceu da Lua Cheia* that the church is not interested in increasing membership ranks. We also hear official statements such as those by *Padrinho* Paulo Roberto that CEFLURIS has no plans to expand. Regarding the latter, the rhetoric dances to a different tune and certainly is more forward-looking insofar as overseas expansion is concerned. Within said context it then becomes easier to understand *Padrinho* Alfredo's "marching orders" to all U.S. churches to build temples and plant *ayahuasca* fields. Such are the methods used when an institution is forced to operate on the fringes of the legal order. Similar to the predicament faced by the thirty other Santo Daime churches in the U.S., *Ceu da Lua Cheia* finds itself in the middle of this conundrum without really knowing what to do. Furthermore, though it may serve as a somewhat reassuring anchor, CEFLURIS-NA membership in and of itself does not guarantee victory given how this institution experiences similar anxieties

to *Ceu da Lua Cheia*. Having said all this, I believe the future of *Ceu da Lua Cheia* remains uncertain for now. Unless the Miami church takes immediate steps to increase its membership, its rank and file may dwindle even further, endangering the continuity of its very presence there.

Two developments may however assist *Ceu da Lua Cheia* to find a solution to its acculturation puzzle. The first one has to do with very recent developments at the heart of the church and the second with the seemingly beneficial turn of events regarding the profile of *ayahuasca* on a global stage. Concerning recent developments at *Ceu da Lua Cheia*, it is encouraging to see this church is finally actively encouraging its *fardados* to engage more forcefully in administrative matters. A solid “bureaucracy” will however not set in unless changes in this regard first take place within the Mother Church’s organization in Brazil. The other reason working in favor of *Ceu da Lua Cheia* is that its future is tied to positive developments concerning *ayahuasca* medical and clinical research.

### **Recommendations**

As the head of Santo Daime Church at its “headquarters” in *Ceu do Mapia*, Brazil, *Padrinho* Alfredo must urgently imbue this organization with a bureaucracy solely dedicated to assist its overseas churches in their mission of expansion and acculturation. A targeted program designed to help overseas churches develop on their own ought to be fleshed out so as to enhance the Santo Daime profile on the global scene. Stronger and more targeted leadership out of Brazil is hereby required if Santo Daime is to make it on U.S. shores including Miami. U.S. churches including Miami must also

understand the assimilation challenges confronting them. A limited, discrete effort by *Ceu da Lua Cheia* to expose itself to the Miami New-Age community would benefit this church's integration into the community and go a long way to ensure its permanence in Miami.

From a narrower focus, several acculturation solution steps may be implemented by the Santo Daime church both in Miami and around the U.S. Such recommendations are tied to Catholic ritual aspects, dress code, using other languages, a more proactive church structure and image as well as the sheer length of this strenuous ritual. The latter all stem from Weber's theory repertoire. Finally--and echoing Berger's theory this time--how the church can gain in visibility so as to "recruit" more followers is another central aspect of acculturation I will hereby delve into.

The rampant Catholic ethos stands as a major impediment to successful acculturation. One potential panacea to luring more followers would be to tone down the Catholic rhetoric. Catholic terms and symbolic repertoire are pervasive in the *hinarios* and in ceremony artifacts on display. Images of the Virgin Mary especially are omnipresent. One could still accommodate such change without stripping Santo Daime from its core Catholic aspects. Given the original importance of The Virgin Mary apparition before Mestre Irineu, its image will understandably always remain at the heart of Santo Daime values and beliefs. Nonetheless, one could award for instance more ceremonial weight to *Yemanjá* as opposed to the Virgin Mary. Another way to dampen the Catholic ethos at the heart of Santo Daime would be to better educate prospective members during their orientation sessions prior to their first work. One would make it very explicit that Santo Daime is not an arm of the Vatican and that this doctrine does not subscribe to any

official Catholic dogma. Rather, one would spell out that any use of Catholic imagery or language is only symbolic and metaphorical and reflects in part ambient so-called “popular Catholicism” in South America. This would potentially prevent newcomers from being taken aback--as some typically are--on the occasion of their first ceremony. I am also in favor of conducting formal teaching sessions for guests who are confused by the multi-cultural Santo Daime doctrine or for those who simply want to deepen their knowledge of this church.

Loosening up the rigid dress code--perhaps doing away entirely with uniforms--could also help nurture Santo Daime acculturation efforts. The issue of uniform is perhaps a bigger acculturation issue here in Miami than say in more conservative “markets” such as Washington DC. This is because Miami is a more fashion-conscious cosmopolitan city, habitually labeled more “flamboyant” than other U.S. cities.

Another way to aid acculturation in the U.S. would be to increase the extent of the English-language repertoire of *hinarios*. This may convince more English-speaking individuals to give Santo Daime a chance as some may be intimidated by the mere singing in Portuguese. For some people, speaking a foreign language may not be their *forte* to begin with. Singing more *hinarios* in English could prove a huge acculturation boost for Santo Daime in Miami not to mention in the U.S. at large. *Padrinho* Paulo Roberto himself reiterated that point when he last was in Miami. He chose to sing a particular *hinario* typically sung in Portuguese this time entirely in English.

Church leadership should work harder on establishing a proper bureaucracy, holding more frequent meetings of *fardados/as* so as to brainstorm more efficiently with regards to how to step up church membership. It would be important to open up the

inner-circle debate on how to render church growth an absolute priority. Instituting an internal mentoring program of younger inducted members would help ensure a more ingrained sense of continuity in the number of work participants should for example Church Protector Alberto be unavailable or ill. This would be an indirect way of acculturating. Vouching there are always enough people to hold down a work is in fact a question of mere survival for the Miami Church. It is imperative the leadership and its *fardados/as* render their church more than just a so-called “Point of Light,” instead committing to make it into a fully-fledged *bona fide* church. This would give it more clout and ensure a higher number of sought-after *Padrinho* visits to Miami.

Another major acculturation obstacle remains the unmitigated difficulty of a Santo Daime ritual. Followers traditionally wishing one another “*bom trabalho!*” (“Have a good work!”) is no coincidence. Akin to the painstaking erecting of a tall building, ritual participants must work very hard indeed for extenuating hours to improve themselves so as to make the world out there a better place. Each participant is ensconced in her or his own pursuit of higher consciousness under the influence of the *daime*. Meanwhile, the extent of the collective ceremonial effort uniting these “soldiers of the forest” is something to be reckoned indeed. What some people may also find difficult or unattractive in this ritual is the rigid military ethos. Staying in formation is a ritual hallmark to the point that, should someone habitually step “out of the line,” that person could be asked to leave. As opposed to the Miami Church, larger churches are more flexible with regards to one’s freedom to step in and out of the *salao* during the ritual which is always formally “opened” and “closed.” Once the Protector “opens” the work, no one else is permitted to enter. Because the Miami Church is a rented house with a

garden perhaps too close for comfort to its next-door neighbors, no one is allowed to step outside especially not to mention enter during the entire duration of the work. That can be too harsh or even claustrophobic for some. Should the Miami leadership relax its rigid ceremony standards, this would encourage more people to join Santo Daime hence supporting *de facto* acculturation.

Leaving aside the military style, the mere physically taxing aspect of the ceremony can be off-putting or even frightening to prospective members unaccustomed to stepping out of their “comfort zone.” Having the courage to squarely face one’s own inner demons and plethora of fears via intense “purging” (vomiting etc.) is in fact what a Santo Daime ritual is all about-- for a large part. Human fear-driven behaviors have always been amongst the most corrosive and destructive as they single-handedly shut down human creativity not to mention the flow of universal love. The latter is one of the cornerstones of Santo Daime. Yet no matter how committed people might be to their spiritual journey, not everyone will be willing to submit themselves to such intense physical discomfort. Another challenge is also how long a ritual typically lasts. As described earlier, ceremonies can last anywhere from five to an astounding twelve hours, namely in the case of *bailado* works. The required physical endurance is something more sensitive constitutions may simply not be able to bear despite good-faith efforts.

Perhaps if the Miami leadership were to make more of a conscious point to shorten the length of a ritual would membership finally grow and foster. Furthermore, because our modern times have rendered us consumers of information and services twenty-four hours a day, people-- especially in Miami where temptations of all sorts are rampant--may have a harder time convincing themselves Santo Daime is worth the time



and effort. In the end, only the true *cognoscenti* of the divine medicine and the value of intense self-knowledge may go to the effort of partaking in a work. Devoting such an immense chunk of time to a religious ceremony can nonetheless remain problematic for some. Parents of young children, for example, may simply not be able to stay away from their offspring for such extended periods of time. The offering of childcare services by a rotation of volunteer church members in proximity of a ceremony could be a solution to the combined issue of time and money that is such a challenge for members with young children.

How then can the Miami Church manage to better acculturate in a city that seemingly offers too many other distractions yet where the ambient New-Age marketplace happens to be thriving? By being a more astute participant in said New-Age marketplace without succumbing to the proselytizing CEFLURIS-NA does not condone. A good example relates to one of our church members, now an enduring pillar of ritual strength. The only reason she found out about Santo Daime in the first place is because she was one day perusing the community bulletin board at a local alternative healing center. The simply-written advertisement was compelling and intriguing enough for her to want to explore what the doctrine was all about. She never looked back. An important acculturation tool could be simply to increase the amount of notices on bulletin boards--including online ones--at local alternative outlets, be they "healing centers," organic health-food stores, energy medicine offices or even yoga studios. The many psychic fairs also regularly on offer in Miami could also be ideal--though still discrete-- "hunting grounds" for Santo Daime. In effect, a more proactive form of "word-of-mouth" would

enhance acculturation efforts and help the Santo Daime Miami Church especially gain a firmer stronghold onto the local New-Age scene.

While the issue of gender in Santo Daime rests far beyond the scope of my thesis, it is worth noting the absence of women at the upper echelons of Santo Daime--specifically as *bona fide* Commanders or church leaders. Likely a direct fall-out from Brazil's more patriarchal society, men only lead the Santo Daime Church. A Commander's wife or partner, however, may at times contribute to the ritual with the leading of rosary-reading, singing or even a *concentracao* in the absence of said husband/partner. One way to encourage acculturation in an ultra-modern American society would be to enable women--whether the wife/partner of the Commander or another senior female member--to actually serve as Commander and leader of said Santo Daime chapter. Also, younger more modern-conscious women may shy away from the actual stern uniforms. A way to encourage acculturation could be to allow women to wear instead what female guests routinely adorn, less conservative though still demure all-white long skirts and modest tops that cover shoulders at all times. Last but not least, the financial aspect of all U.S. churches should be assessed by CEFLURIS-NA with a view to encouraging growth. The institution of a church fund to be used as a lending pool to member churches should be seriously considered. If membership is to increase and acculturation furthered, the construction of temples should be a priority. In order to carry out such venture the availability of scarce economic resources is a must.

## CHAPTER 8

### Recommendations for Future Study

If my instincts serve me right, in the U.S. the political climate is rapidly changing in directions that are auspicious to the increasing use of entheogens. If this is so, only with the implementation of just some of my recommended steps, *Ceu da Lua Cheia* would enjoy a brighter future in Miami. Should the field open up as a result of the increased scientific and clinical research interest in *ayahuasca*, the next story to be written will be ever more different rendering this very thesis obsolete. Also, recent trends in the legal arena would seem to indicate the eventual legalization of *ayahuasca* may not be so ephemeral after all, particularly within the context of its ceremonial sacred use.

#### The Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS)

It is clear by now The Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) is lending an essential helping hand to the Santo Daime acculturation dossier, including here in Miami. That is because this organization is shining a new and much-needed light on the many psychotherapeutic benefits *ayahuasca* use is now associated with, helping to remove some the stigma and fear accompanying it in the past. The allure of Santo Daime is closely tied for many to its potent shamanic identity and the promise of attaining Higher Consciousness. Nonetheless, I believe actual medical research lifting the veil on the very real medical and even life-saving virtues of *ayahuasca* in theory can only help Santo Daime doctrine better acculturate in Miami, the U.S. and the world at large.

Founded in 1986, this dynamic non-profit based in Santa Cruz, CA is single-handedly helping to unlock the door to further education and research into the healing benefits of psychedelic medicine. Once relegated to the dark Underworld, scientific research into the plethora of health benefits linked to these “illegal” mind-altering substances is now back into full gear. After some of the abuse and deaths associated with the misuse of psychedelics (LSD especially) back in the late 60s and early 70s, the federal government then hastily cracked down on such scientific research, while recreational use of psychedelic drugs became a federal offense. Respectful scientific exploration into the arena of psychedelic medicine and its huge potential as approved treatments in medicine and psychiatry, however, is now firmly underway and has gained momentum over the past fifteen years or so.

The mission of MAPS is to “honestly” inform and educate the public at large on both the risks and benefits linked to the “careful” use of psychedelics and entheogens from *ayahuasca*, LSD, MDMA (“Ecstasy”) and Psilocybin to marijuana (MAPS Mission statement, 2014, [www. MAPS.org](http://www.MAPS.org)). This organization clearly states its vision as one where we live in “a world where psychedelics and marijuana are safely and legally available for beneficial uses, and where research is governed by rigorous scientific evaluation of their risks and benefits.” As a sign of the times, even the US government today is timidly dipping its toes into the burgeoning field of medical psychedelic research albeit via supervision and guidelines only. Due to a lack of outright governmental or industry funding, the future of MAPS though remains precarious as it depends entirely on private donations. This organization in fact acts as a bridge of sorts between the related

fields of New-Age religiosity, neuroscience, medicine, psychotherapy, spirituality and human creativity at large.

However, on a more reduced scale and given the above hasn't yet occurred, I believe new Santo Daime research should precisely focus on the strategy according to which this institution has managed to survive and expand even in the face of a hostile environment. It is interesting how the government has reacted to the challenges religious institutions have deposited at the feet of legal order. Such research may shed light on the dialectical relationship between governmental agencies and religious actors. Likewise, given the dizzying promise Santo Daime espouses with regards to healing many human ailments and diseases, it is puzzling to see how little public interest this brew in reality still generates. So many people, unbeknown to themselves, could benefit from the medicinal properties of *daime*. For example, a rigorous scientific examination of members of one of the largest Santo Daime churches on U.S. soil and its likely positive data could go a long way toward softening the federal government stance on *ayahuasca* use. One could envision a study say over two years recording the improvements in mental and emotional health of those *Daimistas* hailing from educated urban middle-class ranks in the U.S. Such scientific findings would surely mirror those previously recorded in Brazil in the mid to late 1990s. It was deemed there that those regularly drinking *ayahuasca* within a religious ritual ended up being more mentally stable, less prone to criminal disorder and were generally more peaceful citizens.

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