

A RITUAL KEY TO MYSTICAL SOLUTIONS:
AYAHUASCA THERAPY, SECULARISM, & THE SANTO DAIME RELIGION IN
BELGIUM

An Abstract

Submitted on the 26th Day of April, 2013

To the Department of Anthropology

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

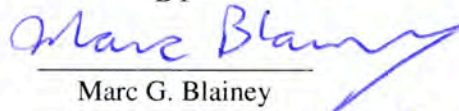
Of the School of Liberal Arts of

TULANE UNIVERSITY

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY



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ABSTRACT

Approximately 600 people from across Europe have officially joined Santo Daime, a Brazilian religion organized around the ingestion of a potent psychoactive beverage called *ayahuasca*. Santo Daime members (called *fardados*) regularly attend ceremonies where they imbibe ayahuasca while meditating, singing, and dancing for between 6 and 12 hours. Deeming ayahuasca a dangerous “hallucinogen,” most European governments have responded by arresting and prosecuting people who engage in Santo Daime rituals. Highlighting Belgium as a cultural bellwether of Europe, this dissertation pursues the following question: *Residing within a social milieu that is dominated by secularism and mainstream Christianity, why are some Europeans adopting Santo Daime spiritual practices?*

The “secular” designates those aspects of social life that do not involve any recourse to supernatural entities. Through the latter half of the 20th century, most social scientists welcomed progressive secularization as an inevitable substitute for declining religions in Europe. Recently, a budding *anthropology of secularism* has emphasized how the institutionalization of materialist disenchantment tends to exclude alternative ideas about the nature of mind and reality.

Conversions to transnational religions portend deeper shifts in how some Europeans are adapting to an increasingly interconnected world. The clarification of this process is important because scholars have yet to account for why some Westerners are making unorthodox religious choices in the age of secularization. During fieldwork, I

asked informants why they had become fardados. The collective responses are summarized by one Belgian fardado who said: “Santo Daime is the key to a lot of solutions.” Fardados consider ayahuasca as a medicinal sacrament (or “entheogen”), which helps them to cure various maladies, such as depression, social anxiety, and alcohol/drug dependence. My informants’ understand their Daime practice as a form of mysticism, whereby the entheogenic ritual acts as a kind of introspective technology (what I term a “suiscope”). Empirical studies corroborate fardados’ claim that ayahuasca is benign and can be beneficial when employed in ritual contexts.

One of the essential functions of anthropology is to render different cultural logics as mutually explicable. Accordingly, this dissertation endeavors to intercede in a misunderstanding between a secular hegemony and an unfamiliar religious subculture.

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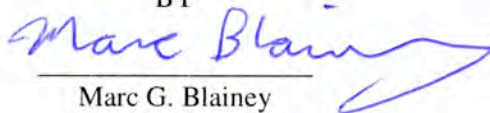
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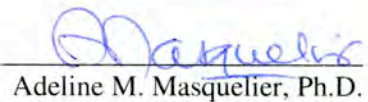


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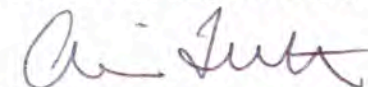
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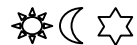
To my loving, kind, patient, brilliant, beautiful wife Darcie.

“Thus do things change. What yesterday was still religion is no longer such to-day; and what to-day is atheism, tomorrow will be religion.”

- **Ludwig Feuerbach**, in *The Essence of Christianity* (1957[1841]: 32)

*Os caboclos já chegaram
De braços nus e pés no chão
Eles trazem remédios bons
Para curar os cristãos*

*The [Amazonians] already arrived
With bare arms and bare feet
They bring good remedies
To heal the Christians*



- from hymn #75, “As Estrelas” (The Stars), received by **Raimundo Irineu Serra** (a.k.a. *Mestre* [“Master”] *Irineu*), founder of the Santo Daime

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Given that I have been working towards my Ph.D. since about age 10, I am tempted to thank every person I have ever met for being a part of my development as an anthropologist. Even though this is not possible, I do want to acknowledge those individuals who have made a substantial impact in aiding my progress towards achieving this principal goal of my life thus far. To varying degrees, the following people have helped to guide how I approach my investigations into why human beings do what they do and believe what they believe.

To begin, I want to express my deep gratitude to the global Santo Daime community, especially the members of the daimista congregations in Belgium, the Netherlands, and elsewhere around Europe. Although I cannot publish their identities, all of the pseudonymous informants mentioned in this dissertation represent real people that were patient with my persistent questions during fieldwork. To the daimistas of Belgium: this dissertation could not have existed without you generously giving your time and your sincere enthusiasm in trusting a young anthropologist to document your customs and worldview. I learned so many scholarly and personal lessons through sharing in your daily lives and in Daime works with you. I hope that by divulging first-hand realities about your beliefs and practices as a genuine spiritual community, this text will in some way help you in your struggle towards attaining religious liberty.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my Ph.D. supervisor William Balée. From the

first day I arrived at Tulane in 2007, Bill has been a vital source of intellectual guidance and support. Not only has he afforded thorough supervision of my struggles and progress at every stage of the doctoral process, his diligence and integrity are traits that I will always seek to emulate in my career as a professional academic. I thank you Bill for being the kind of open-minded and yet prudent advisor that I required. An ideal mentor, you allowed me the freedom to pursue a philosophical anthropology while also instilling in me a fundamental grasp of the ethnographic mindset.

I treasure the comprehensive education I received at Tulane, specifically the four-field training I obtained from faculty members in the department of Anthropology. In particular, I must extend special thanks for the patient and insightful feedback offered by the two other members of my dissertation committee. I want to recognize Adeline Masquelier for teaching me about gender theory and about the anthropologist's place as a participant observer among religious informants. She has also counseled me about the difficult transition from graduate student to qualified scholar; I will forever remember her instruction that despite my inclinations to remain unassuming, many times "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." I am also very appreciative of Allison Truitt's contributions to this project and for her conscientious reviewing of my numerous grant applications. From informing me about safe and unsafe areas of New Orleans during my first week in the city to stoking my interest in urban anthropology through her lectures, Allison has been a steadfast and empathic advisor for both personal and professional matters. Moreover, my thanks go out to our beloved Anthropology secretary Susie Chevalier, who ensures the smooth functioning of the Dinwiddie Hall community.

I thank my many graduate student friends at Tulane for helping me to have so much fun during our leisure time in New Orleans. I want to thank members of the Anthropology softball team for many good times. In particular I am thankful for all the mutual academic and non-academic exuberance I shared with Mike R., Joyce, Roberto, Jim, Lukas, Sherman, Allen, Daniela, Melissa, Cristina, Haley, Jayur, Dustin, Evan, Max, Nicole, Claire, Mike S., Rachel, Erin, Carrie, Valerie, and Jessica. I must also make mention of my good friends Garrett, Diana, Jessie, Brad, Deb, and Gustavo. Y'all kept me sane by reminding me that there is life outside of Ph.D. stress. I cherish the engaging conversations I have had with this merry band of characters, and I am so glad that they were sometimes successful in getting me to accompany them to festivals, parties, and musical concerts in the Big Easy.

In addition, it is necessary to acknowledge the special people that impacted my personal development prior to my time in New Orleans. During my M.A. studies at Trent University I was fortunate to have been advised by Paul Healy (who shepherded our collaborative study of ancient Maya mirrors) and Roger Lohmann (who made me believe I could become a socio-cultural anthropologist). At Trent I was also lucky to have had a stimulating cohort of fellow M.A. students, including my lifelong friends Carrie, Dagmara, Cynthia, Flannery, Ferenc, Rhianne, Jason, and Nathan.

It was during my B.A. at the University of Western Ontario that I began this twelve-year odyssey as an anthropology student. I want to thank my professors at UWO, especially Andrew Nelson, Kim Clark, Lisa Hodgetts, and Darren Marks, all of whom showed confidence in my potential as a future scholar.

I must express my gratitude to Tiago Jurua Damo Ranzi and his father Alceu Ranzi (as well as their colleagues Amelia, Antonia, and Diego) for acting as my chaperones in Rio Branco, Acre, Brazil. Furthermore, I thank the citizens of Céu of Mapiá (especially Padrinho Alex Polari) for their warm welcome and assistance during my fieldwork in their Brazilian rainforest community. I also thank Jessica Rochester, Andrew Dawson, and Matthew Meyer for their invaluable preparatory advice about travelling in the Amazon.

I am thankful for the camaraderie I share with my colleagues in the buddying society of Ayahuasca Researchers. Specifically, I want to acknowledge fellow Canadian Ken Tupper for his friendship and professional advice, as well as Brian Anderson and Bia Labate for their thoughtful comments regarding my research into and interpretations of the Santo Daime.

I am indebted to Armand Haye (in Amsterdam) and Jason Hashimoto (in Ontario) for contributing visual images used in this dissertation.

In terms of financial support, I am eternally grateful for research funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Paul and Elizabeth Selley endowment of Tulane's School of Liberal Arts, and the Murphy Institute Center for Ethics and Public Affairs.

I also want to acknowledge some of my closest friends and family who have supported me at different stages in my journey towards this Ph.D. milestone. In a way, I am thankful to all of the following individuals for having a direct influence on my evolution as a person and as a scholar.

All my friends from Cardinal Carter and Aurora High in Aurora; especially Kelly,

Steve, Melissa, Paul, Matt R., and Chris.

All my friends from UWO; especially Bill, Jay, Moto, Scott, Dan, Alex, Amanda K., Amy, Auriol, Christa, Claudia, Heather, Jen, Kyle, Margi, Matt S., Rob, and Sunny.

My friends from Brussels: Marisa, Anderson, Jörg, Anne, Leandro, Amanda M., and Aki.

I am privileged to have enjoyed the unwavering encouragement of a devoted family. Thank you so much Mom and Dad. Everything I have ever achieved or will ever accomplish is entirely attributable to your unconditional support throughout my life. Thanks to my dear sister Cara (Care-Care) for being the most dependable sibling one could ever hope for (as we are so alike, I look forward to continuing to share in our mutual challenges and successes as we keep learning about life together). I am grateful to my parents-in-law Byron and Barb, who have welcomed me into the Williams family as if I were one of their own. I'm also very glad to have two brothers-in-law (Ryan and Michael), with whom I now share real fraternal bonds. To all my kin, I love you.

And last but the opposite of least, I dedicate this dissertation to my wife Darcie Leigh Blainey, without whom I could not have finished this project with my sanity intact. Darcie (Ixhi), my lovely little one, you are the mirror through which I discover more every day about my self and the world. I look forward to growing with you in compassion and tenderness in all our future years together.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Background and Research Objectives

For over 20 years now, small groups of people across Europe have been gathering discreetly to participate in a sacred but forbidden rite. As members of a Brazil-based religion called *Santo Daime* (Portuguese for “Holy Give-me”), they claim to have found a divine source of healing by way of a potent psychoactive beverage called *ayahuasca*. In Santo Daime rituals ayahuasca is ingested as a holy sacrament, much like the wine distributed in a Christian mass. However, most governments consider this to be a criminal act, since ayahuasca is currently designated as a dangerous “hallucinogen.” The arrival of this new spirituality thus represents an ethical dilemma for European societies: how can the liberalist value of religious freedom be sustained if the fundamental component of Santo Daime religious practice is not permitted? Anthropology, the discipline that strives to account for cultural variation, is apt to intercede with regard to stigmatized populations because it can clarify otherwise obscure social phenomena. Just as prejudices of class, race, gender, and sexual orientation are unmasked through ethnographic research, firsthand documentation of ostracized faith communities can inspire public sympathy. Highlighting Belgium as a cultural bellwether of Western Europe, this dissertation will explain in empirical and empathic terms why some Europeans are partaking in Santo Daime.

Members of Santo Daime are known as *fardados* (males only or both genders collectively) or *fardadas* (females). Fardados from outside Brazil are nonetheless prone

to express key aspects of Santo Daime culture using the Brazilian language of Portuguese (a glossary of these terms is located in Appendix I). They wear white *fardas* (“uniforms”) when attending ceremonial Santo Daime *trabalhos* (“works”), where they imbibe ayahuasca while meditating, singing, and dancing for between 6 and 12 hours. Meaning “vine of the (dead) spirits” in the Quechua language, ayahuasca is a concoction¹ of plants that originated among Amazonian indigenous peoples in Pre-Columbian times (Shanon 2002: 13-14). Fardados also refer to ayahuasca as “Santo Daime” or “Daime,” illustrating how this drink is the central organizing principle of the religion as a whole (Polari de Alverga 1999).

Concurrently, this study’s focus on Santo Daime opens up a broader and deeper inquiry into how the secular ideals underlying Euro-American legal and social norms tend to exclude alternative ideas about the nature of mind and reality. In interviews, fardados said that they are attracted to ayahuasca because it induces a mystical state of awareness. Hereby, the subjective boundary between the observing self and the observed world appears to dissolve. I have experienced this stunning sensation myself in the Daime rituals, and it is astounding to say the least. Fardados interpret this not as hallucination, but as a revelation that all human selves are at one with a celestial Godhead. They believe that this otherworldly encounter catalyzes medicinal cleansings of both body and spirit. This belief is unacceptable for most Euro-American medical and legal authorities, which currently banish ayahuasca and related substances as illegal “drugs.”

¹ As pointed out by Tupper (2011: 16, note 14), contrary to popular discourse ayahuasca is not a “tea,” as it is “technically... a decoction (i.e., a brew) rather than an infusion of the plants.”

Background and Terminology

Based on stories of youths experiencing traumatic “bad trips” a half-century ago during the “psychedelic 60s,” in Western societies so-called “hallucinogens” are assumed to be inherently dangerous. Popular fears about the hippie counterculture’s promotion of psychedelics provoked a worldwide criminalization of this class of chemicals, enacted by the United Nations’ “Convention on Psychotropic Substances” in 1971 (Beyerstein and Kalchik 2003; Spillane and McAllister 2003). Since then, 184 member states have signed this UN treaty, which obliges each signatory to also legislate their own national sanctions.² Globally, the *International Narcotics Control Board* (INCB) now oversees a continuous adjudication for international prohibitions of these psychoactive materials (see Tupper and Labate 2012). Because the mind-altering molecule found in ayahuasca (*N,N-Dimethyltryptamine* [or DMT]) is also officially classified as a banned “hallucinogen,” Santo Daime rituals remain a punishable offence in most countries. Consequently, in most liberal nations where the freedom of religion is enshrined, those whose religious convictions revolve around ayahuasca now risk incarceration. Even while ayahuasca’s constituents are condemned in most places, Santo Daime has managed to earn full legitimacy in Brazil, as well as in small sections of Europe³ (Holland, Spain) and the U.S.A. (Oregon). In these exceptional localities, courts of law upheld fardados’ right to practice their religion as superseding statutes that outlaw ayahuasca. On the other hand, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany have opposed this religious use of

² In the decades after the 1971 UN Convention was passed, all Euro-American countries discussed herein signed and ratified the terms of the treaty (including European nations such as Belgium [in 1995], the Netherlands [1993], France [1971], Germany [1971], the UK [1971], as well as Brazil [1971], Canada [1988], and the United States [1971]). The total list of signatories can be found here: <http://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/MTDSG/Volume%20I/Chapter%20VI/VI-16.en.pdf>

³ Although full legal legitimacy has yet to be granted (i.e. legal proceedings are ongoing), Daime groups have been acquitted of previous charges regarding the possession of ayahuasca in Italy (Menozzi 2011: 386-387).

ayahuasca, arresting and in some cases imprisoning fardados for importation and distribution of an illicit substance (Labate and Feeney 2012; see also Kufner et al. 2007; Silva Sá 2010). Fardados, by contrast, reject the terms “hallucinogen” (which implies that the substance engenders delusions) and “psychedelic” (reminiscent of hedonistic use during the 1960s). Instead, they prefer the terms *sacred plant* and *entheogen*. Meaning “to generate god within” in Greek, entheogen denotes “vision-producing” substances employed “in shamanic or religious rites” (Ruck et al. 1979: 146). This vocabulary of entheogens as revealing an inner divinity is crucial for apprehending fardados’ nonconformist approach to the human condition. Fieldwork I conducted in Brazil (one month in 2008) and Europe (fourteen months from 2009-2011) was aimed at explicating fardados’ belief in the safety and benefits of drinking ayahuasca in a religious setting.

Considering the concept of “religion,” anthropologists such as Talal Asad have questioned the legitimacy of applying this concept cross-culturally as an ethnological device. In *Genealogies of Religion*, Asad (1993) traces the Eurocentric construction of “religion” into a universal category used by Western scholars for explaining non-Western peoples’ institutions of the sacred (Asad 1993). He rejects as “externalist” those attempts by anthropologists to define what religion is according to functionalist (e.g. Malinowski 1939) or interpretative (Geertz 1973) schemes. Instead, he recommends that anthropologists train their efforts on understanding the “internal” aspects of religion, such as worshippers’ subjective construal of ritual embodiment and traditional disciplines for cultivating an ideal human self (Asad 2006a: 212, 234-235, 240). In speaking about his own analysis of medieval Christian monasteries (see Asad 1993), Asad underscores ritual practices as an act of “willing obedience.” He characterizes “monastic disciplines not as

something that comes from outside but as an internal shaping of the self by the self” (Asad interviewed in Scott 2006: 272). This is a compelling critique of studies alleging that the essences of particular religions can be detected via the outward traits of symbols, language, and practice. In fact, European fardados evince similar suspicions of external categorizations of religion; they prefer to accentuate the internal, subjective dimensions of the ayahuasca experience as a direct encounter with God.

Notwithstanding Asad’s sound critique of the religion concept, for practical purposes fardados do still liken Santo Daime to all other communal forms of worship normally described as “religions” (a complex issue that will be returned to later on). This shows how anthropologists must also be mindful of the perils associated with the “deconstructive impulse,” and heed Matti Bunzl’s (2005a: 534) worry that “in our discipline, we spend far too much time deconstructing the key terms of social debate and far too little time analyzing how they function in the real world.” Since the present text deals with European-born Santo Daime adherents, the Western-centric meaning of “religion” is more appropriate than it would be in say, an ethnography on Australian aborigines. Therefore, in discussing cross-cultural spiritual devotion, in this dissertation *religion* is understood to be any “organized belief in phenomena that cannot be demonstrated scientifically or empirically” (Balée 2012: 55).

The term “entheogen” serves the anthropological focus of this dissertation, which conveys fardados’ insider (emic) view that ayahuasca is a remedial sacrament. However, the theological connotations of this term are antithetical to the pursuits of scientists concerned with the psychiatric and biological effects of substances like ayahuasca. While scientific and medical researchers are not so interested in religious beliefs, they are

attentive to the therapeutic values of spiritual experiences (Winkelman 2000: 229). Thus, the term *psychointegrator*⁴ has been proposed for strictly scientific approaches to these substances because it offers an objective standpoint from which to interpret their effects on the body and mind. While the “psychointegrative” function of ayahuasca is germane, the terms “entheogen” and “sacred plant” are relied upon throughout this dissertation. This is because the divine qualities that fardados attribute to the Daime beverage are essential to their religious practice.

An Introduction to Santo Daime

Santo Daime was founded in 1930 by an Afro-Brazilian rubber tapper named Raimundo Irineu Serra, now known as *Mestre* (Master) Irineu. After emigrating from his birthplace in the Brazilian northeast to the Western Amazon region, Mestre Irineu began to experiment with ayahuasca, borrowing from local rituals in the rainforest. In visions he experienced through ayahuasca, Santo Daime mythology holds that otherworldly guides informed Mestre Irineu he would be responsible for establishing a new spirituality. He continued to “receive” *hinos* (hymns) and instructions for instituting this new religion throughout his life, and the Santo Daime *doutrina* (“doctrine”) began to expand around Brazil following the Mestre’s death in 1971.

While most of the approximately 4000 Santo Daime members are in Brazil, there are now followers on every inhabited continent (Labate, Rose, and dos Santos 2008: 27).

Through fieldwork I determined that the first Santo Daime works in Europe were held in

⁴ As described by Winkelman (2001: 229): “The LSD-like psychointegrators have global effects upon awareness, behavior, emotions and cognition... This results in an integration of feelings with thoughts, enhancing insight. Activation of repressed memories permits catharsis and abreaction, facilitating resolution of psychodynamic and interpersonal conflicts. This enhanced awareness, increased emotional lability, disruption of habitual behavior patterns, and dissolution of egocentric fixations permits an alteration of psychological relationships and processes and psychodynamic reprogramming.”

Spain and Belgium in 1989. By 1990 there were Santo Daime groups established in Spain, Belgium, and Portugal. At this time there were less than a dozen European fardados. When Groisman (2000: 16, note 10) conducted a survey in 1996, he reports 29 individual Daime groups in 11 different European countries, with a total population of 324 fardados. Although Santo Daime grew by hundreds of fardados in its first six years in Europe, since 1996 its growth has leveled out to a more gradual pace. At international Santo Daime gatherings I attended in Amsterdam in 2009 and 2010, I met and spoke with participants representing 18 European nationalities. In consultation with informants from around Europe, I learned that official works are organized across 12 European countries (Austria, Belgium, England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Wales). Independent participants also travel to Amsterdam from the Czech Republic, France, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, and Ukraine (see Figure 1). In total, there are now 36 Santo Daime groups in Europe (comprising some 600 fardados). Individual congregations refer to themselves and the wider Santo Daime community as an *igreja* (“church,” usually consecrated with the prefix *Céu do* [“Heaven of” or “Sky of”], as in *Céu do Mapiá*).

Regarding all new religious forms in Europe, it is extremely difficult to ascertain exact statistics. This is because there exists a wide variety of new religions on this continent (estimated to number over 2000 distinct groups), all of which define full-time, part-time, exclusive, or non-exclusive membership in different ways (Barker 1999: 16-18). A conservative tally calculates that Europe has 353,000 practitioners of religions founded since the start of the 19th century; these “new religionists” had an annual growth rate of 0.39% during the decade of 2000 to 2010 (Melton and Baumann 2010: lvii, lxxv),

indicating a slow but steady expansion for these minority religious groups in Europe. Another estimate holds that participants in “alternative” religions make up between 0.3% and 0.5% of the European population (Lewis 2004: 16). This latter estimate suggests that out of the 731 million people in Europe, somewhere between 2.1 and 3.6 million citizens are involved with a non-mainstream religion.⁵

The Santo Daime ideology is made up of a mix of Catholicism, New World shamanism, African spiritualities, and European esoteric theology.⁶ Some scholars have classified Santo Daime as a form of “collective shamanism” (e.g. Groisman 2009; La Rocque Couto 1989; MacRae 1992; see Labate 2004a: 240-242), because each participant is seeking to both cure themselves and to contribute to the healing of other individuals present at the ritual. This tendency tells us something about how some academics like to highlight the shamanistic (i.e. indigenous Amazonian) elements in Santo Daime (see Labate and Pacheco 2011: 81-82). But in interviews with fardados during my fieldwork, they tend to temper the shamanistic aspects of Santo Daime with references to the major world religions. European fardados stressed how their Santo Daime experiences resemble the basic teachings of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism (Islam), Kabbalah (Judaism), and Daoism.⁷ As will become clear throughout this text, my informants express a point of view that is more in line with those authors who classify Santo Daime as a form of “mysticism” (Dias Junior 1991; Shanon 2002; Soares 2010; see Labate and Pacheco 2011: 76). However scholars brand it, clearly the Santo

⁵ According to the United Nations (2007: 7), the total population of all of Europe is estimated to be approximately 731 million people, see:

<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2006/English.pdf>

⁶ European esoteric traditions incorporated into Santo Daime include influences from groups like the *Esoteric Circle for the Communion of Thought*, the *Rosicrucian Order*, as well as various forms of *Kardecism* inspired by the 19th century French medium Allan Kardec (Labate and Pacheco 2011: 75).

⁷ Regardless of historical threads, experiences of mystical union or ecstatic dissolving of self are found cross-culturally (see Bucke 1995[1901]).

Daime doctrine melds a diverse range of religious traditions and metaphysical ideas into a coherent new whole. It is perhaps best to comprehend Santo Daime as a kind of *shamanistic mysticism*, since it combines the shamanistic technique of ingesting an entheogen for healing purposes with a mystical goal of ecstatically uniting self and God.

The term *syncretism*, meaning “the combination of diverse traditions in the area of religion” (Shaw and Stewart 1994: 11), can apply to the Santo Daime because of its blending of elements from several spiritual backgrounds. Such blending occurs to some degree in all circumstances of acculturation (i.e. when different cultures come into contact with one another). But as Droogers and Greenfield (2001: 31) note, “syncretism in itself does not indicate whether the two (or more) religions involved in the mixing process are influencing each other equally, or whether the process is asymmetric, with one dominating the other.” My informants rebuffed my questions whenever I asked about contrasts between different syncretic aspects of Santo Daime. Fardados describe Santo Daime as an “eclectic, yet highly organized and spiritually aligned ritual form” (Goldman 1999: xxvi). They do acknowledge that there are different religious elements composing the Daime doctrine. However, they prefer to concentrate on how these elements’ fuse into a new cohesive whole. It is therefore necessary for scholars to focus on the harmonious mixing of different spiritual traditions in Santo Daime as well as on its eclectic syncretism.

In differentiating those who have officially become fardados (after undergoing a *fardamento* initiation rite) from those who attend these works without a formal dedication, the latter are referred to by the unofficial but expedient term *firmados*.⁸ When

⁸ At some Santo Daime works, I have met seasoned visitors who distinguished themselves from less experienced non-fardados with this unofficial term *firmados*. This term is derived from the ubiquitous

discussing both fardados and firmados, they are referred to collectively with the catch-all term *daimistas*. Since fardados are the most thoroughly committed and experienced kind of daimistas, the present study centers more on fardados than non-member daimistas like the firmados. Interestingly, my informants refused to deem their decision to become fardados a conversion. As one attends more Santo Daime works and lives among the fardados, one comes to understand that the fardamento is more of an ordination. In a certain sense, in Santo Daime there is not one priest that oversees the congregation but rather everyone is their own priest. Here one witnesses how Santo Daime confounds Eurocentric notions of religion. Unlike ecclesiastical organizations like the Roman Catholic Church that are made up of hierarchical authorities overseeing a flock of parishioners, in Santo Daime churches fardados assemble to partake together in a self-guided religious act. One of my informants compared her decision to become a fardada to a marriage ceremony. In undergoing the initiation ritual of fardamento, the newly minted fardado enters into a private relationship with a spiritual presence that is believed to exist inside all human persons, what Daime hymns refer to as the *Mestre Ensinador* (“Master Teacher”). Fardados say that by committing oneself to the teachings of this inner study, the entheogenic drink reveals a mystical truth that all beings are extensions of one cosmic Being. With reference to ethnographic findings, future chapters will elucidate fardados shared conceptions of the Santo Daime doctrine.

As in other European societies where their religious practices are still considered deviant, Santo Daime groups in Belgium are compelled to hold rituals in secret. But Belgian daimistas allowed me access to their rituals and expressed their willingness to

Daime ideal of *firmeza* or “firmness,” a trait that denotes a person’s capacity to gracefully cope with the ordeals encountered in both Santo Daime works and life in general.

participate in ethnographic research because they do not want to live in the shadows. Both during and immediately following my fieldwork, several Santo Daime communities in Europe were raided by police, resulting in the arrests of fardados in Great Britain (August 2010) and Portugal (October 2011). Although all those arrested were released on bail, they were charged with importation and possession of a controlled substance (a jailable offence), their Daime sacrament was confiscated, and legal proceedings are ongoing. In October of 2011, a financial dispute in one of the four Belgian Santo Daime churches resulted in a police raid and a subsequent government investigation into all Daime activities in the country. At present, the Belgian Santo Daime groups are undergoing what promises to be a lengthy legal process.

A recent biennial report from the *Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations*, filed on behalf of the Belgian national and regional governments, outlined the scientific and ethnographic evidence pertaining to ayahuasca⁹ (CIAOSN/IACSSO 2010: 10). Created by an act of parliament in 1998, the Belgian government's anti-sect Center pursues a mandate that includes a duty "to publish, whether on its own initiative or at the request of any public authority, advice and recommendations about the phenomenon of harmful sectarian organizations and especially on the policy regarding the fight against these organizations" (Fautré 1999: 389). Despite the overwhelmingly skeptical tone of this text, the authors make great pains to cite the results of biomedical studies and to illustrate the emic perspective of those who ingest ayahuasca for religious purposes (see Chapters 3 and 7). This report ends with a review of legal trials involving ayahuasca churches in Brazil, the U.S.A., Holland, and France, concluding that the French decision to prohibit ayahuasca was

⁹ Published in both French and Flemish, the report also discusses the African entheogen *Iboga*.

“slanted in favor of a strongly repressive option”; it is thus implied that this Belgian “anti-sect” agency views the French law prohibiting ayahuasca religions as exceedingly “repressive.” Time will tell whether the Belgian authorities will rule for or against daimistas’ right to ritually drink ayahuasca. But if this report is any indication, it would seem that there may be some government sympathy in favor of Belgian citizens’ religious right to engage in Santo Daime. Shining an ethnographic light on the realities of Santo Daime in Europe will provide anthropological details for governments wrestling with this clash between drug policies and religious freedom.

Because fardados in Belgium now face legal limbo, it is imperative that social facts about Santo Daime are revealed so as to counteract “anti-sect” stigmas found in mainstream Belgian society (Fautré 1999). Through its anti-sect center, the Belgian state pays extra attention to new religions, a vigilance that sometimes verges on discrimination. This is witnessed when one observes that new religions like the Anthroposophical Society, the Universal Church of God, and Sahaja Yoga were successful in legal cases in which they accused the Belgian government of defamation (Fautré 2010: 321). When it comes to the all-important constitutional question of whether Santo Daime is a “religion” to be protected or a “sect” to be feared, these definitions are murky in Belgium. As itemized by legal scholar Norman Doe (2011: 99), “there are no formal legal requirements for a religious group to become a statutory *culte reconnu* [recognized religion] in Belgium; according to unwritten administrative practice, the group must be: sufficiently large; well-structured; present in the territory for some decades; socially important; and it must be such as not to threaten social order.” It is demonstrated herein that, except for daimistas’ small population size, the Santo Daime

meets all of the above conditions.

At the supranational level, the protection of religious freedom is decreed in Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR),¹⁰ a law that applies to all EU member states. But it is unclear whether these protections would be extended to Santo Daime because this decision hinges upon whether or not the EU Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg would classify Santo Daime as a bona fide “religion.” In Belgium, the government has taken a characteristically hybrid position between the exceptionally wide interpretation of religious freedom in the Netherlands, and the especially stern restrictions placed on unconventional religions in France. Whereas virtually all new religions are referred to pejoratively as *sectes* (“sects” or “cults”) in France, a Belgian anti-sect commission made a crucial distinction between benign and harmful sects. As reported by Belgian legal scholar Paul Lemmens (1999: 87-89), the commission’s report defined a tolerable “sect” as “an organized group of persons who have the same doctrine within a religion,” while a “harmful sectarian organization” is “a group with a philosophical or religious vocation, or pretending to have such a vocation, which in its organization or practices engages in harmful illegal activities, harms individuals or society, or affects human dignity” (see also Ferrari 2006: 12-13). Of the criteria listed in the commission’s report as traits that designate a sect as “harmful,” none apply to the

¹⁰ The two facets of the ECHR Article 9 stated in full (see Doe 2011: 42, note 15):

“1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

2. Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.”

As Lemmens (1999: 94) point out, religious freedom is ensured in the Belgian Constitution; the protections for religion in ECHR Article 9 are supported by Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which “is drafted in practically identical terms.”

Santo Daime doctrine as it is regularly practiced around the world.¹¹ During fieldwork, I did not witness any form of physical, psychological, sexual, or financial abuse in the Daime congregations I visited. My informants never urged me to convert to their religion, nor did I ever observe any form of aggressive recruiting, as there is a fundamental taboo against pressuring people to participate in Daime works. I met three former fardados who had freely quit the church, all of whom expressed their gratitude and positive feelings for the Daime. Fardados repeatedly affirm that individuals should attend only when “called” to the Daime out of their own free will.

As will be seen later in Chapter 7, while the ritual use of ayahuasca and otherentheogens is currently illegal in most of Europe, the justification for such laws (i.e. that “hallucinogens” are harmful) is not supported by empirical evidence. No one can predict what the Belgian government will eventually decide, but it is evident that Santo Daime disturbs the “strong” Belgian intellectual “tradition of positivism...that at times borders on scientism” (Fox 1988: 304). Through first-hand interactions with the Santo Daime community, my research contributes objective knowledge about clandestine ayahuasca rituals as they are performed in Belgium.

Research Problem and Findings

During fieldwork (2009-2011), my plan was to spend over a year conducting research about the emergence and expansion of Santo Daime in Europe. My research

¹¹ As summarized by Lemmens (1999: 89), those criteria indicating a “harmful sectarian organization” include: “fraudulent or misleading recruitment methods; recourse to mental manipulation; bad physical or mental treatment of the adepts or their family; denial to adepts or their family of adequate medical treatment; violence, including of a sexual nature, to the adepts, their family, third persons or even children; the obligation for the adepts to break with their family, their spouse, their children, their relatives and their friends, kidnapping of children, or their withdrawal from their parents; the deprivation of the freedom to leave the sect; disproportionate financial demands, fraud, and embezzlement of money and goods, at the expense of the adepts; abusive exploitation of the work of the adepts; a complete break with the democratic society, considered as evil; the will to destroy society in favor of the sect; recourse to illegal methods in order to acquire power.”

project pursues the following question: *Residing within a social milieu that is dominated by secularism and mainstream Christianity, why are some Europeans adopting Santo Daime spiritual practices?* The Santo Daime congregations in Belgium demonstrate the transnational movement of a foreign spiritual organization. Conversions to exotic religions portend deeper shifts in how some Europeans are adapting to an increasingly interconnected world. The clarification of this process is important because there remains a lot of uncertainty among scholars regarding why some Westerners make unorthodox religious choices in the age of secularization (see Dawson 2003).

When I asked informants why they had become fardados, they gave a variety of explanations, but the central theme is summed up by a fardado from Belgium, who said: “Santo Daime is the key to a lot of solutions.” In a few words, this statement crystallizes the prime reason for my informants’ initial attraction and long-term commitment to Santo Daime; they are on a quest for “solutions.” In dozens of recorded interviews, Belgian fardados recounted to me how their Santo Daime experiences directly improved their lives because it guided them towards answering deep personal conflicts. They contend that their Santo Daime practice has helped them to heal various maladies, including depression, social anxiety, and alcohol/drug dependence. Indicating a belief in the causative links between mind and body, they used the word “solutions” to express how Daime rituals had repaired them emotionally, psychologically, and physically.

In examining how European fardados justify their Santo Daime practice, this dissertation will communicate their temperate but sincere rejection of the secular-materialist worldview held by many Western scientists and laypeople. Rather than relying on rationales based solely on physics, fardados judge all of reality to be an

interconnection of spiritual forces constituting a singular divine Absolute. They claim that Santo Daime allows them to open themselves up to sacred mysteries located within their own consciousness. They say that Santo Daime provides a reliable path for directly encountering a primordial source of healing and serenity that they could not find through the established secular and Christian options in Europe. Below, following an overview of the Belgian social context within which this ethnographic research was carried out, the analytical scope and thrust of the present volume will be formulated.

Belgium as a European Social Science Laboratory

Belgium is a small nation encompassing 30,528 square kilometers (11,787 square miles, slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Maryland). It is bordered by the Netherlands to the north, Germany to the east, France to the south, and by the North Sea to the west.¹² Belgium therefore makes up less than 1% of the total area of the European Union.¹³ With a population of just over 11 million,¹⁴ Belgians make up roughly 1.5% of the total European population.¹⁵ Sociologist Renée Fox, the foremost non-Belgian expert on Belgian culture, wrote an entire essay entitled “Why Belgium?” because she was so often asked this question by both American and Belgian colleagues. She explains that “with a mixture of real interest, conventional politeness, perplexity, and, on the part of Belgians, a tinge of traditional irony,” her informants were puzzled concerning why she had chosen to study Belgium (Fox 1988: 285). Belgian daimistas were also quite curious as to why an ethnographer had selected their country as the focus of research into the global

¹² CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/be.html>

¹³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ee.html>

¹⁴ The most up-to-date population statistics are published by the World Bank, see: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/belgium>

¹⁵ see United Nations (2007): <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2006/English.pdf>

expansion of Santo Daime.

The primary reason I chose Belgium as a field site for studying Santo Daime in Europe is because Belgium's enduring linguistic-cultural discord parallels a broader rift that has long existed across the European continent. The nation of Belgium is subdivided into Flanders (the northern region where people speak Flemish, a Belgian variety of the Dutch language) and Wallonia (Belgium's French-speaking region in the south). This geographical-linguistic segregation makes Belgium an ideal point of investigation because it straddles the "faultline between Europe's Latin and Germanic cultures within its own borders" (Wagstaff 1999: 86). Accordingly, Belgium has been labeled the geopolitical and cultural "'crossroads' of Western Europe" and a "paradigmatically European society," having been "occupied consecutively throughout its history by a series of European nations that had left their marks upon it" (Fox 1994: 5). Others have referred to it as "the archetypal European country" since "the evolving European Community resembles Belgium in being based on the assertion of a common identity uniting peoples of different languages" (Grootaert 1990: 3). Indeed, the national motto of Belgium is "Strength through Unity" (*Eendracht maakt macht* [Flemish], *L'union fait la force* [French]), a well-meaning slogan that is strikingly similar to the motto for the entire European Union: "United in Diversity." The notion of "Strength through Unity" dispels underlying tensions between different ethnic-linguistic communities by implying that otherwise distinct cultural groups share vital political and economic interests. Reflecting on daimistas' fervent endorsement of "strength through unity" as a spiritual philosophy (explained further below), it is ironic that their own religious affiliation is debarred as illegitimate within Belgian society.



Figure 1: The European continent; countries in which Santo Daime works are now occurring indicated by a double-armed cross (following the precedent set in Labate and Araújo 2004: 614 [with Sandra Goulart]); black boxes indicate countries whose citizens attend Daime works in Amsterdam. Map courtesy of Armand Haye, Amsterdam



Figure 2: Modern Belgium; regions where Santo Daime churches hold ritual works indicated by double-armed cross (locations are not exact, to protect anonymity). Map courtesy of Armand Haye, Amsterdam

When considering the location of Belgium on a map of Europe (see Figure 1), Belgium inhabits a relative centrality between the extremes of north (Iceland, Scandinavia), East (Baltic states, Romania), South (Italy, Greece), and West (Ireland, Portugal). Running roughly west-east across the map of Europe, the socio-political geography of the continent includes the broader divide between Germanic- and Latin-speaking countries of northern and southern Europe respectively. In fact, one can see the broader geographical-cultural divide of Europe replicated in the map of Belgium (see Figure 2). More specifically, Belgium is made up of five Flemish provinces (West Flanders [*West-Vlaanderen*], East Flanders [*Oost-Vlaanderen*], Flemish Brabant [*Vlaams-Brabant*], Antwerpen, and Limburg), five Walloon provinces (Hainaut, Namur, Walloon Brabant [*Brabant wallon*], Luxembourg, and Liège) and the officially bilingual (but mostly francophone) Brussels Capital Region. Thus, the European continent's ethnic-linguistic border runs straight through the Germanic-Latin midpoint of bilingual Belgium. The divide between Flanders and Wallonia within Belgium evokes a fractal-like position of Brussels, the de facto "capital of Europe"¹⁶ that now serves as the permanent headquarters of the European Union's executive branches (Favell and Martiniello 2008; Hein 2004). The predominantly French-speaking Brussels Capital Region is surrounded as an island inside the borders of Flemish-speaking Flanders. Actually, the central Belgian region of Brabant (which in 1995 was divided into two separate provinces along linguistic lines) resembles a mini-Belgium, again with Brussels in the middle.

¹⁶ Brussels is the EU's executive capital because it is the permanent hub of both the European Commission and the Council of the European Union. The EU parliamentary capital is located in Strasbourg, France and the EU judicial capital is situated in Luxembourg, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (Hein 2004).

In terms of population, out of the 11 million Belgians¹⁷ approximately 60% are Flemish-speakers and 40% French-speakers (CIA World Factbook 2008¹⁸). There also exists a small region made up of mostly German-speaking Belgians residing in three “cantons” on the eastern border (854 km², with around 75,000 people¹⁹), a community whose ethnic-linguistic rights are recognized in the Belgian constitution. However, in reality “the Brussels Francophones and Belgian Germanophones are often disregarded, and the common formula for describing Belgium is ‘Flemish and Walloons’” (Stengers 1990: 8). From this socio-geographical perspective, the map of Belgium really does comprise the heart of Europe: the national border encapsulates both a distinct Germanic and Latin community, which are themselves enclosing the executive Capital of Europe (Brussels), whose two official languages are of Germanic and Latin origins. With all this in mind, the decision to base the EU government in Brussels is a tactical compromise to neutralize potential conflict and balance pan-European political interests.

Belgium’s reputation as an exemplar of European character is widely attested. In the early 20th century Belgian poet/writer Emile Cammaerts (1939: 209) referred to his country as “the microcosm of Europe,” declaring that because of “her central position between England, France, and Germany, Belgium is exposed to outside influences and is particularly fitted to assimilate them.” This same premise is reaffirmed today, particularly by those who have a personal stake in the continued existence of Belgium as a unified country, such as members of the Belgian royal family. In introducing a comprehensive volume on “Modern Belgium” (Boudart, Boudart, and Bryssinck 1990), Prince Philippe (eldest son and heir apparent of the current King Albert II) applies this

¹⁷ <http://data.worldbank.org/country/belgium>

¹⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/be.html>

¹⁹ http://www.dglive.be/en/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-1263//2264_read-27181/

same logic of Belgium as a “meeting place of Germanic and Latin cultures.” The prince asserts that it was “quite natural for Belgium to become a driving force of European integration” because of its “peaceful quest for unity in diversity.” But this rosy picture obscures how Belgians’ regionalist commitments overshadow the idea of a unified country, a fact evident in the sovereign’s official title as King of the *Belgians* instead of King of *Belgium* (Fox 1988: 301). Thus, the intricate fragility of both Belgian and EU unification is a major reason why “the realm of Albert II appears, to the foreign observer, more and more like a microcosm of 21st century Europe” (Dumont 2000: 15). Looking back on the volatile socio-political history of this small section of northwestern Europe, one sees how concerns of modern-day Belgians echo those of pan-European identity. Since my fardado informants so often accentuated their identity as a long lineage tied to ancient origins, the following chronology traces Belgian culture from its beginnings.

The Sweep of Belgian History

The human occupation of the land that is now Belgium dates back to the prehistoric Neanderthals (Spencer 1997).²⁰ Historically, Celtic peoples known as the *Belgae* were first documented by Julius Caesar. Caesar admired the *Belgae*’s extraordinary bravery as it took him seven attempts from 57 to 50 B.C. to conquer their territory between the Scheldt and Meuse river basins. This marked the beginning of almost two millennia of back-and-forth colonizations of this same ground by groups of Germanic and Latin Europeans. After the end of Roman rule in the 5th century, the

²⁰ Less than one year before the modern nation of Belgium came into existence through the Belgian Revolution of 1830, a physician named Philippe-Charles Schmerling (1790-1836), discovered the remains of a Neanderthal infant at *Engis*. Although Schmerling’s finding was dismissed at the time, he was later vindicated as having been the first to unearth Neanderthal remains (decades before the 1956 discovery in the Neander Valley of Germany). This discovery was followed by more Belgian Neanderthal specimens, including *La Naulette* (found by Edouard Dupont in 1866) and *Spy* (Marcel de Puydt and Maximin Lohest in 1886), exposing the richness of Belgium’s Pleistocene fossil record (see Spencer 1997).

power vacuum was filled by Germanic Franks inhabiting the north and Romanized Celts (called *Wala*, ancestors of today's Walloons) settling in the south. A large woodland region, a section of which still remains as the Sonian Forest, separated these two groups. Historian Bernard Cook (2002: 3) maintains that this early post-Roman borderline initiated the ethnic-linguistic partition that still exists in Belgium today. By the close of the first millennium, a feudalistic pre-Belgium had arisen at the respective edges of early Germany, France, and the Netherlands. During the second millennium, control over what is now called Belgium then passed sequentially from the Dukes of Burgundy (1384-1556), to the Hapsburgs of Spain (1556-1713), then Austria (1713-1794), followed by short phases under the rule of France (1794-1814) and then the Netherlands (1814-1830) before it gained independence in the 1830 Belgian Revolution (Cook 2002).

Sandwiched as it is between the Netherlands and France, the process of forming the national borders of a sovereign Belgium resembled the later formation of African states more than that of other European nations. After separatist riots in Brussels resulted in Belgian citizens defeating the Dutch forces of King William I in August 1830, the great European powers met at the Conference of London the following November. These outside powers (England, France, Prussia, Russia, and Austria) agreed to meld together the two divergent ethnicities of Flanders and Wallonia. It was expected that this top-down compromise to create an independent Belgium would provide a buffer that could protect against future European conflicts.²¹ The great powers agreed that Belgium would remain a neutral territory (Roegiers and van Sas 1999: 315). Following the Revolution, the modern nation of Belgium came into existence as a constitutional monarchy, its German-born King Leopold I acting more in a symbolic role of dispassionate arbiter for

²¹ This idea is articulated in Cammaerts' (1939) reference to Belgium as the "keystone of Europe."

the democratically elected parliament.

According to Belgian historian Emiel Lamberts (1999), after the 1830 revolution Belgium's adversarial Liberal and Catholic parties agreed to a conciliatory constitution. At first, a coalition of Belgian "unionists," made up of Liberal and Catholic nationalists, was sustained for the pragmatic purposes of negating the "reunionist" forces loyal to the Netherlands. Even though the Liberal faction's more secular approach to government held sway for the first few decades, the Catholics established considerable clout by the end of the 19th century. At the same time, the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the coal mines and ironworks of Wallonia stimulated the growth of a working class and the organization of socialist-leaning unions (Lamberts 1999). In response to the deep societal disharmony between these political factions, leaders of the "major particularistic blocs (or so-called 'pillars')" managed to "foster agreement and concerted action...on a wide range of nationally important, value-laden issues" (Fox 1994: 17). In the first century following independence, "these Catholic, Socialist, and Liberal (secular) groupings or 'pillars' characterized Belgium's political segregated civil society" (Cook 2002: 137). The inbuilt frictions within the fledgling nation of Belgium were initially alleviated by material wealth that flowed in from the King's exploits in Africa.

Belgian Colonialism in Africa

From its inception up until today, an unending cycle of political instability has persisted in Belgium, albeit as a less violent version of the interethnic conflicts in many post-colonial African nations. After taking control of almost one million square miles²² of central Africa between 1876 and 1885, Belgium's King Leopold II presided over the "bloody and exploitative" plunder of the Congo Free State. The King's forces brutally

²² <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cg.html>

subdued the local population in order to extract ivory and wild rubber latex.²³ It is interesting to note that the same late-19th century rubber boom that profited King Leopold II in his Belgian Congo (Cook 2002: 84-86; Hochschild 1998: 159) also played a crucial role in the foundation of Santo Daime in Brazil (see Chapter 3). The King's haul of African resources produced great prosperity that helped to buttress Belgium's development against its own internal turmoil. The Belgian Congo served a getaway function for everyday Belgians, many of whom travelled to the African colony as a respite from "tiny, tradition-enclosed Belgium — a frontier and dreaming space" (Fox 1994: 154). But for Africans, Belgium's negligent colonial policy (which lasted up until decolonization in the early 1960's) left a legacy of conflict and war. King Leopold II is blamed for what amounts to a genocide in his colony, with estimates of between one and ten million Congolese deaths attributed to the Belgian administrators.

Beginning in 1960, the former colony became the independent state of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), and would continue to experience intermittent upheaval and civil war leading into the 21st century.²⁴ In 1962 Belgium also ceded independence to colonies in Burundi and Rwanda that it had inherited from Germany after World War I, the latter of which experienced a horrific genocide in 1994. The causes of the Rwandan genocide can be directly attributed to Belgian colonial policies, which had continued "the German practice of privileging the Tutsi minority at the expense of the majority Hutus" (Cook 2002: 84-86, 101, 135; see also Mamdani 2001). The fact that some of the most violent atrocities of Africa's colonial and post-colonial

²³ In his saga about the sordid social history of rubber, John Tully (2011: 109) reports: "When the Belgians began the commercial exploration of the Congo basin after 1885, they found over twenty species of rubber-bearing vines and shrubs, including several types of *Landolphia*."

²⁴ "The World's Worst War." *New York Times*, December 15, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/16/sunday-review/congos-never-ending-war.html?pagewanted=all>

history resulted from colonists' self-seeking policies and clumsy transition to independence shows how the case of Belgium illustrates the wider European project. Congruently, it was due to analogous intercontinental procedures that an Afro-Brazilian migrant in the Amazon ended up founding a Christian-inspired religion that eventually made its way to Europe. In this way, Santo Daime can be seen as a composite reverberation of the European conquests of Africa and South America that is now returning to its derivation. In justifying their spiritual practice, Belgian fardados understand Santo Daime to be an Amazonian renewal of Christ's original message. This idea is also present in the opening quotation of this dissertation, a hymn lyric from Mestre Irineu referring to Daime as a "remedy" that can "heal" Christendom. All of my informants are deeply suspicious of institutionalized Christianity in Europe. They dislike what they see as a history of politicians and priests perverting Jesus' model of peace and charity for the purposes of acquiring imperialist and commercial power.

Belgium through the World Wars

During the first half of the 20th century, Belgium was itself subject to some of the most brutal events of World Wars I and II. Belgium had originally been set aside (after the 1830 Revolution) as a buffer zone between the constantly combative larger countries of Western Europe. Yet it remained a fierce battleground where the big European powers continued to clash over domination of the continent. Its national autonomy and officially neutral stance were violated in each of the great wars when it was invaded and occupied by Germany. From a global perspective, American and Commonwealth soldiers fought and died alongside their French and British partners at the northern end of the Western Front, which ran through Belgium during both World Wars. *In Flanders Fields*, the

iconic poem by Canadian military officer John McCrae, honors the huge World War I losses suffered by the Allies in the infamous battles of Ypres and Passchendaele. Hitler (who fought for Germany at Ypres in 1914) chose the Walloon Ardennes as the site of his last-ditch counter-attack on the advancing Allies in Winter 1944-1945, a bloodbath that is now known as the Battle of the Bulge.



Figure 3: Map of Belgium hung above the moveable bookcase in the Anne Frank House, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (published with kind permission of Anne Frank Fonds/Anne Frank House, via Getty Images)

In addition to the destruction and enormous loss of life within Belgium during World War II, well over half of Belgium's pre-war Jewish population was deported and murdered at the Auschwitz concentration camp, leaving only 20,000 Jewish Belgians after the war (Cook 2002). As fate would have it, a map of Belgium still hangs over the moveable bookcase that guarded Anne Frank's hiding place in Amsterdam (Figure 3). It

is appropriate that above this secret door, the portal through which Nazi police apprehended the most well-known casualty of World War II, one finds an image of the country that would become the pivot for European powers' attainment of postwar peace. After centuries of mutual destruction, the seating of the European Union in the capital of an independent Belgium now represents the healing of what for too long had been a war-torn continent.

Modern Belgian Society

Throughout its pre-Belgian forms and into the 21st century, Belgium stands as a testament to the turbulent history of Europe, epitomizing both the bloody horrors of war and the anxious handwringing of political compromise. While these broader trends of war and peace were felt across Europe, in the restricted territory of the recently split Low Countries there developed a specifically Belgian response to internal social conflicts. In general, the Belgian socio-political landscape has been marked by waxing and waning of supremacy held by opposing ideological and regional interests, such that eventually an “agree to disagree” compromise was reached. However, the foundational pillarization of Belgium ultimately frayed following the Second World War. Just as Belgium's Liberal and Catholic pillars began to settle their differences through political concessions, the tensions between the Flemish-speaking north and French-speaking south started to boil over. The seeds of the internal division between Fleming and Walloon that still lingers in Belgium were sown directly after independence, when the francophone elites designated French as the official language of government. This created a situation where even Flemish-speaking peasants in Flanders were required to be able to speak French in order to participate in public life. Naturally, this engendered feelings of resentment among

Flemings, who were effectively rendered second-class citizens by the ruling classes. But the success of Wallonia during and after the Industrial Revolution eventually subsided. As the French-speaking region declined economically in the mid-20th century, Flanders entered an era of postwar growth, giving birth to a newfound self-confidence of Flemish cultural identity (Lamberts 1999).

Today, it is apparent that both Flemish- and French-speakers in Belgium display feelings of insecurity relative to each other. While “there exists the continuing legacy of French linguistic prestige,” there is a palpable upsurge in the status of Flemish due to the “more recent Flemish strength in socioeconomic terms” (Edwards and Shearn 1987: 147). This has created a situation that Belgians refer to as *morcellement* or *splinteren* (“fragmentation”²⁵):

In spite of Belgian cultural patterns that Flemish and Walloons share (or perhaps because of them), the structural splits between the two linguistic communities have continued to multiply, bringing in their wake the doubling of many organizations and facilities as part of a fissionary process in the society that involves more than decentralization (Fox 1994: 17).

This fragmentation process lends credibility to the idea that Belgium is in the process of breaking up into two separate countries. The Santo Daime community in Belgium has not escaped this fragmentation tendency. At the time of my fieldwork there were four distinct Santo Daime groups in Belgium: one in Flanders, one in Wallonia, and two in the Brussels region. In Chapter 4, the history of Santo Daime’s development in Belgium will be explained along with an account of why members attend certain groups and not others.

²⁵ Lamberts (1999: 319) explains the roots of Belgian fragmentation this way: “The Flemish movement, in its long-running confrontation with the francophone elites, worked to ensure that Dutch language and culture gradually replaced French in the public life of Flanders. After 1970, francophone Walloon nationalists also helped turn Belgium into a decentralized federal state, in which the country’s feuding regions became largely autonomous. This parceling out of the Belgian nation-state was intensified by the fact that after the Second World War the government was transferring more and more of its powers to supranational organizations like the European Union and NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization).”

Over the past half-century, Belgium has experienced numerous internal standoffs tied to its inbuilt ethnic-linguistic hostilities, what Belgians allude to as the “Linguistic Problem.” One infamous episode of student and faculty protests in 1968-1969²⁶ resulted in the official breakup of two of the country’s most prestigious universities (Fox 1994: 14-15). The Catholic University of Louvain²⁷ became two universities (the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven on the original campus in Flemish Brabant and the Université Catholique de Louvain, established in a newly planned city in Walloon Brabant). The Free University of Brussels also split along linguistic lines, resulting in distinct but neighboring campuses in the capital for the Université Libre de Bruxelles and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. A similar crisis engulfed the entire nation in 1987, when Belgian Prime Minister Wilfried Martens was forced to resign. This was over a dispute regarding the technically illegal election of an adamantly French-speaking mayor of Fourons/Voeren, a francophone town in the Flemish province of Limburg.²⁸

The most recent spat in the national government involved a political stalemate over rising linguistic strife in the Brussels suburbs. In the June 2010 national elections, the separatist party New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), led by Bart de Wever, won the most seats in the Belgian parliament (almost 30% of the total vote). Combining the more mainstream N-VA party with the votes received by the more extremist right-wing Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest) party, more than half of the voters from the Flemish region had voted for a separatist party!²⁹ Although these separatists were unable to secure the

²⁶ This was part of a Europe-wide series of protests in 1968-1969 (see Jobs 2009).

²⁷ Belgium’s oldest university (founded in 1425).

²⁸ “Belgian Leader Resigns for 2d Time in Dispute.” *New York Times*, October 16, 1987; <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/10/16/world/belgian-leader-resigns-for-2d-time-in-dispute.html>

²⁹ “Vote Widens Divide Between Flemish- and French-Speaking Regions.” *New York Times*, June 13, 2010; <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/14/world/europe/14belgium.html>

majority of votes across the country, none of the remaining non-separatist (but regionally-aligned) parties could cobble together a coalition government. The main obstacle was reaching an agreement regarding new policies to protect the language rights of all citizens living in the area immediately around Brussels. The suburban areas around bilingual (but mostly French-speaking) Brussels compose the fractious Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde electoral district, or BHV. While a large and growing proportion of residents in the BHV are French-speaking, the area is officially part of the Flemish province of Vlaams-Brabant and is traditionally home to many native Flemish-speakers.³⁰ This seemingly minor locality typifies the profound depth of broader ethnic-linguistic divisions in Belgium. As protracted as previous predicaments were, the most recent deadlock left Belgium without an elected government for 589 days.

Halfway through this standoff, on February 17, 2011 Belgium set the world record for how long a country has gone without a government (249 days), beating even post-Saddam Hussein Iraq!³¹ But in typical Belgian fashion, instead of angry protests this milestone was hailed with satirical celebrations across the country. Dubbed the “Frites Revolution” (*Frites* means “French Fries”), this festival atmosphere (which included much beer-drinking) was aimed at sending a message of national unity and Belgians’ collective disgust with political gamesmanship. Sudden surges of Belgian patriotism have become customary in times of crisis (Fox 1994: 314). During these occasions many Red, Gold, and Black flags are visible, hanging out of windows in Brussels and on signs that read *TOUCHE PAS À MON PAYS!* (“Don’t Touch My

³⁰ “Belgium Edges Closer to Forming Government.” *Financial Times*, September 15, 2011; <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/3cf3dca4-df69-11e0-a19c-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1p6xzHckv>

³¹ Belgium Ends Record-breaking Government-free Run.” *CNN*, December 06, 2011; http://articles.cnn.com/2011-12-06/world/world_europe_belgium-government_1_belgium-coalition-government-political-crisis?_s=PM:EUROPE

Country!”). In reality the recurrent political crises regarding Flemish and Walloon language rights, which perplex both Belgians and non-Belgians alike, can be said to highlight a perpetual drive towards governmental compromise and power-sharing. Such events characterize Belgium’s unusual sense of “national” identity (see Figure 4).



Figure 4:

- **Above:** A sign in the window of a Brussels home reads in French: “Don’t Touch My Country!” (photo by the author)

- **Left:** Bilingual Posters from a national protest (In French and Dutch: “February 17, 2011, French Fries Revolution; Not in our name Youth; We are tired of Division”)

As distinct as the two major Belgian ethnic-linguistic communities are, there is nevertheless some flow of Belgianness that extends across the regional divide. Apart from the regional partition of languages, Flemings often intersperse their Flemish with French words such as *merci* (“thank you”) and *ça va* (“ok, that’s good”). On the other hand, French-speaking Walloons and Bruxellois are prone to say *s’il vous plaît* (usually meaning “please”) just like the Dutch *alstublieft* for “here you go,” a pleasantry that is

not found in other French countries (Danblon et al. 2005: 48). Both Flemings and Walloons express an anti-nationalist doubt about the future of Belgian unity. As a non-Belgian researcher, Fox was astonished at Belgians' view of their own country as one that "barely exists"; that it is an 'historical accident,' an 'artificial state,' or a 'nonstate'; she was baffled by "the continual failure of Belgians to recognize that this 'Belgium-in-spite-of-itself' outlook is part of the shared culture they deny possessing" (Fox 1994: 7, 321-322, 331-332). If indeed there is a common quality that distinguishes Belgians from non-Belgians, it is this tendency of Belgians to eschew their national identity in favor of local, regional, and supranational allegiances. In this way, Belgians' common identity is marked by a lack of commitment to a national mindset. Despite the pessimism expressed by a recent Belgian Prime Minister, Yves Leterme, who "infamously called Belgium an accident of history, united only by its king, its national football team and some beers" (Economist 2007), this divided country has thrived against substantial odds.

At the commencement of my fieldwork, the latest turmoil of the Belgian national government began just as Belgium took on its responsibilities as "President" of the European Union's Council of Ministers (an important legislative position which rotates between member-states for 6-month terms). This meant that the position of symbolic figurehead for the European Union (perhaps appropriately) was filled by a non-elected caretaker government. Finally, on December 6, 2011, the inauguration of Elio Di Rupo as Prime Minister of a new coalition government restored civic integrity to the capital of Europe. As a sign of how social crises can lead to transformational novelties, Di Rupo became the first Belgian Prime Minister since the 1970's whose first-language is

French.³² Moreover, the fact that Di Rupo's identity as a gay atheist³³ has not hindered his political ascent in Belgium testifies to the rise of secular and progressive ideological trends across Europe.

Considering that "Belgium is a country, but not 'a nation'," Cook (2002: preface) remarks that "for those who believe that the heyday of the nation state has passed, what more appropriate venue for the administrative center of a Europe of regions rather than of nation states." At the advent of postwar European integration it was a Belgian, Paul-Henri Spaak, who began in 1947 to spearhead the notion of a "United States of Europe"³⁴ as a definitive resolution to war on the continent. Seeking to thrive on mutual compromise rather than mutual destruction, the development of a supranational European community began immediately after World War II with the new economic partnership forged between Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg (a.k.a. "Benelux"). This action was followed by the creation of a Proto-EU body known as the European Coal and Steel Community in 1950. This unprecedented agreement reached between Benelux, France, Germany, and Italy had the following objective: "to substitute a merger of essential interests for long-standing rivalries through the creation of an economic community and to lay the first foundations of a much wider and much more profound community among long-divided nations" (Davignon, Paemen, and Noterdaeme 1990: 122-124). This recognition by previously oppositional nation-states that their fates would be shared in the postwar era established the core principles underlying the European

³² "18 Months After Vote, Belgium Has Government." *New York Times*, December 1, 2011; <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/02/world/europe/belgium-forms-government-with-elio-di-rupo-as-premier.html>

³³ "Profile: Belgium's Elio Di Rupo." *BBC News*, 5 December 2011; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15983739>

³⁴ A Manifesto of the same name was published in 2006 by Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt (see Habermas 2009: 58)

Union as it is known today.

The ongoing effort to keep Belgium united while at the same time recognizing the local authority of different ethnic-linguistic communities mirrors the impasse currently facing the entire European Union. Indeed, similar antagonisms between regional, national, and supranational interests are now gripping the EU as it struggles to maintain political cohesion amidst emergencies of economic debt.³⁵ Again Belgium serves as a social microcosm of Europe as a whole: residents of the more prosperous northern region of Flanders are increasingly tired of providing monetary rescues to offset the economic woes of Wallonia in the south. Before WWII, Wallonia's mining and industrial sectors hummed with activity while Flanders' economy was based on agriculture. But since the mid-20th century the Belgian situation has reversed, with a Flemish high-tech boom occurring alongside a decline of industry that has brought spiking unemployment to Wallonia (Cook 2002: 138-139). In the case of Europe, the stronger northern economies such as Germany are becoming more hesitant to deliver financial bailouts to peripheral and southern members of the EU, the so-called PIGS³⁶ (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Spain). There is a pervasive attitude among Germanic citizens (in Flanders and in northern Europe as a whole): they believe the economic fruits stemming from their own values of industrious efficiency are neutralized by what they see as the lazy work ethic and irresponsible social entitlement programs enacted by their southern partners³⁷

³⁵ For an edifying analysis of the Europe's crisis of political union, and a frank discussion of how these problems will not go away until citizens accept their supranational identity, see Habermas (2009).

³⁶ "Europe's PIGS don't Fly." *CNN Money*, February 5, 2010;

<http://money.cnn.com/2010/02/05/news/economy/financial.hotspots.fortune/index.htm>

³⁷ "Belgian Vote Reflects Tensions Over Unity." *Wall Street Journal*, October 14, 2012;

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390443675404578056684165209930.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

- "Greek Bailout Drives Rift in European 'Brotherhood'." *The Globe and Mail*, Mar. 5/25, 2010;

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/europe/greek-bailout-drives-rift-in-european-brotherhood/article1490568/>

(Wallonia and Mediterranean Europe respectively). Of course, this ethnocentric stereotype stems from real cultural differences between Germanic north and Latin south. Economically, there is a “North-South axis” in Europe. Citizens of largely Protestant northern countries tend to be wealthier with less of a gap between rich and poor; in contrast, more Catholic southern countries are less wealthy and exhibit greater social inequality (van Oorschot and Arts 2005: 9-10). Of course, Orthodox Greece is a non-Catholic exception in the Mediterranean region. Also, the Flemish region of northern Belgium is an anomalous mix of Europe’s North-South features because it is a Germanic society steeped in Catholicism (Blom and Lamberts 1999: 480). In a nod to Belgium’s long track record of resolving seemingly intractable disputes between disparate ethnic-linguistic factions, the former Belgian Prime Minister Herman Van Rompuy was tapped in 2009 to be the first long-term President of the European Council. This new political position, created by the Lisbon Treaty, designates a single individual to represent the heads-of-state of all EU member-states.³⁸

Even though I am fascinated by Belgian and European politics, I soon learned that my fardado informants tend to dislike political drama as an unwarranted clash of opposing self-interests. Along with the citizens of Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, Belgians are generally among the most politically disaffected people in Europe, in that citizens in these countries do not consider politics to be a significant factor in their lives (Torcal 2006: 166-168). This is peculiar, given the centrality of Belgium within the E.U. alliance. However, as Belgian law disqualifies their religious practice, it is not surprising that fardados are cynical about how their welfare is being represented in government.

³⁸ “Special Report: Europe’s man in the middle.” *Reuters*, Dec 7, 2011; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/12/07/us-europe-vanrompuy-idUSTRE7B615M20111207>

Yet this does not mean that fardados lack political opinions, and when the topic came up they were all adamantly in favor of conciliatory and green politics. A notable example is one fardado named Karel, a 50-year-old manager of a hotel in a downtown urban center. Even though Karel has been participating in Santo Daime since 1995, his wife does not attend Santo Daime rituals at all. When I met Karel for an interview in his West Flanders apartment, he was eager to interpret past and current political disputes as an asset that undergirds Belgians' social maturity. Comparing the quarrels of his homeland to internal conflicts in the EU, he remarked upon how Flemings and Walloons tend to confront their shared challenges:

We love each other dearly...Let's unravel that: It's a strength that way too, and it's a weakness on the other hand...We're still one country...but being such a compromise state...being small, being somehow divided, we're not a fear to the big powers, so all the powerhouses come to Belgium. Because you have the ego...Ego in a nationalistic context is chauvinism, we don't have that. We're not proud to be Belgian...Less proud than the French or the Germans or the English, for instance. So we're more fit to compromise. We're true Europeans, that's why the whole European core is here. So our state of compromising is actually our strength. For instance, the first president of the European Union is now a Belgian [Van Rompuy]. He knows how to compromise...Trying to solve disagreement makes us very intent on solving these problems, and you put it in a bigger perspective: He's Belgian, he's open and he wants to do the best with it. No ego, try to compromise!

- **Karel**³⁹ (West Flanders)⁴⁰

It will become clear throughout this text that Belgian fardados pinpoint the source of all

³⁹ Throughout this text, I refer to informants with pseudonyms (any resemblance to the names of real people is purely coincidental). I am only publishing information that does not unduly intrude upon the privacy and anonymity of Santo Daime members. Since they are technically criminals in the eyes of most European governments, I am determined that my research and subsequent publications are in accord with the Ethics Code of the American Anthropological Association (AAA); in particular, the "primary ethical obligation...to do no harm": "Among the most serious harms that anthropologists should seek to avoid are harm to dignity, and to bodily and material well-being, especially when research is conducted among vulnerable populations. Anthropologists should not only avoid causing direct and immediate harm but also should weigh carefully the potential consequences and inadvertent impacts of their work. When it conflicts with other responsibilities, this primary obligation can supersede the goal of seeking new knowledge..." The most recent version of the AAA ethics code can be found here:

<http://www.aaanet.org/profdev/ethics/upload/Statement-on-Ethics-Principles-of-Professional-Responsibility.pdf>

⁴⁰ The demographic information for the majority of Belgian fardados whose quotations are cited herein can be found in Appendix III.

human-made problems (be they interpersonal or geopolitical) as resulting from commitment to what they refer to as the *ego*. Fardados' prescription for dealing with all kinds of hostility postulates a direct correlation: less ego = more peace. As Karel points out, in order to "solve" problems caused by the ego, it is necessary to set selfish fixations aside in favor of implementing an intention towards conciliation.

A long history of military conflicts and political negotiations has certainly left an indelible mark on 21st century Europe. However, Europe is also characterized as the birthplace of artistic and scientific breakthroughs in ages such as the Renaissance and Enlightenment, intellectual feats that represent some of the greatest achievements of human history. What is known as "Western" culture has its roots in philosophies formed by Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian worldview along with industrialized skills developed through the methods of science (Matthews and Platt 2001). Belgium is again stereotypically European in its commitment to science as a dependable approach to problem solving.⁴¹ Belgium played host to the global scientific community for some of the most significant scholarly events of the 20th century. Prominent examples of this include the Solvay Conferences in Physics, with Brussels serving as the backdrop of the first meetings in 1911 (Barkan 1993) as well as the famous 1927 meetings where Einstein exclaimed that "God does not play dice with the universe" (Bohr 1949). In addition, the *Atomium*, a massive monument shaped like an iron molecule, was erected to celebrate the 1958 Brussels World's Fair. The Atomium still stands today as a symbolic "declaration of faith in man's ability to mold the atomic age to the ultimate advantage of all nations and people" (Simons 1958: 26).

⁴¹ This cultural trait could be said to date back to Andreas Vesalius, a 16th century Flemish scholar considered as the "founder of modern anatomy" (Tarshis 1969).

At the same time, European linguistic and religious heritage is now prevalent worldwide. In his anthropologically-oriented review of world history, Eric R. Wolf (1997: 385) underscores the “signally important role” Europe has played since the early stages of globalization: “the world of 1400 was already burgeoning with regional linkages and connections; but the subsequent spread of Europeans across the oceans brought the regional networks into worldwide orchestration, and subjected them to a rhythm of global scope.” But there has also been a reverse flow of influence whereby European explorers and traders brought home ideas and technology from foreign lands. For example, food plants now seen as staples of European cuisine, such as the potato (Pollan 2001: 192-206) and tomato (Heiser 1985: 132-133), were originally domesticated by indigenous peoples of the Pre-Columbian New World. The Santo Daime has likewise been transported from its birthplace in the remote Amazonian rainforest into the historical and cultural setting of Europe.

The Ethnographic Context

The present text presents a detailed ethnographic portrayal of the Santo Daime religion as it is being executed beyond its geographical and social origins. Though all of my informants are native Europeans, my reason for meeting and spending time with them is decidedly because they have chosen to follow a spiritual tradition from Brazil. Fundamentally, Belgium is a suitable site for researching the inception and subsequent growth of the Santo Daime in Europe for three reasons: (1) Belgium’s status as a microcosmic representation of Western European society; (2) Belgium’s historical and geopolitical importance, centered on Brussels, for the past and future development of the

European Union; and (3) the fact that along with Spain, Belgium features the oldest Santo Daime tradition on the continent, the first daimista outpost in northern Europe.

Beginning in May 2010, I spent 12 continuous months conducting participant-observation in Belgium and other European countries to understand how fardados individually and collectively perceive their adopted religion. My wife and I decided to settle in Brussels for the year, and upon the recommendation of an elder fardada we rented a residence in the chic, multiethnic district of Ixelles/Elsene.⁴² We lived near Place Flagey, a newly renovated plaza that is emerging as a communal hotspot of the city. From our 19th-century row house apartment at 112, Avenue de l'Hippodrome,⁴³ we could watch our neighbors and busy commuters passing up and down the slope of the street. Our line of vision extended from the emblematic crow-stepped gable roof of a building to the left, down the hill to the idyllic ponds jutting out from the Cambre Woods nature area.⁴⁴ We often peered out our window to glimpse, smell, and hear the typical phenomena of this city: automobiles, trucks, Vespa scooters, streetcars, but also children, couples, and families conversing with each other in French, English, Portuguese, Arabic, Turkish, Polish, German, and Mandarin. Even though French and Flemish are the two official languages of Brussels, it was rare to hear Flemish spoken in the borough of Ixelles, where immigrants intermingle with the predominantly French-speaking residents.

The diverse linguistic flavor of present-day Brussels is the result of multiple and increasingly substantial waves of immigrants who have flocked to Belgium during the 20th century. This influx has coincided with marked declines in birthrate among the

⁴² Coincidentally, the woman who first brought Santo Daime to Belgium in the 1980s lived in Ixelles.

⁴³ I took it as a good omen that our second-floor apartment was above a sign that said "Marco's Ideas."

⁴⁴ We were pleased to be close to this extension of the Sonian Forest, which marks the boundary between Flanders and Wallonia. It can be difficult to escape the asphalt and exhaust fumes in central Brussels.

aging Belgian-born populace. As the 1.65 fertility rate of Belgium's native-born inhabitants continues to remain well under the replacement level of 2.0 (CIA World Factbook 2008⁴⁵), immigration is required to offset the greying of the population (André 1990: 40). While newcomers from both European and non-European origins can now be found throughout Belgium, the area immediately in and around Brussels hosts the majority of the growing immigrant communities. Today, in the Brussels Capital Region “26 percent of the population is non-Belgian...[and] about 42 per cent of the population (of 1.1 million inhabitants) is of foreign descent” even if they were born in Belgium (Teney et al. 2010: 273-274).

This demographic trend is plainly noticeable as one strolls around Ixelles' neighborhoods, sampling treats from the Polish and Brazilian bakeries, the Portuguese bars or the Irish pub, the Austrian, Moroccan, and Turkish eateries, and the Congolese corner-stores in the African Matongé quarter. While these “New Belgians” have brought their own cultural traditions and lifestyles with them to their adopted homeland, they also acquire the linguistic and bureaucratic skills they need to function in the established Belgian social order (Cook 2002: 145). Of course, as in other European countries, there is significant hostility that exists between Belgian-born residents and the immigrants, with “prejudice and discrimination” aimed especially at Muslim foreigners from Morocco and Turkey (Fox 1994: 22). But from my perspective spending most of my time with Belgian-born informants, it was certainly remarkable how this international commerce of various immigrant communities seemed to merge so seamlessly amidst the conventional Belgian banks, grocery stores, restaurants, and bars.

Perhaps the best way to fathom “Belgianness” relative to external processes of

⁴⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2127.html>

immigration and supranational politics is through the concept of the “Château.” Fox (1994), the aforementioned authority on the culture of Belgium, relies on the metaphor of the “château” (a grand, noble residential building) to explain her over 30 years of attempting to grasp how Belgians view themselves. An oft-mentioned adage has it that to be Belgian is to be born with a brick in one’s stomach. Reflecting upon the views expressed by her postwar informants, Fox (Fox 1994: 205-206) emphasizes how the house⁴⁶ can be seen as a fundamental symbol of the Belgian consciousness. Indeed, Belgians are disposed to characterizing the entirety of Belgium as a house inhabited by different “families” or composed of distinct “pillars” (Fox 1988: 289). Conflicts in Belgium “are often expressed in rather domestic terms, invoking the image of alternating threats, disputes, and temporary periods of pacification between spouses” (Fox 1994: 311). While these “house”⁴⁷ and “family” metaphors apply to Belgian fardados’ view of their society, it must be added that Santo Daime provides them access to yet another house with Brazilian connotations: “The category ‘house’, a frequently used metaphor among the Daimistas, designates the ‘moral community’” (Cemin 2006: 280).

In addition, references in the Santo Daime hymns to the “holy house” (*casa santa*), “palace,” or “temple” denote the intrapersonal “casa” revealed by undergoing mystical states: the literal home of one’s own subjective consciousness (see Schmidt 2007: 137). One Belgian daimista used the cultural metaphor of cleaning the house to

⁴⁶ According to Fox (1994: 205-206), Belgians’ “respectability and very being depend on having a house of their own — preferably one they have constructed themselves — filled with personal and family possessions...their house was not just a dwelling place or a mortar-and-brick expression of how much social and economic progress they had made. It was also a physical and symbolic bulwark — a structure that gave them protection and security in the face of the vicissitudes, the dangers, and the sorrows of life. And it was a haven too — a sanctuary of their love and of the courageous hope that there would be a future.”

⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that the notion of a “house” as a metaphor for the self was also present among Brazilian fardados (Polari de Alverga 2011: 205) and Dutch daimistas interviewed by Groisman (2000: 187). Apparently this is a cultural symbol extending across the entire Low Countries region.

speak about how Daime acts like a “key” to sustaining health of his individual self:

The fact of going [to Santo Daime works] gives me the confidence of having one key. Ok, I can get mixed, I can get lost in society. I can get contaminated by the stress, by the purposes of other interests that try to effect me. But already I have one key...it's not because I clean my house once that it's clean forever. I'm clean if I have the discipline to clean my house every weekend, for instance. I'm clean, also, if I have the discipline not to dirty my house...[Santo Daime] is the key to myself, it's the key to this Higher Self.

- **Gabe** (Brussels)

My informants regularly used this “key” metaphor to describe how Santo Daime rituals help them in their life. Later chapters will return again to this notion of “key” in explaining how fardados tend to conceptualize Santo Daime in technological terms. The goal of reaching one’s “Higher Self,” or an ideal state of consciousness beyond the ego, will also be developed throughout this text. For now, it is essential to observe the sense of community daimistas feel with one another, as they form relationships with like-minded people in the “house” of Santo Daime.

The Santo Daime Family in Belgium: A Periodic Social Group

In the past, anthropologists were accustomed to dealing with a particular ethnic, linguistic, or other social phenomenon that is bounded within a circumscribed village or district. With the rise of the internet and unprecedented transnational flows of ideas and people, scholars can no longer take for granted that the “local” exists as a static place (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 15-16). Daimistas’ homes are geographically scattered across Belgium. For the most part, my informants live their own individual lives much like any other Belgians. They spend the bulk of their time outside of the church environment, going to their day jobs, raising children, and socializing with non-Daime friends/family. Of these more mainstream relationships, fardados only disclose theirentheogenic practice to people that they trust to accept this non-mainstream pastime.

There is an ebb and flow of Santo Daime social organization whereby Belgian fardados meet at ritual works at least four times a month,⁴⁸ between which they go back to their mostly separate lives. Thus, my field site offers a unique methodological challenge for an ethnographer trying to study Santo Daime culture in Europe: daimistas value the 30 or so hours they spend together at ritual works each month as sufficient for comprising their religious community. Although some daimistas do mingle with each other outside works (see below), there is no obligation to interact with fellow worshippers between works.

The setting of ritual works is the rhythmic nucleus of the Santo Daime community in Belgium, meaning that the social nexus of their mutual interactions is transitory. Otherwise, Santo Daime is one of many other demographic subgroups that Belgian daimistas belong to simultaneously. Considering interviews⁴⁹ collected both at multinational Santo Daime gatherings in Amsterdam and during my more intensive fieldwork with four Belgian Santo Daime churches (May 2010-May 2011), European daimistas come from all socioeconomic classes and a range of religious backgrounds. Some are rich, residing in million dollar homes, while others live more humbly in public housing. Although most had either a Christian or atheist upbringing, some daimistas also participate in Buddhist, Hindu, or Islamic organizations. Regarding 33 informants whose personal data I collected, Belgian fardados represent a wide spectrum of age groups (between the ages of 29 and 70, with an average age of 46). Belgian fardados also work in a variety of professions, mostly engaged in forms of community service. In my overall count, the Santo Daime groups in Belgium feature at least nine teachers (of dance, music,

⁴⁸ Some periods of the year involve special rituals that occur between the four standard gatherings, such as during the June Festival, which includes four extra works for a total of eight works within one month (see Appendix II).

⁴⁹ Although the majority of interviews were conducted in English, I have taken the liberty to make slight grammatical corrections to interview transcriptions quoted herein, so as to conform to Standard English.

language, schoolchildren, and the disabled), four nurses, two doctors, two graphic designers, two practitioners of alternative therapies, and two astrologers. Other occupations include an architect, a psychologist, a kinesiologist, an industrial designer, a hospice-care supervisor, a landscaper, a housekeeper, an arborist, a hotel manager, a massage therapist, a security guard, a photographer, a receptionist, a telephone operator, a draftsman, and a social worker. Two informants were currently unemployed and four had retired from their jobs (most of this data is listed in Appendix III). So other than their dedication to Santo Daime, at first glance it seems the demographics of my informants are virtually indistinguishable from a cross-section of European society. Yet in coming together to attend Daime rituals at regular intervals each month, participants distinguish themselves as a spiritual community. Thus, in order to frame the nature of the Belgian Santo Daime culture, I classify the daimista congregations in Belgium as “periodic” social groups.

The backgrounds and personalities of the people who attend Santo Daime works are diverse to say the least. Several Belgian fardados admitted that as youths they had been carefree bohemians who enjoyed a vigorous nightlife. But all fardados express that at some point in their life they became spiritually restless and noticed a hunger for finding deeper existential meaning. Prior to “finding” or “meeting” the Daime, many Belgian daimistas had previous training in a non-Daime form of mystical practice. Of the 50 informants included in this research, there were those who had practiced or still practice forms of prayer in the tradition of Catholicism (three Belgian daimistas) or Islamic Sufism (two daimistas). They also include daimistas with experience in Hindu yoga (two), Buddhist meditation (seven), Daoism (one), and three had a background in

native American or neo-pagan shamanism. However, for the remaining 32 informants Santo Daime was their first serious mystical commitment. Either way, all Belgian daimistas are associated with the wider trend of Euro-American “spiritual seekers.” Such seekers tend to experiment with spiritual disciplines from different cultural contexts. In general, these individuals are seeking methods that can help them surmount life’s difficulties with greater acceptance and grace. The common theme of today’s spiritual seekers is described as a project to “resacralize the self” (Wuthnow 1998: 158-160; see also Roof 2003: 147). Chapters 5 and 6 will explain in more detail how members of the small Santo Daime community in Europe exemplify a much broader cultural shift in the Western world. It will be argued that daimistas represent a small segment of the millions of Westerners who are now actively looking for alternatives to both traditional religion and modern secularism. My informants want to be religious in a way that fuses a formal spirituality with the values of individual liberty that are prized by secular modernity.

Daimistas refer to each other as members of a “spiritual family.” This spiritual family is not confined to how much time members spend with each other in the physical realm. Such non-traditional social groups are now becoming an established subject of anthropological study. For example, European fans that amass at football (soccer) games constitute such a periodic community (King 2003: 13). Following Durkheim (1915: 349-350), even though the Santo Daime and soccer communities in Europe are composed of individuals who do not all live in the same neighborhood, their periodic assembly for collective ritual a few times a month is enough to sustain a sense of collective identity. The periodic rituals of Santo Daime offer an opportunity to understand how some Europeans are adopting new styles of social relations by tapping into a globalized

spiritual culture. In this way, Belgian fardados are not unlike diasporic communities, in that they feel a close kinship-type bond with fardados in Brazil and all over the world.

A mingling of Brazilian and European Santo Daime cultures occurs through reciprocal tourism. European fardados often travel to Brazil in a kind of religious pilgrimage. When non-Brazilian daimistas bring their new religion home with them and begin to practice there, this resettlement creates a global network of Santo Daime's transnational expansion. The European churches also regularly host "entourages" (*comitivas*) of Brazilian fardados for extended visits in Europe. During these sojourns, the visiting fardados stay with host fardados. European hosts are eager to improve their Portuguese and learn from veteran Brazilians, just as the Brazilian visitors are keen to improve their English as they impart their expertise about Daime. Brazilian daimistas are prone to view this cultural exchange in post-colonial terms as a "reversed form of invasion" (Schmidt 2007: 229). However, on rare occasion European fardados complained to me that the exchange is occasionally too unidirectional. Although some informants may perceive Brazilian fardados as less open to learning from non-Brazilians, they normally inhibit such misgivings as gratuitous carping based in egotistical pride. As discussed in the following chapters, while there is considerable influence from Brazil, the Santo Daime communities in Europe are developing mainly according to local processes of social transformation.

At both the global and local level, the Santo Daime family is overseen by highly respected veteran fardados referred to by the titles *Padrinho* ("Godfather") and *Madrinha* ("Godmother"), terms of endearment that mark them as authorities in the doctrine. These titles are reserved for the most experienced fardados, and are bestowed only on those

whose knowledge of the Daime doctrine is widely respected in their congregations. In Belgium, there are as few as four *Padrinhos* and three *Madrinhas*, made up of current or former leaders of the four Santo Daime groups in this country (see Chapter 4). Officially, no Santo Daime member has unassailable authority over any other. However, a hierarchy of social organization does exist when it comes to the practical matters of managing church affairs. Each Daime church is run by an individual male or female *comandante*⁵⁰ (“commander”). The commander tends to designate veteran members of the church to carry out particular responsibilities concerning various tasks (e.g. interviewing newcomers, upkeep of financial records, or overseeing the ritual space). By fulfilling these unique functions, these members develop a kind of informal authority within their congregations. On an international level, administrative duties are presided over by committee, whereby a group of *fardado* representatives is charged with making policy decisions for affiliated Daime churches. For instance, I learned that a Dutch *Madrinha* and her most trusted confidante now serve indefinitely as the President and Secretary of a committee representing Santo Daime churches in 12 European nations. Based in Amsterdam, other members of this board rotate for provisional terms.

In the general membership, *fardados* refer to their fellow *fardados* as “brothers and sisters” (*irmãos e irmãs*). Out of the 50 informants that contributed to this research, 19 (38%) are married, 31 (62%) are unmarried,⁵¹ 21 (42%) have children, and 29 (58%) do not have children; of the 19 married *daimistas*, there are 8 couples that attend Daime works together. It is not uncommon for *daimistas* to begin dating each other after

⁵⁰ A militaristic term for the leader of a church. Dawson (2007: 73-74) describes this as a “military motif” prevalent in Santo Daime discourse (with participants organized into *batalhões* [“battalions”] of age and sex and *fardado* members wearing *fardas* [“uniforms”]).

⁵¹ Of these 31 unmarried *daimistas*, 7 had previously been married and 4 were currently involved in committed relationships with a significant other.

meeting at the ritual works. I witnessed three pairs of daimistas begin to court each other during my fieldwork. I observed two instances of fardados' partners who were not involved in Daime becoming curious and eventually begin attending ritual works (but this is not universal, as discussed below). All daimista couples I met were heterosexual. Although homophobia appears to be present in the Santo Daime centers of Brazil (Cavnar 2011: 61, 64), I met individual fardados whose same-sex orientation was fully accepted in the European Daime community.⁵²

In Brazil it is common (and legal) for children to fully partake in Santo Daime in the company of their parents. When scholars studied Brazilian adolescents who participate in structured ayahuasca ceremonies, they judged these youths to be “healthy, thoughtful, considerate and bonded to their families and religious peers” (Dobkin de Rios et al. 2005: 135). When these ayahuasca-drinking adolescents were compared to a control group, researchers found few significant differences between the two groups; overall, results reveal that the adolescents who attend ayahuasca rites consume half as much alcohol (Doering-Silveira et al. 2005), and show lower levels of anxiety, self-image, and attention problems (Silveira et al. 2005: 131) relative to the control group. Thus, in Brazil the right of children and pregnant women to drink Daime is recognized as an “exercise of parental rights” (Labate 2011a). Chapter 7 will review empirical evidence that ayahuasca is non-toxic and can offer benefits when used in ritual contexts.

Unlike in Brazil, children are not permitted to attend Santo Daime ceremonies in Belgium. Belgian Daime church leaders told me that this restriction is in place because the drinking of ayahuasca by children would only exacerbate the qualms of government

⁵² Belgian fardados expressed to me their sympathetic concern for a transgendered participant who alternated between standing on the male and female sides of the gender-divided ritual space when attending works in Amsterdam (see the discussion of Daime rituals in Chapter 4).

authorities. As official documents of the Belgian Santo Daime explicitly state: “the minimum age for participation in the ritual is 18 years of age.” Even though no children attend ceremonies and some daimistas’ spouses are not interested in drinking Daime, these loved ones will sometimes attend non-ritual Santo Daime events like dinner parties. I met two married fardados’ spouses who do not participate in Daime works, and indeed both individuals in each couple respect their partner’s spiritual choices. Some sense of community develops where daimistas do share in each other’s lives without requiring that all family members attend Daime works. In my time in Brazil, I observed that family members who choose not to drink Daime are nevertheless welcomed into non-ritual functions of the congregation. All fardados avow that drinking Daime is a deeply personal choice and that no one should be coerced into ingesting ayahuasca. Like choosing to be a Catholic priest, my informants say that becoming a fardado is a spiritual “calling” that does not apply to everyone.

Much like any close-knit kinship structure, I observed that daimistas occasionally meet outside of the ritual atmosphere at social gatherings for meals, birthdays, administrative meetings, and scheduled hymn-singing practices. In addition, Belgian fardados do keep in contact with one another and with fardados around the world via online social networks. Upon gaining access to these online groups, I noticed daimistas sharing links to spiritual websites and youtube videos with each other. These links are most commonly related to Daime topics such as specific hymns or audiovisual footage of rituals in the Amazon rainforest. Many friendships develop between members of the church. I observed that Belgian daimistas sometimes go on vacations together (e.g. to Brazil or other European Daime centers) and exchange reading materials. It is evident

that fardados seek each other out for business opportunities. I observed informants perform babysitting, housekeeping, and yardwork for fellow daimistas, tasks which were compensated with money. During visits I sometimes helped fardados watch over each other's children while the parents were at work. I also got to help a fardado who is an arborist trim the vegetation for an elder Belgian fardada. But for the most part these non-ritual meetings occur among subsets of daimistas that already live in close proximity to each other. For example, I accompanied four fardados that live in the Antwerpen province to their regular lunch date, as they meet at their favorite restaurant the day after Daime works. I joined the fardados of Liège for scheduled walks in the forest. There are also multiple fardados who live near each other in the regions of East Flanders, West Flanders, Luxembourg, and Brussels. These daimista enclaves do interact socially with each other on a regular basis outside the works. However, other than smaller pockets comprising five or fewer individuals, many daimistas do not live near other daimistas, and thus only see each other when they meet at rituals. This distinguishes the Belgian Santo Daime churches from those in Amsterdam and in Spain, where I noted that most daimistas live relatively near to each other and maintain more continuous and intimate contact. Belgian fardados would likely not agree with their community being designated a "periodic" social group because from their emic perspective the Daime family is always connected spiritually. But for practical purposes of participant-observation, the outsider's (etic) viewpoint of ethnography can only perceive social affairs in the physical world. In the Belgian Santo Daime, such tangible meetings mainly occur at ceremonial works.

The Allure of the Ayahuasca Experience

By 2008 the study of ayahuasca spirituality comprised almost 300 books and

articles as well as over 80 completed and ongoing M.A. and Ph.D. theses (Labate, de Rose, and dos Santos 2008: 42-48). Although public and professional awareness is rapidly growing, for most people ayahuasca remains a strange enigma. The internet has stimulated popular interest in ayahuasca, with enthusiasts exchanging stories about otherworldly visions and introspective journeys experienced under the effects of the brew (Tupper 2009). However, what it really feels like to undergo the ayahuasca experience is very difficult (if not impossible) to explain in words. This dissertation presents a balance of references, juxtaposing the scholarly perspective with daimistas' subjective accounts of what the Santo Daime sacrament means for them.

When consumed in sanctified contexts, the altered state of awareness brought on by entheogenic substances resembles the qualities of mystical experience (Pahnke 1963; Pahnke and Richards 1966; Winkelman 2001). Ranging from the gruesome to the sublime, this is an ineffable state that was described as the "antipodes of the mind" by Aldous Huxley (1990[1956]: 92-93). Psychologist Benny Shanon (2002: 57), one of the world's foremost experts on the cross-cultural cognitive effects of ayahuasca, characterizes the general impact of the brew thusly:

When the 'force' strikes, usually around forty minutes after consumption of the brew, many are prone to vomit. It is a vomit like no other — drinkers often feel that they are pouring out the depths of both their body and their soul...Usually, the harshest symptoms...occur during the first 90 minutes following the onset of the effect. During this time, visions can be very strong and the entire experience may be tough and even frightening. At times, the person...feels he or she is losing his or her senses and even going mad. Quite commonly, people feel that they are about to die...With experience, however, the fear can be better managed and...drinkers usually begin to come to terms with the Ayahuasca experience and even enjoy it. Indeed, people may find that this experience presents them with moments of exhilaration and great wonderment.

While these physical and psychological difficulties are common for new people during

their first few sessions with the tea, Shanon is correct in stating that this is really more a learning curve of ayahuasca. Although it may seem perplexing why people would want to subject themselves to such agony, it is important to point out that the vomiting is most often associated with newcomers (see Beyer 2009: 213-214). The psychological shock and sudden onset of an unfamiliar state of awareness in one's initial ayahuasca experiences can bring on dread and nausea. But as Shanon notes in the conclusion of the above passage, these difficulties normally give way to cheerful feelings the more rituals one attends.

Since he has personally consumed ayahuasca in more than 130 rituals, it is worth quoting in full Shanon's (2002: 41, 339-340) phenomenological sketch of the most startling effects of the brew:

With Ayahuasca, the divide between the self and non-self is blurred and the balance between the internal and the external changes...First and foremost, under the intoxication, drinkers feel that they are more connected to nature and the cosmos at large...Further, drinkers feel closer to other human beings and living organisms. The sentiments of love, empathy, and compassion common with Ayahuasca are corollaries of this effect. The closeness felt to the Divine and the Ground of all Being is another manifestation of the fundamental systemic change at hand...the barrier between the self and the world may dissipate to such a degree that individuality is indeed lost and the mental and the real become one.

Although such objective accounts are instructive, one ought to take seriously Shanon's (2002: 39) suggestion that the subjective feeling of the ayahuasca experience "brings us to the boundaries not only of science but also of the entire Western world-view and its philosophies." Indeed, the typical phenomenology of ayahuasca's healing function has been described as the inducement of a "mind-body-spirit connection" (Sobiecki 2013). With this in mind, it is the primary aim of the present dissertation to present why some European adults are attracted to Santo Daime rituals. I found that daimistas are

dissatisfied with the precepts of both traditional religions and secularism. For them, the ayahuasca experience appears as a promising avenue for curative self-exploration.

As an ethnographic account seeking to understand the culture of Santo Daime in Belgium, this study emphasizes daimistas' recurrent assembly at ritual works. My informants' opting for Santo Daime practice is the most conspicuous trait setting them apart from the European mainstream. I wanted to know what this unusual choice to become a fardado suggests about the shifting religious landscapes of 21st century Europe? The present text's focus on the apparatus of Daime ceremonies, in conjunction with daimistas' firsthand testimonies, is meant to capture the research subjects' life priorities. As the reader will see below, those Belgians attracted to Santo Daime are primarily concerned with existential matters of experience, enlightenment, and wellbeing. Thus, the format and style of this text is meant to reflect and convey Belgian fardados' atypical worldview relative to the dominant cultural norms of Europe. Through the course of this analysis, readers will gain a thorough familiarity with an otherwise secluded religious community. By extension, this study will illuminate rationales as to why some Westerners are flouting their society's conventional belief systems, preferring a foreign spirituality to both the secular and mainstream Christian options.

Structure of Chapters

Following this introductory chapter, the text will lay out the background and evidence that is pertinent to the central problem of this dissertation; namely, why is it that some Europeans are choosing to join the global Santo Daime movement? While each chapter addresses a specific topic, the sequential flow between chapters is intended as a

progressive unfolding of an answer to this quandary.

Fardados believe that participating in Santo Daime works helps them to discover and implement solutions. During visits with informants, my research strategy struck a balance between emphasizing fardados' personal testimonies about why they are drawn to Santo Daime practice and scientific techniques for gathering empirical data. I recorded 50 semi-structured interviews with daimistas from four Belgian Santo Daime congregations. Of the 50 interviewees, 42 are fardados, three are former fardados,⁵³ and five are non-fardados. This sample includes people born or living in locales representing all ten Belgian provinces and the Brussels Capital Region. Throughout this dissertation, the reporting of ethnographic data is supplemented with direct quotations from interviews with Belgian daimistas. In seeking to integrate theoretical implications with the results of my ethnographic fieldwork, each chapter advances a specific aspect of the wider concerns of this study.

Chapter 2 delineates the methodological and theoretical approaches that guided this ethnographic research into Santo Daime activities in Belgium. The specific challenges and techniques of participant-observation and interviewing of informants are outlined. The reasons for employing certain sampling techniques are explained in terms of the exceptional demands of this research, which concerns a small, non-localized collection of Belgians who gather for a ritual practice that is illegal. When an ethnographer wants to cultivate empathy with members of religions organized around extraordinary experiences, one must immerse oneself in the research subjects' worldview (a method called *ethnophenomenology*). Following the discussion of methodology, the

⁵³ Occasionally, long-time veterans of Santo Daime in Europe will leave the church because they no longer feel inspired to remain members.

theoretical orientation of the “anthropology of self” is applied to Belgian fardados’ view of Santo Daime as a mystical form of spirituality. So as to frame the analysis of subsequent chapters, the personalities and direct testimonies of various informants are introduced.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed review of the scholarly literature concerning ayahuasca and Santo Daime. The chapter commences with a brief explanation of the chemistry and ethno-botany of ayahuasca (to be elaborated upon in Chapter 7). This is followed by a historical summary of the first Europeans to come into contact with the brew through their encounters with indigenous peoples in the Amazon rainforest. The discussion then charts the anthropology of ayahuasca use in different cultural settings. This includes the employment of the beverage in its original shamanistic healing and divination contexts among aboriginal groups, the neo-shamanistic rituals of multiethnic mestizos, and the different syncretic “ayahuasca religions.” The expansion of ayahuasca spirituality has emerged in recent decades as a global issue with which non-Amazonian cultures must now come to terms.

Chapter 4 concentrates on an ethnographic exposition of Santo Daime members and their ceremonial works in Belgium. Through a systematic illustration of the dynamics involved in Santo Daime works and the spiritual beliefs associated with these practices, I present the private ritual world of Belgian fardados. For fardados, Santo Daime’s eclectic ideological elements coalesce into a single unit, and it is this fusion (or solution) of separate backgrounds into a harmonious whole that constitutes the essence of the doctrine. During ritual works, this symbolic amalgamation of many religions into one is paralleled by the experiential solution of the ayahuasca drinkers with each other and all

of Nature. But why are Europeans choosing to partake in these services? While the general public is largely unaware of Santo Daime expansion, this chapter's ethnographic account shines a light on behaviors that might otherwise seem suspicious.

Chapter 5 deals with past and current scholarly interpretations of the place of religion in Western European society, with a special focus on debates about the decline of conventional Christianity and the rise of secularism. After surveying the anthropology of European cultures, with a special focus on research dealing with religion, the chapter then explores the present and future of religion on the continent. With reference to the writings of leading figures, especially Charles Taylor and Talal Asad, this chapter reassesses a widespread assumption in the social sciences that spiritual beliefs are declining in Europe. Recently, scholars from multiple disciplines have begun to refute the inevitability of secularization predictions, a trend that includes the emergence of a new *anthropology of secularism* subfield. As important as this academic debate is, for my informants the academic studies of religion and secularism are nowhere near as noteworthy as the direct personal experience of participating in Santo Daime works.

In moving towards a cogent answer to the central question of this dissertation, Chapters 6 and 7 examine the results of semi-structured interviews conducted with Belgian fardados. Pursuing a standard cognitive anthropology focus on *schema* — what Roy D'Andrade (1995: 132) defines as “culturally shared mental constructs” — two freelisting exercises were implemented. Fardados were asked to list the people they deem “great spiritual teachers” as well as all the plants they consider sacred. These methodological techniques of *cultural domain analysis* generate both qualitative and quantitative data; thereby, the empirical results present fardados' viewpoint as an

alternative perspective from which to consider the tolerability of entheogenic religions in Euro-American societies.

Chapter 6 begins by presenting the results of a freelist for the first semantic domain produced by Belgian fardados. After hearing many informants reference the names of various people from whom they learned important life-lessons, fardados were asked to compile a list of all the “great spiritual teachers” that they know. One gets a clue about the shared values of Belgian fardados through the spiritual figures they mentioned, which include both ancient and modern people from a variety of cultural traditions. This affinity for integrating different religious practices to cultivate inner peace suggests that Santo Daime is symptomatic of a much deeper social transformation underway across the West today. When considered alongside their eclectic values, fardados’ responses during interviews imply that Santo Daime members in Europe are “Cultural Creatives”; this is a growing demographic group which has so far escaped the notice of most social scientists. With reference to the results collected in a comprehensive sociological survey (Ray and Anderson 2000), the expansion of Santo Daime is associated with this emergent Western subculture because European fardados share the Cultural Creative penchant for seeking innovative solutions to common existential and ecological crises.

Chapter 7 expounds on the results of my second freelist test with Belgian fardados. The data show informants’ mutual conception of “sacred plants,” which they believe teach humans the same lessons as the great spiritual teachers. The chapter then proceeds to evaluate the conventional logic that outlaws these same plants as illegal “drugs.” The mainstream Euro-American perspective presumes that altering

consciousness with substances other than alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and pharmaceuticals is outright dangerous. But while Western society has demonized “hallucinogenic” substances and those who ingest them, many other cultures throughout history have revered these same substances as medicines and as ritual sacraments. The way Belgian fardados describe the transcendence they seek through Daime is identical to a cross-cultural mystical state classified as *Cosmic Consciousness* (Bucke 1995[1901]). Moreover, medical scientists have begun to take another look at “hallucinogens” and are finding that the dangers of these substances have more to do with the context in which they are used than with the substances themselves. The findings of recent scholarly studies consistently show a therapeutic potential of entheogens like ayahuasca. This evidence supports the claims of Santo Daime members, an underground community of European citizens who continue to employ an entheogen in structured ritual settings.

Chapter 8 summarizes the collective findings of preceding chapters. Previous chapters indicated reasons why some Belgians are drawn to a religion that combines various spiritual traditions in rituals involving the ingestion of ayahuasca. The text concludes by assessing the broader implications of this dissertation in terms of recent scholarly appeals for a post-secular compromise in the Euro-American public sphere. The ritual drinking of ayahuasca by committed practitioners of Santo Daime can reveal social realities about the use of entheogens that cannot be reproduced in the laboratory. Fardados drink ayahuasca not to have a casual trip with hallucinogenic imagery, but rather as an introspective steppingstone towards lasting emotional stability and existential serenity. In short, the ritual consumption of ayahuasca is a key instrument in their mission to obtain solutions to problems in their lives.

At first glance, the expansion of this Brazilian religion runs against the grain of 20th century predictions about secularization trends in Europe. But Santo Daime is one of many new religious movements that are emerging alongside the decline of conventional spiritualities in the Western world. So while this is an ethnography focused on ayahuasca use and the Santo Daime doctrine in Belgium, it is by necessity also a study of a much larger subculture that has been overlooked in Euro-American society. One of the essential functions of anthropology is to render different cultural logics as mutually explicable. Therefore, my research endeavors to reconcile an intercultural misunderstanding that has heretofore remained intractable. Despite the decades-long global “war on drugs,” there has remained a proportion of the population that is willing to face stiff judicial penalties in choosing to ingest entheogenic substances. Belgian daimistas claim that Santo Daime rituals provide mystical solutions that help them to feel happier, healthier, and more fulfilled in their lives. With this in mind, the next chapter will introduce the methods and theoretical scope of the present study.

CHAPTER 2

Methods, Theory, and General Findings

Despite the Santo Daime members' welcoming acceptance of all newcomers, it can be cumbersome at first for a researcher to gain the trust and respect of fardado informants. It is a delicate task to be an anthropologist collecting ethnographic data about European fardados because they are a vulnerable population considered as criminals by their governments. Nonetheless, the fardados were exceptionally patient with my many faux pas, which thankfully lessened as I learned the ropes of Santo Daime social norms in Belgium.

Virtually every Belgian fardado I met expressed his or her willingness to pick me up at the nearest train station and host me in his or her home overnight in order to allow for the collection of anthropological data. Because fardados' residences are distributed widely across Belgium, I chose to reside in Brussels as a central location from which all fardados could be reached by train, with no trip exceeding two hours. Through long-term fieldwork I visited many urban and non-urban contexts dotted across Belgium. Santo Daime informants were interviewed in locations stretching in all cardinal directions and in various landscapes and cityscapes. For example, my interviews occurred in cottages in the farming countryside of West Flanders, a cabin in the southern province of Luxembourg, a modern suburban household in the eastern steel city of Liège, and during a stroll through the Kalmthoutse Heide nature reserve on the Dutch border in the north. I sometimes stayed overnight, met fardados' families, and cooked and ate meals with them.

The recording of individual interviews allows the ethnographer to piece together how informants share common values and ideologies. The majority of interviews were conducted during one-day meetings, either in restaurants, parks, or daimistas' residences. The 50 interviews ranged between 11 minutes to over two hours, with a mean duration of just over one hour per daimista. In addition, I stayed the night at the homes of ten different Belgian fardados. My overnight stays lasted between one and seven days (the average visit was for two nights). These visits offered me a chance to learn about Belgian fardados' daily lives in mundane settings that supplemented my interactions with them at Santo Daime ceremonies.

Fieldwork Methods

Although I am not a member of Santo Daime, I delved into their rites just as an anthropologist studying Buddhism would train in techniques of meditation. My first ambitions were to attend as many works as I possibly could. However, I soon realized that one has to pace oneself so as not to overexert body and mind. I have now participated in more than 70 ayahuasca rituals in Brazil, Europe, and North America. Attending these rituals is the most feasible avenue for meeting new informants and developing rapport. Of the dozens of ayahuasca rituals in which I have participated, 55 were Santo Daime works during my fieldwork in Europe. While the frequency of works fluctuated throughout the 14 months I was there, this is an average of just under four works per month. To put this in perspective, a typical fardado attends more than 60 works during the 12 months of the official Santo Daime calendar (i.e. four works per month plus as many as 19 special works held throughout the year; see Appendix II).

Belgian Santo Daime works are held in centuries-old Christian churches, rental spaces, various residences, and also in open-air forests. These ceremonies can really be held anywhere that can be assured to remain private, calm, and quiet.

In participant-observation during Santo Daime works, I initially aimed to heed David Gellner's (2001: 339) stipulation for "a minimal secularism, a kind of 'non-alignedness of religion'" among anthropologists; after all, "a fundamentalist who wandered, by error or design, into a course on the anthropology of religion would soon have to choose between being a good anthropologist and being a good fundamentalist." This was a standard prerequisite for anthropologists studying religion in the 20th century, who were encouraged to see religion as founded upon supernatural beliefs that are incompatible with the scientific worldview (e.g. Wallace 1966: vi). Marvin Harris (1979: 6; cited in Lett 1997: 52) accepted that "science does not dispute the doctrines of revealed religions as long as they are not used to cast doubt on the authenticity of the knowledge science itself has achieved." The problem, however, is that in excessively trying to avoid "going native," anthropologists who are personally committed to secularism are subject to the cultural biases of Euro-American modernity (see Chapter 5). For this reason, I sought to sustain an aloof distance from the callous skepticism-verging-on-atheism that too often pervades scholarly considerations of spirituality, particularly anthropological interpretations of Christian religions. In championing this more balanced approach, Fenella Cannell (2006: 3) writes:

Anthropology sometimes seems exaggeratedly resistant to the possibility of taking seriously the religious experiences of others. Religious phenomena in anthropology may be described in detail, but must be explained on the basis that they have no foundation in reality, but are epiphenomena of 'real' underlying sociological, political, economic, or other material causes. It is not necessary to be a believer in any faith, or to abandon an interest in sociological enquiry, to wonder why the

discipline has needed to protest quite so much about such widely distributed aspects of human experience.

Many secular anthropologists (dating back to E.B. Tylor in the 19th century) are not at all interested in “taking seriously” the religious ideas of the cultural “other.” Instead, these skeptics are intent on displaying the deft capacities of the secular mindset to construe all spiritual beliefs as wishful fantasies (e.g. Guthrie 1993). As noted by Katharine Wiegele (2005: 15) in her study of charismatic Catholicism in the Philippines, such reductive interpretations display secular scholars’ “tendency to ignore or dismiss or ‘explain away’ spiritual experience.” This disparity can be rectified by balancing an objective (etic) construal of the evidence with the recognition that insiders’ (emic) perspectives can help shape anthropological expositions of religion.¹ Moreover, when scholars set aside secular biases that discount the emic value of religious practices, the results of my fieldwork with Belgian fardados suggest that science may have much to learn from mystical states of consciousness (see Chapter 7). Rather than get mired in the futile debates between theism and atheism, this dissertation accepts the claims of both believers and non-believers as plausible epistemologies in and of themselves. I did not ever feel compelled to adopt the metaphysical beliefs of fardado informants. But I did strive to take seriously their explanations and advice about how one can most effectively approach and manage altered states of awareness brought on by ayahuasca.

Ethnophenomenology

Anthropology is uniquely positioned to arbitrate in Santo Daime’s clash with mainstream Western culture because of what Bruce Kapferer (2001: 344) calls the discipline’s “willing suspension of disbelief.” By inspecting a religion that dispenses

¹ This approach is exemplified in James Houk’s (1995: 24) approach to Orisha religion in Trinidad.

ayahuasca in a controlled setting, my research employs phenomenology as a “narrative strategy” for fostering “empathy” with people that the Euro-American public sphere deems irrational (Desjarlais 1992: 35; see also Desjarlais and Throop 2011).² Thus, in focusing on how informants subjectively enunciate their lived experiences, my approach follows from a line of thought stretching from the *anthropology of experience* established by Victor Turner (1982) to the *existential anthropology* of Michael D. Jackson (2005). My fieldwork with fardados from northwest Europe pursues the methodological approach of *ethnophenomenology*, whereby one records and scrutinizes the “descriptions of extraordinary experiences...by everyday people” (Eberle 2010: 135). For the ethnographer trying to understand a culture or subculture organized around extraordinary experiences, a pivotal aim of ethnophenomenology is to immerse “oneself in that culture’s worldview in order to observe in oneself the effect of such an immersion” (Kukla 1988: 151).³ Hence, to gain a more empathetic comprehension of their

² Following Shanon (2002), a Swedish study (Kjellgren, Eriksson and Norlander 2009: 310) employs phenomenological models of psychology to analyze questionnaires distributed to 25 northern Europeans who had experienced ayahuasca an average of 17 times. One caveat is that on average, this study’s respondents’ last ayahuasca session was over 300 days prior to being interviewed, which makes it difficult to rely on such old memories.

³ Applying the anthropological approach that André Droogers (1996) and Kim Knibbe (Knibbe and Droogers 2011) frame as “methodological ludism” (derived from the latin *ludus*, meaning “play”), Judith Sudhölter (2012: 18-23) advocates this as ideal for the ethnographic study of Santo Daime: “The scholar should develop a flexibility by which she is able to actively engage in different ways of reality making...she should be able to switch back and forth between the religious frame under consideration, and her own (academic) perspective.” At first glance, I find much to like in this method: methodological ludism does not presume a contrast or conflict between two incompatible worldviews (i.e. academic vs. religious), and thus leaves room for open-minded dialogues where science can inform spirituality and vice-versa. However, I prefer to combine the “suspension of disbelief” approach with ethnophenomenology because I am concerned that a dialectic code-switching between the ethnographer’s “academic” worldview and his/her earnest adoption of the native’s point of view will in some cases result in confusion between scholarly observation and “going native.” For example, in Santo Daime the logic of methodological ludism might imply that the ethnographer should temporarily become a fardado just to see what it feels like. But this is an overextension of play that is fraught with complications (e.g. such a notion might offend real fardados as demeaning a sanctified rite of passage for contrived purposes). There is thus a slight but crucial difference between the *immersion* of the broadminded researcher in the extraordinary experiences of their informants (i.e. ethnophenomenology), and the temporary but recurrent *adoption* of the native’s perspective in methodological ludism (Sudhölter 2012: 18). In sum, while Sudhölter, Droogers, and Knibbe rightly

worldview, I documented the manner in which fardados advised me on how to optimize my ayahuasca experiences, as well as how they spoke about their own Daime encounters. I implemented their advice during the rituals in an effort to witness the phenomenological parameters they describe as introspective “looking,” the “holy light,” an “open heart,” and “ego-death.”

In straddling the line between staunch belief and adamant disbelief (what could be called “abelief”), the ethnographer’s ideal niche in studying Santo Daime amounts to having one foot in and one foot out of the fardado social groups they deal with. In participating in ritual works, the methods driving the present study emulate Titti Schmidt’s (2007: 22) work at the Brazilian Santo Daime hub of Céu do Mapiá; she discovered that “an important key to the heart of the members was [her] willingness to drink the Daime and to participate actively during the rituals...According to them [she] would never understand anything about them or their work if [she] did not drink the brew.” I share Schmidt’s disinclination to “go native.”⁴ But despite her lack of personal commitment, Schmidt found that she gained the trust of her informants by proving to them that she was willing and able to drink ayahuasca. She declares that the fardados were more open to providing ethnographic information once she began to participate in Daime works (Schmidt 2007: 27). Likewise, in my own experience with European fardados, it is clear that in order to gain acceptance into a Santo Daime community, the

critique full-blown agnosticism as too “passive,” the romantic thrust of ludism strikes me as too active. Ethnophenomenology, on the other hand, respects informants’ truth claims as an alternative rationality, but maintains scholarly rigor by being careful not to blur the fundamental line between researcher and informant. In spite of these differences, ethnophenomenology does agree with the methodological ludism principle that the ethnographer “must study and *learn* the ‘new’ alternate frame of reality quite seriously” (Knibbe and Droogers 2011: 291). This is what I tried hard to do in my fieldwork.

⁴ In contrast to non-Brazilian scholars’ tendency to refrain from “going native,” most Brazilian anthropologists who study ayahuasca spirituality end up becoming formal members of the groups they are researching (Labate, de Rose, and dos Santos 2008: 41); the latter issue is discussed in more detail by Labate (2004b).

ethnographer first has to demonstrate the capacity to face and cope with the intense psychological and physical demands imposed by the ayahuasca tea.

Fieldwork Language

I conducted my research predominantly in English. Even though this is my informants' second or third language after their native tongue/s, they were all adept at understanding my questions and expressing coherent responses. While Belgians' first language is either French or Flemish, they use English "as a neutral medium" because (for reasons discussed in Chapter 1) there is a considerable friction between Belgium's two main linguistic communities (Cenoz and Jessner 2000: 9). English is also the most commonly understood language across the European Union. It is taught in schools from an early age because a majority of Europeans (67% in a recent poll) consider English the most "useful" language (European Commission 2012: 69-73⁵). However, since all ceremonies are performed entirely in French or Portuguese, my working knowledge of these languages was beneficial in the ethnographic context of the Belgian Santo Daime. My efforts to learn Flemish were much more sluggish because the Daime church in Flanders runs its rituals using only Portuguese (again, a conciliatory measure to sidestep Belgian linguistic sensitivities). The hymns in all Belgian churches are performed entirely in the main language of Brazil.⁶ Thus, just as English is a mediating language between French and Flemish in everyday Belgian life, Portuguese serves a similar function in Santo Daime ceremonies. While not all members speak Portuguese fluently (the hymnbooks contain French, Dutch, or English translations for most hymns), the

⁵ Hence, one of the obstacles to accelerating my Belgian linguistic skills was that so many Belgians speak English very well. I only met three Belgian fardados who could not communicate fluently in English. Even though two of them were Flemish, I was able to communicate efficiently with them in French.

⁶ Notable exceptions are the hymns received by local fardados, which are sometimes performed in rituals.

Portuguese language is clearly marked with prestige among Belgian fardados. Daimistas' degree of Portuguese fluency corresponds roughly to the frequency and length of their pilgrimages to Brazil.

Fitting In as an Ethnographer

After navigating the early stage of building mutual familiarity with informants, I began to assimilate. But I did not find out until the end of my fieldwork how members of the Belgian Santo Daime community perceived my presence among them. For instance, one of my final interviews was carried out with Saskia, a 36-year-old Flemish language teacher who has been participating in Daime since 2007. She lives by herself in a row house apartment but maintains an active social life. She says that like many of her lifelong friends of the same age, she had previously been a non-believer, agreeing that “if it is not proved by science, it does not exist.” She has other good friends who are spiritual, but they are not engaged in Santo Daime. Since she first arrived in Daime out of curiosity, Saskia has found a deep faith in God. She has also gained many new friendships with fellow Belgian fardados. When I asked her what she thought about having an anthropologist hanging around all year, she responded:

At first, for me it was a little bit strange, because we are all studying the Daime. We are all a type of anthropologist, but in the astral world. We are all studying the world inside, what's happening there. And the first time that you said that you are making a study [of us]...[my] first reflex was: you have enough work with yourself (laughs). But now, the more that you went to the [works]...you take your place and you do it in a nice way.

- **Saskia** (East Flanders)

Her reflex was certainly correct. One quickly finds that in addition to conducting ethnographic work, an ethnophenomenological approach to Santo Daime requires a deep study of one's personal self. What daimistas call the “astral” is the otherworldly realm

contacted through Daime rituals. Here in the astral, they say one can interact with spiritual beings like angels or other “guides” such as Jesus, the Virgin Mother, saints, and other deceased figures. Saskia’s view of all Santo Daime participants as students of the human condition is a central element to be addressed in later chapters. Hugo, a Dutch-born fardado now living with his wife and two children in Belgium, answered the same question about the ethnographer’s presence thusly:

I think it’s helpful to see that [you] get into the same process, because [you’re] doing works. That makes it easier, because I don’t have to explain it on the literal side...it’s like talking to the irmão, to the brother.

- **Hugo** (East Flanders)

What he means by this is that many of the important aspects of Santo Daime are not relatable in words and that it is only through experiencing them directly that one can gain entry into the close-knit brotherhood/sisterhood of daimistas. Hugo is a 37-year-old industrial designer who has been attending Daime works since 2004. He did admit that because his wife and children are not involved in the Santo Daime it is difficult to share his experiences fully with them. Nevertheless, he maintains a happy and secure family life because his spouse is accepting of his Daime practice.

Officially, the ethnographer is considered a visitor at all of the Santo Daime churches they attend because they are not formerly enrolled as a member. Members pay a monthly due of 50€ while non-members pay 30-60€ for each individual work⁷ (I paid the non-member fee for each work I attended). In the process of becoming acquainted with members of all four Santo Daime groups in Belgium, they commented about my progress and politely critiqued my novice shortcomings. Because of my past experiences

⁷ For example, in the CEFLURIS denomination of Daime the monthly membership fee (which includes a membership card) pays for one’s admission to two “concentration” works, one *cura* (“healing”) work, and one *santa missa* (“Holy Mass”) work; during the month, a member is also able to participate for free in the works of any other CEFLURIS church (see Chapters 3 and 4).

in Mapiá and my frequent attendance at works, a veteran Belgian fardado remarked that I am a “friend of the Daime.” It is this label of friend of the Daime that I feel most comfortable in assuming. It indicates that as an anthropologist, I write on behalf of European daimistas who live amidst a mainstream society that is as of yet unfamiliar with Santo Daime ritual practices.

Answering the Research Problem

My methods are organized around supplementary research questions, which concern the interaction of social dimensions implicated in the importation of Santo Daime into non-Brazilian contexts:

- What personal traits are shared among Belgians who have converted to the Santo Daime?
- How do Belgian fardados view the inclusion of ayahuasca in Santo Daime rituals relative to their decision to commit to this religion?
- What features of the Santo Daime’s eclectic belief system are most important to Belgian fardados, and why?

Answers to these secondary research questions about personal attributes, the effects of ayahuasca, and religious syncretism jointly address my principal research objective of ascertaining why Santo Daime is attracting European converts. In order to elicit relevant ethnographic information, in recorded interviews informants were asked prepared questions such as:

- What initially attracted you to Santo Daime?
- Why do you continue to attend Santo Daime works?
- How is it that Daime influences your life positively/negatively?
- How has the Daime influenced how you think and feel about the meaning of human life?
- Can you describe what it feels like during a Santo Daime work?

I then also inquired about particular details of Santo Daime worldview and about specific topics that came up in the course of each interview. Fardados' responses spell out justifications underlying the movement of the Santo Daime from Brazil to Europe.

As an initial example of my informants linking of Santo Daime to practical “solutions,” one can consider the perspective of Nadia, a 42-year-old massage therapist. Nadia lives with her husband and three children in Antwerpen province. After attending Daime works informally for three years, she became a fardada in 2005. Her husband is not a committed daimista, but he attends works with her a few times a year because he finds them beneficial. Although she had abandoned the Catholicism of her upbringing, she found in her 30s that she had “a big desire for something else.” In evocative language that reveals how she approaches the Santo Daime experience, she described the results of her spiritual practice this way:

It corrects my behavior in a very strict way. It makes me concentrated in life, how I act towards other people, to my children, to my husband. I can't say it's always easy because you're born with some patterns that are very stuck sometimes. To be free of them it takes a long time, but I feel very covered by the Santo Daime, because [these patterns] lead me in a certain way, they show me how to act from the heart...For me, I'm grateful that I've met the Santo Daime, it's a wonder to me...I've become closer to Nature, I'm more in touch with the universe...I'm conscious about the Earth, about who I am...It liberates you, but it's not always easy...you lose friendships but it's not bad because these are friendships that are not worth it...loneliness is a part you have to go through before you get liberation. It's like you go to the desert and it's heavy to walk. It's like a test in trust, you know, and sometimes you lose trust; you think 'Oh, Santo Daime, is this really something good?' and you get doubts. I think everybody goes through that [fasting] in Santo Daime, or maybe not everybody but I did...

Before I drink the Daime I ask for healing, and to harmonize again the situation, and then the Daime lets me see the solution...Once you get to this concentration, once you really understand it, then some things come open again, and you come on all the levels, and there you see the solutions. But you have to concentrate yourself or nothing can happen. And that's also in your daily life: If your mind is distracted, and you go left and right, you're restless, down, depressed, so nothing can come in. And that's what the Daime also lets you see. The Santo Daime is for everyone, but I understand not everybody can understand it, or wants to understand. It's a certain

language that you have to learn, and it takes a while...To be humble...more união [union]...you live more with your heart.

- **Nadia** (Antwerpen)

The topic of Santo Daime's therapeutic potential arose in all of my interviews with Belgian fardados. While any purported benefits of ayahuasca remain controversial relative to prevailing scientific paradigms, fardados are proficient at verbalizing their own folk theories about how the Santo Daime helps people. Nadia's language of "solutions" as related to learning how to live and act "from the heart" is common fardado parlance for valuing the transcendence of subconscious ego conflicts. They equate the sense of being a separate "ego" with the "mental" process of discriminating and segregating the world through intellectual concepts. While fardados accept the practical uses of human beings' mental faculties, they believe that this must be counterbalanced with the heart's natural sense of "intuition." They posit that this spiritual core of the heart simultaneously links all beings in Nature to a single divine consciousness. As one veteran Belgian fardado said about the purpose of Daime works: "We work to open our hearts. And then you are ready to go to the Higher Consciousness." By this logic, in "opening" one's own heart through the dissolving of ego boundaries, one learns how to connect on an intuitive level with that which is usually considered other-than-self. Fardados explain that this energetic "synchronicity" adjoining everything in the universe is "very subtle," and thus it goes unnoticed when the heart is closed or when one lives too much in the mental-ego.

Sampling Methods

As regards the sample population for my core research (50 daimistas in Belgium), the nature of the ethnographic population in this case requires several sampling considerations. Since my research involves a "special population" whose members are

not localized as a residential community, random sampling methods are inappropriate⁸ (Taylor and Griffiths 2005). Bernard (2000: 76) states that typically, “life history research and qualitative research on special populations (drug addicts, trial lawyers, shamans) rely on judgment sampling” whereby researchers select “a few cases for intensive study.” Hence, the small population size of Belgian fardados and the fact that this study focuses on the ritual ingestion of a banned psychoactive substance necessitates a “judgment” (also called “purposive”) sample.⁹

Philippe Bourgois (1999) has advanced a resolute defense of “the power of small samples” in anthropological studies of people who use illicit substances. He argues that purely “quantitative researchers do not understand the intensity of the relationship one must develop with each individual in one’s sample to obtain information that addresses the cultural contexts and processual dynamics of social networks in its holistic context” (Bourgois 1999: 2158). In order to gather adequate data about the religious use of ayahuasca in Belgium, my dissertation research required a concentration of my time and focus on individual Santo Daime devotees. Therefore, following the ethnographic style exemplified in Bourgois’ (2003) book on New York crack-dealers, the present dissertation includes numerous direct quotations that allow Belgian daimistas to

⁸ According to Taylor and Griffiths (2005: 94-95): “Talking to even a small number of drug users can produce a wealth of information for understanding behavior that often challenges commonly held beliefs about drug use. For this reason, researchers have often been content to dispense with the benefits offered by probability sampling theory and opt for any method that allows them access to sufficient numbers of drug users who exhibit the particular aspect of the behavior of interest. For many purposes the samples that are produced by conventional methods simply do not produce sufficient numbers for any meaningful analysis or may even exclude those who are often of most interest. Drug studies are sometimes criticized by those naïve to the issues of this area for their lack of sampling rigor, when often in practice less insight would have been achieved by adopting a conventional approach to sample generation.”

⁹ Bernard (2006: 186, emphasis added) confirms that: “Nonprobability samples are always appropriate for labor-intensive, in-depth studies of a few cases. *Most studies of narratives are based on fewer than 50 cases*, so every case must count. This means choosing cases on purpose, not randomly. In-depth research on sensitive topics requires nonprobability sampling. It can take months of participant-observation fieldwork before you can collect narratives about topics like sexual and reproductive history or bad experience with mental illness or *use of illegal drugs*.”

enunciate their worldview in their own words. As demonstrated by Mark Fleisher's (1995) analysis of how most American street criminals are the product of defective child services and prison systems, it is imperative that ethnographers shine a light on the unseen realities lived by marginalized groups. Whereas presumptuous social stigmas can perpetuate uncritical laws that exacerbate the very problems they are designed to resolve, ethnographic facts help to inform more effective public health and crime policy (Fleisher 1995: 5, 243-247). Unlike the violent felons studied by Bourgois and Fleisher, my informants are only violating a prohibition against substances that have proven to be safe and beneficial in ritual circumstances (see Chapter 7). In contrast to street criminals involved in the underground drug-market, Belgian fardados are non-violent and gainfully employed members of society.

I followed a snowball-sampling method to identify Belgian citizens who frequently attend Santo Daime works. After meeting informants at rituals, the ethnographer is "handed from informant to informant" and the sample of interviews expands through the personal contacts of each interviewee (Bernard 2006: 193). Out of the 50 daimista informants included in this study, 32 (64%) live in Flanders, 6 (12%) live in Wallonia, and 12 (24%) live in the Brussels region. Members of the Daime church in Flanders are more represented for the following reasons: (1) most veteran Belgian fardados attend the Flemish church; (2) the Flemish church was the first one I attended upon arriving for fieldwork; and (3) the Flemish church was easily accessed using public transit. While there are some clear differences in the makeup and customs of the different Daime churches in Belgium (see Chapter 4), the core values discussed in this thesis are shared in common by daimistas around the country.

The best way to attain an understanding of how drinking ayahuasca motivates Europeans' dedication to the Santo Daime is to ask the fardados themselves. Asad (1996: 266) states that religious conversions in the West are typically expressed as narratives through which people apprehend and describe "a radical change in the significance of their lives"; often, "these narratives employ the notion of divine intervention; at other times the notion of a secular teleology." Thus, I tape-recorded informants' spoken narratives about what initially attracted them to Santo Daime, and about how their worldview has changed since they became fardados. In these open-ended interviews, fardados were asked to recount how altered states of consciousness induced by ayahuasca had impacted their lives.¹⁰

Anthropological Theory and Fardados' Mystical Worldview

Much of human activity is organized around the solving of problems. In all times and places, humans seek to alleviate various forms of suffering (hunger, poverty, violence, illness, unhappiness) and overcome obstacles (disabilities, injustice, socioeconomic marginalization, catastrophe). For many cultures throughout time, spiritual or religious systems evolved to explain and manage common difficulties that are part and parcel of the human condition. Contrarily, the dominant view in modern Western culture rejects the notion that problems and solutions have anything to do with the supernatural because it holds that such entities do not exist. According to anthropologist Charles Laughlin (1999: 465), the modern Euro-American worldview can be characterized as "materialist," in that it is "primarily concerned with tracking external

¹⁰ In deftly employing a similar strategy, the M.A. thesis of Judith Sudhölter (2012: 8) demonstrates how a focus on "the interrelation between experience and narrative" is the most appropriate entrypoint for understanding the worldview of European Santo Daime members.

events while in the waking state” (see also Johnson 1985). Such a portrayal is quite similar to Benjamin Whorf’s (1941) model of the Standard Average European (SAE) worldview, wherein the reification of externality relegates internal consciousness to the epiphenomenal domain of the “imaginary.” Indeed, generic materialism (also called “physicalism”) still represents the dominant metaphysical paradigm amongst Western scientists (Barušs 2003: 20; Frith and Rees 2007: 9) and philosophers (Alter 2007: 396; Seager 2000: 340). The ideology of physicalism regularly coincides with a faith in the empirical sciences as a progression towards a conclusive theory of everything, faith in attainable objectivity, reductionist interpretations, atheism, and the notion that the whole of reality is closed under physics (Stoljar 2009: 12-13). So it is commonly assumed in Western culture today that problems appear for various reasons but that ultimately they have to be managed with appropriate *external* responses: physical problems come from bad hygiene, or bad nutrition, or bad luck, and must be treated with behavioral changes or surgery or pills; psychological problems come from bad experiences or bad brain chemistry, and must be treated by psychotherapy or pharmaceuticals; relationship problems derive from disloyalty, bad compatibility, and bad habits, and can be settled by finding new relationships; geopolitical problems originate with bad people or conflicts between different groups of actors. Most Westerners learn how to navigate the practical problems of existence through trial and error along with the guidance of peers. The general message is: if you want to be happy, the best way to secure this emotional state is to engage in the external system of work and rewards, thereby acquiring physical and social comforts that can engender your contentment.

In contrast to this materialist approach, spiritual traditions categorized as forms of

mysticism explain human suffering very differently. For mystical practitioners from different cultural traditions throughout the ages, the main sources of and solutions to most human problems are found within. Many world religions have mystical branches affiliated with them, ranging from faiths where mysticism composes the main body of teachings to mere offshoots that persist in a quasi-official status relative to church orthodoxy. In distinguishing between mysticism and regular religious institutions, theorist Evelyn Underhill (2002[1930]: 72) underlines that the mystic seeks “not to *know about*, but to *Be*”: “Mysticism, in its pure form, is the science of ultimates, the science of union with the Absolute, and nothing else, and the mystic is the person who attains to this union, not the person who talks about it.” Carmody and Carmody (1996: 4) render a mystical experience as “a direct encounter with ultimate reality, the very foundation of everything that is.” However, as these authors recognize, language fails to capture the intensity and depth of this experience. The reason for this is that in normal waking awareness, the individual observer perceives a distinction between the self and the other-than-self. Thomas Csordas (2004: 163-164) draws attention to the “ineffable” relationship between self and not-self as “the phenomenological kernel of religion”; he proposes that in removing the sense of a self-other divide (or *alterity*) “the mystics have discovered that the wholly other can be modulated into the wholly one and that it is equally awesome either way.” Since time immemorial, groups of mystically-inclined people have found it necessary to devise structured disciplines to organize and construe these “awesome” bonds between self and otherness. I found that fardados share the mystics’ theory of life. They believe that drinking ayahuasca in their rituals helps them to generate mystical experiences through which they can intuit the answers to problems

in their life.

The Anthropology of Self

The mystical priorities of Belgian Santo Daime members differ from the materialist/physicalist view that dominates in the 21st century Western world. *Ethnology of metaphysics* (or *ethno-metaphysics*) is a theoretical approach initiated by A. Irving Hallowell (1960: 20) that seeks to comprehend how and why different cultures conceive of the fundamental nature of reality in different ways (Blainey 2010a, 2010b). Hallowell's fieldwork dealt mostly with the Ojibwa indigenous people in Canada, and his writing displays a relativistic empathy for the worldviews of the non-Western other — this is not surprising, since he was a student of Franz Boas. For his part, Hallowell was aware of how an individual's sense of being an individual is tied to ontological ideas endorsed by the culture to which one belongs: “Just as different peoples entertain various beliefs about the nature of the universe, they likewise differ in their ideas about the nature of the self” (Hallowell 1955: 76). This focus on subjective “selves” allows anthropology a greater functional role in contemporary social conflicts, as “the need for more complex theories of the subject that are ethnographically grounded and that contemplate how individual singularity is retained and remade in local interactions has become ever more apparent” (Biehl et al. 2007: 14). Hallowell's pioneering ideas led to a full-fledged *anthropology of self*, whereby ethnographers began to focus their research on cross-cultural variability in the notion of selfhood.

Undoubtedly, a chief contribution of anthropology has been the recognition that a human being's sense of personal identity is necessarily modeled according to norms of enculturation practiced by the social group to which they belong. As argued by Michelle

Rosaldo (1984: 150), “society...shapes the self through the medium of cultural terms, which shape the understandings of reflective actors.” After outgrowing the culture-and-personality trends of the mid-20th century, the social sciences gravitated towards the more complete concept of the “self,” following the work of George H. Mead (1934). In the words of Gerald Erchak (1992: 9), “self is clearly a more all-encompassing concept than personality, including the mind, the emotions, the body, as well as the individual’s cognition or perception of all of these, all in the context of social action...and it changes throughout the life course.” A famous (albeit highly criticized) attempt to distinguish how societies shape the self was proffered by Shweder and Bourne (1984). By contrasting the Western “egocentric” self with the non-Western “sociocentric” self, these authors classified cultures according to their preferred “solutions” to the universal problem of managing the interface between the individual and the collective: “the ‘sociocentric’ solution subordinates individual interests to the good of the collectivity while in the ‘egocentric’ solution society becomes the servant of the individual” (Shweder and Bourne 1984: 190). Reviewing cross-cultural treatments of the concept of personhood, Brian Morris (1994: 16) notes that “the ‘self’ structure of Western culture has thus been widely described as individuated, detached, separate and self-sufficient, and as involving a dualistic metaphysic.” But as Morris acknowledges, to dichotomize Western and non-Western ideas of self this way is to perpetuate the dualistic view that denies the existence of alternative modes in Western thought. In actuality, Euro-American thinkers have promoted an array of metaphysical paradigms of selfhood; as D. W. Murray (1993: 9) indicates, “Hobbes’s materialism, Spinoza’s monism, Mill’s associationism, and finally, the Darwinian-inspired pragmatism of James have all

presented theories of mind alternative to Cartesian rational dualism.” These are not just philosophical views but examples of the kinds of thought that are permissible within Western culture. In contrast to the plurality of philosophical positions entertained in Western thought, European culture is largely averse to the Santo Daime belief that ayahuasca experiences can heal the self. This kind of cross-cultural clash demands anthropological scrutiny, the results of which will contribute new knowledge about the ideological conventions assumed by both fardados and the wider European populace.

For fardados, Santo Daime is a balanced “solution” of egocentric and sociocentric concerns. They deny that individual and social interests are mutually exclusive; in fact, like many non-Western cultures (Morris 1994: 193-194), fardados believe that “the social and the individual are dialectically related.” One Belgian fardado described Santo Daime as “at the same time individualistic and also everyone together.” The dominance of Aristotelian logic in Western thought tends towards differentiation of the world through *either-or* analyses.¹¹ In contrast, the mystical propensity of Belgian fardados is more inclined towards a *both-and* policy that envisions the shared unity of what appear to be separate entities in conflict. This sentiment was articulated by Werner, a 58-year-old retired telephone operator who has been attending Daime works since 2002. When I met with him for an interview in his apartment, he proudly served me delicious *moules-frites* / *mosselen friet* (mussels and french fries, a national dish of Belgium). Werner trained intensively with a Hindu yoga teacher before he found the Daime, but he claims that he

¹¹ In book Gamma of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle defends his foundational axiom of non-contradiction, “the principle that nothing can both have and not have the same property in the same regard at the same time” (Lawson-Tancred 1998: xlvi). Fardados reject this supposition in advancing their own mystical axiom that the individual self is both isolated from the world and unified with the world at the same time. What the former sees as paradox, the latter sees as reality. One of my Belgian fardado informants agreed that Aristotle’s logic is acceptable in daily life, but he argued that “you can also say that something can be A and can be not A at the same time.”

learned the same mystical truths in both of these spiritual disciplines. Referencing Daime concepts in Portuguese, he answered my question about the goal of Santo Daime works this way:

The goal of the works in the Santo Daime is união [union]. You feel that you are one with everybody...The first part of the works are always a little bit individual: you have to clean yourself. You have to look at your doenças [diseases], and after a time when that is cleaned...you feel that everybody is more in that oneness...Santo Daime is a cleaning work and it helps us to get connected with that oneness.

- **Werner** (East Flanders)

Werner esteems this feeling of interpersonal oneness that he feels in Santo Daime works, an extraordinary experience aided by the ingestion of an entheogen that dissolves his sense of separation from other human beings and the rest of nature. He sees this isolation as caused by “diseases” of individualism that need to be “cleaned” in order to reveal the fundamental unity of all beings. The ritual use of ayahuasca is an incentive for Belgian daimistas in search of what Durkheim (1915) termed “collective effervescence,” a sensation of bonding with fellow humans through communal rituals (see also Taylor 2007: 482). My informants say that through Daime they “clean” the aspects of their inner self that are egotistical; thereby they say they see more clearly that they are not separated but fundamentally connected to everyone else.

Cultures provide guidelines, yet it is plainly apparent that there remains a variety of selves within any one culture. The present text considers a group of Belgians who espouse a view of self that is atypical relative to a European social upbringing. Daimistas are aware of how their cosmology resembles what Western mystical authors speak of as the “perennial philosophy” (Huxley 1945), “egolessness” (Kornfield 2000: 74; Wilber 1998), or “holotropic” awareness (Grof 1998). My informants are largely in agreement with the ideal of non-duality (an underlying union of opposites) that has been

championed by mystics from different cultures and time-periods (Wilber 1998: 12-15).

In essence, Belgian fardados speak of their spiritual beliefs as following the common teachings of indigenous shamans and the spiritual masters of Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. This penchant for observing different religions as built upon the same mystical truths (e.g. Kornfield 2000) extends from recent shifts in Euro-American culture, a topic that will be developed further in Chapter 6.

Findings: Mystical Solutions to Practical Problems

After a year of learning how fardados view the nature of existence, a pattern emerged in their explanations for why they attend Santo Daime works. When one tries to take seriously fardados' unorthodox view of human existence, they are pointing out what they see as a fundamental flaw in the outlook of the average present-day Euro-American. In their critique of Western civilization's habitual approach to human life, fardados identify the ego as the source of most practical and existential problems (i.e. physical and psychological sicknesses and stresses). They claim that our ordinary experience of a divergence between the individuated observer and the observed world is an illusion or mirage. In accordance with scholarly reports about the entheogenic experience (Doyle 2012; Pahnke 1969), fardados explained Santo Daime as a "mystical" death of the ego, a "letting go." This view was expressed by Izaäk, a 48-year-old graphic designer who is also trained in the Asian alternative therapy of *shiatsu*. At the time of my fieldwork, Izaäk lived with his wife and their three kids in an urban row house. Both he and his wife have been fardados in the Belgian Santo Daime since 2005, but their children cannot participate in rituals with them. Izaäk described the Daime experience this way:

The mystical part is, in a way, always an experience of dying. So, [it's] what we're going to have in our last moment. Every Daime work is training for dying, so when

the moment comes you'll be prepared...It's total ego-loss. So your ego will always try to have control, even in the work situations. At that moment, you just have to break through the membrane...it's a death of the ego at that moment, and then you go to a Higher Consciousness. And in a way the ego is still there, but it's not active anymore, it's on standby. But to pass that moment is the most difficult. Some people flip out, because you really have to let go. It's like going into the abyss and just trusting it. You don't have to grab a rock, you'll fall even faster (laughs). So don't catch anything. If we're swimming, it's the same thing: you don't catch the water, you just get into the water.

- **Izaäk** (East Flanders)

This ego-loss is not permanent, as this feeling lasts only a few hours, gradually dissipating after each work. Fardados say that Daime mystical practice just gives one a window of opportunity to see that one's being does exist beyond the ego. Analogous remarks were made by another Belgian fardado who is in a similar situation to Izaäk, in that his fardada wife attends Daime works with him but their children do not. Gustaaf, a 48-year-old teacher who moonlights as a folk musician and puppeteer, lives with his family in a rural Flemish home. He also portrayed the Santo Daime experience as a momentary death of the ego:

The hardest part for every individual is to consciously investigate his ego. And for lots of people this process is terrifying because you have to let go of values, you have to let go of conditions, you have to let go of everything to get as pure as possible...So to leave that is for the ego, it's like dying. And dying is for most people something to be very afraid of, or to ignore...[In Daime] you surrender to something that is stronger than your ego. And everything that is luggage, or extra, that you don't need in your system to be connected to that whole, you have to get rid of it. Is it by sweating, is it by throwing-up, is it by diarrhea, is it by being angry, or whatever? Get rid of it. Let go. You don't need it.

- **Gustaaf** (East Flanders)

For fardados, identification with one's ego (through the dualistic belief that one is separate from external reality and distinct from other egos) is a sickness. This ego sickness causes people to fight with or dismiss one another, and can even result in disharmonies of the self, which then manifest as physiological symptoms. Belgian

fardados say that the majority of people do not even know that commitment to the ego is bad for them. Universally, my informants claim that commitment to conceptual dualisms (i.e. self-other, body-mind, matter-consciousness, science-religion, Nature-God) causes psychological and physical conflict inside and between human selves. On the other hand, they understand that such abstract dissections of reality can be helpful in scientific endeavors. But they say that Westerners have lost sight of the forest for the trees. This philosophical outlook is exemplified in the following statement from one informant:

The ego is the one you have to fight, of course. He is the one who says 'This is my piece of ground'...If there would be no ego, definitely no wars...All your conditionings are your ego because you want to hold onto them. No, it's just blocking you from your essence, from divine happiness and ultimate wisdom...For me...[it is] the entheogen, the sacrament basically, which helps you to go into the layers of your subconscious so it becomes conscious. You have to unravel all your conditions that actually make you sick or make you worried or make you afraid or make you angry.

- Karel

My informants tend to classify the Santo Daime as akin to other mystical confrontations with one's inner ego illusions. The long-term benefits of the struggle to overcome egotistical discord within oneself have been recognized since ancient times in Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, and shamanic traditions (Grof 1998: 150-152; Kornfield 2000: 38-41). Santo Daime has spread throughout the world mainly because its eclectic receptiveness to all forms of mystical practice makes it adaptive to many different social climates.

European fardados are modern mystics who disagree with the mainstream Western materialist approach to solving external problems. One gets this impression from Eleonora, an unmarried 37-year-old fardada who works as an "energetic healer" for Belgian clients looking for alternatives to Western medicine. She has been participating in Santo Daime works since 2005. When I interviewed her as we sat on a bench outside

the chapel before a Daime work, she explained her conviction that:

Most people who come to the Santo Daime come because they want to learn about themselves. It's not an easy way, so...that's something that binds us...I believe that there's nothing outside us that's not inside us. So, people mostly judge everything that's outside them and say 'That's bad and that's bad and that's bad,' but they don't have a clue that all these things also live inside them and they can only do something about it and make it better by healing these parts in themselves...Like war...look at the war in yourself. You can't help the war outside; you can stop the war in yourself, and if a lot of people do that, then the world can change. Therefore, I think it's so important to heal everything in yourself.

- Eleonora (East Flanders)

Fardados' ethical outlook locates the burden of responsibility squarely on the individual observer, making it impossible to differentiate between oneself and a person or issue that one wants to judge negatively. Fardados are noticeably unwilling to heap blame for worldly woes on any external individual or group. Instead, they prefer to emphasize how ayahuasca rituals teach them to focus on fixing their own personal imperfections. They describe human beings' inner domain as either in "harmony" or "blocked." Harmony is seen as our natural state of non-duality, while ego "blocks" stem from a delusional belief in separation between self and not-self. They understand that "blocks" are a common part of human life, but they strive to "dissolve" these blocks so as to achieve greater states of inner unity. Subsequent chapters cover this multifaceted concept of "solutions" as it pertains to the phenomenological elements of ayahuasca experiences and the professed benefits of Santo Daime for physical health and psychological well-being.

One of my key informants early in fieldwork was Waudru, a retired music teacher who in 2011 was already a 13-year veteran of the Daime. At age 70, Waudru is famous in the European fardado community for her skilled playing of the violin during ritual works. She now lives in the Brabant countryside, where she is constructing a spiritual retreat center. But during my fieldwork she lived with three generations of her family in

a three-story house in downtown Brussels. At this time she was helping her son and daughter-in-law raise their three young children. For a week I stayed with her family in the guestroom of the house, helping cook, clean, shop, and take care of her grandchildren.



Figure 5: A statue of the archangel St. Michael, near Place Ste. Catherine, Brussels (photo by the author)

Walking around her neighborhood with her, Waudru repeatedly pointed out the Catholic emblem of St. Michael (*St. Michel* in French). Images of this patron saint of Brussels are installed throughout the city. Not only is the representation of the archangel battling a dragon or devil a prominent symbol of Belgium's capital, it is also a common element in Santo Daime iconography (see Figure 5). In an effort to describe what Santo Daime practice can teach humans about their ego, she expressed her allegorical interpretation of St. Michael:

St. Michel and the Dragon, the two are us. It's the same person...To accept all of you, the dark, to accept yourself even if you are jealous, even if you are lazy, if you have an ego, if you are judging, we are [all] like that. Jesus says 'Love the other as you love yourself,' and the first thing is to see how imperfect we are, to accept it, to

love it, and to change if you don't like it.

And the dragon is all that: all the monsters who are in us, all the comparisons. To think you are more or you are less, it makes the same confusion and the same disharmony...[St. Michael] says to the dragon 'I see you. I know that you are me'...because on the statue you see even the dragon has wings. So 'You are me and I am you, but there are things that I don't let come inside of me, it has to go back to the earth and the earth will heal it'...that is the Higher Self and the Lower Self. That's it exactly: The Lower Self is the dragon...you don't let that be the center of you. That is the way.

- Waudru (Brussels)

Through first-hand knowledge of mystical states of consciousness in Santo Daime ritual, daimistas learn to contact their divine “Higher Self,” the aspect of their consciousness they associate with St. Michael in the astral otherworld. Gradually, they say they learn to supplant their egotistical “Lower Self” by choosing to allow the Higher Self to govern their daily decisions and actions. With their shared intention of experiencing and nurturing a feeling of harmonious non-duality, it is evident that European fardados value a mystical sense of selfhood.

I employed standard methods of participant-observation and cognitive anthropology to gather data about fardados' shared systems of meaning. This dissertation presents the findings of this research, seeking to show how fardados think about Santo Daime (both the tea and the religion) in a way that can be rendered comprehensible to outsiders. Accordingly, this text refers to fardados' language of Santo Daime “solutions” as a multidimensional trope. Hereby, daimistas claim that Santo Daime affords solutions to daily problems by encouraging metaphysical solutions within a subject's consciousness. According to informants, Santo Daime rituals provide practical solutions through a mystical encounter whereby the self's ego boundaries “dissolve.” In this state of awareness, it seems to the participants as if the observer and observed fuse into a single entity (i.e. a metaphysical “solution” of self and Nature-God, like two elements of

salt and water creating a chemical salt “solution”). In identifying the ego as the main source of suffering, daimistas’ apply this diagnoses and remedy to all human-made problems, both individual and social. Prior to addressing the Belgian case directly, the next chapter will introduce readers to the South American origins of Santo Daime and the ayahuasca sacrament.

CHAPTER 3

The Culture of Ayahuasca and the Santo Daime Religion

The brown liquid called ayahuasca is the focal point of Santo Daime spiritual practices. Two basic ingredients are required to make ayahuasca. The primary entheogenic qualities of the brew come from the chemical N,N-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT¹), provided by the leaves of the *Psychotria viridis* shrub (Figure 6). But the potential effects of DMT are entirely neutralized when it is ingested orally by itself because the enzyme Monoamine oxidase (MAO) breaks DMT down in the stomach. Hence, the pulverized wood of the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine is included in the brew because its bark contains β [beta]-carboline harmala alkaloids (harmine, harmaline, and/or tetrahydroharmine). These β -carboline chemicals act as MAO inhibitors (MAOI). The inclusion of MAOI allows orally administered DMT to pass from the stomach into the bloodstream so that the drinker experiences the full force of the entheogen, usually lasting from 4 to 12 hours depending on the dose (Callaway 2006: 100-102; McKenna, Callaway and Grob 1998: 67; Shulgin 2003: 109-110). This method for creating an entheogenic beverage by combining plants whose chemical ingredients are inert (or at

¹ In contrast to the well-known entheogenic *phenethylamines* mescaline (found in the peyote and San Pedro cacti) and MDMA (alias: “ecstasy”), DMT is part of the other group of *tryptamine* entheogens. Tryptophan, a common amino acid in the human diet, is synthesized naturally in the body by aromatic amino acid decarboxylase (AADC) into tryptamine, the base molecule of the tryptamine class of entheogens, which includes LSD, ibogaine, psilocybin, psilocin, and 5-methoxy-DMT (*bufotenine*, found in toad toxins). The crucial neurotransmitter called serotonin is also a tryptamine found in the human body, but it does not have entheogenic potential (Callaway 2006; Jacob and Presti 2005; Shulgin 2003; Spinella 2001: 350-356; Strassman 2001: 32-37).

most inconspicuous²) when ingested alone represents an innovative technological achievement on the part of indigenous Amazonians.



Figure 6: clockwise from top-left; a *Psychotria viridis* bush; a *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine (both photos by Lou Gold, published with permission); some Daime tea the author helped to make in Céu do Mapiá, Brazil (photo by the author)

² There remains a controversy regarding whether or not the β -carboline constituents of *Banisteriopsis caapi* are psychoactive by themselves, beyond their accepted emetic and purgative properties (Beyer 2009: 209-211). For instance, it has been demonstrated that harmaline is somewhat psychoactive (and arguably “hallucinogenic”) (Naranjo 1967). There are reports that ayahuasca brews made exclusively from *B. caapi* (i.e. no other DMT plants added) have some faint mind-altering effects (Beyer 2009: 217-218; Highpine 2012). However, because the most prevalent β -carboline in the vine (harmine) is apparently non-psychoactive, the issue of *B. caapi*’s entheogenic capacity remains uncertain (see Beyer 2009: 215-218). Since the current dissertation concerns Santo Daime, a religious context in which the ayahuasca employed always contains both DMT and MAOI ingredients, it is this composite recipe that is emphasized herein.

Traditional and Novel Ayahuasca Practices in South America

The misty origins of ayahuasca date to some time before the arrival of Europeans in South America. The indigenous use of ayahuasca (which is called different names such as *yagé*, *caapi*, and *nixi pae*, depending on the native context) was first documented by José Chantre y Herrera, a 17th century Jesuit priest who (citing an unknown, undated source) referred to it as a “diabolical brew (brebaje diabólico)” (Brabec de Mori 2011: 46, note 20; Ott 2011: 105; Ott 1994). The first outsiders known to have actually experimented themselves with ayahuasca are the Ecuadorian geographer Manuel Villavicencio (1858) and the British botanist Richard Spruce. Both authors describe the ayahuasca intoxication as involving intense imagery, defining the overall experience as a predictable progression from dreamlike bliss to frightening anguish. Spruce drank “half a dose” of the tea in 1852, when he visited a native community on the Uaupés River (Amazonas, Brazil). However, he had to rely on the stories reported to him by “intelligent traders” because his own experimentation was interrupted before he could feel the brew’s full effects:

White men who have partaken of caapi in the proper way concur in the account of their sensations under its influence. They feel alternations of cold and heat, fear and boldness. The sight is disturbed, and visions pass rapidly before the eyes, wherein everything gorgeous and magnificent they have heard or read of seems combined; and presently the scene changes to things uncouth and horrible...A Brazilian friend said that when he once took a full dose of caapi he saw all the marvels he had read of in the *Arabian Nights* pass rapidly before his eyes as in a panorama; but the final sensations and sights were horrible, as they always are (Spruce 1908: 420-421).

Akin to Spruce’s account of indigenous ayahuasca rituals, which he observed as nothing but a baffling spectacle of masochistic confusion, psychoactive plants like ayahuasca continue to be feared as poisonous narcotics by most Euro-Americans. Today, scientists and spiritual devotees constitute a minority of Euro-Americans intrigued by ayahuasca

(see Luna and White 2000). From these more empirically informed perspectives, it becomes easier to understand why some people in search of answers to life's big questions are attracted to entheogens.

Ethnobotany of Ayahuasca

It was Spruce (1908) who bestowed a scientific label on the vine that he learned was the main constituent of the ayahuasca. He identified it as a member of the genus *Banisteria* (later renamed *Banisteriopsis*) and added the *caapi* species name because it was the term that his native hosts used to designate both the vine and the potion made from it. In fact, as with the more popular term “ayahuasca” (“vine of the soul” or “vine of the dead” in Quechua), indigenous tongues often use the same name to refer to either the finished liquid or to the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine by itself (Beyer 2009: 207-208). This woody liana plant is widespread in the area east of the Andes mountain range, where lowland tropical forests are interlaced with tributaries feeding the Amazon river. The vine is well-known to ayahuasca aficionados for its knotted helix shape, often resembling a twisted rope as it climbs alongside and between the trunks and branches of larger trees. When either the cultivated or wild varieties of *B. caapi* are harvested and cut into smaller chunks, it exposes the lobed cross-section of the vine's inner flesh (Figure 7). Here one witnesses this vine's distinctive patterns of light- and dark-brown “bands...spiraling around the axis”³ (Gates 1982: 10, 112-114).

³ Gates (1982: 10) states that “apparently in *B. caapi* the xylem parenchyma form wide bands which traverse the secondary xylem and subdivide it into discrete lobes...These lobes are often apparent on the outside of the stem as longitudinal ridges spiraling around the axis.”



Figure 7: Cross-section of the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine; photo by Lou Gold (published with permission)

It was originally thought by early researchers that the primary psychoactive effects of ayahuasca were due to the chemicals in *B. caapi* (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1990[1972]: 86; Schultes and Raffauf 2004[1992]: 21-22). But tests in the mid-to-late 20th century showed that it is actually the addition of the leaves of DMT-containing plants that gives the tea its patent mind-altering qualities (McKenna 2005; Riba et al. 2003). It is now widely believed that the β -carbolines in *B. caapi* function mainly as inhibitors of the MAO stomach enzyme, which are required to potentiate orally administered DMT (a chemical with undisputed psychoactive properties). The chunks of vine are macerated into a pulp that is mixed with the DMT-containing leaves and boiled in water to serve as the basic elements of the Daimé beverage.

Ayahuasca in Pre-Historic South America

Routinely, the best conjecture that modern scholars can put forward for how Pre-Columbian South Americans developed the basic recipe for ayahuasca is through “trial and error.” But ethnobotanist Wade Davis (1995, cited in Narby and Huxley 2001: 289) stresses that this phrase ignores the socially-ingrained skills and knowledge of indigenous peoples; they somehow managed to pair the distinct botanical requisites which are “orally

inactive” by themselves, but when combined “the result is a powerful synergistic effect, a biochemical version of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts.” Davis proposes that instead of imagining the first discoverer of ayahuasca as having unwittingly stumbled upon the precise plant mixture, one must consider indigenous botanical knowledge as akin to experimental research by scientists in our own culture. Shanon (2002: 16) further extends this reconsideration of the origins of ayahuasca’s botanical formula:

When one thinks about it, the discovery of Ayahuasca is indeed amazing. The number of plants in the rain forest is enormous; the number of their possible pairings is astronomical. The common sense method of trial and error would not seem to apply.

Alas, the prehistoric genesis of ayahuasca remains a mystery, since the initial commencement of any “trial and error” project with plants that are otherwise inactive when ingested alone is inexplicable in terms of secular rationality. Narby (1998: 11) underscores the indigenous explanation for how ayahuasca was invented: “It is as if they knew about the molecular properties of plants *and* the art of combining them, and when one asks them how they know these things, they say their knowledge comes directly from hallucinogenic plants.” Many European fardados admitted to me that they had received messages from the intelligent spirit/s contained within the ayahuasca plants.

Indigenous Entheogen Use in the Present-Day

Today, the preparation of the ayahuasca drink varies cross-culturally with different indigenous traditions known to have distinct modes of preparing the brew. Depending upon the cultural context, the blending of ayahuasca’s necessary DMT and β -carboline components can occur through the inclusion of a variety of locally available flora. Moreover, “a virtual pharmacopoeia of admixtures are occasionally added, the

most commonly employed...are known to contain alkaloids, such as nicotine, scopolamine, and atropine,” each of which contributes to how the finished product will affect the drinker’s sensory experience (McKenna 2006: 41).

In general, it is known that ayahuasca is employed by indigenous peoples for a variety of practical purposes, including to prophesize the future, obtain otherwise inaccessible information, acquire spiritual protection, for pleasure/entertainment, and to diagnose and cure illnesses (Dobkin de Rios 1984: 175-176; see also Adelaars et al. 2006). Among shamanistic traditions of the Amazon rainforests and the Andes, ayahuasca was probably preceded by alternative methods for introducing entheogenic plants into the human body. A widespread South American practice observed in both ancient and modern indigenous populations is the inhalation or “snuffing” of ground seeds of the genera *Anadenanthera* and *Virola* (which contain DMT and other psychoactive chemicals), occasionally enhanced by the chewing of *Banisteriopsis caapi* root. It is apparent that this “snuffing” practice dates back as much as 4,000 years. Archaeologists have unearthed preserved *Anadenanthera* seeds and seedpods alongside the basic “snuffing” toolkit comprised of inhaler tubes, and trays for grinding and holding the snuff; all of which is often stylized with visionary motifs (Torres and Repke 2006; see also Schultes and Raffauf 2004[1992]; Von Reis 1972). It is also apparent that the ritual use of San Pedro cactus (*Echinopsis pachanoi*, containing the entheogenic chemical mescaline) has endured among peoples of the Andes and western coastal regions for at least 3000 years (Furst 1976; 109; see also Burger 1992: 64, cited in Torres 1995: 301).

Public and academic knowledge of ayahuasca increased with the renowned publications of poet-novelists (Burroughs and Ginsberg 1963), ethnobotanists (Schultes

1963), and anthropologists (Dobkin de Rios 1972; Harner 1973; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1990[1972], 1975), often including personal accounts of the authors' own experimentation with the tea. With intellectuals' demonstration of alternatives to viewing these substances as "psychedelic drugs," Western scholars began to make inroads into understanding indigenous perspectives on ayahuasca. The ayahuasca experience tends to confound Euro-American notions of rationality, creating an awkward disparity between ethnographers who decline drinking the brew versus those who do experiment with it. The gravity of experiencing the brew directly is evidenced by Michael Harner (1973: 16-17), who wrote about being deeply moved when he participated in an ayahuasca ceremony with the Jívaro people of the Ecuadorian Amazon: "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."

The use of ayahuasca is widespread across many indigenous groups located in the western extremes of the Upper Amazon basin. This is the lowland jungle region encompassing eastern Peru, Ecuador, northwestern Brazil, northern Bolivia, and the southern forests of Colombia and Venezuela. At the time of completing his dissertation, Luna (1986: 167-170) counted over 70 indigenous groups associated with the use of the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine in "psychotropic preparations." Even though the exact geographical origin of ayahuasca is speculative, the best guess of scholars pinpoints the lower Napo river region of northern Peru as the tea's likely birthplace (Zuluaga 2004: 132). Scholars generally agree that as with the dispersal of other cultural traits, knowledge and use of ayahuasca gradually spread to groups across the western Amazon basin and beyond. However, there is considerably less agreement regarding *when* the

knowledge about how to make ayahuasca first emerged. It has become customary for both scholars and ayahuasca practitioners to reference the “millennia” that indigenous Amazonians have used ayahuasca (McKenna 2005; Polari de Alverga 1999: 137), with a proposed time-depth of “at least 5000 years” (Narby 1998: 154). But this premise has now come under scrutiny. In a landmark paper, Peter Gow (1994: 91) first challenged this conventional wisdom by noting that ayahuasca shamanism “is absent from precisely those few indigenous peoples who were buffered from the processes of colonial transformation caused by the spread of the rubber industry in the region.” In this way, Gow’s hypothesis reverses the usual assumption that the extensive indigenous use of ayahuasca predated European intrusions; instead he posits that urban mestizos (“mixed blood” native/European peoples) adopted ayahuasca technology from a remote indigenous group they encountered while collecting rubber in the rainforest. In this scenario, the ritual use of ayahuasca was geographically restricted until colonialist outsiders embraced this practice and transmitted it to other indigenous collaborators throughout the western Amazon. Pointing out the fact that archaeological discussions of ayahuasca are tenuously based on 4000-year-old drinking vessels that could have held any liquid (Naranjo 1986), Brabec de Mori has advanced a robust analysis of the ethnohistoric evidence for ayahuasca use in the eastern Peruvian lowlands. He concludes that in this region “the use of ayahuasca is probably less than 300 years old” (Brabec de Mori 2011: 24). Scholars must thus heed Torres and Repke’s (2006: 12) caution that entheogens consumed in liquid form:

...present particular difficulties that complicate their identification in an archaeological context. Ingestion or preparation of such plants requires no paraphernalia that might be identified with certainty, and conjecture of such practices based solely on the presence of elaborate drinking vessels is insubstantial

and unwise.

This interpretive prudence regarding inconclusive archaeological evidence must be upheld in future discussions. The uncertain antiquity of ayahuasca's widespread use in the western Amazon demands a scholarly reassessment. While this important question of ayahuasca's spatiotemporal origins will continue to inspire debate, this dissertation is not so concerned with ayahuasca's past as with its present-day and future use by people from outside of South America.

Ayahuasca Tourism

Partly as a result of interest spurred by anthropologists' publicizing the traditional use of this powerful drink, from the late 20th century until today an increasing number of people from around the globe are now seeking out ayahuasca experiences. As the alleged healing and transcendental properties of this plant beverage are disseminated by word-of-mouth, literary media, documentaries, and the internet, many individuals travel to the rainforests of South America in search of physical cures and spiritual enlightenment. It is not a surprise that many of these ayahuasca tourists begin their quest by attending ceremonies with assumedly "authentic" ayahuasca shamans from native Amazonian communities. This is a logical pursuit, since ayahuasca originated among aboriginal peoples prior to the intrusion of European colonialism. But anthropologist Marlene Dobkin de Rios has called for governmental regulations of ayahuasca tourism, arguing that naïve drug-tourists are easy prey for opportunistic charlatans "out to get rich quick"; masquerading as ayahuasca healers, "these so-called 'neo-shamans' are mostly men without any special training, with little – if any – knowledge of disease process or biochemistry, and who are prone to use local witchcraft plants (read poisons) to ensure

that their clients have a good trip” (Dobkin de Rios and Rumrill 2008: 72). The commercial incentives of ayahuasca tourism are enticing for otherwise poor residents of the Amazon, with foreign visitors unwittingly shelling out between \$300 and \$500 for rituals that normally cost locals between \$20 and \$30⁴ (Dobkin de Rios 2009: 167). While such reports raise grave warnings about tourists’ safety and threats to Amazonian cultural heritage, other experts see this as a misreading of the situation.

According to some scholars, the (albeit problematic) cultural interaction between Euro-American outsiders and ayahuasca healers in the Amazon is an ongoing give-and-take, the social implications of which have yet to be determined. In response to Dobkin de Rios’ disapproval of “drug tourists,” Michael Winkelman (2005) published an article in which he reviews the personal testimonies of Europeans and North Americans he interviewed at an ayahuasca “retreat” in the Amazon. Winkelman counters the portrayal of ayahuasca tourists as impulsive hedonists, reporting that the pilgrims he met at the retreat were resolutely seeking improvements in their existential well-being. He concludes that his consultants’ “principle motivations can be characterized as: seeking spiritual relations and personal spiritual development; emotional healing; and the development of personal self-awareness, including contact with a sacred nature, God, spirits and plant and natural energies produced by the ayahuasca”⁵ (Winkelman 2005: 209). In analyzing the interaction of ayahuasca tourists and local peoples in the Peruvian ayahuasca market, Beatriz Labate (2011b) shows how both groups are actively engaged in symbiotic systems of negotiation and innovation. Another Ph.D. dissertation by

⁴ The Santo Daimé rituals I attended in Europe usually cost between \$40 and \$80 USD, a price that includes the considerable cost of importing the ayahuasca overseas from Brazil.

⁵ Two recent documentary films (*Metamorphosis* [Aronowitz 2009] and *Vine of the Soul* [Meech 2010]) depict Western tourists travelling to the Amazon to take part in relatively safe ayahuasca ceremonies and their subsequent reactions to their maiden ayahuasca voyages.

Evgenia Fotiou (2010) also repositions the debate away from viewing ayahuasca tourists as inadvertent accomplices in the continued destruction of defenseless local traditions. Instead, she highlights a perspective of “interculturality” whereby contacts between the cultures of Western tourists and Amazonian healers (*curanderos*) are viewed as a cooperative dialogue. Fotiou does acknowledge the obvious concerns about the ayahuasca tourism market fostering a profit motive among imposter “shamans.” But rather than denouncing adjustments of presumably “authentic” indigenous and mestizo traditions to accommodate Westerners’ desire for the “exotic other,” she contends that:

People, including shamans, adapt constantly to new circumstances and as anthropologists have stressed, culture constantly takes new forms and should never be viewed as static... Since cultures constantly reinvent themselves, every cultural act, including shamanism, should be considered authentic (Fotiou 2010: 134-135).

For the purposes of the present dissertation, it is apparent that many Western ayahuasca “tourists” in the Amazon attend these rituals for reasons very similar to European *fardados*’ dedication to Santo Daime: Euro-Americans are drinking ayahuasca because they believe it can provide shamanic/mystical *solutions* to physical and psychological problems in their everyday lives.

Mestizo Ayahuasca Innovations

Despite the potential health and social risks posed by untrained swindlers and foolish travellers, the allure of ayahuasca endures in the Amazon. In fact, an entire industry of ayahuasca tourism now exists in the western Amazon region, centered in the urban hub of Iquitos, Peru. Skilled indigenous shamans in the jungle are complemented by urban mestizos trained as genuine *ayahuasqueros*, a term “which denotes a healer who specializes in ayahuasca ceremonies” (Fotiou 2010: 64). Ayahuasca practices of mestizos (also known as *caboclos* in Brazil) aimed at medicinal and psycho-spiritual

healing are more broadly known as *vegetalismo* (see Labate 2011b). In *vegetalismo* contexts, indigenous-inspired elements (such as the invoking of spirit beings and the singing of chants called *icaros*) are mixed with Christian traits (e.g. prayers and symbols from Catholicism). This combination of native and Christian components in *vegetalismo* reflects the general history of Amazonian mestizos, whose multiethnic identity is the result of post-colonial contacts between indigenous groups and workers employed in the rubber industry. The methods of indigenous and mestizo ayahuasca practices have since expanded outside the Amazon. Renowned *ayahuasqueros* now leave their home countries to lead rituals in North America and Europe or train Westerners in the arts of ayahuasca healing (see Metzner 2006: 34; Tupper 2009, 2011: 207-208).

The seminal text dealing with *vegetalismo* practices is the Ph.D. dissertation of Luis Eduardo Luna (1986). Luna focuses on how Peruvian *vegetalistas*⁶ conceive of and utilize their *icaro* chants and the magic phlegm (*yachay*) hidden in their chest as “tools” in their shamanic activities. This author pays particular attention to *vegetalistas*’ view that their psychoactive plant medicines are *doctores* (doctors) or *vegetales que enseñan* (plants that teach): “it is their belief that these plants possess spirits from which they learn medicine, and from which they receive the magic phlegm and the magic chants or melodies” (Luna 1986: 16, 63). More recently, Stephan Beyer (2009) has written a comprehensive examination of mestizo ayahuasca shamanism. He specifies exactly how psychoactive “plant teachers” are considered by *vegetalistas* as non-human beings that can convey information to humans who approach them properly:

We must remember that the plant spirits are powerful and unpredictable; the relationship between shaman and plant is complex, paradoxical, multilayered... The shaman “masters” the plant by taking the plant inside the body, letting the plant

⁶ A generic term for healers specializing in plant medicines, which can include ayahuasca.

teach its mysteries, giving the self over to the power of the plant. There is a complex reciprocal interpersonal relationship between shaman and other-than-human person — fear, awe, passion, surrender, friendship, and love. The shaman is the *aprendiz*, apprentice, of the plant; in return the plant *teaches*, and teaches by *showing* — the verb *enseñar* means both (Beyer 2009: 61).

Followers of Santo Daime also view ayahuasca rituals as a state of consciousness that can only be “mastered” through a humble reverence for the spirits contained within the plants. Likewise, the idea that ayahuasca and other psychoactive plants are spiritual “teachers” that “teach” or “show” their human student otherwise hidden truths about the nature of the universe is also a central value of Santo Daime practice.

These non-Western forms of ayahuasca therapy are no longer restricted to remote rainforest locales. As ayahuasqueros perform ceremonies for tourists and also train Euro-American individuals to lead rituals, new forms of “cross-cultural vegetalismo” are now linked into ongoing processes of globalization. Indigenous, mestizo, and even Euro-American ayahuasqueros now travel around the world, offering tea that is perceived by clients as an “authentic” antidote to the dispirited complexion of consumerist modernity (Tupper 2009). In addition to the indigenous and vegetalismo contexts, new variations of ayahuasca practice are swiftly being “reinvented” in Brazilian urban centers. What have been termed “neo-ayahuasqueros” are independent individuals and groups engaged in modifying the more religious ayahuasca traditions towards more secular psychotherapeutic ends (Labate 2004b). After receiving training in South America, some autonomous neo-ayahuasquero therapists have brought their brand of ayahuasca therapy to their European homeland. While the study of the neo-ayahuasquero scene in South America is well underway, the emergence of similar practices elsewhere is a fruitful avenue for future research. Intercultural exchanges between Euro-Americans and

Amazonians continue to expand. It is evident that just as Western medicine has provided new knowledge to non-Western peoples, the potential benefits of ritual ayahuasca use are gradually seeping into scientific awareness (see Anderson 2012; Beyer 2012; Fotiou 2012).

An intriguing prospect for Western medicine is the progress being made by self-styled ayahuasca healers who incorporate Euro-American psychotherapeutic approaches in an effort to cure addictions to drugs like cocaine and heroin. The most noteworthy example of this trend is the internationally renowned Takiwasi center in Tarapoto, Peru. Takiwasi is directed by Jacques Mabit, a French-born veteran of Doctors without Borders. Since 1992 Takiwasi has treated more than 700 patients in a program that involves a nine-month stay, during which they receive an average of 25 treatments with ayahuasca (Labate, Anderson and Jungaberle 2011). To be sure, Mabit's effort to fuse indigenous and Western medical knowledge has not gained acceptance as a form of drug treatment outside of South America.⁷ Dr. Mabit and his colleagues explain that ayahuasca rituals can help individuals heal from debilitating psychological ailments like drug addiction because the tea instigates a deeply introspective mindset whereby the subject must confront their deepest memories and emotions: "Those sessions allow the patient to release false psychic models, negative ideas, bad self-images, pejorative feelings (rage, hate, sadness, etc.), to correct personal perspectives, and to open up new horizons" (Mabit, Giove and Vega 1996: 261). This logic agrees with the statements of numerous European fardados, who say that their experiences with Santo Daime were the primary aid that supported them in overcoming various addictions (see Chapter 7).

⁷ A recent documentary aired on the "Nature of Things" program of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) proclaims, "the reported success rates for curing addicts at Dr. Mabit's detox centre are quadruple the average" (Ellam et al. 2011).

Emergence and Expansion of the “Ayahuasca Religions”

The Santo Daime is the oldest of three Amazonian-based churches in which ayahuasca is imbibed as a sacrament in ceremonies combining Christian, Afro-Brazilian, and European influences; collectively they are classified as “ayahuasca religions” (Goulart 2004; Labate 2006, 2012; Labate and Araújo 2004; Labate, MacRae, and Goulart 2010). Unlike the more assorted recipes for the brews found in indigenous and mestizo traditions, the ayahuasca religions share the same basic formula for their sacramental drink: *P. viridis* leaves and *B. caapi* vine boiled together in water.

It was in 1930 that an Afro-Brazilian man named Raimundo Irineu Serra, referred to by devotees as *Mestre* (“Master”) Irineu, officially initiated the religious doctrine of Santo Daime (Figure 8). The details of Irineu Serra’s life are various and often contradictory, but there is a general sequence that is standardized in Santo Daime folklore. He was born in 1892 in São Vicente Ferrer, a small town near the Atlantic coastal Bay of São Marcos in the northeastern Brazilian state of Maranhão. After growing up as the son of recently freed slaves, the young Irineu Serra travelled to the Amazonian frontier region of Acre in 1912 to work as a rubber-tapper. He would eventually settle on the outskirts of Rio Branco, the capital city of Acre state, dedicating the remainder of his life to establishing the ritual structure of the Santo Daime “doctrine.” But, before going into more detail, it is important to note the concurrent history that Santo Daime shares with the other ayahuasca religions.

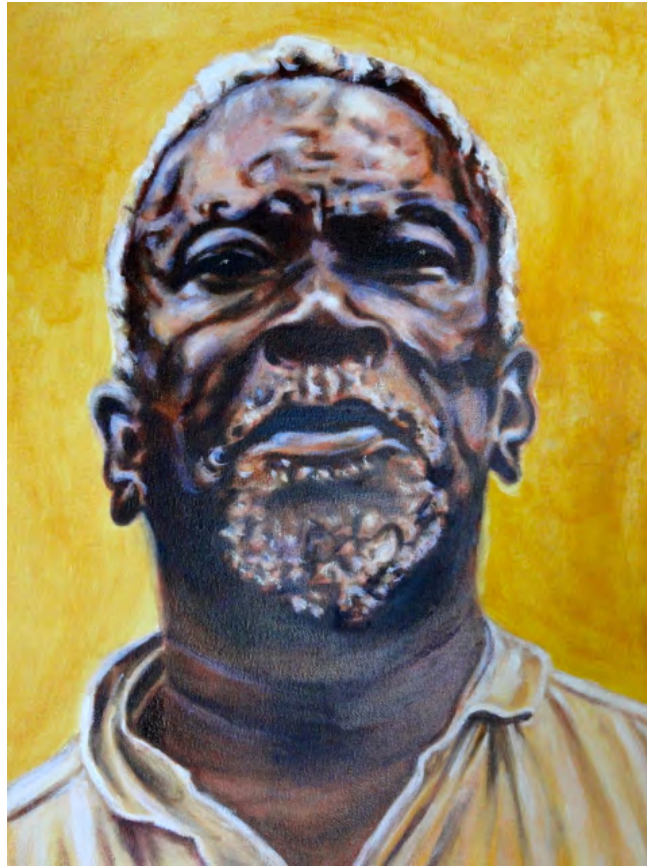


Figure 8: Portrait of Mestre Irineu (1892-1971); painting by Johanna Wernink; hung up in the ritual space during Daime works in Amsterdam (published with permission)

Another ayahuasca religion called *Barquinha* (Portuguese for “Little Boat”) was founded in 1945 by Daniel Pereira de Mattos (a.k.a. *Frei* [Friar] Daniel) in Rio Branco. Frei Daniel was also born in the northeastern Brazilian state of Maranhão and migrated to Rio Branco in his adulthood where he eventually attended some of Mestre Irineu’s Santo Daime sessions. It was Mestre Irineu who gave some ayahuasca to Daniel and “encouraged him to pursue” his own “mission” of healing with *Daime*, as ayahuasca is also known by this name within the Barquinha doctrine (Frenopoulo 2006: 369). Unlike the other ayahuasca religions the Barquinha organization has not expanded beyond the state of Acre, where it incorporates approximately 500 members. Having had such close ties with Santo Daime since its birth, the Barquinha rituals resemble the interactive singing of Santo Daime works, albeit with a more nautical symbolic system and more

emphasis on mediumistic healing (Araújo 2006). Like Santo Daime hinos, the content of songs (called *salmos*, “psalms”) performed in Barquinha rituals are believed to have been received from beings in the astral otherworld and represent the core values of the doctrine. Also like hinos, the salmos are deemed as revealing subjective truths to be interpreted intuitively by each individual who reads them while under the influence of Daime (Mercante 2006: 172).

A third ayahuasca religion, the UDV (*União do Vegetal*⁸, Portuguese for “Union of the Vegetal”), was founded in 1961 by José Gabriel da Costa (a.k.a. Mestre Gabriel) and is now based in Porto Velho, capital of the western Brazilian state of Rondônia. Mestre Gabriel was born in the northeast of Brazil in the state of Bahia but as a young man he travelled to the western Amazon to work as a rubber tapper. UDV “sessions” are more hierarchical and explicitly pedagogical than rituals of the other ayahuasca religions; during sessions, lower echelon disciples ask questions to designated UDV *mestres* (“masters”) whose answers impart spiritual knowledge. Much of this esoteric wisdom is restricted to members of specified ranks and UDV ritual songs (*chamadas* or “calls”) are never written down. This organizational and ritual structure contrasts with the more egalitarian Barquinha and Santo Daime religions. But the UDV’s interpretation of ayahuasca experiences as generating revelatory *mirações* (mind’s-eye visions), divine light, and energetic “force” (which they call *burracheira*) parallels similar concepts in Santo Daime (Brissac 2006; Goulart 2006). Like Santo Daime, the UDV has recently begun to expand outside of Brazil and now has small communities in Europe and the

⁸ The official full name of the UDV is *Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal* (CEBUDV)

U.S.A.⁹ (Soares and de Moura 2011). The UDV is known for being proactive in advocating for the legalization of its holy sacrament, which it calls “Hoasca” or “the Vegetal.” An international legal precedent was set in 2006 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of UDV members’ religious right to ritually consume ayahuasca: Chief Justice John Roberts wrote the majority opinion upholding the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which exempted the Native American Church’s sacramental use of peyote in 1993, as superseding the Controlled Substances Act with respect to the UDV (Bronfman 2011; Meyer 2005; J. Roberts 2006).

Since the first published analysis, a short encyclopedic entry about the Santo Daime (Bastos 1979), scholarly interest in the ayahuasca religions has bourgeoned. However, in an exhaustive volume rightly described as a “Comprehensive Bibliography” of the ayahuasca religions, it is apparent that two significant gaps in the literature remain: the authors state that (1) “the transnational expansion of the UDV and Santo Daime, despite its importance, has been one of the least explored areas in studies of the ayahuasca religions,” and that (2) their research “points to an enormous hole in English-language publications on Santo Daime...in the area of anthropology” (Labate, de Rose, and dos Santos 2008: 34, 43-44). Focusing on Santo Daime, the present dissertation will help fill these missing pieces in the ethnographic puzzle relating to the international expansion of ayahuasca spirituality. For the purposes of the present study’s focus on Santo Daime, it is notable that migrants from the Brazilian northeast founded all three ayahuasca religions once they had settled in remote urban capitals of the Amazon (Rio Branco and Porto Velho). Consequently, the roots of the ayahuasca religions can be

⁹ “Justices Weighing Narcotics Policy Against Needs of a Church.” *New York Times*, November 2, 2005; <http://travel.nytimes.com/2005/11/02/national/02scotus.html>

traced back to processes of mass migration and an economic world system associated with the rubber boom and bust years in Brazil from 1850-1920.

Economics of the Amazonian Rubber Tapper Migrations

In 1839 Charles Goodyear (whose name was later immortalized with tires) accidentally discovered the process of rubber vulcanization. Through joining raw latex with sulfur, rubber becomes a resilient material that revolutionized the railroad, manufacturing, clothing, mining, sports, and condom industries (Jackson 2008: 23-25), sparking a world demand for raw latex. The harvesting of rubber tree sap for industrial consumption converged mainly on the Amazonian species *Hevea brasiliensis*, which was “far superior” compared to the “weak fine rubber” yielded by other species (Barbosa de Almeida 2002: 178; Stokes 2000: xiv). However, it took decades for infrastructure to develop to the point where rubber could be extracted in amounts suitable for supplying a global market. In fact, an efficient technique for extracting optimal amounts of rubber from a single tree did not become known to Europeans until 1855 (Dean 1987: 10).

Mestre Irineu was born into an impoverished setting where “the peasant exists on the periphery of society with little access to resources, no participation and no voice in the development of the region where he lives...drought, hunger and misery are words synonymous with Brazil’s North-East” (Oakley 1980: 12). Between 1877 and 1888, a series of devastating droughts hit northeast Brazil (the states of Maranhão, Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas, Sergipe, and Bahia). Thus, in an opportunistic effort to exploit the Amazon’s supply of rubber, the rubber magnates enlisted most of their laborers from the drought-ridden northeast, a region whose inhabitants were “known throughout Brazil as the *flagelados*, the scourged ones” (Collier

1968: 45). The Afro-Brazilian contingent of rubber migrants in the late 19th century is not surprising, as the deplorable economic and agricultural conditions in the northeast coincided with Brazil's total ending of slavery in 1888 (Matory 2005: 201). It is only logical that newly freed slaves leapt at the opportunity for self-employment in the lucrative rubber tapping industry.

However, despite the high hopes of many aspiring rubber tappers, known as *seringueiros*, the system was organized disproportionately against the lowly extractors, favoring instead the intermediary creditors called *patrões* ("bosses"). The patrão would lend the new immigrants cash advances (with high interest), stipulating that the tappers sell back all their rubber exclusively to him. Regardless of this economic inequality, droves of young men flocked to Acre, a district acquired by Brazil in 1901 after prevailing in a territorial dispute with Bolivia (Dean 1987: 39-42). It is known that Irineu Serra travelled to the freshly opened rubber zone at age 20. He was accompanied by two Afro-Brazilian acquaintances, the brothers Antonio and André Costa, who were also from his hometown of São Vicente Ferrer (MacRae 1992: 48). These men were moving into Acre at what seemed like a most ideal phase of the rubber boom, as the price of rubber had reached its all-time high in 1910 (Weinstein 1983: 141, 214, 232).

Unfortunately for the Brazilian rubber barons and eager new migrants like Irineu Serra, in 1876 an Englishman named Henry Wickham had smuggled out 70,000 rubber seeds in "one of the most successful and far-reaching acts of biological piracy in world history" (Jackson 2008: 9-10). Although the founder of the Santo Daime had been part of the population increase in Acre "from 74,484 to 92,379 between 1910 and 1920," the bootlegged seeds had already founded a rubber industry in the British colonies of Asia;

Asia then surpassed Brazil in rubber output for the first time in 1913 and produced more than ten times as much rubber as Brazil by 1919 (Weinstein 1983: 218, 242).

Nonetheless, the importance of the lingering Amazonian rubber industry for the initial formation and persistence of the Santo Daime church cannot be understated.

Throughout the decade before the final collapse of the rubber industry that followed World War I, Irineu Serra and his rubber tapper peers had been experimenting with ayahuasca during their travels in the jungle. Granted that details concerning the early founding of Santo Daime are scarce, according to Brazilian anthropologist Edward MacRae (1992: 48-49): Irineu Serra's northeastern peers "the Costa brothers opened up a religious center in the [19]20's, called 'Círculo de Regeneração e Fé' (CRF) (Center for Regeneration and Faith) in the town of Brasiléia, Acre." These innovative ayahuasca rituals surfaced amid other syncretic religious movements formed by migrants importing their Afro-Brazilian belief systems from Maranhão (Monteiro da Silva 2004: 417). Both in the past and continuing into today, it was and is quite commonplace for residents of remote rubber-tapping camps (*seringais*) to employ ayahuasca by combining indigenous and non-indigenous ritual techniques (Labate, MacRae, and Goulart 2010: 3, 6-7; Pantoja and Silva da Conceição 2006). After belonging to the CRF during the 1920's, Irineu Serra ultimately left to establish his own organization. Following the collapse of the Brazilian rubber industry, the corporate class that had ruled over the western Amazon went bankrupt. Many rubber tappers emerged as peasant managers of a regional economy detached from the rest of the world until World War II, when the allies needed rubber again after being cut off from the Asian supply (Barbosa de Almeida 2002: 181). This 20-year interruption of Acre's contact with the outside world coincided with the

Santo Daime founder's transition from common *seringueiro* to the renowned spiritual healer now known as Mestre Irineu.

History of Santo Daime

At some unknown juncture during his wanderings rubber tapping in the rainforest¹⁰ Irineu Serra was introduced to ayahuasca, purportedly by some indigenous people or multiethnic *caboclos* (see Chapter 4 in Goulart 1996). Here Irineu Serra's cultural predispositions are intriguing. In the Western Amazonian region of Brazil *caboclo* refers to people with "Indian-white mixed blood" (Landes 1940: 391). However, in the Candomblé religion of Irineu's northeast birthplace "caboclos" refer to "Brazilian Indian spirits" identified as native counterparts of African-inspired spiritual beings called *orixás* (Matory 2005: 29). Jonathan Goldman (1999: xxii; see also Haber 2011), an American leader of a Santo Daime church that won its legal right to import and consume ayahuasca in Oregon, recounts the foundational myth of the Santo Daime doctrine:

[Mestre Irineu] saw a woman in the Moon who identified herself as the Queen of the Forest. She told him to go into the jungle by himself for a week to fast, pray, and drink the sacred tea. When he did this he was informed, to his total surprise, that he had a spiritual mission: He was to establish a new spiritual path to be called the Santo (Holy) Daime. He came to understand that the woman with whom he was communicating was in fact an embodiment of the Divine Feminine...He also came to understand that she was instructing him to create a religion that would center around the direct experience of the divine forces contained both in the forest and in the astral plane. Access to these subtle realms would be facilitated by drinking of the sacramental tea that, in its new context, was to be called Daime.

In 1930, Irineu Serra held his first *trabalho* ("work") at Vila Ivonete in the outskirts of Rio Branco. This ritual was open to the public and attracted many former rubber tappers,

¹⁰ Speaking of Irineu's 1912 arrival in the rubber tapping lands of the Western Amazon, Edward MacRae (1992: 48) reports: "At first, he settled down in Xapuri, where he lived for two years, and then went on to Brasiléia, where he worked for three years, in the rubber plantations and then to Sena Madureira, for another three years. During this period he also worked as a civil servant for the Border Commission, created by the federal government to map the Acre frontier with Bolivia and Peru." The M.A. thesis of Sandra Goulart (1996) is the most detailed account of oral history relating to the birth of Santo Daime.

particularly fellow Afro-Brazilian peasants who made up the greater part of Irineu's early following (MacRae 1992: 50). According to sociologist Andrew Dawson (2007: 71-72), as former rubber tappers continued to settle in the urbanized outskirts of Rio Branco:

A combination of growing popularity and escalating persecution led Irineu Serra to seek a move from Vila Ivonete. This was made possible by the donation of a tract of land by the then Governor of Acre, Guiomar dos Santos, who had already been instrumental in safeguarding Irineu Serra and his religious community from the attentions of the local police force. Originally known as 'Custódio Freire,' the land donated by Guiomar dos Santos is today named 'Alto Santo' and serves as the headquarters of the 'Universal Christian Light Illumination Centre' (*Centro de Iluminação Cristã Luz Universal - CICLU*) founded by Irineu Serra after his community's arrival in 1940.

The political clout that the Santo Daime founder was able to muster is astonishing, given his subaltern ethnic and economic status. But Mestre Irineu's fame in the region grew so briskly after 1930 that membership in a local branch of the church was commonplace. This trend continues in Acre today, as even though most locals proclaim a Catholic identity, the Santo Daime doctrine is established as a conventional feature of Acrean society (MacRae 2004: 29).

Many fardados believe that Mestre Irineu was "a reincarnation of Jesus" (Dawson 2007: 76). After the Mestre's death in 1971, a sizeable portion of his followers pledged themselves to Sebastião Mota de Melo, referred to as Padrinho ("Godfather") Sebastião (Figure 9). Padrinho Sebastião was a caboclo man specializing in the spiritist tradition of Allan Kardec, and he branded his form of Santo Daime with the acronym CEFLURIS¹¹ (in English: "Eclectic Center of Flowing Universal Light Raimundo Irineu Serra").

¹¹ Although the Santo Daime branch founded by Padrinho Sebastião was recently renamed *Igreja do Culto Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal Patrono Sebastião Mota de Melo* ("Church of the Eclectic Cult of the Universal Flowing Light Patron Sebastião Mota de Melo," or ICEFLU), I refer to it herein as CEFLURIS because this is the standard acronym in the literature on ayahuasca religions and because in the common parlance of European fardados CEFLURIS is still the name used to designate the Santo Daime branch affiliated with Céu do Mapiá (Labate, dos Santos, et al. 2010: 210)

Legends state that both Mestre Irineu and Padrinho Sebastião prophesized the globalization of the Santo Daime (Polari de Alverga 1999: 6, 18). During the 1970's, the Alto Santo CICLU community continued while Padrinho Sebastião maintained his separate CEFLURIS community outside Rio Branco called Colônia 5000, effectively creating a split between these two Santo Daime denominations. In 1980, Sebastião moved his center of operations north onto a rubber plantation known as Rio do Ouro, in the state of Amazonas. However, the Rio do Ouro daimistas were later evicted by the owner of the property. The eviction compelled Sebastião and his followers to make an arduous journey further north where in 1983 they founded a permanent base at Céu do Mapiá on a tributary of the Purus river (MacRae 1992: 58-59). Years of consolidating a foothold at Mapiá overlapped with the beginnings of a national expansion for CEFLURIS, which in 1982 formed Céu do Mar in Rio de Janeiro, the first Santo Daime church outside the Amazon (Labate 2012a: 96). The current head of the CEFLURIS branch of Santo Daime, Alfredo Gregório de Melo (now known as Padrinho Alfredo, the son of Padrinho Sebastião and his widow Madrinha Rita Gregório), was born on a rubber plantation (seringal Adélia, Amazonas state) near the Juruá River in 1950. It is in this same region that Padrinho Alfredo has founded a new remote community called Céu do Juruá, which now complements Mapiá as an important CEFLURIS settlement in the rainforest (Schmidt 2007: 66).

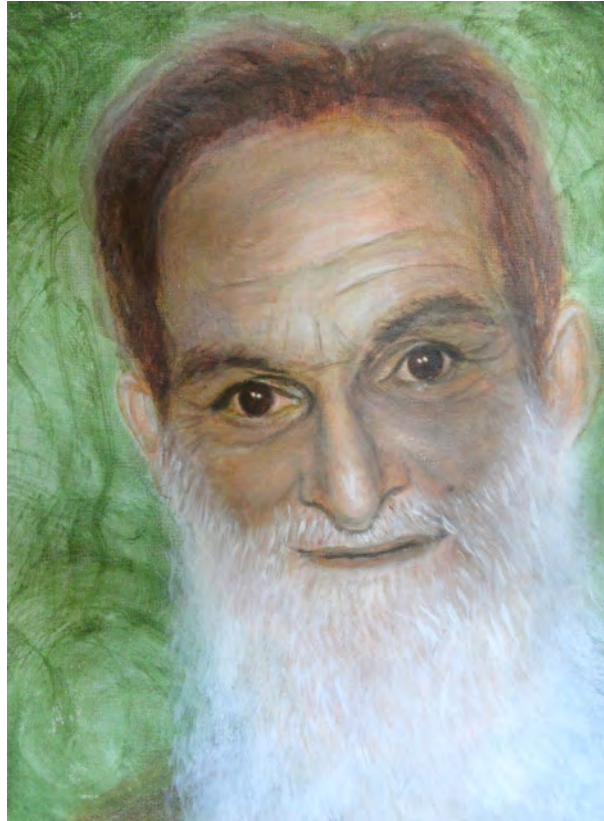


Figure 9: Portraits of **(above)** Padrinho Sebastião (1920-1990) and **(below)** Madrinha Rita (1926-); paintings by Johanna Wernink; hung up in ritual space during Daime works in Amsterdam (published with permission)



In an article discussing two months of fieldwork conducted at Céu do Mapiá, the present-day “Mother Community” of CEFLURIS, Dawson (2010) examines the delicate insider-outsider statuses that must be navigated by researchers who drink ayahuasca in Santo Daime works. I faced similar awkwardness with informants during my initial months of fieldwork in Europe, but found that with time my place within the community became more stable. Mention must also be made of Swedish researcher Titti Schmidt’s (2007) long-term ethnography of Mapiá, which encompasses a thorough outline designating the Santo Daime doctrine as an “eco-religious movement.” Schmidt provides a comprehensive account of how the residents of Mapiá conceive of Santo Daime ritual practice as a universal touchstone for interpreting the human condition. This outlook is mirrored in fardado communities around the world. As the scholarly literature focusing on various aspects of Santo Daime continues to grow, let us now turn to publications that are most pertinent to the objectives of the present dissertation.

Past Studies of Santo Daime in Europe

In Brazilian publications, anthropologists have focused on tracing the history of how different religious ingredients (e.g. indigenous shamanism, Afro-Brazilian traits, Folk Catholicism, Kardecism), were combined into the multifaceted whole of the Santo Daime doctrine. Not unlike many secular scholars’ ignoring of emic rationales for religiosity, Labate and Pacheco (2011: 72) have critiqued ayahuasca scholars’ “tendency to conflate the historical formation of Santo Daime itself with the various authors’ personal representations of this religion as constructed through time and in relation to Brazilian society.” For instance, Goulart (1996) contends that Santo Daime can best be understood as an outgrowth of the post-rubber boom era confluence of indigenous and

Afro-Brazilian customs with a strong infusion of folk Catholicism and Kardecism. On the other hand, Cemin (1998) refutes the notion that post-rubber boom social fluctuations played a dominant role in the shaping of Santo Daime. Instead, she asserts that the doctrine exhibits influences from pre-rubber boom modes of indigenous shamanism and folk Catholicism. While anthropologists have been intent on dissecting syncretic components (which could be seen as a cultural bias of the scientific approach to the world), fardados themselves prefer to envision Santo Daime as a medley of different spiritual traditions convening around universal truths. The spiritual backgrounds of European fardados are diverse to say the least (Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, even atheist). But, they are less concerned with the particular origins of particular religions and are far more engrossed in the effects of participating in Santo Daime works in the present-day. It is more important for them that each individual confronts and navigates the experience of Santo Daime rituals. Through this, fardados believe that each individual receives appropriate lessons for overcoming their ego.

The only book-length study dealing exclusively with the Santo Daime in Europe is Alberto Groisman's Ph.D. dissertation, based on fieldwork with three churches in the Netherlands (Groisman 2000). This text provides the first documentation of Santo Daime's expansion outside of Brazil. In his quest to understand the "transposition" of Santo Daime from Brazil to a European context (i.e. the process of how it was incorporated into a Dutch setting), the author focuses heavily on the "trajectories of groups and individuals, basically the way they interpreted and applied their perception of what Santo Daime is" relative to their personal histories (Groisman 2000: 19). He argues that the Santo Daime in Holland fits the mold of what he terms "postmodern religiosity,"

paralleling other New Age groups in its stress on individualism and “experiential knowledge” (see Groisman 2000: 242-243). While this outsider’s (etic) perspective is informative, Groisman’s dissertation all but ignores his informants’ insider (emic) explanations for *why they* say they are attracted to Santo Daime. This study also grapples with the incongruity that the ethnographer had many more years of experience and familiarity with Santo Daime practice compared to his Dutch informants.¹² Chapter 6 will report the results of testing Groisman’s hypotheses, which entailed asking fardados directly about whether they agree with his conclusions.

The recent work of graduate students in the Netherlands is also notable. Written in Dutch, the B.A. thesis of Jacqueline Braak (2009) considers the long-term significance of *inzichten* (“insights”) that daimistas in the Netherlands gain through their ayahuasca rituals. Also written in Dutch, Jazmin Wuyts (2008) conducted a “multi-sited” study of urban Daime communities in Brazil and the Netherlands; like Groisman, she categorizes Santo Daime from an etic perspective as a *religie van de nieuwe tijd* (“Religion of the New Age”). More relevant for the present dissertation (and more accessibly written in English) is Judith Sudhölter’s M.A. thesis in religious studies. In between attending seven works with the Daime church of Amsterdam, Sudhölter (2012: 21) also interviewed eight Dutch daimistas. In her effort to compare and contrast the experiential narratives of Daime participants she presents direct quotations from her interviewees, many of which evoke themes assessed herein with regard to Belgian fardados. For instance, Dutch daimistas told her that the ego is illusory, making statements like “we are the universe that beholds itself,” “all is one,” and claiming that Daime helps to “dissolve”

¹² Groisman’s (2000) fieldwork experience with Santo Daime in Brazil dates back to 1988, whereas during his 12 months of intermittent fieldwork in Holland between 1996-1998, even his most experienced Dutch informants had only been involved in the church since 1992.

the ego (Sudhölter 2012: 45-46). However, though she hints at the “mystical” worldview of her informants, her analysis draws its main conclusions from the idiosyncratic distinctions between individual daimistas. Of course, she is right that European daimistas are “highly aware of the relativity of their own story-telling” (Sudhölter 2012: 59) as rooted in the subjectivity of their personal perspectives. As one can see in the quotations found throughout the present dissertation, European fardados frequently attach disclaimers to truth statements (e.g. “for me”) to indicate that they are not alleging universal or objective facts. But Sudhölter (2012: 47) makes the exaggerated declaration that Dutch daimistas’ “cosmologies differ to...a large extent.” Through the comprehensive research undertaken for the present dissertation, it is clear that there are common elements shared in Belgian fardados’ worldview; in particular, the Santo Daime experience reinforces their mystical conviction that the differences between individuals and cultures are superficial. Unanimously, they downplay these dissimilarities as a dualistic distraction, emphasizing how Daime teaches them to concentrate on the elemental connections interlinking all things in the universe.

Two other major works by graduate students include assessments of Santo Daime as part of a broader probing into the ritual uses of ayahuasca in Europe. The M.A. thesis written in Spanish by Santiago López-Pavillard (2008) is a good general overview reporting on the researcher’s ethnographic encounters with various forms of ayahuasca ritual in Spain. Santo Daime members are subsumed into a corpus of interviews that also includes participants in the UDV and independent ayahuasca shamanism. The goals of this study parallel Groisman’s research in the Netherlands, in that both authors are concerned with the process of how these foreign ayahuasca religions are incorporated

into and interpreted within a European cultural milieu. López-Pavillard (2008: 138-141) acknowledges that ayahuasca rituals in Spain attract “seekers” (Spanish: *buscadores*) in search of deeper levels of self-knowledge. But he also admits that more in-depth ethnographic analysis is needed in order to understand how people integrate the lessons of ayahuasca into their spiritual worldview. The present dissertation will serve to satisfy this appeal, embarking on a detailed examination of how Europeans interpret their ayahuasca experiences relative to existing religious and secular norms of Europe.

The Ph.D. dissertation of Janine Schmid (2010), written in German, reports on the results of semi-structured interviews conducted with 15 participants in ayahuasca rituals, seven of whom are Santo Daime members. The dissertation has been summarized in two English publications, both of which examine the participants’ “subjective healing theories” about *how* ayahuasca can cure. Schmid et al. (2010: 201) report that of the 15 informants, seven “declared that they had successfully ‘healed themselves’ with the help of ayahuasca” but that there were five “disorders ayahuasca seemed to have had no influence on (migraine, fibromyalgia, prostate cancer, pain/knee, pyelitis).” Many of my informants also claim to have achieved physiological healing through Santo Daime rituals (see Chapter 7). However, fardados told me that they are attracted to the Daime beverage *not only* as a medicine for existing health problems, but also as a source of practical remedies to common sociological and existential dilemmas in human life. Thus, what Schmid (2011: 252) designates as “unspecific changes” triggered by ayahuasca rituals will be addressed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Besides the above theses, there exist two articles assessing ethnographic encounters with Santo Daime in Europe. Carsten Balzer (2005) recounts details about the

first “Santo Daime” ceremonies in Germany held in 1993, what he incorrectly claims as the “first steps of the Brazilian Santo Daime religion in Europe” (see below). Jan Weinhold’s (2007) article on the intricacies of Santo Daime rituals is included in an edited volume dedicated to the study of ritual mistakes. Some of my fardado informants were aware of these articles, both of which concentrate primarily on the “failures” of Europeans aspiring to practice Santo Daime. They criticized the research as giving undue attention to natural growing pains of importing the doctrine from Brazil, thereby neglecting more effectual functions of the rituals. Even so, Weinhold’s article is interesting from an etic perspective, in that it surveys how ritual errors highlight some of the tacit social norms in Santo Daime works. Balzer’s article is also to be commended for acknowledging in his closing remarks that the Santo Daime in the Netherlands has made gradual progress. Over decades, the European fardado communities have matured in the doctrine and the churches have developed a stable atmosphere for administering ayahuasca akin to that found in Brazil. The remainder of the present dissertation presents evidence bearing this out.

In terms of recent scholarly work dealing with Santo Daime, the last decade has seen an exponential increase in the amount of publications, especially in the English language. In particular, the collaborative work of Labate and her colleagues has made significant inroads in marshaling current research that deals with ayahuasca and the ayahuasca religions. The edited volumes *O Uso Ritual da Ayahuasca* (The Ritual Use of Ayahuasca) (Labate and Araújo 2004), *Ayahuasca, Ritual and Religion in Brazil* (Labate

and MacRae 2010¹³), and *The Internationalization of Ayahuasca* (Labate and Jungaberle 2011) embody an indispensable corpus of reference material. In terms of Europe, the first section of the *Internationalization* book contains a chapter by the Dutch historian Wouter Hanegraaff (2011), who theorizes on challenges posed by the introduction of ayahuasca spirituality into Netherlander society. The second section of the book concerns the potential medical applications of ayahuasca and includes a chapter by a prominent fardado intellectual named Alex Polari de Alverga (2011). While the final section of this book is very helpful in offering firsthand historical and legal details about the rise of Santo Daime in France, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands (Bourgogne 2011; Menozzi 2011; Rohde and Sander 2011; van den Plas 2011), only the chapter on Spain includes information collected by a professional social scientist (López-Pavillard and de las Casas 2011).

Thus, the present text is timely in that it will supply original and concrete ethnographic data pertaining to Santo Daime in Belgium, assembled during long-term anthropological fieldwork. Moreover, in conveying the subjective viewpoints of members of the original Santo Daime community in northern Europe, my project elucidates why this religion is being adopted by people outside Brazil. But before delving into the main discussion of my core Ph.D. research with the Belgian Santo Daime, it is important to sketch out how earlier experiences prepared me for the rigors of participating in the full annual calendar of ritual works. In laying the foundations for an analysis of European fardados' worldview, it was important for me to visit Céu do Mapiá, the base of Santo Daime's international expansion.

¹³ Many of the chapters in this volume are reproductions of a special issue of the journal *Fieldwork in Religion*, organized by the same editors in 2006, then reprinted as a complete volume called *The Light from the Forest: The Ritual Use of Ayahuasca in Brazil* (Labate and MacRae 2008).

Ethnographic Training: Passage to Céu do Mapiá

In the summer of 2008 I travelled to Rio Branco in the Brazilian Amazon, the veritable nerve center of ayahuasca religion where one has access to different offshoots of Santo Daime, UDV, and Barquinha. In Rio Branco I attended two Barquinha rituals, one work with the Alto Santo line of Santo Daime, and toured a UDV facility (called a *núcleo* [“nucleus”], although I did not attend a UDV session there). I also visited Mestre Irineu’s tomb, which is located at the last stop of a bus called the “Irineu Serra.” From Rio Branco, it takes 5 hours by taxi along a very rough road to reach the town of Boca do Acre in Amazonas state. From Boca do Acre I caught a *canoa* (motorized canoe) that was already on its way to Céu do Mapiá to deliver supplies.¹⁴ It takes 3 hours to ride up the Purus river until the canoa turns onto the Igarapé Mapiá, a smaller stream that empties into the Purus. For the next 4 hours the canoe stopped along the way to visit the modest homes of caboclo families, each of whom kindly welcomed the young *gringo* (foreigner). The residents of these homes served meals of local fish, capybara (a large jungle rodent), and sides of rice and *macaxeira* (cassava), with raw sugar cane for desert. After a cold sleepless night in a hammock at a pit stop called *Casa Grande* (Big House), the boat embarked early the next morning to travel 5 more hours along the igarapé until finally reaching Céu do Mapiá.

At the Pousada São Miguel, one of the original structures of Céu do Mapiá that is now the main inn, the room I rented was a far cry from my later home in Brussels (see Chapter 4). From my Mapiá bedroom I looked out the window out onto a lush, green

¹⁴ While I had been advised by friends to ensure that I get a direct boat to Mapiá, my canoe driver left the dock late and so what is usually a one day trip was broken up by many stops to make deliveries and included a night’s stay in the jungle.

garden speckled with a rainbow of flowers. The sounds of insects buzzing and birds chirping were only occasionally interrupted by a gas-generator or motorboat. The community of Mapiá consists of 1000 permanent residents; 70% are local caboclos and 30% come from elsewhere in Brazil or from abroad (Schmidt 2007: 74). Staying at the São Miguel Inn was an ideal location for meeting new international visitors who arrive at Mapiá without having prior arrangements to stay with locals. I conducted short interviews with visitors from all over the world, including people from Brazil, Columbia, Argentina, the United States, Mexico, Ireland, Poland, Spain, South Korea, and Japan. These first interviews would help to lay the foundation for subsequent research with fardados in Europe.

The people I met in Mapiá spoke about many different types of personal revelations, but the common denominator revolved around the capacity of Santo Daime to alleviate the struggles of daily life. A young fardada from Texas explained that prior to her first Santo Daime work she had been having negative feelings towards members of her family. But she said that after drinking Daime “every resentment I ever had for my family was lifted, instantly.” A daimista from Spain who studies psychology responded upon being asked what her Santo Daime experiences have done for her personally: “it’s given me strength to believe in myself and what I can do...it’s given me support in my faith.” In trying to explain how and why Santo Daime delivers these positive outcomes, a fardado from Columbia said in a mix of Spanish and Portuguese:

With Santo Daime one can encounter a higher power. The Santo Daime is a drink of power, a sacred plant which is made to purify devices because the Santo Daime is able to show something better out of matter, such as to realize God is inside and outside of everything. When we fear, the Santo Daime is looking for love. Thought

*is steady in the light. We can realize that there are things besides matter: spirit.*¹⁵

- Javier

It is a common premise among fardados that a variety of forms of human suffering can be resolved by making personal contact with a universal source of love and light through the “sacred plant.” This idea was echoed by a fardado from California describing how Daime changed his life:

I was going through a lot of personal problems, emotional problems. It was a really difficult time and [the Daime] just cleaned everything out and it felt like the weight was just lifted and I felt clear, I felt open, I felt at ease. You know, it took a little time, a few works, but knowing that that is what occurred, I just really focused on wanting to understand and study the tradition.

- Malcolm

He went on to explain that he had come to Mapiá to deepen his knowledge of the Daime, such that he could return home to fortify his daimista community in California. At the time of these interviews, I was still very inexperienced with Santo Daime works. But as Malcolm indicates, as one continues to attend works it is common for one to have similar feelings of inner clarity and relief.

The ten works I attended at Mapiá were very demanding, a common hurdle for neophytes partaking in their first full *hinário* (“hymnal”) works during the *Festa Junina* “June Festival.” Regular Santo Daime works usually last about six hours, while full *hinário* works last as much as 12 hours with an hour break in the middle. These works often involve an experiential journey into the source of one’s deepest observing “I.” This sensation can be described as an encounter with “ego-death,” or the dissolving of the barrier between the conscious observer and the observed world (see Doyle 2012).

¹⁵ “Pode encontrar com Santo Daime um poder superior. O Santo Daime é um a bebida de poder, uma planta sagrada donde está feita para purificar os aparelhos porque o santo daime tem poder de mostrar coisas superiores fora de materia; como por exemplo perceber é deus dentro e fora de tudo. Quando nos tememos o santo daime é procurar amor, firmar o pensamento é na luz, nos conseguimos perceber que existem coisas além da materia: espírito.”

One special work that I participated in was the *feitio* (Portuguese: “fabrication”), or the making of the Daime beverage. Through this highly ritualized process, *feitio* participants treat the ingredients of the Daime with special care at each stage of preparation. The constituent botanical elements are gathered in the consecrated building known as a *Casa do Feitio* (Fabrication House). Then the leaves of *P. viridis* (called *Rainha*¹⁶ [“Queen”]) are carefully washed by females (*catação*) while the woody bark of the *B. caapi* vines (*Jagube*) is painstakingly cleaned (*raspação*) and then pulverized with wooden mallets (*bateção*) by males (Figure 10). Since the participants also ingest fresh warm Daime tea during the work, the entire *feitio* is viewed as an initiation rite. Reverence for the cosmic relationship between human-student and plant-teacher is underscored by the immense exertion invested over several hours of processing the leaves and vine (Polari de Alverga 1999: 146-147). One learns just how grueling it is to crush the vines with a mallet for hours on end (all the novices’ hands get torn up with blisters). When the female *Rainha* and the male *Jagube* vine are combined and cooked with water, *fardados* believe that in uniting these two plants it imbues the Daime beverage with a divine spirit (Cemin 2006: 267-272).¹⁷ This physical-chemical solution of plants is symbolic for spiritual solutions that *fardados* believe are the key to personal salvation; through working with the Daime, a person can attain mystical solutions to inner conflicts, thereby entering a practical process of healing and enlightenment (see Chapter 4).

¹⁶ The leaves of *P. viridis* are seen as the feminine aspect of the brew. *Rainha* is a reference to the “Queen of the Forest” who initiated Mestre Irineu as the founder of Santo Daime (Polari de Alverga 1999: 253).

¹⁷ Although lack of access to raw materials means that *feitio* works (where the plants are prepared and cooked into Daime) are not carried out in Europe, many European *fardados* have participated in such works during their pilgrimages to Brazil.



Figure 10 (Clockwise from top-left): The men crush the Jagube vines with wooden mallets (*bateção*); this creates a vine pulp; Females carefully clean bugs and other impurities off of the Rainha leaves (photos by Dutch fardada, published with permission); the vine and the leaves are combined in large metal pots (photo by Lou Gold, used with permission); and the mixture is boiled in water using wood burning ovens (photo by the author)



The first time I began to hear about the idea of Santo Daime being a gateway to practical and metaphysical “solutions” occurred in one of my final interviews at Mapiá. When an Irish fardado was asked why he thinks people struggle with problems in their life, he pondered the question for a moment and proceeded to give a meticulous answer:

I think people tend to stop feeling and start thinking and then try to work things out...especially people from the West because we're conditioned to try and work things out and try to understand them in an intellectual way. We like to try and figure out how things work...when the true path to everything is feeling. The true language of life in its purest sense is to be able to connect with each other without words, and if you can use your feelings as a means of communication, you'll understand so much more. Because the amazing thing about the universe is that as humans, we use words in a way that they lie; words aren't the truth, feelings are the truth. And people tend to tell people what they want to hear, or think they want to hear, when if you're tuned into your feelings and you spend time in anybody's company, in any situation, you'll feel what's going on much quicker than you'll hear what's going on...and the more you tap into this, the more your heart becomes open, and the more open your heart is, the more the ability is to receive love, and generate love...

Once you start loving yourself, your family, your friends around you, strangers, you radiate that love, but you get it back, and getting it back you're receiving this unconditional flow of energy from the universe, which gives you all that you need. Everything that you ever could wish for in this life and the next life is contained in that one message of love and light. And the path that we are all on is very interesting, because most of us try to figure it out in our heads, we're always going 'What should I be doing?' instead of switching it off and thinking 'My path is illuminated by the light'. But it's a strange situation: the light illuminates your path, but you can't see the light, you can only feel it. Then when you feel it, the light reveals itself from within and you realize that everything that you need is within you, and once you get into that cycle, your, what I would call True Life or New Life...opens up and you end up walking in this great space...where stuff happens around you in an effortless way, and the thinking goes, and the struggle goes!

And the idea that all the tasks or things that were issues (like the idea of work and all these labels) melt away into nothing, and life takes care of the things that you originally thought were problems. Nothing is a problem because now, as you perceive a problem to arise, the solution is arriving at the same time, so what happens first is the solution, you never see the problems...and this is the New Era of how we all need to function and that's the goal: for all the people on the planet to reconnect to each other and to stop thinking and stop putting conditions in the way of everything. My only message is: to feel is the only path.

- Riley

Fardados view the tendency to rely more on mental “thinking” as a double-edged facet of

Western culture. They do recognize that mental thought encourages many intellectual achievements. But they also see Western culture's resolute dependence on thinking as causing people unnecessary suffering and confusion when they are confronted with life's conundrums. A fardado from Spain corrected me when I asked him about his "thoughts" and "opinions" about what Daime means for his life:

Thoughts and opinion don't have any interest [for me]...what I consider important is experience...For many years I was thinking about everything, making questions, and trying to understand life in this level of the mind. And with yoga...I realized that I was asking about life; all the energy and attention I was giving to this asking, I was taking from simply living; so, when I understood this, I tried to correct it because my choice is living. I still think, but I think [about] what is necessary...because [thinking is] a tool. It's not God, it's not me, it's a tool.

- Ignacio

Santo Daime devotees try to avoid overthinking human life. Instead they focus on developing and placing trust in what they believe to be the natural senses of intuition found in the intelligence of the human "heart." Tapping into this "experiential" or "feeling" aspect of the self (located in the center of the chest), rather than identifying with a mental stream of thought, is seen by fardados as an advancement in one's personal evolution. They believe that this goal of developing an "open heart" is facilitated by participating in Santo Daime works. Since the ayahuasca experience feels like a dissolving of the ego-self, fardados interpret this event as revealing a core self located in the heart *chakra* (the Sanskrit term for "wheels" or corporal energy centers, a concept borrowed from the Asian tradition of *tantrism* [Jones et al. 2005: 8992-8993]). But as the wisest daimistas would always warn throughout my fieldwork, sacred plants like ayahuasca can only display the pathway to solutions for people who ingest them. The plants will not solve people's problems magically. In another Mapiá interview, a visiting Mexican indigenous healer instructed:

When you drink ayahuasca or peyote, the plant, in many ways, does not heal you; what it does is it shows you your patterns, your behaviors, and I think this is where a lot of people don't get it. So it wakes you up, and now how am I going to take these patterns that I see and try to change them?...So a lot of people don't change because they keep drinking and drinking and drinking [Daime], but they can't see their patterns and then really try to change them in their life with their families, with their friends, their interactions. We say: 'The Ceremony actually starts when the plant ceremony ends.'

- Sibila

So even though many people are drawn to attend ayahuasca rituals for therapeutic reasons, the drinker's willful intention and determination to implement the lessons learned from Daime works is necessary for success. These concepts are also appreciated by European daimistas, who assert that the Daime rituals are really like a reproduction of daily life. They cherish the mystical experience of Daime works as an opportunity to face one's problems in a condensed form. It is during these rituals that solutions to one's problems are revealed. But these lessons must be incorporated in normal life between rituals to have any lasting benefits. As my time in Mapiá came to a close, my plans began to shift towards the long-term fieldwork I would carry out in Belgium.

In Mapiá one of my final interviews was with a prominent elder of the CEFLURIS movement, Padrinho Alex Polari. I asked him what I should expect from the Belgian Santo Daime? He said that even though the churches in Spain and the Netherlands are more well-known, Belgium was one of the first countries where Santo Daime took root in Europe. He said that this is a difficult time for the churches in Europe, where there is very little comprehension of the sacramental use of ayahuasca. Instead there is legal discrimination of Santo Daime as the use of a "hallucinogenic drug." He sees this as a "mystification" of the truth. He also said that in the *casa da Bélgica* (house of Belgium) "today there is a fragmentation of the groups" where some

people have split away from the CEFLURIS line and have begun to hold non-CEFLURIS Daime works. When asked about his views regarding scholarly research into Santo Daime, he expressed his approval for the many studies that are currently underway across the world. He said that now is a “very important opportunity” because this is a time “of much union and also a lot of dialogue between the traditional knowledge of forest peoples (the importance of spirituality in these sacred plants), and also with science, with the state.”¹⁸ The present dissertation can help to advance this ongoing intercultural dialogue towards the growth of mutual appreciation between mainstream Western society and newly arrived entheogenic religions like Santo Daime.

Although I had wanted the fast boat that can travel from Mapiá to Boca do Acre within 6 hours, only the slow canoa was available for my departure. Unlike the 12-hour trip to Mapiá, because it was now going with the current of the igarapé (but against the current of the Purus) the boat was able to make it to Boca do Acre in a little over ten hours. After participating in ten ayahuasca ceremonies during one month in the Amazon I returned home to Canada physically exhausted but intellectually energized. I looked forward to beginning my core fieldwork with the Santo Daime congregations in Belgium.

¹⁸ “de muito união e também de muito diálogo entre o saber tradicional dos povos da floresta (a importância da espiritualidade nesse das plantas sagradas), e também com a ciência, com o estado.”

CHAPTER 4

Santo Daime Congregations and Rituals in Belgium

I first arrived in Belgium in the summer of 2009 for two months of exploratory fieldwork. Having already carried out preliminary research in the rainforests of Brazil a year earlier, I was struck by the stark contrasts between these two field sites. Even though I was studying the same religious tradition in both locales, the steamy Amazon jungle had given way to the concrete jungles of urbanized Europe. Instead of spiders, snakes, and bats, I was now confronted with pigeons, begging vagrants, and the constant threat of expert pickpockets.

I emerged from the Bruxelles-Nord / Brussel-Noord train station in downtown Brussels into a congested and yet strangely tranquil city characterized by a mishmash of centuries'-old architecture with ultra-modern high-rises. Taken together, the assortment of buildings conveys a stylistic blend of influences from surrounding European nations. At the same time, Brussels' cityscape is punctuated with exceptional specimens of the Art Deco and Art Nouveau forms popularized by Belgian designer-architect Victor Horta (1861-1947). It takes time to adjust to the principally cement, brick, and glass backdrop of this metropolis. Brussels is often "misrepresented as the grey, scruffy and rather boring adopted capital of Europe" (Favell and Martiniello 2008: 137). However, along with the many other profound lessons that ethnographic fieldwork furnishes, one discovers that the beauty of a place is not always a quality that is immediately recognizable; rather, it is the observer that must find out how to appreciate what is being

observed. Only after many weeks does one's eye adjust enough to notice that between the concrete and glass, a plethora of art pieces are pasted throughout Brussels. Numerous large walls are splashed with bold-cultured murals depicting famous Belgian comics like Tintin, Gaston Lagaffe, and Lucky Luke. These officially sanctioned murals (an initiative of the Brussels Comic Book Museum) are accompanied by illicit graffiti-type paintings of monochromatic arachnids, dinosaur skeletons, and other animals by Belgian street artists like Bonom and Roa.

In every way, the unassuming little nation of Belgium is not the place one would imagine as the setting of exotic rituals organized around the consumption of a mind-bending Amazonian beverage. Yet this is precisely why it is a perfect context to observe how the Santo Daime's use of this still enigmatic plant concoction is spreading throughout the world. My intention was to spend over a year here in Europe trying to understand some empirical truths about fardados' dedication to Santo Daime, particularly the question as to why these individuals are choosing to repeatedly undergo the ayahuasca experience? As I walked the streets of Brussels in search of my hostel, I was surrounded by the smog and noise in this bustling capital city of Belgium, which simultaneously serves as the central headquarters of a fledgling European Union. This would be my headquarters also.

Before getting in touch with Belgian Santo Daime contacts, I wanted to orient myself to my new surroundings. The first few days of fieldwork were spent exploring the downtown core of Brussels, wandering in and out of the gorgeous Grand Place (Grote Markt in Flemish [see Davies 1996: 626-627]), the central square of the city, teeming with tourists who meander around its shops and buskers. Still just a tourist at the time, I

made a point to savor the delicious flavors of world-famous Belgian chocolate, *frites*¹, and waffles, as well as the best beer on the planet. For the ethnographer, these abundant visual and gustatory delights of Belgium afforded recreational relief in between the occasionally gut-wrenching ordeals that accompany regular ayahuasca use. In addition, Belgians are generally warm and hospitable people. Relations with research informants, many of which developed into good friendships, provided a source of emotional support. This was essential for a young anthropologist trying to study a ritual format that challenges each participant to directly confront his or her deepest personal weaknesses. The omnipresence of the typically Belgian sensual and social value of *gezelligheid* (Flemish for sociability, coziness, or snugness) served to offset the arduous (and sometimes excruciating) challenges that one undergoes in Santo Daime works. The adjectives *gezellig* (Flemish for pleasant, comfortable, or cozy) and *gentil* (French for amiable, friendly, or genial) rightly describe the cordial way that Belgian informants invited me into their homes.

In spending a lot of time with fardados, whose soft demeanors are marked by cheerful openness (they credit their Santo Daime practice for this), it became obvious that the basic ideals of Santo Daime worldview have been easily incorporated into the standard Belgian cultural disposition. Through an in-depth ethnographic analysis of the Santo Daime groups in Belgium, this chapter contributes novel insights as to how and why this spiritual tradition from the postcolonial periphery is being embraced by small groups of people in the West.

¹ While anglophones are accustomed to calling them “French Fries,” Belgians insist that fried cut potatoes are of Belgian origin. Indeed the Frites Museum in Brugge, Belgium attests to this national heritage.

Historical and Contemporary Developments of Santo Daime in Belgium

Summarizing the chronology of Chapter 3, the historical process that led to the formation and global expansion of Santo Daime runs as follows: From the 16th to the 19th century, Europeans brought African slaves and Christianity to South America, a continent inhabited by a native population, some of whose ritual practices utilized ayahuasca; as slavery was finally eradicated in Brazil in 1888, many young Afro-Brazilians sought to work as rubber tappers in the Amazon, an economic opportunity prompted by the contemporary rise in Euro-American demand for rubber; beginning in the 1920s, Mestre Irineu and other rubber-tappers combined the Afro-Brazilian and Catholic elements of their upbringing with Amazonian indigenous practices of ayahuasca consumption; in the late 20th century, the Santo Daime becomes regionally and then nationally popular in Brazil, eventually attracting devotees from around the world. While ayahuasca rituals have also been exported to North America, Asia, Africa, and Australia (see Labate and Feeney 2012), the present study of Santo Daime highlights how Europeans' colonization and Christianization of South America has come full-circle with the arrival of this form of eclectic ayahuasca Christianity in Europe. As attested in Chapter 3, even though Santo Daime in Brazil is well researched, the reasons for its transnational expansion remain understudied. This supplies incentive for the present analysis of the Belgian case.

The non-Brazilian awareness of Santo Daime began with a trickle of foreign travellers reaching the community of Padrinho Sebastião in the 1970s. This is revealed in the Colônia 5000 guestbook signatures of visitors from Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, England, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland, Israel, Japan, and Canada (Fróes 1986: 48, cited in Groisman 2000: 84). In fact, the most

experienced living European fardado that I had the chance to meet during fieldwork is the current *Madrinha* (“Godmother”) of Santo Daime in Italy, who reported that she and some Italian friends had visited Colônia 5000 in 1978-1979. At the early stages of Santo Daime expansion (which involves only the CEFLURIS branch and its offshoots), it is typical for new groups to begin as a small congregation called a *ponto* (“point”). After a few years of development and growth, pontos can eventually be given official designation as an *igreja* (“church”). The first Santo Daime ponto outside of Brazil was a small congregation in Boston, U.S.A., inaugurated in 1987, and the first official works in Europe were held in 1989 (Groisman 2000: 16). It has been previously reported that the earliest Santo Daime rituals in Europe began informally in Spain in 1985, and that a fardado representing Céu do Mapiá visited Spain to oversee the first official Santo Daime work in Europe on March 19, 1989, “a date which in that particular year coincides with the beginning of Easter week” (López-Pavillard and de las Casas 2011: 365). But during fieldwork I discovered that this same Mapiá representative also travelled to Belgium to supervise works there immediately following the March 1989 works in Spain. Unlike some of the other European countries (e.g. Labate and Jungaberle 2011, Groisman 2000; Weinhold 2007), the Santo Daime community in Belgium has not yet been addressed in any scholarly research.

I had initiated contact with the Belgian Santo Daime through email. After receiving a response and talking on the phone with a fardado charged with the duties of managing the internet website for the Santo Daime in Belgium, I acquired contact information for Lars, a fardado that had previously served as commander of the original Belgian church. Lars had retired from his commander role in 2001, but he continues to

regularly attend works as a respected elder. Upon arrival for fieldwork, it was fitting that my first recorded interview was carried out with Lars, who is the most veteran fardado in Belgium (after the founding member moved to Céu do Mapiá in the late 1990s). At 55 years of age, Lars is an unmarried landscaper living in rural Flanders. It is because of his vast experience that I will return to his interview responses multiple times below. Lars explained to me why he thinks Santo Daime has become appealing to some Europeans:

People are searching for something, something that puts them on a higher level. People want to be conscious in their life, I think. They're searching for that. Not to be put asleep all the time, by consumption and by watching television and going to sports. They want to be active. They want to find something that fits to themselves that is out of the common culture, the common lack of consciousness in this society. So, when you find something that appeals to your deepest self, you want to know more about it. And I think there the Santo Daime has a big role to fill. But the Santo Daime's not for everybody. It doesn't have the ambition... It's a doctrine, it's a school where you can learn to deal with your own life, with the mysteries of life. It gives answers to those very profound questions: What is the meaning of life? I don't know! (laughs) But it gives you a direction. That's also why it works, for example, for drug addicts, or ex-drug-addicts; they see a new direction in their life, and so they can overcome their addiction.

And, we have the addiction to materialism; we want a new car. All our culture is about having things. And with the Santo Daime you see you don't need that anymore. You need to have some comfort in life. Everybody wants to have comfort, and that's a good thing. But it's not the main goal anymore. You can look through it. You don't have this enormous hole anymore in your soul, that stays empty, that the shopping center can't fill.

...We are the land of the Godless. All over Europe, all over America. There are still the ancient, the old religions, like in Belgium [we have] Catholicism, Christianity in Europe. But they don't appeal anymore to the people. They are burned out, there is only form. But every man has that need for spirituality. And people fill that with materialism... They're searching for it, but they don't find it. Or there's also the success of the Eastern religions like Zen Buddhism or Tibetan Buddhism or even Islam. And also Christian fundamentalism...but sometimes it's too strange to fit in this society. To become a Tibetan monk is not obvious in our culture, or to become Islamic in Belgium, it's difficult also. Because there never has been a translation of these religions, of these philosophies into Western society. [Santo Daime] is even weirder, but when people come to take Santo Daime, it is something from the South American Indians, but because it has Christian roots, it's also a Christian doctrine...We use the names of the Christian saints like São José or Jesus. For us it's easy to understand. We can imagine something when we hear the name São José (St. Joseph): ok, that's the father of Jesus. And Maria, Mary, we

know who she is. All this Christian mythology, we understand...

...Me myself, I consider Mestre Irineu as a prophet, someone who brings a holy message, a message from the Divine. Also, he brought this doctrine. He was the in-between between the [South American] indians and the Western civilization. He translated the Ayahuasca into Daime. He was Brazilian but he was a black man. He was like a synthesis between indian, African, and European. Between red, black, and white... some people in the Daime they say it's like you had Jesus, and he gave his lessons. And then, Mestre Irineu renewed those lessons. He planted this holy doctrine again in the world, a second time. The second arm of the cross. You must find that out yourself, everybody's different.

- Lars (West Flanders)

As he recapitulates the idea that every human's "search" for well-being is rooted in a desire to experience a "higher" consciousness — what Charles Taylor (2007) calls "fullness" — Lars also conveys here the common European view that mainstream religious values are in decline in Europe (Catholicism in the case of Belgium). So alongside the remnants of the once pervasive community of practicing Christians there is now a substantial segment of the population that is non-religious (i.e. secular materialists). Lars also expressed the belief of many fardados around the world that one of the main symbols of Santo Daime, the double-armed Cross of Caravaca² (Figure 11), represents the return of Christ. Daimistas interpret this not as Jesus coming back to earth as an individual, but rather that the liquid Daime brew provides access to the spirit of Christ and that "Christ



Figure 11: Double-armed cross at Céu do Mapiá, Brazil (photo by the author)

² MacRae (2006: 398, note 5) explains that this "important Daimista symbol is a Byzantine cross supposed to have been introduced to Spain by the Knights Templar, and which has since had strong occultist connotations. In the nineteenth century its name was used in a compilation of prayers that were used by healers and magicians in Spain, Portugal, and Latin America."

Consciousness” can be obtained inside each individual person who commits to the Santo Daime path (Polari de Alverga 1999: 2, 16, 25, 173-174). And thus, while Santo Daime is largely Christian in form, Lars articulates fardados’ common conviction that the “doctrine”³ revealed by Mestre Irineu is a “synthesis” of universal truths that apply to all humans regardless of their cultural upbringing. It is through disciplined drinking of the Daime sacrament (which is itself a chemical synthesis of distinct plant ingredients into a homogeneous solution) that daimistas believe they can transcend the superficial divisions between different religious traditions, making contact with the common source of all spiritualities. Lars invited me to stay a few nights at his home outside Bruges. This visit proved crucial, as he recounted to me the history and diverse social landscape of the Belgian Santo Daime.

The founder of Santo Daime in Belgium, a female art teacher from Brussels and one of Lars’ closest friends, discovered the doctrine while on a trip to Brazil in 1981. During this journey, she eventually made her way to Colônia 5000 in the western Amazon, which served as the command center of the CEFLURIS Santo Daime movement prior to its relocation to Mapiá. Over the next few weeks, as she participated in her first ritual works where ayahuasca is consumed, she befriended Padrinho Sebastião. Because he had trouble pronouncing her francophone name, he nicknamed her

³ For daimistas, the word “doctrine” (*doctrina* in Portuguese) is the most accurate label for the complex of teachings, rituals, and cosmological principles of Santo Daime. For fardados, the “doctrine” is not so much a codified system of beliefs as it is a straightforward method or manual for life that is compiled in the ever-growing corpus of *hinos* (hymns), believed to be received from the spiritual Otherworld. Especially in secular Europe, where a general distrust of hierarchical organized religion is prevalent, I occasionally witnessed newcomers’ discomfort with the term “doctrine” because of their association of this word with “indoctrinate.” The *hinos* do mention the term “indoctrinate,” but the intention of this word in Daime is meant to encourage the drinker to “indoctrinate” themselves, rather than the connotation of some outside human authority seeking to evangelize and convert others.

Pedrinha (“little stone”⁴). When it was time to leave, the *Padrinho* supplied this young woman with a batch of *ayahuasca* to take home with her to Brussels, thus giving nascence to Santo Daime in northern Europe. She would practice Santo Daime privately for the next eight years, making frequent return trips to Brazil where she became directly involved in the early construction of Céu do Mapiá. In due course, she led an unofficial Daime ritual with three of her friends (including Lars) near Brussels in February 1989, a month before the Mapiá visitor arrived from Spain to administer the first official Daime work in Belgium. Now, the Santo Daime population in Belgium has grown to approximately 60 *fardados*, along with dozens more non-member *firmados* attending works in four distinct congregations.

The Belgian Santo Daime Today

The roots of the four Belgian Santo Daime groups lie in the now defunct *Céu da Lua Nova* (“Heaven/Sky of New Moon”), the country’s first official organization formed in 1992 by the four attendees of the pioneering 1989 work. These first four Belgian *fardados* were then haphazardly joined by visitors, with alternating works held in Brussels and West Flanders attended by as few as two and as many as 20 people. Despite the irregularity of participation this early church⁵ persisted with the core members, ensuring that the full calendar of works was executed, often in open-air settings “in Nature.” A gradual accumulation of new *fardados* developed through the late 1990s until the first of multiple schisms occurred in autumn of 2003. During a work, one of the original four *fardados* received instructions from the astral world that it was time for her

⁴ This relating of this story of the foundation of Santo Daime in Belgium implies Catholic connotations that she (like Saint Peter [*Petrus*, the “rock”]) was among the first to found a church in Europe.

⁵ While common Western parlance might refer to the Santo Daime in Europe as a “sect” or “cult,” these terms carry a pejorative implication. I use the term “church” (*igreja* in Portuguese) because this is how the *fardados* prefer to label their individual organizations and the global Santo Daime community as a whole.

to open a new group in Belgium. She gained the approval of Brazilian leaders from Mapiá and opened a new church near Brussels called *Céu da Luz* (“Heaven/Sky of Light”). This split marked the initial surfacing of a latent friction that still exists between the churches in Belgium. Interpersonal tensions between church leaders follow the trend of recurrent Santo Daime fissions since the death of Mestre Irineu while also manifesting conflicts that are uniquely Belgian. Although fardados cite social discord stemming from the ethnic-linguistic divide and personal dislike of particular authority figures, travel-distance is the principal concern that my informants provide in explaining why ruptures have occurred between the churches in Belgium. So, for many Belgian daimistas it was just a practical decision to attend *Céu da Lua Nova* if they lived closer to where it held works in Bruges and to frequent *Céu da Luz* if they lived closer to Brussels. On the other hand, it is revealing that the memberships of these two respective churches were almost exclusively Flemish- and French-speaking. These two separate groups operated independently for a few years until the commander of *Céu da Luz* and her husband left the Santo Daime in spring of 2007 because the time-commitment of leading a church was infringing too much on their family obligations.⁶ As the members of *Céu da Luz* now had no commander, they decided to join with *Céu da Lua Nova*. In acknowledging this reconciliation of Belgian daimistas into one group, the joint church was rechristened in late 2007 as *Céu da União* (“Heaven of Union”). Today, *Céu da União* (CdU) is the oldest and most sizeable church in Belgium consisting of approximately 30 fardados and many non-fardado members that attend regularly. During my fieldwork, CdU works

⁶ I interviewed three former fardados, all of whom expressed gratitude for the lessons and personal growth they had acquired through their years of Santo Daime involvement. However, the former comandante of *Céu da Luz* did express her sadness over her fardado colleagues’ negative reaction to her leaving. Indeed, I did hear some current fardados express their disappointment in those who had “quit the Daime.”

were conducted in a rented 19th century chapel in East Flanders, usually attended by between 15 and 40 people.

One year after the consolidation of Céu da União, the tensions between certain individuals resulted in another split, with a woman from Brussels (who happened to be the cousin of the former Céu da Luz commander) deciding that she would start her own church in Wallonia. She traveled to Brazil and after much contemplation she opted to open a church not affiliated with CEFLURIS, instituting what remains a rare instance of a non-CEFLURIS Daime group in Europe. She named the new church *Céu do Arco-Iris* (“Heaven/Sky of Rainbow”), which gathered for its first official work in the summer of 2008. Holding works in rented spaces in the province of Namur, Céu do Arco-Íris (CdAI) was composed of 20 fardados at the time of my fieldwork and is allied with a Santo Daime “line”⁷ in Brazil that broke away from CEFLURIS. Much like CdU is affiliated with the CEFLURIS hub of Céu do Mapiá, CdAI is linked to a Brazilian church called *Céu do Dedo do Deus* (“Heaven/Sky of the Finger of God”), located near a mountain of the same name in Rio de Janeiro state, whose leader Padrinho Zé Ricardo serves as “spiritual advisor” to CdAI. Arising out of the CdAI commander’s musical expertise (she is an expert luthier⁸), the performance of Santo Daime hymns in this church is palpably slower and softer than the more rapid and vigorous sound characteristic of CEFLURIS ceremonies. Besides the fact that this church is made up mostly of French-speakers while CdU has a majority of Flemish-speakers (even though there are members of both Belgian linguistic groups in both churches), numerous fardados cited their preference for the music at CdAI as a reason they attended this newer

⁷ Some Santo Daime hymns make reference to following *nesta linha* (“in this line”).

⁸ Someone who makes and repairs stringed instruments.

church. Thus, these two churches provided me an opportunity to interview Belgian citizens who have chosen to follow separate Santo Daime denominations. Also, since CdU and CdAI comprise the most experienced Belgian-born fardados, the bulk of my fieldwork schedule and focus revolved around attending rituals and spending time with members of these two churches.

In addition, two other Daime organizations are based in Brussels, called *Rendezvous avec Soi* (French for “Meeting with Yourself” [RaS]) and *Casa da Cura Mestre Irineu* (Portuguese for “Mestre Irineu House of Healing” [CCMI]). While their devotees are mostly Belgian-born, both of these Santo Daime groups are managed by young Brazilian married couples with affiliation to the Brazil-based church *Céu Sagrado* (“Sacred Heaven/Sky”), located in the state of São Paulo. The Brazilian founders of RaS and CCMI were already good friends in Brazil, but they proceeded to become more independent of each other once they arrived in Belgium. The male founder of RaS came to Belgium in 2006 and made contact with members of CdU. He and his wife had chosen Belgium because they had read on the internet that Belgium is the “Heart of Europe.” Having come from a non-CEFULRIS background, he became interested in establishing his own Santo Daime group modeled on the Céu Sagrado template but oriented towards European tastes. RaS basically constitutes a non-religious alternative more palatable to those Western Europeans who are wary of being allied with the rigid dogma of their Christian upbringing. The name of RaS accurately portrays the practical function of Santo Daime as it is construed in Europe, literally as a “meeting” with one’s deepest “self.” Participants at RaS rites do not wear uniforms (hence there was no differentiation of fardados and non-fardados). While ceremonies of RaS included the

singing of hymns from Mestre Irineu, attendees were encouraged during an “improvisation” section of rituals to perform individually with musical instruments for the group, regardless of their musical skill. Also unlike CdU and CdAI, there is only faint reference made to Catholic saints or Jesus in RaS rituals, and significantly less emphasis was placed on religious imagery within the ceremonial space. For example, while it is customary for photographs of famous personalities from Santo Daime and other mystical traditions to be placed around the room and on the central altar for a Santo Daime work, these were replaced with various rock crystals at RaS. The only “religious” symbol to be found was the apparently indispensable double-armed cross at the center of the altar. It is apparent that RaS acts as a relatively informal introduction to the ayahuasca experience; after this more casual ceremony, initiates seem prone to become more interested in the strictly controlled rituals of Santo Daime proper. The Brazilian couple who founded and manages RaS told me that they perceived Europeans as being generally distrustful of new spiritualities; they have consciously scaled back much of the “religious” facets of the ayahuasca ceremonies they organize. These immigrants’ impression is most likely derived from a prevalent suspicion in Europe of “brainwashing” in new religious movements, a sentiment exhibited in the rigorous surveillance and persecution of so-called “sects” in Belgium and France (Fautré 1999; Richardson and Introvigne 2001).

Whereas I attended numerous rituals with the groups described above, it was quite difficult to gain access to the second Brazilian-run group CCMI. Amongst daimistas in Belgium CCMI is considered to be “more closed,” as opposed to the other “more open” groups. These metaphors of “closed” and “open” refer to the amount of restrictions a

group maintains concerning receptivity to new participants. It was quite simple for me to gain admission to CdU, CdAI, and RaS by just asking for contacts and accompanying a member to a work, but it was not until the 12th of my 14 months in the field that I secured approval by email to attend some CCMI works (not for lack of trying). More than in the other three groups, the Brazilian leaders of CCMI are referred to by the honorific titles of Padrinho and Madrinha, and they are shown greater deference by members of their congregation despite being a generation younger than the CdU and CdAI commanders. The man who would become Padrinho of CCMI began in 2007 to provide private sessions for Belgian clients. Eventually, he gathered these separate individuals for group works, which led to the formal organization of CCMI in 2009, now consisting of 12 fardados and several regular visitors. It became apparent in speaking to CCMI fardados that the group's "House of Healing" moniker is a decisive framing of this group as a spiritual healing center. Indeed a sizeable proportion of disciples at both Céu Sagrado in Brazil and CCMI in Belgium are attracted to these centers because of a substance abuse problem (e.g. cocaine, alcohol). While tobacco⁹ and moderate alcohol consumption are tolerated in the Belgian-led CdU and CdAI, all psychoactive substances other than ayahuasca (considered a "medicine") are ardently discouraged in CCMI, which advocates strict abstinence as key to a healthy lifestyle. In the words of the CCMI commander, unlike the curative qualities of Daime, all other psychoactive substances encourage

⁹ According to World Health Organization statistics, smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol are popular in Belgium (see WHO 2004, 2008: 274-275). Some daimistas are tobacco smokers, but the tendency is to eventually quit. Among veteran Belgian fardados (i.e. those with more than ten years of experience in Daime), only one currently smokes tobacco. While the volume of alcohol consumed typically declines when people begin to follow Santo Daime, most Belgian daimistas do not quit entirely but merely moderate their alcohol consumption so as not to become overly intoxicated. See this WHO data online at: http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/en/belgium.pdf and http://www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/mpower_report_full_2008.pdf

people to become addicted to “bad energy.”¹⁰

The success of RaS and CCMI in Belgium has not gone unnoticed in these groups’ patron church in the south of Brazil. In particular, since the leaders of RaS and CCMI managed to obtain steady employment upon immigrating, they were also able to bring their children from Brazil to attain educational opportunities in Belgium. The perceived prospects of a higher quality of life for his family spurred a third member of Céu Sagrado to attempt to found his own group in Belgium. I was present when this third man came from Brazil and was hosted as a special guest in a work with CdAI. Here he performed a selection of his own received hymns as an advertisement for subsequent works that he would lead in Antwerpen province. In an interview with this man, he was adamant that works in Europe lacked the steadfastness standard to Brazilian works called *firmeza* (the Portuguese word for “firmness” that fardados consider as an essential trait for enduring personal obstacles both inside and outside of Santo Daime works). For instance, he disapproved of the small mattresses provided for people to lie down in European works. However, at his two works in Antwerpen (designed to encourage this heightened firmness), it proved too severe for many of the neophytes that attended, and ultimately he failed to establish a committed following. CdAI also hosted a young female guest from *Céu do Gamarra* (in Minas Gerais, Brazil), who then arranged her own work in Belgium’s Limburg province. This was the state of the four Belgian Santo Daime churches when I left the field in May 2011.

In October 2011 police raided a RaS work in Brussels and arrested the male leader of the group. The arrest apparently had nothing to do with the ayahuasca (the chemical ingredients of which are technically illegal in Belgium). Instead, it was due to a

¹⁰ In Portuguese: “*energia do mal*.”

complaint of a former member alleging that the RaS leader had used finances allocated for the group's collective purchase of land in Brazil to stake his personal claim on said land. CdU had previously sent a formal letter through their attorney to the Belgian government, explaining exactly how they were using ayahuasca in their Santo Daime rituals; they had interpreted the government's non-response to the letter as implicit approval of their spiritual practices. The RaS arrest provoked the Belgian authorities to open a formal investigation of Santo Daime (as had previously occurred in other European countries), but it remains to be seen whether Belgium will go the way of the Netherlands in officially permitting ayahuasca rituals, or the way of France, where Santo Daime is still prohibited. As the legal process ensues, CdU and CCMi continue to hold works, CdAI has temporarily ceased works in Belgium out of fear that police will intrude, and RaS is now based in Brazil.

So while the CEFLURIS roots of Santo Daime in Belgium echo the trend of these churches' expansion across Europe, at the time of my fieldwork only one of the four Belgian groups was affiliated with CEFLURIS while the other three were non-CEFLURIS. Of the four, it is interesting to consider the distinctions between the two churches run by Belgian-born commanders, and the two groups led by Brazilian immigrants. In essence, the respective characters of the four groups range from CdU's more orthodox adherence to the doctrine as practiced by their Brazilian sponsors to RaS' non-religious adaptations. In this way, the two Belgian-run churches tend to embody a more conventional approach to Santo Daime practice (with CdAI having made some slight adjustments), whereas the Brazilian-run groups espouse a more adaptational method for modifying rituals to fit European tastes. For instance, Lars told me about how

CdU struggled to find a linguistic compromise for giving instructions in the works, which are announced in between the singing of hymns in Portuguese. After first trying to translate announcements in French and Flemish (too cumbersome), then trying English (not everyone speaks it), the leaders of CdU finally settled on Portuguese. Even though few CdU members speak Portuguese, this decision was viewed as an impetus for encouraging them to learn the original language of Santo Daime. The non-CEFLURIS groups in Belgium represent the first international satellite centers for their sponsoring churches in southern Brazil, which are themselves breakaways from CEFLURIS. The creative license exemplified by diverging from CEFLURIS (which had itself separated from Mestre Irineu's original Alto Santo line) is emulated in Belgian groups that implement "softer" musical performance (CdAI), or more secular and less dogmatic rituals (RaS). CCMI has gone so far as to introduce new elements that are not officially part of Santo Daime doctrine, alternating conventional Santo Daime works with what are termed "ayahuasca sessions," inspired by their Padrinho's affinity for the indigenous Yawanawa culture of South America. Linguistically, although the other Belgian groups always sing in Portuguese, announcements during CdAI works are in French with Flemish translations for important details, while RaS and CCMI operate entirely in French.

It is likewise intriguing to note the differences in self-identification between the more conventional and the more adaptational Santo Daime groups in Belgium, as the standard "Céu" prefix is conspicuously absent from RaS and CCMI. This intentional move away from the conventional church names beginning with "Céu" marks the adaptational systems of RaS and CCMI as resembling the more experimental character of

“neo-ayahuasquero” groups in urban Brazil (Labate 2004b). On the one hand, the freeform innovations and loose spiritual connotations of RaS are the reason its members refer to it as a “spiritual group” rather than a “church.” While the label “church” is appropriate to describe the institutional nature of CCMI, it is distinguished from CdU and CdAI by its unequivocal emphasis on aboriginal shamanism and addiction therapy. While the members of CCMI retain close contact with Céu Sagrado, the deviations of RaS from a standardized Santo Daime doctrine indicate that it is not an official *igreja* sanctioned by the authorities in Brazil. Regardless of whether they achieve official church status, it is clear that CCMI and RaS have identified a previously untapped market for Santo Daime alternatives in Europe, as their works in Belgium also attract people from France and Holland. The French visitors are to be expected, since Santo Daime is prohibited in France. Remarkably, the Dutch members of RaS and CCMI were willing to make the drive south because they prefer these less religiously-oriented ayahuasca works to those in the Netherlands, where CEFLURIS is the only Santo Daime option. Before their arrest, the RaS leaders had begun scheduling regular works with about ten participants in Amsterdam to meet the demand in that city. But as the arrest had put their immigration status into question, the leaders of RaS returned to Brazil and reinstated RaS based in São Paulo state. Belgian members of CdAI, RaS and CCMI continue to organize group pilgrimages to their patron churches in southern Brazil, just like the decades-long tradition of CEFLURIS-affiliated European fardados travelling to Mapiá.

The partitions of Santo Daime groups in Belgium parallel the tendencies towards “intense secession processes” found in Brazil, where cycles of segmentation, expansion, and diversification of ayahuasca religions comprise a “circular movement of fabrication

and constant multiplication of ritual practices and symbolic systems” (Labate, MaCrae, and Goulart 2010: 4-5). Whereas CEFLURIS epitomizes the adaptational propensity of Santo Daime in Brazil, the CEFLURIS church (CdU) is the most conventional congregation in Belgium because it attempts to maintain the doctrinal principles as they have been directly imported from Mapiá. One sees similar diversification in other groups associated with the “New Age” in Europe. For instance, one finds disagreements in Wicca, occult esotericism, and paganism circles between traditionalists and splinter groups more concerned with “creative reinterpretation” of the traditions (Hanegraaff 1998: 86-87, 382-383). In contrast, the non-CEFLURIS Brazilian churches that sponsor CdAI and the more adaptational RaS and CCMI groups demonstrate how Santo Daime expansion is not a series of splits, but rather more like the organic extension of branches from a tree. Rather than rejecting their CEFLURIS roots, CdAI and CCMI works include the singing of prized hymns received by Padrinho Sebastião. A book by the leader of Céu Sagrado (the patron of RaS and CCMI) pays respects to CEFLURIS and hails Padrinho Sebastião as “propagator of Santo Daime” (Neto 2006: 16, 22). But these official tributes notwithstanding, there remains a tension between the leaders of the different Santo Daime groups in Belgium.

As with the conflicts that occur among different Santo Daime lines in Brazil, from time to time individuals from one Belgian group can be heard criticizing one of the other Belgian churches. I do not want to get into specifics about the private details of interpersonal disputes within the Belgian Santo Daime community (indeed, numerous Daime hymns warn against the detrimental impact of gossip, as for example in Mestre Irineu #78, which calls for an end to the spreading of “bad news” [*má notícia*]). But in

general, fardados' complaints had to do with "power struggles" between different views about how the doctrine is most accurately followed, a situation resembling the "discord and rivalry that prevails" between ayahuasca churches in Brazil (MacRae 2010: 196-199). This is not unlike the disagreements between rival factions that exist in conventional churches and smaller esoteric groups alike: all "have their traditionalist conservatives and their liberal-minded modernists" (Hanegraaff 1998: 408). On the other hand, many of the individuals who appeared to me as having integrated the deeper teachings of unconditional love, acceptance, and oneness described in the hymns rarely if ever spoke ill of fellow daimistas (nor of fellow human beings for that matter). While some bitterness and mutual distrust continues between the leaders of the four Belgian congregations, the general membership of each group displays no animosity. Instead, numerous fardados assured me that these disputes were merely growing pains of the church's expansion, and that they were confident that over time these wounds would heal as the Belgian churches moved towards harmony.

Although my research concentrates on the Belgian-run churches CdU and CdAI, the motivations for Belgian members of RaS and CCMI attending ayahuasca works are indistinguishable from the intentions of CdU and CdAI members; all Belgian daimistas are seeking metaphysical and practical *solutions*. This multidimensional concept of solutions is essential to the present dissertation, and will be developed in the remainder of this chapter and in following chapters. In terms of metaphysical "solutions" (like the chemical melding of two previously separate substances), a male member of CCMI told me that Daime is a way of "connecting to the Absolute," a melting of the self into the divine source of existence (although he did not feel comfortable with the loaded word

“God”). As for practical solutions (e.g. a remedy for some problem), a female member of RaS related a common narrative of how working with the Santo Daime sacrament can gradually lead to one’s personal growth and self-improvement. Although Yanette is not a committed fardado, she claims that Santo Daime works have helped her to overcome her addiction to cigarettes and her lifelong struggle with chronic “melancholy,” a disorder that worsened after the death of one of her parents. She had initially sought assistance through shamanistic-style ayahuasca ceremonies, but she found that in these rituals she “didn’t have enough support.” She eventually learned about Santo Daime works. She said that Santo Daime afforded her an atmosphere of mutual support that helped to guide her through the difficulties of the ayahuasca experience:

I think [Santo Daime]’s a divine being, a kind of healer. It tracks down the things that don’t belong in your system...like illnesses, but also thoughts and emotions...it tries to get them away or to have you change your mind or the way you feel in your heart about it. But it’s not always easy at that moment, because when that is happening, you don’t want to because you’re so used to that...it’s too difficult, it’s much too heavy to accept and to overcome and to transform...you have to work with it...but then it can give real benefits and real positive things, real good things, no more dark things. It’s nothing obscure, nothing ambiguous, nothing strange. Then you can see it’s really something pure.

But first it confronts you with the opposite effect...In the beginning when I drank Daime I saw hell, it was horrible: it’s dark things, it’s a dying, thinking you lost your mind, thinking people are against you¹¹...Now the Daime is helping me to get a little bit more confidence to trust people...I now interpret it that it’s ok to live your life in a good way; if you try to help people, if you try to work, if you try to love people, to be responsible for the environment and to clear yourself from bad habits like drinking alcohol, swearing, smoking (everything that’s not good in fact¹²), and you really work on yourself and also your mind every day and you try

¹¹ As an ethnographer, I can relate with this account because I had some adverse reactions in many of the early ayahuasca rituals I attended (vomiting, chills, intense fear, disorientation). But not all daimistas go through this difficult initiation with Santo Daime; indeed, some individuals who already have a background in mystical disciplines like yoga or meditation reported to me that their previous practice had prepared them for Santo Daime, so their first experiences with ayahuasca were blissful; it appears that for many, the mystical encounter with ayahuasca can be a jarring shock, but for others it is akin to deep introspective states with which they are already familiar.

¹² She attends one of the Brazilian-run Daime churches that promote total abstinence from all psychoactive substances except ayahuasca. Thus, her pessimistic attitude about alcohol and smoking does not apply to all Belgian daimistas.

to develop and to purify and to get better, I think you get a lot of rewards and that's what's happening now with me, finally.

- **Yanette** (Brussels)

Daimistas trust that the mystical experiences provided by Santo Daime works foster practical enhancements in their daily lives by bringing devotees face to face with repressed emotions, uncomfortable memories, and other destructive thought patterns. Scholars have acknowledged this in passing with regards to Santo Daime in Brazil, such as when MacRae (2006: 396) affirms Brazilian daimistas' belief "that every time someone takes the brew they have the opportunity of entering into direct contact with God and, if deserving, they might then be able to find solutions for problems they may be facing and even be healed of terminal illnesses, as many followers claim to have been." The discussion now turns towards Belgian fardados' perspectives on how and why the metaphysical-mystical solutions attained in Santo Daime works can lead to practical solutions in the everyday lives of participants.

Santo Daime "Works": Framework for Curing the Ego

After spending a few days at Lars' home in the summer of 2009, where he patiently answered the many questions I peppered at him and offered me advice about how to approach the European Santo Daime community, we drove to my first work in Belgium. It was at this introductory work with the CdU congregation that I began to immerse myself fully into the ritual life of Belgian fardados.

The Belgian fardado community enjoys a close relationship with the Amsterdam church *Céu do Santa Maria* (CdSM, this is the largest and most well-known Santo Daime

church in Europe¹³). As with my time in the Amazon, I was in Belgium for the 2009 June Festival. Fardados from all over Europe (and guests from all over the world) travel to Amsterdam for the festival works (also called “big” or “long” works). At works I attended around Europe (but mostly at the international gatherings in Amsterdam), I met Santo Daime participants from Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Surinam, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde Islands, U.S.A., Guatemala, Turkey, Israel, Tunisia, Malta, Morocco, Iran, and Sint Maarten.

I accompanied Belgian informants to the festival celebrations in Amsterdam, held on the same dates every year according to the fixed calendar of official ceremonies (see the full calendar in Appendix II). While fardados consider all works important, they place special emphasis on the birthdays and death-dates of prominent figures in Santo Daime lore. These big works often involve dancing (*bailado*) while singing an entire *hinário* (hymnbook/hymnal), which can take as much as 12 hours to complete. During dancing works, participants rotate between three types of dance depending on the beat of the hymn, all of which are paired with a particular rhythm of the maracá instrument: the *march* (taking three steps right, then three steps left), the *waltz* (swaying back and forth without moving feet), and the *mazurka* (stepping in place, swiveling the body continuously from facing right to facing left). While Belgian works usually include between 10 and 40 people, at the big works in Amsterdam it can feel like a spectacle because the relatively large crowds, sometimes exceeding 200 attendees, swell the capacity of the church.

After participating in 10 and 11 Daime works during the summers of 2008 and

¹³ CdSM is also the place where I had my first ayahuasca experience in a Santo Daime Mother’s Day work in 2005.

2009 respectively, I returned to Europe for a stint of 12 more months of core fieldwork in 2010, wherein I took part in 44 additional works with Daime groups both inside and outside of Belgium. I tried to divide time proportionally between the Belgian Santo Daime churches. However, because this research focuses on the adoption of Santo Daime by Belgian-born fardados and the early rapport acquired with CdU and CdAI (the two churches with Belgian-born leadership), I tended to partake in more works with members of these two churches. Although there are numerous variations in the form and order of these rituals depending on the particular location and purpose of the work, what follows is a distillation of the essential facets of conventional Santo Daime works as they are carried out in Europe. After detailing the intricate ritual mechanisms that contribute to Santo Daime as an introspective technique, the discussion proceeds to explain fardados' folk theories about how this ritual practice engenders various *solutions*.

Figure 12: An overhead view of a dancing work at Ceu da Santa Maria in Amsterdam (photo by a Dutch fardado, published with permission)



When one arrives at a conventional Santo Daime work in Europe (i.e. CdU or CdSM), one encounters a lively and deliberate buzz of activity. Daimistas converse happily while setting up chairs, tables, stands for musical instruments, and other basic ritual equipment, a process that must be reversed after the work in the rented *salão* (“hall,” the physical space in which Daime works take place). Once the preparation of the salão is complete, the room consists of a hexagonal arrangement of chairs or chalk-lines on the floor¹⁴ facing a 6-pointed-star-shaped central table (Figure 12).

¹⁴ This depends on whether or not it is a “dancing” work (where chairs are not included).



Figure 13:

- **Left:** The hand-held *maracá* serves as the main percussive instrument in Santo Daime music (photo by a Dutch fardado, published with permission)

- **Below:** The ritual space of Daime works involves rows of chairs organized in a hexagonal shape. All face the central star-shaped table. On the table are placed a cross sculpture (in the middle), candles, flowers, incense, a *maracá*, and hymnbooks; for dancing works, the chairs are removed and participants stand in the same hexagonal layout (photo by the author).



In the middle of the table a double-armed cross sculpture is always placed so that it occupies the geographical midpoint of the salão, sometimes with a rosary draped over it and ornamental designs with favored symbols such as the crescent moon and six-pointed star; around the cross are placed fresh cut flowers in a vase, photographs of Santo Daime figures and Christian icons, incense/smudge sticks immersed in a small pot of sand, three lit white candles (with a fourth placed under the table), and the personal hymnbooks¹⁵

¹⁵ One of the few ritual taboos in Santo Daime (which will be corrected when violated by a newcomer) is to never place a hymnbook directly on the floor. Instead, if one needs to set down a hymnbook, it is best to have some other object (even a thin piece of material) between the book and the floor.

and *maracás* of fardados who will sit around the table for the work (Figure 13). These latter objects are two of the most distinctive personal objects in Santo Daime: hymnbooks have a distinctive spiral binding and maracás are rattle instruments made of tin cans decorated with sparkly symbolism with metal ball bearings inside.

In Brazil, the atmosphere of the salão is reminiscent of “Afro-Brazilian *terreiros*...[as] many daimista churches string paper or material strips along the roof space by way of reproducing the forest canopy” (Dawson 2007: 80). For special festival works, European Santo Daime churches simulate this visual display by hanging multi-colored paper flags (blue, yellow, green, pink, white) across the ceiling. Other objects placed with careful intention and exacting care around the salão include a larger “Daime” table at one end of the hall displaying similar objects as the central table, along with a piece of *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine, large bottles of Daime liquid, glass serving jugs, and stacks of Duralex¹⁶ *picardie* glasses in which the sacrament will be served. Also distributed throughout the room are larger photographs/paintings of revered personalities from Santo Daime or other spiritual traditions (such as Mestre Irineu, Padrinho Sebastião, Madrinha Rita, Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary, Ramana Maharshi [see Appendix III]). To energetically purify the room, incense paraphernalia for *defumação* (“smudging”) includes Eagle Feathers for wafting, candles, charcoals, a knife (for chopping), a Bic lighter, chips and sticks of *Palo Santo* (Spanish for “Holy Wood,” of the tree species *Bursera graveolens*), which is mixed into a “cocktail” of Lavender (*Lavandula* spp), Myrrh (*Commiphora* spp), White Sage (*Salvia apiana*), assorted “Amazon herbs” from Mapiá, placed within the Shell of an Abalone mollusk (*Haliotis* spp, which they like to

¹⁶ A French brand of juice glass; one of the veteran fardados who served the Daime commented to me about the suitability of the company’s Latin name for acting as vessel for the Daime: *Dura-lex* (Latin: “Hard Law”). The hymns attest to the capacity of Daime to deal “justice” frankly and directly.

use because it embodies the 4 elements: it is a sea animal [water], it has natural holes to waft oxygen onto the incense [air], it is made of calcium [earth], and the incense is ignited [fire]; the fardado in charge of the CdU defumação reasoned that this species of shell “is what Native Americans use for smudging”). Resting stations outside the central hexagon include extra chairs, jugs and glasses of drinking water,¹⁷ thin mattresses and blankets for those who need to lie down during the work, and plastic buckets for vomiting (purging), various instruments (guitars, mandolins, violins, accordions, flutes, and/or electric piano) and amplifiers, as well as *Florida Water* cologne.¹⁸ Fardados also often carry personal objects in their hands or pockets, such as white/beige sweaters, chair pillows, hymnbooks, water bottles, and maracás. In some of the old chapels where Daime works are held in Europe, the rock floor is inscribed with the names of the deceased who are buried underneath it.

Shortly upon arrival, the visitor joins with committed fardados to wait in a line for formal registration at a table located near the entrance of the salão. Each person signs their name on the attendance list,¹⁹ pays their entrance fee, and purchases a new hymnbook if they do not already own the text that will be sung at this particular work. Neophytes²⁰ are gathered together with a designated fardado who further prepares them about what to expect in the work. It is easy to distinguish the fardados because they are all wearing either their blue or white *fardas* (two types of “uniforms”) with a “star” broach on their chest (unmarried fardados wear the star on their left [heart] side while

¹⁷ The openings of all glass jugs and Duralex *picardie* glasses (whether they contain Daime or water) are covered with either white doilies or laminated paper marked with a six-pointed star; apparently this is done to protect the liquid contents from foreign energies that are flowing throughout the salão during the work.

¹⁸ *Água de Florida* cologne (made by Murray and Lanman company) is not typically included in Daime works, yet in CdU a bottle was used at the resting stations to freshen the face and hands after purging.

¹⁹ As discussed in Chapter 1, participants in Belgian Santo Daime works must be 18 years of age or older.

²⁰ As discussed in Chapter 7, all newcomers must undergo an “intake” interview where a church authority scrutinizes whether the candidate’s intentions are genuine and rules out psychotic/schizophrenic symptoms.

married fardados wear the star on their right side). An iconic symbol of the fardado identity, this silver-dollar-sized 6-pointed star usually contains the image of an outstretched eagle taking flight above a crescent moon, the symbol that is also on the official Santo Daime flag (where it appears in white on a green field). The star is made of metal and always pinned to the lapel of the fardas of both males and females during ritual works (Figure 14).

Figure 14:
- **Left:** The double-armed cross is often associated with star and moon motifs
- **Right:** The star brooch; as an official insignia, fardados “receive their star” in the fardamento initiation rite



Figure 15: Fundamentals of the Blue (below, left) and White (below, right) fardas as worn by female and male fardados (images courtesy of Jason Hashimoto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada)



What most strikes the outsider are the uniforms (*fardas*) worn by fardados, a custom derived from Mestre Irineu's Afro-Brazilian background. The white farda is worn for special occasions like the important festival works scheduled on the annual calendar, and consists of a fully white shirt, tie, pants, and blazer for men, while women wear a white shirt and an ankle-length green pleated skirt, accented with a green sash across the shirt, a collection of multi-colored ribbons suspended from the shoulder, and a shimmering tiara on their head (see Dawson 2007: 74). This white uniform resembles the mostly white garb, colored ribbon sashes, and tiaras worn in Baile de São Gonçalo ceremonial balls (Figure 15). Labate and Pacheco (2004: 331-334) show how the Baile de São Gonçalo, a Portuguese tradition that spread widely throughout Brazil in the mid-19th century, influenced the eclectic religiosity of Maranhão and would have been a frequent spectacle in São Vicente Ferrer during Irineu Serra's childhood. It was in 1936 that Irineu Serra introduced "the *farda* and the *baile* or *bailado* (a synchronised and repetitive dancing)" (Groisman 2000: 80), based on what he could remember about the Baile de São Gonçalo he had seen in his youth. However, modifications to both the

uniforms and dances of the Santo Daime were made following Mestre Irineu's return trip home to Maranhão in 1957, when he noticed inaccuracies in his initial memories of the São Gonçalo (Labate and Pacheco 2004: 334). The standard blue farda (worn at regular works) consists of white long-sleeved shirt, navy blue tie, and navy blue pants for men and white long-sleeved blouse, navy blue bowtie, and navy blue ankle-length pleated skirt for women (this is deliberately meant to resemble a school uniform [Groisman 2000: 79], as all fardados are considered "students" of the Daime). Shoes seem to be the one article of clothing that can vary, as fardados' footwear can include sneakers, sandals, loafers, or even bare feet.

As the time for commencing the work approaches, chattering voices quiet down and cease as each individual is ushered to their assigned "place." Following official doctrine (outlined in a CEFLURIS [1997] manual called "Norms of Ritual"), attendees are organized with fardados closer to the central table and visitors closer to the outside of the hexagon, females on one side and males on the other, with three separate age sections on each side in collections of (1) older-married, (2) younger-married, and (3) younger-unmarried males/females. All these sections are arranged according to participants' height, ascending away from the central table from shortest to tallest. As aromatic incense smoke wafts through the air, participants open their hymnbooks²¹ and introductory defumação hymns signal that the work is about to begin.

Works are officially opened with prayers, which always include the Catholic editions of *Pai Nosso* ("Our Father") and *Ave Maria* ("Hail Mary") as well as invocations

²¹ Besides the numerous hinários (full hymnbooks) containing the many hymns received by individual leaders of Santo Daime, CEFLURIS churches in Europe all utilize what they call the "green book" (a publication of Amsterdam's Céu da Santa Maria), while non-CEFLURIS churches print their own hymnbooks (e.g. CdAI has a book modeled after the "green book" with a cover photograph of a rainbow arching over a beautiful mountain scene).

from esoteric spiritual traditions²² that inspired the early founders of Santo Daime. When the commander deems it necessary he/she will announce that it is time to drink Daime. Then the first of two or three “doses” of Daime is served, with the first being the largest and subsequent doses containing smaller amounts of liquid.²³ Participants form a queue to receive the drink at the serving table (*fardados* go first), with one line on the male side and one on the female side. *Fardados* who serve each dose of Daime have been trained how to serve the tea via mentorships with more experienced *fardados*. Each person is served their dose of Daime and the single-use glasses are stacked until they are picked up by *fardados* who take them to a nearby kitchen where they are washed in preparation for the next dose.²⁴ Depending on the purpose of the work and readiness of the attendees, the Daime served can range from weaker to stronger varieties.²⁵ Jeremy Narby’s (1998: 6) description of ayahuasca as “extremely bitter” is quite accurate. Beyer (2009: 212) is

²² Examples of these other prayers recited in Santo Daime works are the “Key of Harmony” and “Consecration of the Space” from the Sao Paulo-based Esoteric Circle of the Communion of Thought, as well as the “Prayer of Carita” from spiritual mediumship circles in France.

²³ As pointed out by MacRae (2006: 397): “More recently, with the growth in number of followers, certain changes were made in the cooking process, in order to use the raw material in a more efficient manner, avoiding waste and cooking some batches a little more, so as to concentrate them for easier transport. Nevertheless, the ingredients used are still the same and differences in concentration are taken into account when the Daime is served during the rituals. But Daimistas have always been aware of the fact that the same dosage of the brew, taken from the same batch, will have different effects in different moments on the same person, so little attention is normally given to matters of a more pharmacological nature. Many Daimistas even dislike giving too much attention to such details, since this suggests a denial of the divine nature of the Daime by seeing it as ‘just another drug.’”

²⁴ So hallowed is the Daime liquid that the residue in the bottom of used glasses is carefully saved to water plants at home, which is believed to imbue those plants and their fruit with the Daime spirit.

²⁵ Silva Sá (2010: 169-170) describes how different stages of the *feitio* preparation and cooking ritual result in different strengths of Daime tea: “This task is carried out by skilled specialists, who monitor the flavor, visual aspects, and the effects of the drink. Usually, the same liquid is boiled three times, together with fresh raw plant materials on each occasion. This produces a thick dark liquid that is then filtered through a cloth sieve. Depending on the stage of brewing, the Daime is classified as ‘first’, ‘second’, or ‘third degree’. The strongest type is ‘first degree’, having boiled three times. The quality of the brew is further regulated through the selective use of raw plant materials – in terms of quantity or of the specific parts of the plant (e.g. the branches of the vine are not as strong as the roots). Some samples can be stored successfully for several years, fully preserving their properties.”

Depending on the strength of the Daime liquid being offered, I was informed that participants are served between 75 and 150 ml for the first dose. This means that approximately 1 liter of 2:1 or 3:1 Daime can provide the first dose for 10 people. For the second and third servings progressively smaller doses of usually stronger Daime are served (sometimes as little as 15ml of 9:1 strength *mel* for the final dose).

more explicit: “the ayahuasca drink...has an oily, bitter taste and viscous consistency that clings to your mouth, with just enough hint of sweetness to make you gag.” Many drinkers often carry mints or raw ginger, which they slip into the mouth to offset the harsh aftertaste and concomitant nausea. The range of taste from repellent to slightly sweet is a quality that seasoned fardados discuss much like wine connoisseurs; the highest quality product is designated *mel* (“honey”) because its flavor verges on being pleasurable to the pallet.

During Santo Daime works, the attendees “work” on their individual selves while also making a concerted effort to generate a shared spiritual “energy” (also called *força* [force]), a vigor that flows within and between all of the participants. This topic arose in conversations with Etienne, a 39-year-old fardado from CdAI who works as a registered nurse in the southern Walloon province of Luxembourg. I visited him and his family at their cabin in the wooded Ardennes region. Although his wife does not attend Daime works, they did nevertheless get married in a Santo Daime wedding ceremony at CdAI. He agreed to participate in an interview in exchange for me helping him move dozens of freshly cut logs from the top of a hill on his property down to a firewood stack at the side of his house. When asked to describe what happens at a Daime work, Etienne explained it like this:

Santo Daime works have a special energy...People are sitting in a certain way and all the energy is concentrated over the table...as a person individually you get higher in energy, but all that energy doesn't stay in you, it just goes there, it's a flow...the center of the flow is over the table, and all the energy goes there and goes up to the Astral and from there goes back to all the persons...so by getting focused as an individual person, but adding all those individual persons together, then it's not anymore individual, it's collective.

- **Etienne** (Luxembourg)

This description of the work is similar to that of Frederik, a 47-year-old bachelor who

works as a therapist and astrologer. Frederik has been attending Santo Daime works since 2005 and he became a fardado in 2006. He always sits at the table in CdU because he leads the singing for the men's side during the works. When I visited him at his large home in the remote Flemish countryside, he used the typical daimista terminology of the "current" to describe the mysterious energy that appears in Daime works:

When I feel there is a current, it usually starts at the table, at the center, and so we feel that something is changing in the energy. We feel it physically, we feel it emotionally, we feel it in the presence around us. And then the current goes out, so that you have the first rows, and then the second and the third and the fourth and so on...I find it very difficult to put a word on it. I think it's a combination...it's energy, it's light, it's matter, it's non-matter, it's strength, it's something powerful, sometimes you can smell it, sometimes you don't, sometimes there are colors, sometimes there are no colors, so it also depends because it's different every time.

- **Frederik** (East Flanders)

The cooperative building up of this ectoplasmic "energy" (the "flow"²⁶ of which fardados call the *corrente*, or "current") is potentiated by the altered state of consciousness affecting all the participants and their shared intention to open a bridge to the spiritual dimension. Or as Lars put it:

I think the human brain makes the separation between the material world and the astral world. But in fact, there is no border. The ratio [reasoning mind] can't experience the astral world because it's part of the material world. But our consciousness lives in both worlds; both worlds that are in fact one world. Here around us are plenty of spirits and astral beings and God is here and angels, but we don't see them. We [act] like they don't exist, and they also [act] like we don't exist (laughs). It's like a veil, the veil of Isis²⁷ is taken away. The curtain opens, you can see what is behind. We see in fact there is no curtain. We make the curtain.

- **Lars**

Here again one sees the dismissal of the ego "veil" or "curtain" as an illusory construction of dualistic boundaries. Some fardados claim that during works and while

²⁶ In order to optimize the current's flow between and within participants' bodies, everyone is expected to stand or sit up straight in their chair without crossing their feet, legs, or arms (although gently clasped hands seem to be acceptable). Daimistas believe that the crossing of physical extremities causes energetic blocks, thus discouraging the flow and healing properties of the "current" during the work.

²⁷ Here he refers to ideas discussed by Hadot (2006).

meditating at home they experience out-of-body journeys through alternate dimensions, a phenomenon called astral projection.²⁸

At the same time, the astral is the abode of what fardados call the *Santa Luz* (“Holy Light”), roughly equivalent to other faiths’ conception of the Holy of Holies, Nirvana, or Heaven. My informants impressed upon me frequently that the *feeling* of direct encounters in Daime works with the various beings, energies, and lessons portrayed in the hymns is impossible to comprehend intellectually. Werner used a gustatory analogy to explain the extraordinary sensation of cosmic “oneness” that is accessible through Daime works:

If you want to know it you have to taste it and you have to drink it and then you know what it is...It's like drinking wine. It's like, we can talk all day about wine: wine is made like this from those grapes. And then you have talked about it, and then you think 'Now I know everything about wine'. But when you drink it, then you know it! And it's the same with that oneness. When you have that experience of oneness, everything disappears; your thoughts disappear, your emotions disappear, and there is just deep, deep, deep happiness, deep oneness. Once you experience it, then you know [what it's] about. That's the point where your spiritual path begins.

- Werner

Using a typically Belgian aesthetic metaphor, Etienne also communicated the ineffability of the astral “experience” brought on by the Daime:

I can't tell with words...you can have an experience to get close...it's like [trying] to describe colors to a blind person...you know or you don't know. How do you explain the taste of chocolate to somebody who has never eaten chocolate?

- Etienne

Cemin (2006: 281) highlights the prominence of this astral realm in fardados’ awareness as “the creative source of everything that exists, being represented on earth by the [Santo Daime] leaders and the Sun, Moon, Earth, Wind, and Sea, being the Light of the Heavens, whom one must love,” all of which is reinforced in the hymn lyrics.

²⁸ <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/astral-projection>

There are specific roles that some fardados hold during rituals. Thus every work needs a *comandante* (“commander”), who guides the operation of the works from a lead position at the table. Also sitting at or near the table with the commander (depending on the number of people in attendance) are the *músicos* (“musicians”) who play guitars and other instruments to accompany the singing. Female *puxadoras* (“pullers”) are responsible for knowing all the hymns by heart and they use their loud voices to instigate and “pull” the singing of the entire congregation. Another crucial function is supplied by fardados serving in the role of *fiscal* (plural *fiscais*, Portuguese for “supervisors” or “guardians”), whose functions are to maintain order in the salão and to aid persons having difficulty handling the ayahuasca experience. Acknowledging the significance of all the roles listed above, the value of *fiscais* must be emphasized as a vital cog in the engine of Santo Daime works because their “supervision” (*fiscalização* in Portuguese) upholds the integrity of the ritual space. Fiscal guardians are an essential safety valve, particularly for newcomers struggling to come to grips with the intense psychological and physiological modifications that can occur after the ingestion of ayahuasca. Another internal document entitled “Guidelines for Guardians” (CEFLURIS n.d.) advises new *fiscais* about their delicate duty to assist those in need without letting their own ego fixations disrupt the healing processes of individuals in the work:

As with everything within the Daime, the main teacher is the power itself. The ultimate source of guardianship is provided by the All that Is; all that is Nature, all that is Love, and all Divine Beings. The Daime will teach each guardian how to best fulfill their role, based on their relationship with the power and their own sensibilities...The main guidelines when caring for people are, to make your first priority your own alignment with God, to maintain harmony, and, to keep your interactions subtle and minimal, yet firm. The most important work going on is between each person and the Daime. Even kind actions can interfere with that process. Keep talking, touching, and eye contact to a minimum. If it is absolutely necessary to speak to someone, do so after a hymn is completed, and then say as

little as possible...If a person is throwing up, you can hold the bucket for them and keep their hair out of the way, if they need the help. They may be handling things very well on their own. Often the most helpful thing that you can do is remember that each person is Christ, and treat them with that level of respect, tenderness, and love...Always allow harmony to prevail. If someone doesn't want to do what you think is best, go along with their needs, unless someone will be harmed...ABOVE ALL, TRUST IN GOD. The Daime Knows What The Daime Is Doing.

The Norms of Ritual further describes how “the good fiscal must be serene, gentle and at the same time persuasive and firm when it is about solving problems and situations that bring harm to the harmonious flow of the work” (CEFLURIS 1997). In cultivating this ideal demeanor, skillful fiscals command respect from all participants in the work, and will work in concert with fellow fiscals to address problems that may arise. While fiscals endeavor to resolve issues in the salão without restraining participants, “occasionally this may also be necessary, usually with inexperienced individuals, who, under the effect of the brew, behave in a troublesome or aggressive manner” (MacRae 1992: 105).

Since collective ritual is the most important aspect of Santo Daime religious life, I attended as many different types of work as possible. All official Santo Daime churches hold “Concentration” works on the 15th and 30th of every month. Bimonthly Concentration works are typified by periods of silent meditation at planned junctures within the ritual. These works include a meditative phase of personal introspection where each individual “within the force of the current, of the spiritual energy of the elevated minds and of the protection of our spiritual guides, [tries] to attain a state of contemplation, of complete rest, serene and without thoughts, in which [one attempts] to merge the observer, the observed and the act of observing into one” (CEFLURIS 1997). It is this feeling of mystical union of self and what might usually be considered non-self, which my informants spoke of as a metaphysical solution that leads to therapeutic

solutions in life outside the works. Besides the standard Concentration works every two weeks, there are a variety of works organized irregularly throughout the year that include *Cura* (“Healing”) works (with “Star,” “Cross,” and St. Michael varieties), baptisms, weddings, *Santa Missa* (“Holy Mass”) death memorials, and *Fardamento* initiation rites where members officially become fardados by “receiving their star.” Popular Brazilian rituals of Umbanda were incorporated into the CEFLURIS line of Daime with the addition of *Mesa Branca* (“White Table”) spirit-conjuring rites (see Chapter 6).

While each work possesses a distinct energy of purpose, all works are directed towards a mystical intent verbalized in the special “Consecration of the Space” prayer recited at the opening of each work. This lengthy prayer acts to sanctify the salão by emphasizing that the only presence in the room is a Divine Being simultaneously composed of Harmony, Love, Truth, and Justice (the fourfold motto underlying Santo Daime morality). The prayer identifies this entity as God, stating that “God is the essential Life of all beings, the health of body and mind”; the prayer ends by proclaiming:

In the most perfect communion between my lower self and Higher Self,²⁹ which is God in me, I consecrate this place to the perfect expression of all the Divine qualities that are in me and all beings. The vibrations of my thoughts are the forces of God in me, which are stored here and radiate to all beings.

Again, it is this transcendent state of union (or metaphysical solution) between humans and the conscious spirit of all Nature that is the main goal of Santo Daime devotees. It is no surprise that this ritual use of an entheogen (substances that are believed to reveal the divine within) is tied to a theology of *panentheism*, which “understands God and the

²⁹ As with the entire “Consecration of the Space” prayer, the concepts of “lower self” and “Higher Self” are derived from the influence of the “Esoteric Circle of the Communion of Thought,” of which Mestre Irineu was a member along with the Rosicrucian Order (Labate and Pacheco 2011: 75, 78). Dawson (2007: 83-84) recounts how this Euro-Brazilian “esoteric-Spiritist repertoire served Irineu Serra as a template by which he orchestrated the progressive formalization of this community’s discourse and practice.”

world to be inter-related with the world being in God and God being in the world...[seeking] to avoid both isolating God from the world as traditional theism often does and identifying God with the world as pantheism does” (Culp 2009). The fusion of these multifarious aspects of God in Santo Daime works is deemed to occur inside the subjective being of each participant who is willing to open their heart and mind to the Daime experience. The mystical realization of panentheistic union between the human self and the divine is underscored in hymns sung at Santo Daime works, such as:

<i>Eu estou com Deus</i>	<i>I'm with God</i>
<i>Deus está em mim</i>	<i>God is within me</i>
<i>Eu estando com Deus</i>	<i>I being with God</i>
<i>Deus é o meu caminho</i>	<i>God is my path</i>

- Padrinho Sebastião # 143³⁰

After ingesting the entheogenic sacrament each individual takes their place to commence hours of singing and meditating geared towards manifesting this intention.

Music and the Singing of *Hinos*

Recently, a pivotal publication by Labate and Pacheco (2009, 2010; see also Blainey 2011) instituted the comparative study of the ayahuasca religions’ musical traditions. Aptly entitled *Opening the Portals of Heaven*, this treatise deals with ritual music in both the Santo Daime and UDV. The authors emphasize Santo Daime as a “musical religion” because the ritual ingestion of the sacrament is inextricably tied to the performance of and personal engagement with chanted *hinos* (“hymns”). Through the expansion of CEFLURIS and its offshoots, “the number of hymns today is in the thousands, forming a corpus that keeps growing” (Labate and Pacheco 2010: 31, 92).

These hymns are considered by daimistas in biblical terms as a “third testament” (Labate

³⁰ I will make reference to excerpts of specific hinários throughout this text by citing the person who “received” them and the number of the hymn within the entire hymnal. Short forms of names can be referenced in the glossary of Appendix I (e.g. Padrinho Sebastião # 143 = PS#143).

and Pacheco 2010: 30, 89), witnessed in the way members refer to particular songs and phrases within hymnals like they are bible passages.³¹ Furthermore, these authors observe accurately that for the adepts of ayahuasca religions, the music associated with their rituals acts as “a kind of sign of experience which metonymically condenses the religious experience as a whole” (Labate and Pacheco 2010: 94). Thus, the centrality of the singing of Santo Daime hymns accompanied by instrumental music within ritual works cannot be overstated (to hear what hinos sound like, many videos of Daime singing performances can be found on youtube).

Santo Daime hymns are a type of mantra following a rubric whereby short verses of poetic text are repeated, with vertical lines indicating stanzas to be repeated. As one delves past the surface connotations of the hino lyrics they take on the form of polysemic texts, like modernist literature or religious holy books, because they can have different subjective meanings for different people at different times.³² This polysemic flexibility is amplified when the reader-singer is under the influence of the Daime. So, when reading the lyrics one must remember that daimistas “consider themselves as following a ‘musical doctrine’ and that the hymns only reveal their full strength when sung to the sound of ‘maracás’ and under the effect of the sacred brew” (MacRae 1992: 126). It is nevertheless possible to outline some elementary facets of Santo Daime doctrine as delineated by the hymns.

Explaining how the hymns composing the basic gospel of the Santo Daime

³¹ In my interview with the leader of the Dutch church Céu da Santa Maria, who is widely considered the “Madrinha of Europe,” she concurred with this characterization of the corpus of Santo Daime hymns as a “Third Testament.”

³² See McDonald (1984: 70): “...fertile meaning arises from the polyglot elements of *Finnegans Wake*, Hart Crane, William Blake, or the Bible, Torah, Koran, or any other fractured, layered, polysemic text. The production of meaning, as Eliot saw, can only happen in a complex interaction among the performed word, the act of perceiving it, and the kaleidoscopic contexts produced in that magic moment of connection.”

doctrine are “received from the astral, or the spiritual kingdom,”³³ the church’s principle historian, Lúcio Mortimer, opens Mestre Irineu’s *O Cruzeiro* (“The Cross”) hymnal with a well-known story about how the Mestre initially refused to sing when he was recruited by the Queen of the Forest:

It was the Spiritual Virgin Mother who taught him and ordered him to sing to His brothers. The hymns of the *Cruzeiro* are this revelation: words that are new, beautiful and simple explaining an old teaching. It’s the fruit of Daime and its powerful teachings. From this hymnal comes down a multitude of hymns praising God and His Creation. To speak about the real meaning of the Hymns is a very difficult task. However, despite my ineptitude, I am certain that by loving these songs in my heart, I am fulfilling myself completely in the Spiritual Life.

As noted by MacRae (1992: 126), daimistas believe that the doctrine of Santo Daime is summarized in the final 12 hymns of Mestre Irineu’s hymnal, a subsection called the *Cruzeirinho* (“little cross”) that is performed at the end of every work. Here are some examples of these summary phrases from the *Cruzeirinho*: “The teachings of the Professor bring us beautiful lessons... To respect one’s brothers and sisters...and learn to appreciate one another” (MI#118); “This path of love inside my heart, I ask Jesus Christ to give us salvation” (MI#120); “Whoever seeks this house and arrives here, encounters the Virgin Mary, she gives you your health” (MI#122); “I take this drink which has an incredible Power, it shows all of us here in this Truth” (MI#124); “I tell everybody the hymns are teachings us...The Holy Mary is Supreme...She sent me here to be a teacher” (MI#125); “The House of my Father is in the heart of the world, where all Love exists there is a profound secret...It’s in all humanity, if we all know each other here in this

³³ Receiving hymns is a prevalent but not uncontroversial phenomenon amongst daimistas; of course, one of the main sources of renown for figures of past and present Santo Daime leadership are the quality and widely recognized authenticity of the hymnals they “received” from the astral. On the other hand, fardados are often suspicious of inauthentic hymns that they believe to be a manifestation of the human ego, perceived as only a mimicry of the style and language of authentic hymns. There is also a tradition of the receiver dedicating or “offering” individual hymns to close friends and family as a gesture of camaraderie (Labate and Pacheco 2011: 36)

Truth” (MI#126). While Mortimer is correct that decoding the “real meaning” of Santo Daime hymns is difficult (if not impossible because their interpretation is inherently subjective), these excerpts from the Cruzeirinho do tell us this: The hinos insist that when one drinks Daime, one gains entry to a storehouse of teachings provided by a spiritual “professor” contained both in the beverage and inside every human being; this “master teacher” (*Mestre Ensinador*), which simultaneously represents the divine Feminine and Masculine essences present in all Nature, instructs the drinker in how to access universal truths and wisdom about the human condition; the core thrust of these teachings revolves around the values of unconditional compassion and love for oneself and every other being, principles that mirror the teachings of Christ and other spiritual sages.

Calling attention to the fact that music is a major component of ritual alterations of consciousness found cross-culturally, Shanon (2011: 290) observes that “ayahuasca amplifies an effect intrinsic to music, and in turn, music provides extra fuel for ayahuasca’s psychoactive effects.” The Norms of Ritual manual describes how the spiritual current envelopes all participants in a harmonic energy, eliciting a dissolution of the boundaries that normally separate individuals from each other and from the cosmos:

The dancing and the music generate an energy that is channeled by the vibrations of the maracá. All this propitiates an inner work of spiritual uplift and expansion of consciousness, which supports the *mirações*, the insights and diverse teachings that occur during the work with every member of the current. The hymns guide our ritual expedition. They awaken, encourage, advise and instruct us so that we may be able to make our inner dive, always within the protection of the current. The *firmeza* [“firmness”] of the current rests within the firmeza and consciousness of every brother and sister and his/her obedience to the rules of the work (CEFLURIS 1997).

Miração (plural: *mirações*) is the Santo Daime terminology for “the visionary states produced by the beverage” that can be considered a kind of “shamanic flight,” as

explained by Mapiá elder Alex Polari de Alverga (1996):

This is the summit of the ritual's work. During this lengthy journey, the self unfolds; it remembers and resolves certain karmic problems; it channels energy to heal itself and others; it obtains revealing and emancipating insights for its conflicts; and experiences all types of ineffable states of mystical perception, of comprehension of the universe, love for humanity, premonitions or future events and synchronicity. As a result of all these stages, we are given the possibility of experiencing total ecstasy and a feeling of blessedness. It is important to note that everything described is processed in an inner connection with the music, the singing, the dance, and the rhythm of the maracás.

Visions and other perceptual modifications that are a hallmark of the ayahuasca experience³⁴ are thus guided in Santo Daime rituals by the music and textual meanings aroused by the hymns. This same notion of music providing a structural framework that guides the entheogenic experience has also been noted with indigenous ayahuasca rituals (Andritzky 1989: 80-81). Accordingly, these visions are highly esteemed for their capacity to precipitate “self-knowledge, the assimilation of the message of the hymns, social integration, spiritual healing, and salvation of the soul” (Abramovitz 2002: 21³⁵). Rather than interpreting them as “hallucinations,” daimistas are attentive to insights received through *mirações* and are keen to integrate these existential teachings into their daily lives. However, even though these *mirações* are what attracts many newcomers to Santo Daime, veteran *fardados* cautioned that these psychedelic visions can become an empty infatuation with the projections of one's ego, rather than edifying lessons. *Fardados* consider Daime visions as like the bardo “projections” enumerated in the Buddhist text *Bardo Thödol*, known in the West as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Evans-Wentz 1980[1927]): images of otherworldly beings are ideally treated as archetypal

³⁴ It is common for artistically-inclined ayahuasca participants to be inspired to compose music or visual illustrations as a result of their experiences. For a vivid depiction of the visual images encountered through ayahuasca from a viewpoint of indigenous Amazonian myths, see Luna and Amaringo (1993).

³⁵ “A *miração*, que tem entre seus objetivos o autoconhecimento, a assimilação da mensagem dos hinos, a integração social, a cura espiritual e a salvação da alma...”

guideposts to unifying oneness, rather than as things in themselves. For instance, if one sees a vision of a scary monster or an angel, fardados say it is important to recognize that visions merely convey lessons about how one can evolve spiritually and transcend ego fixations. Elder fardados were aware that spiritual seekers tend to get distracted when they focus too much on encountering otherworldly beings. Etienne, a fardado from CdAI, referred to these as “side effects” of the ego, which can “trick” one into focusing on how spirits are imparting special information. He warned that this is “a big trap, because you get stuck” in the egotistical notion of possessing elite knowledge rather than remembering that the learning process is unending. Werner echoes other Santo Daime elders in downplaying the content of visions, stating that the goal in Daime is really to learn how to “live in union with your family, with your friends, that you see how you can keep the harmony, stay in that loving way...That’s the most important thing, and that’s what the Daime is helping us to realize: to stay in our hearts.” Unlike the dualistic focus of the egotistical mind-brain, the “heart” symbolizes fardados’ ideal of cultivating sensitivity to the underlying unity of all beings.

The themes of ethical teachings and life lessons broached in the many hymns are wide-ranging. One finds a cross-section of the fundamental values and symbols of Santo Daime in this excerpt from Padrinho Alfredo’s hymn #27:

| *Vou receber minha Mãe*
 | *Dentro do meu coração*
 | *Para eu poder caminhar*
 | *Neste mundo de ilusão*

Vou colocar minha Mãe
Bem juntinho do meu Pai
Vida, paz e harmonia
Com isto nos satisfaz

Amor, verdade e justiça

| *I’m going to receive my Mother*
 | *Within my heart*
 | *So I can walk*
 | *In this world of illusion*

I’m going to place my Mother
Right next to my Father
Life, peace and harmony
With this we are satisfied

Love, truth, justice

*Fé, firmeza e consciência
Serenidade, respeito
São partes da providência*

*Faith, firmness, and consciousness
Serenity, respect
Are parts of providence*

*Calma e tranquilidade
Obediência e coragem
Humilhação e prudência
São partes desta imagem*

*Calmness and tranquility
Obedience and courage
Humility and prudence
Are parts of this image*

*Este é o amor divino
Do trono celestial
Que resplandece nas matas
Iluminando todos iguais*

*This is the Divine Love
Of the Celestial Throne
That shines in the forest
Illuminating all equally*

Daimistas consider the hymns as a map or blueprint that teaches them how to nurture these traits in oneself so as to transmit illumination in one's daily life. It is not by merely conceiving of the merit of these ethical-emotional traits that Santo Daime hymns guide daimistas' personal integrity. Rather, the Daime experience fosters an explicit confrontation with the (often repressed) features of one's personality that do not live up to these values. My informants report a broad variety of examples of how their Daime experiences have "corrected" their habits and beliefs, both in terms of detrimental qualities of their individual character as well as what they see as destructive aspects of their cultural upbringing in Europe (see Chapters 6 and 7). In other words, Santo Daime works are considered a means to "working" towards becoming an evermore-enlightened human being. Fardados from outside Brazil also receive hymns, either in Portuguese or in their native language. Frederik, the Flemish fardado from CdU, received an entire hymnal in English that touches on the concept of "ego," which does not typically show up in hymns from Brazil. For example, from Frederik's hymn #7 called "Pluto's Angel":

*I'm the destroyer of old patterns
I don't like the ego's tricks
I'm not fond of mind creations
That will make your true soul sick*

As is witnessed throughout this dissertation, the concept of ego (as a mental construct of separation) is central to how Belgian daimistas interpret the Daime experience.

In a straightforward hymn called *Confia* (“Trust”), the lyrics of MI#119 advise devotees about how to handle and capitalize upon their Daime experience:

<i>Confia, confia, confia no poder</i>	<i>Trust, trust the power</i>
<i>Confia no saber</i>	<i>Trust the knowledge</i>
<i>Confia na força</i>	<i>Trust the force</i>
<i>Aonde pode ser</i>	<i>Where it is</i>
<i>Esta força é muito simples</i>	<i>This force is very simple</i>
<i>Todo mundo vê</i>	<i>Everyone can see it</i>
<i>Mas passa por ela</i>	<i>But they pass by</i>
<i>E não procura compreender</i>	<i>And don't try to understand</i>
<i>Estamos todos reunidos</i>	<i>We are all together</i>
<i>Com a nossa chave na mão</i>	<i>With our key in hand</i>
<i>A limpar mentalidade</i>	<i>Cleaning our mentality</i>
<i>Para entrar neste salão</i>	<i>To enter this temple</i>

All the hymns employ symbolic language, such as the “key” which opens inner doors of latent knowledge. The *Daime* (literally “give-me”) is a catchall term referring to the doctrine organized around this sacramental beverage and the capacity of the rituals to act as a skeleton key for unlocking internal “blocks” that cause problems in people’s lives; sometimes the Santo Daime doctrine is referred to as a “golden key” that is a “key to all my discernment” when it is “consecrated in your heart” (PA#106, 120, and 142). The closing of this chapter will have more to say about fardados’ descriptions of Santo Daime rituals as a key technology or tool for psycho-spiritual transformation and healing. For now, let us look more closely at what Santo Daime hymns have to say. Below are some wordclouds³⁶ extracting the most prominent words found in some exemplary hymnals

³⁶ A *wordcloud* shows a visual representation of high frequency words in a text; it does this by showing high frequency words as larger in the wordcloud (but their relative placement within the wordcloud is random). All wordclouds in this dissertation were created using the open-source software www.wordle.net

Figure 18 (below): A wordcloud from *Flores de São João* (“Flowers of St. John”), a well-known hymnal by Brazilian fardada Cristina Tati. The most frequently cited words include *marcha* (“march”), *vamos* (“let’s go”), *deus* (“I will”), and *coração* (“heart”).



Figure 19 (below): A wordcloud from *A Pilgrimage to the Angelic Realm* (a hymnal received in English by a Belgian fardado in Céu da União). The most frequently cited words include “light,” “angel,” “sacred/holy,” and “soul.”

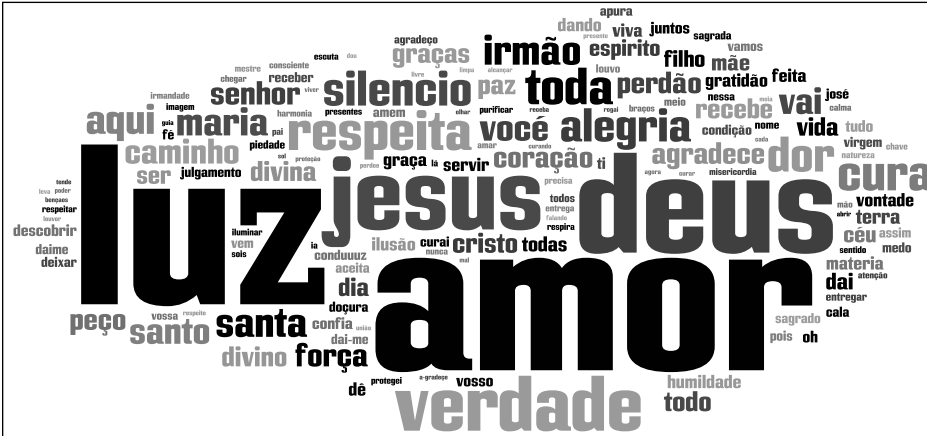
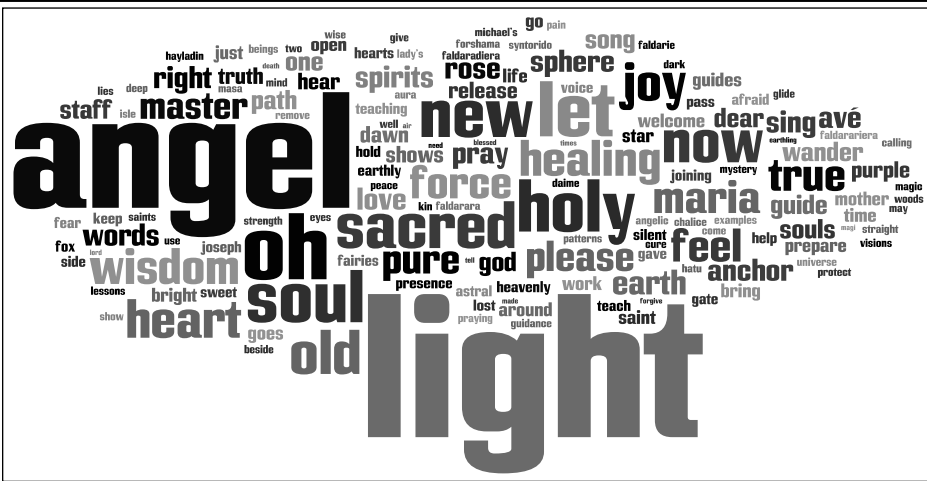


Figure 20 (above): A wordcloud from *Doçura da Luz* (“Sweetiness of the Light”), a hymnal received by the commander of the Belgian church Céu do Arco-Íris. The most frequently cited words include *luz* (“light”), *amor* (“love”), *deus* (“God”), *Jesus*, and *verdade* (“truth”).

The Ethics and Symbolism of Santo Daime Hymns

There are a number of ideological elements contained in the hymns, all of which work in concert to guide the introspective journey of the Santo Daime experience. To begin with there is an assortment of spiritual beings (both anthropomorphic and abstract) whose names and energetic powers are summoned regularly. These include the *Mãe* (“Mother,” an essence of the divine feminine referred to with various names such as “Celestial Mother,” “Queen of the Forest,” and “Divine Virgin Mary”) and *Pai* (“Father,” dubbed as “Eternal Father” or “Sovereign Lord/King/Creator”), often cited together as paired aspects of one androgynous God. From the Afro-Brazilian influences, the hymns identify many deities (*orixás*; e.g. *Yemanjá*, *Ogum*) and indigenous *caboclo* spirits³⁷ (e.g. *Tucum* and *Currupipiraguá*³⁸) that “come from the Astral” (MI#64). The hymns entwine allusions to these Afro-Brazilian names with Judeo-Christian biblical figures such as Jesus Christ (of whom Mestre Irineu is considered an avatar), St. John the Baptist (avatar: Padrinho Sebastião), and King Solomon (avatar: Padrinho Alfredo).

By merging these Christian concepts with eclectic non-Christian spirituality it is believed that Mestre Irineu renewed a genuine connection between human beings and the Divine Absolute, which he termed *Juramidam*. *Juramidam* refers to “the major spiritual entity” permeating the doctrine (Goulart 1996 [Chapter 4³⁹, note 7]) and at the same time refers collectively to all the members of the Santo Daime “family” (Schmidt 2007: 88).

³⁷ The hymns PA#34 and #131 provide a representative list of these Afro-Brazilian *orixá* and *caboclo* spirits, and a general list with information can be found at: <http://www.nossairmandade.com/beings.php>

³⁸ Citing Labate and Pacheco (2004), an official Santo Daime website identifies *Tucum* as the “name of a caboclo, an entity with a lot of power and knowledge. In the native Brazilian Tupi language, tucum is also a name for the palm, *Bactris setosa*, from which strong fiber is made”.

The same website identifies *Currupipiraguá* as “possibly a transformation of Curupira, a religious entity from the northeastern Brazilian state of Maranhão, where Mestre Irineu was born”; see <http://www.nossairmandade.com/beings.php>

³⁹ see www.neip.info/upd_blob/0000/272.pdf

More specifically, according to MacRae (1992: 55) daimistas’:

...work in the astral plane is conceived of as a war or a battle against weakness, impurity, doubt or illness. The daimistas are the soldiers or ‘midam’, who alongside Jura (God) make up the Juramidam Empire, a source of strength for the obedient, the humble and the clean of heart. Thus, Juramidam means God or God and his soldiers, a notion of the divine which is both individualistic and collective.

The spirit of Juramidam, revealed inside and between Santo Daime participants, is all-encompassing and contains all beings and values of Santo Daime as one within itself.

Moreover, Polari de Alverga (1999: 252) identifies Juramidam as “the Divine Being who lives in the spiritual drink,” noting that “the hymns speak of Juramidam as being the new manifestation of Christ in the forest.” This Daime theology resembles the concept in Catholic Christology called “Hypostatic Union,”⁴⁰ described by Belgian theologian Edward Schillebeeckx (1963: 30-31 [note 64], 57) as Jesus’ demonstration of “a divine way of being man and a human way of being God”: “In Christ the redemptive love of God has become an historical reality...and through the Hypostatic Union — Jesus’ humanity assumed in a divine person which thus becomes the ultimate goal of all humanity — Christ is not merely morally representative of all mankind.” In Santo Daime, Juramidam highlights the prospect that every human being can find this mystical Christ quality in themselves, a goal that is facilitated through drinking the Daime sacrament in ritual. Relatedly, Belgian fardados explained the experience of the Holy Light (*Santa Luz*) as a direct encounter with an otherworldly source of unitive radiance. Below are two examples of this outlook, one from Saskia (introduced above) and another from Lambert, a 58-year-old art teacher who currently serves as the commander of CdU.

⁴⁰ Taylor (2007: 278) frames the theology of hypostasis as assuming that “the person is the kind of being which can partake in communion”;
- in Christianity, hypostasis refers to “the one person of Christ in which the divine and human natures are united”; see <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/hypostasis>

The latter has been involved in Santo Daime since 1995 and manages the Flemish Daime church with his wife Hendrickje, who performs the singing role of *puxadora* (“puller”)

for the female side during rituals. These fardados explained the Holy Light this way:

It would be beautiful to live in the Holy Light every minute! Sometimes in the Daime I feel in the Holy Light, and it feels like you are surrounded by light, and everything inside is light, and I can feel my cells and their great spaces, and in the great spaces there is a big light. So in the whole body, everything is enlightened...I think the Holy Light is when you awake the light inside of you, and that you can let it burn: the Christ in you, it's the Christ that wakes up.

- Saskia

They say it is an astral Light...The Santa Luz is real. In the Daime it is a reality, it is there! And when you are lucky, in a good moment you can come completely in the Light. This is one of the mystical experiences you can have. You feel the strongest in the Light. And you feel in the love in the Light. And then you feel everything, you become it, and you feel it, and you know it, and it is Everything when you come in the Light. And during the works, we have moments that we all come in the Light...it becomes clear, really. It becomes very clear.

- Lambert (West Flanders)

So while the Daime sacrament contains the Juramidam being, it is also said to contain the divine illumination of Christ. Indeed, fardados regard the Daime as “liquid light.” These connotations with Christ consciousness mark Juramidam and the Holy Light as the ultimate metaphysical “solutions” in Santo Daime, signifying daimistas’ goal of experiencing firsthand the spiritual merger of God and humanity as one unified being. The importance of experiencing this inner light is revisited at the close of this chapter.

The array of Santo Daime visual symbols also includes overtly Christian icons (crosses, images of Saints, Jesus, and Mary) alongside a mixture of non-Christian motifs (six-pointed stars, crescent moons, hummingbirds⁴¹, trees, flowers, avian wings, and the plants used to make ayahuasca). These visual symbols are alluded to in the hymns, where they swirl together to infer an interwoven harmony of human spirituality and the

⁴¹ Hummingbirds (Portuguese: *beija-flor* [literally, “kisses flowers”]) symbolize the spirit of the Daime (Greganich 2010: 32).

natural environment. It is because of this clear parallelism in Santo Daime between the welfare of the human and natural realms that Schmidt (2007) designated Santo Daime an “eco-religious movement.” Above all, however, the double-armed cross (*cruzeiro*) acts as a kind of symbolic *axis mundi* in Santo Daime life. During works, force/energy from the astral is said to emanate from the center of the table, with the double-armed cross as the focal point. While there is hardly any reference to Christ’s resurrection, the hymns stress Jesus’ suffering on the cross as symbolic of the need to maintain faith in Divine Love even when faced with immense pain, doubts, and fear. As Lars explains:

In the Daime they don’t accentuate [Christ’s resurrection]. In the Daime you don’t have this feast of Easter. Easter doesn’t exist in Santo Daime because they say, ‘Christ is alive’. Why feast his re-birth? Because he’s alive! They feast the Semana Santa [Holy Week], with his suffering and his death. The suffering of Christ, you can also translate it into everybody’s life: the suffering through life and death.

On this topic, another fardada interprets Christ’s resurrection as allegory. Jeannette was born in the French-speaking region of Wallonia but grew up in the Flemish region. She was previously employed in a bio-engineering laboratory of the local university, after which she pursued a career in financial consulting. At age 60, she is now retired and divides her time between taking care of her grandchildren and receiving clients for her astrology practice. She had been attending works at CdU since 2005, when she learned about the Daime through her contact with Frederik, who is also a Flemish astrologer. After recently taking her star to become a fardada, during an interview in her row house residence she stated:

For me the resurrection is what the Daime tells us every time. Every time when we can contact the Higher Self, that’s the resurrection, that’s what Jesus [taught] with the Resurrection: you leave your body, and you’ll be back...every time when we take Daime, and we travel, it’s a possibility to [experience] that we are bigger than our body, that we are bigger than what we can experience with the eyes, the nose, the senses. And that’s the resurrection. So it’s the way that I put it in life: you have

to be whole, and there is more every time.

- **Jeannette** (East Flanders)

Thus one's enduring of suffering during the singing of the Cruzeiro and other hymnals is akin to each individual participant standing "at the foot of the cross" (MI-SM#2; PS#40, 49, 50, and 88; PA#106). As the hymns suggest, this climactic experience can be so acute that it is interpreted as identifying personally with the agony of Christ's sacrifice; "to firm in" the divine light and love contained within the symbol of the crucifixion is considered a means of strengthening one's own firmness and faith (MI#7, GG#27, PS#26, PA#96).

It is not apparent whether it was intentional or coincidental that the star of David (the icon of Judaism) and the crescent moon (the main insignia of Islam) are converged with a Christian cross in Santo Daime iconography; but European fardados nonetheless interpret this conflation as denoting Santo Daime as a common meeting-ground for *all* mystical schools. I met Jewish fardados educated in the Kabbalah, fardados trained as Islamic Sufis, and other fardados who were experts in Buddhist and Hindu meditation and yoga; all affirmed that Santo Daime was helping them to reach the same primordial truths of heavenly light, pervasive love, and cosmic unity that they had learned about in the other mystical schools with which they are affiliated. Instead of isolating these different religious backgrounds, fardados consider Santo Daime to be a "melting pot" where the common truths of otherwise discrete spiritual traditions are homogenized. This accords with Dias Junior's (1992: 47) depiction of cooking the holy drink as resembling how the eclectic Daime "doctrine can be seen as a cauldron where different influences blend together" (cited in Labate and Pacheco 2011: 76). Such notions of brewing

multiple elements into a liquid mixture fit with the “solutions”⁴² trope proffered herein: the material “solution” of plants and chemicals in ayahuasca acts metaphorically to symbolize the metaphysical solution between the observing self and a universal God-Nature, an experience that in turn catalyzes practical “solutions” for daimistas’ well-being. Hence, the mystical union of all existence is promulgated by the hymns’ repeated references to harmonic synergies shared between symbolic concepts. In synchronized contemplation, these symbols act as signposts pointing to the oneness of all things.

In hymn #1 (entitled *Harmonia Cósmica* [“Cosmic Harmony”]) in the hymnal of the same name by Padrinho Zé Ricardo (the Brazilian advisor of the more adaptational CdAI), one finds these atypical lines recited after conventional Santo Daime references to Christian and Afro-Brazilian entities:

Viva a Mãe e Aurobindo
E Massahanu Taniguchi
Viva Buda, Viva Krishna
Viva Gandhi e o Dalai Lama

Hail the Mother and Aurobindo
And Masaharu Taniguchi
Hail Buddha, Hail Krishna
*Hail Gandhi and the Dalai Lama*⁴³

This same hymn closes with stanzas celebrating a concept of “university”: a recognition that the amalgamation of “love, light, [and] eternity” found in different religious traditions is a sign that humans in different times and cultures have achieved the same state of being “one with God and the Universe.” While this hymn is not sung in the conventional rituals of CEFLURIS in Europe, CdU fardados do agree that the universal truths espoused by all great mystical traditions are self-same with the teachings of Santo Daime (see Chapter 6).

⁴² Although it is not found often in the Daime hymns, the word *solução* (“solution”) shows up in hymn #129 of Padrinho Paulo Roberto’s hinário *Luz na Escuridão* (“Light in the Darkness”).

⁴³ Even though they are not officially part of Santo Daime doctrine, all of these people were identified as “Great Spiritual Teachers” by Belgian fardados I interviewed (see Chapter 6 and Appendix III); that is, all except for Masaharu Taniguchi, founder of a Japanese new religious movement called *Seicho-no-Ie*.

The Belgian adaptational group CCMI placed Buddhist and Hindu statuettes on either side of the cross on the table for their works. To invigorate the collective energy of the salão, all Santo Daime works include a series of *Viva* (“Hurray”) calls after every ten hymns or so, with senior fardados (usually male) initiating “Viva” exclamations for various Daime symbols and personages, and the congregation responding with a concerted “Viva!” As an adaptation, the CCMI commander includes unconventional calls such as “Viva Buddha” and “Viva Krishna” in addition to more conventional calls of “Viva Mestre Irineu” and “Viva a Rainha da Floresta” (Hail the Queen of the Forest). He explained that these are all part of the astral energy that the Daime contains. While there was no reference to such unconventional entities in CEFLURIS works, many of these prominent spiritual figures from outside Santo Daime are also highly revered by CdU fardados (see Chapter 6).

After the closing prayers are recited, it is announced that the work is “closed.” A round of applause follows and attendees’ faces often express happy relief that they have braved another work. The clapping then converts into singing of *Parabéns* (“Happy Birthday” in Portuguese⁴⁴) and all members whose birthday is near are brought up to the front to be serenaded.⁴⁵ Then everyone hugs the people in their immediate vicinity, congratulating each other on a “good work” (or *bom trabalho* [in Portuguese], or *goed werk* [Dutch], or *bon travail* [French]). Participants change out of their white uniforms into street clothes before crowding around the food table to snack on the available cuisine. Now begins a social time, with the striking up of various conversations and the

⁴⁴ In the Amsterdam church Céu da Santa Maria, they follow the Parabens song with the Dutch version of Happy Birthday called “Lang zal hij/ze leven” (Long shall he/she live).

⁴⁵ At a CdAI birthday work I attended, a fardado was presented with a beautiful crystal. At CdU the tradition is to give a bouquet of flowers to people celebrating their birthday. I was honored that even though I was not officially a member, after a work at CdU near my birthday I was presented with flowers.

servicing of food (fruit, cake, hot tea, juice, nuts, and Belgian confectioneries such as stroopwafels and *Jules Destrooper* brand cookies). Since the effects of the ayahuasca are still present for a few hours after an intense Daime work, the food tastes delightful!

The discussions immediately after a work are generally relaxed and jovial, with everyone basking in the blissful afterglow of the entheogenic ceremony. But this is not a time for idle chitchat. Instead, the norm is to focus on commiserating about subjects related to Santo Daime. Sometimes newcomers who had a particularly difficult work will be seen resting or talking through their experience with a commander or fiscal. For neophytes like me, this post-work social time is an opportunity to ask questions to experienced fardados about how to best handle difficult or strange situations encountered during the work. While I initially approached fardados with intellectual questions related to the underlying theory of my anthropological research, I quickly learned that such topics were seen as “too mental.” In downplaying mental/intellectual thinking as an ego activity, daimistas prefer to talk in terms of “feeling” and “getting in touch” with the “vibrations” of spiritual entities and one’s “Higher Self.” The ethnographer gradually becomes more adept at engaging with daimistas in their mystically-inclined speech style.

Popular Supplementary Trends

Mention must also be made of some peripheral practices that are customary among many European fardados, but are by no means an official part of Santo Daime doctrine. These include their ingestion of both mundane and obscure natural substances loosely associated with the expansion of ayahuasca culture in Brazil, the acquiring of lustrous crystals, and spiritual books that some fardados deem as equivalent to Santo Daime teachings.

For instance, most European fardados more or less lean towards an organic diet (known colloquially as *bio* in Europe). But this is by no means universal, as the meals I shared with fardados ranged from a totally vegan potluck feast to fast-food hamburgers. Although many daimistas opt for vegetarianism, others like to eat meat, such as those who served me delicious horse salami in Flanders and urged me to try local wild boar in the Walloon Ardennes. On one occasion after a work in Amsterdam, a novice daimista reproved me for bringing non-organic raisins as a contribution. An elder fardado who overheard these judgmental remarks later approached me and expressed his disagreement with the novice's comments; this fardado said that there are no rules in Santo Daime about what one cannot eat/consume, but that he himself does seek out natural as opposed to processed foods, as well as foods that have been produced ethically. While fardados generally prefer to be responsible consumers (a value that accords with their belief that all actions are reciprocal), veteran Santo Daime members are also staunchly disapproving of moral chastising. While many fardados around the world abstain from alcohol, viewing it as a destructive habit, a substantial number of European fardados enjoy alcoholic drinks, but always in moderation. In Belgium, a culture that cherishes its beer, the commander of one of the Belgian Santo Daime churches said that he still appreciates a bit of alcohol now and then, smiling as he affirmed to me that "it's in the blood."

During the intermissions of ritual works some fardados use *rapé* (pronounced *hap-EH*, Portuguese for "snuff"), a powder made from tobacco and burnt bark of South American trees such as "pau-pereira" (*Platycyamus regnellii*).⁴⁶ Rapé, the use of which was borrowed from South American indigenous groups, is administered on oneself or from one person to another via a jointed tube with one end inserted in the nostril and the

⁴⁶ <http://daimeluzsagrada.org/rape.html>

other end in the mouth for blowing air through. The main purpose of this snuff is to provide a temporary calming effect that at the same time sharpens the mind's focus as one enters the Daime work. Some fardados also ingest rapé in their homes when they use it as a complement to silent meditation or as a sleep aid.

After the works of RaS and CCMI, the commanders of the works invite participants to take *kambô*, a secretion collected from the glands of the giant leaf frog (*Phyllomedusa bicolor*). These Brazilian-run Daime churches also offer separate *kambô* sessions open to all Belgian daimistas, but not all daimistas are keen on *kambô* (in fact most members of CdU and CdAI seem to shy away from it). In sequence, each patient sits in a chair and allows the commander of either RaS or CCMI to burn seven tiny wounds into their biceps (or sometimes other parts of the body) with a small wooden ember. Then the fresh scars are removed with paper towel so as to directly introduce globules of the *kambô* plasma. The onset of effects is almost immediate. Onlookers watch and assist as the *kambô* initiates vomit profusely into buckets and then rush to the nearby restroom to commence unstoppable diarrhea. Enthusiasts allege that *kambô* cleanses the body energetically and has fortifying properties (see Labate 2012b).⁴⁷ Because the ethnographic method of participant-observation requires the researcher to go beyond passive surveillance towards direct engagement with informants' lived experiences, I underwent the *kambô* ordeal twice with RaS. Not only did the same outward bodily reactions occur, but both times I was temporarily seized by what seemed an almost unbearable physical discomfort. During the peak of the *kambô*, one feels as if on the verge of total collapse. After a few moments of this agony, the effects subside

⁴⁷ Lab tests have confirmed that this frog's secretion has antimicrobial properties (Beeton, Gutman, and Chandy 2006: 410).

leaving only a euphoric state of deep comfort tinged by a great sense of relief. This alternative medical practice needs further empirical studies to confirm or deny the anecdotal evidence of its safety and benefits.

In their private lives at home, many European fardados are wont to use Bach Flower Remedies, consisting of little brown bottles that contain distilled liquid sourced from different flower species. The liquid is dropped and mixed into a glass of water, which is then quaffed down. These distillations of particular flower species are believed to deliver a range of health and emotional benefits (Bach and Wheeler 1997). Unlike the scientific rationales of Western medicine, daimistas' confidence in the efficacy of these flower essence treatments are based in a conviction that rudimentary components of Nature can heal when the correct knowledge is applied. Many fardados were especially concerned about the implications of new EU regulations decreed in 2011 under the "Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive"; while this law was meant to address the fact that "the use of herbal medicines in Europe is on the rise," it has upset communities who advocate and use folk remedies not recognized by the state (Dente 2011: 636). Daimistas are not just concerned about the prohibition of psychoactive entheogens, but they believe that non-psychoactive folk remedies like those mentioned above are being banned because these threaten the profits of the pharmaceutical industry.

Placed throughout many fardados' homes are rock crystals of various colors, shapes, and sizes. These were also placed on the central table in some Santo Daime works, particularly the more adaptational varieties of RaS and CCMI. At one birthday work with CdAI, the commander presented a fardado with a large purple crystal as a birthday gift in a public presentation following the ritual. Upon being asked about the

large collection of crystals placed throughout his Antwerpen apartment, a fardado who works as a Western-style medical doctor said: “they contain the most sacred light that you can find on this earth.” These crystals are a prototypical object of New Age devotion, and are sold in New Age shops throughout North America and Europe (Laqueur 1997: 36-37). Just like Christian, Afro-Brazilian, and indigenous elements were included in Mestre Irineu’s original inventory, New Age ideas are now being incorporated into the Daime doctrine along with Asian and Middle Eastern traditions.

Parallel to these trends in consumption habits, it is typical for fardados’ homes to be adorned with images and symbols from a variety of different religious backgrounds, as well as with a large collection of books dealing with a host of spiritual topics. It would be beyond the scope of this dissertation to account for all of the mystical avenues explored by individual fardados.⁴⁸ But although it is not directly associated with Santo Daime doctrine, one book in particular is cherished by many European fardados, a large volume called *A Course in Miracles* (Schucman 2007[1976]). The text of *A Course in Miracles* was transcribed by Helen Schucman, a Professor of Medical Psychology at Columbia University, with the aid of her colleague William Thetford, who helped her to edit and ultimately publish the final volume. From 1965 to 1973, Schucman heard an “inner voice” dictate the Christian message of *A Course in Miracles* to her, and she wrote down these words even though she considered herself an atheist (Hanegraaff 1998: 30). The “combined volume” of *A Course in Miracles* consists of a main theoretical section that is meant to be read in tandem with a “workbook” section comprised of specific lessons to guide short stints of daily meditation. The book as a whole embodies a strong statement of panentheism, agreeing with Santo Daime doctrine in its proclaiming that

⁴⁸ See Chapter 6 for a more thorough discussion of how fardados esteem a variety of religious traditions.

God is in everything and everything is in God. In offering existential advice, the Course also contends that the world perceived as outside is merely a “projection”: “The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that... Therefore seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world” (Schucman 2007[1976]: 445). Its emphasis on the divinity located in the interior world of the conscious subject parallels the basic teachings of most mystical philosophies. The Course’s text pinpoints the main hindrance to realizing inner and outer peace as the widely-held egotistical belief in the division of internal self and external not-self. Fardados say that in Daime works they learn that everything in the outside world is intimately connected to their own self and vice versa. This realization inspires them to abide by the Christian “golden rule” (“do unto others as you would have them do unto you”) not as a moral axiom, but as following from the essential unity of self and other.

A Course in Miracles is considered a comprehensive blueprint detailing how the ego is the “great deceiver” (Schucman 2007[1976]: 416), refuting the modern notion of disenchantment by equating the Nietzschean scheme with ego neuroses: “The ego is at war with God... The death of God, if it were possible, would be your death” (Schucman 2007[1976]: 486). Fardados’ views about how Santo Daime affects the ego are expressed by a Belgian fardado’s response when asked why he participates in Santo Daime:

To cure. Basically that’s the main point: to cure myself from my ego, and to help people to cure themselves from their ego. By taking ayahuasca, to get so sensitive to myself, to get so sensitive to other persons, just to try to live together in harmony, just that... [Western psychiatry] made an entire system to cure the ego... the problem is the ego makes himself a system to cure himself, so of course it doesn’t work, because ego is tricky... so he made a structure to have this feeling to be ok, but it didn’t work, because he himself is the problem, the ego himself is the problem...

For me, [Santo Daime is] a complete way... All spiritual ways have the same goal: to get out of the ego... [The ego is] what makes living so difficult for everybody, so just to cure that. To make living just simple... happiness, that’s about

it...[Ayahuasca] doesn't solve the problem, it shows you where the problem is...so after, it's your decision to just look, and to change or not look and not change. But it will not do the work for you, it's just (for me) a very fast way if you decide to move fast...It just depends on the intention...you give a direction and then the ayahuasca just guides you to this intention...The idea is not to get rid of the ego, the idea is to ask the ego to serve, and to show him that he has more interest by serving than by trying to keep the power.

- Etienne

Fardados are clear that the goal of curing the ego does not mean that one has to eradicate the ego.⁴⁹ Rather, the goal is to realize how the belief in one's individual separateness (i.e. ego) is merely a practical concern in daily life, and that at a deeper level of reality all beings are actually united as a single divine consciousness:

For me, my ego is a part of me that is not me (laughs). It's all kinds of things that help me to survive and to have a life here on earth. So it's very useful, there are very useful things in it, and I've learned a lot through it. And I also need my ego to put things in form, because without my ego I would be nothing of course. But it's my ego that has to serve my consciousness and not the other way around...getting the ego into a place where it is loyal to the Higher Consciousness, then it is really tamed. Because you can tame something, but it stays quite wild or vicious, and it just waits until it can get you in some way, that is not tamed. By tamed I mean it's loyal, it's faithful, and it knows that you will care for it, that it can make mistakes and it will be forgiven.

- Frederik

Once the perils of identifying with one's egotistical conditions are exposed through working with Santo Daime (or any other mystical practice), fardados believe that the ego can play a new role in the service of one's "true self" or "Higher Consciousness."

The reasons for the popularity of A Course in Miracles among European daimistas are exhibited in a discussion with two fardados who attend CdSM in Amsterdam; when asked what was the most important lesson they had learned from Daime, the woman (a Belgian fardada from Antwerpen province) told me how both the

⁴⁹ This concurs with the Buddhist teacher Chogyam Trungpa's (1973: 180) advice about *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*: "many people make the mistake of thinking that, since ego is the root of suffering, the goal of spirituality must be to conquer and destroy the ego...That struggle is merely another expression of ego."

Course in Miracles and Santo Daime help people to “dissolve/resolve” their ego:

ego loslaten [“to release ego”]...*If you’re singing the hymns, all blocks within yourself are being dissolved/resolved [“opgeloost”]...they cease to exist...It’s the thing that shows and lights all the blocks⁵⁰ you have, and all the things that keep you separated...It shows the Christ awareness...and it helps you to let go of the ego...In the end, Daime is just a liquid, and it’s you that has to do it...You can drink liters and liters of Daime, but if you’re not working yourself, there’s no point. It will probably not help you if your own intentions are lacking or missing or not there.*

- **Charlotte** (Antwerpen)

Charlotte is a 52-year-old social worker who has been active in Santo Daime since 2006.

Her daughter from a previous marriage (the mother of Charlotte’s granddaughter) has attended Daime works with her mother, but was not keen on the experience. Charlotte’s Dutch boyfriend told me that A Course in Miracles can serve as a “key” to the ego:

For me it’s such a key...it really helps me connect it, what I experience in the Daime, in my daily awareness...So much is explained there about how the ego works, and how it confuses people instead of showing them something that’s more true. And ego is just illusions creating more illusions and fears.

All European fardados I spoke with identify ego illusions as the main source of psychological and physiological suffering and illness. This is the same sense of the individual human actor as secluded from spiritual forces that has been exalted in secular modernity, what Taylor (2007: 262, 300) calls the “buffered” identity. In contrast to the “buffered” self, fardados are more likely to agree with A Course in Miracles (see Schucman 2007[1976]: 118-119, 182) that anguish stems from “sleeping” human beings’ identifying with their dualistic ego; my informants say people would be wise to “awaken” to the divine will that flows within and between all beings. In short, fardados believe that inside each person is a divine quality shared in unison at the core of all beings.

⁵⁰ The Course in Miracles talks about how “the ego’s whole thought system...blocks your joy, so that you perceive yourself as unfulfilled” and how “the removal of blocks, then, is the only way to guarantee help and healing” (Schucman 2007[1976]: 132, 153).

According to European fardados, A Course in Miracles is simply a more detailed verbalization of the lessons that they receive from the introspective journeys they embark upon in Daime works. Fundamentally, in the modified states of consciousness available in Santo Daime, fardados seek to experience a meditative awareness of the observer observing itself, a beatific and curative revelation of the source of all being. They believe that it is from this unique vantage point, where observer and observed are witnessed as a single entity, that the ego conflicts underpinning all suffering and illness can be resolved.

A Key to Solutions: Santo Daime Rituals as *Suiscope* Technology

Daimistas claim to have achieved astoundingly positive results through working with Santo Daime. Not only do they assert that the Santo Daime experience can help to heal personal and social conflicts, but fardados also contend that their spiritual practice helps to repair the current discord between humans and the natural environment. Cemin (2006: 279) recounts the predictable outcomes of Santo Daime practice thusly:

Daime reconciles man with himself, with his social milieu, his history, position and culture, and with the milieu of origin of the product which is essential to Daimistas: the forest, because 'Daime is from the forest, the doctrine is from the woods', and, for example, Daime harmonizes man with the whole cosmos represented by the woods, the stars, and the visible and invisible, physical and spiritual beings that inhabit them."

It is understandable that such claims stimulate the curiosity of many people around the world today who are seeking psycho-social healing and/or those who are concerned about continuing ecological crises such as deforestation and declining biodiversity. Through interviews, I urged my informants to explain *how* their commitment to Santo Daime helps them to realize such an idyllic state of being.

In the following quotations from European Santo Daime members, one sees daimistas' explanation of how the ritual use of ayahuasca can foster personal "transformation" (see also Cougar 2005; Schmidt 2007: 141-144). One Flemish firmado, a banker who was preparing to soon become a fardado, told me that the main intention of participating in Santo Daime is to "integrate our demons" and to transform "sorrow into serenity." In the words of another veteran fardado, a Friesian playwright and theatre director who now lives with his fardada girlfriend in the Brussels suburbs:

One of the most difficult things I transformed was revenge to love. For me that was very hard...The Santo Daime helps you to do it. It's a big help to transform. Once I said 'I want to be happy.' Then I thought someone would give me that. And now I know it's just work! And now I found something that gives me the possibility to change myself!...It's amazing!

- **Alwin** (Brussels)

Of course, all religions provide what their devotees consider as practical and spiritual guidance and help for dealing with difficulties faced in daily life. Fardados are no different from the followers of other religions in their claim that Santo Daime affords liberation from bodily and psychological suffering. My highlighting of my fardado informants' repeated use of words like "solution" is not meant simply to communicate the obvious point that their religious practice aids them in both adapting to hardships and appreciating wonders of the human condition. Rather, I refer to their language of "solutions" as a multidimensional trope, whereby variations in the related meanings of this word serve to convey to outsiders the emic (insider's) perspective of Santo Daime's capacity for all-purpose healing. Thus, in the interview transcripts there is a recurrent reference to finding practical "solutions" through working with Santo Daime; at the same time this text propounds a metaphysical discourse pinpointing fardados' captivation with the notion of two or more elements becoming one. Fardado interviewees often used

words connoting the conjoining of two entities, such as: connected, communion, link, contact, touch, engage, lock, bound, combine/combination, unite/union, synthesis, dissolve, mix, integrate/integration/integrating, and balance. In direct relation to European fardados' language of "solutions" is their characterization of Santo Daime rituals as a complex technique that acts as a "key" to accessing these solutions. As discussed above, fardados believe that by nurturing the current of Holy Light energy in Santo Daime works, they can incarnate that energy, which helps to allay the amount of suffering in themselves and in the world. While this idea is outlandish to secular non-believers, fardados believe that the Daime rituals constitute a precise method for conjuring and directing divine astral energies, which heal individual participants by dissolving ego barriers.

In both ancient and modern times, certain cultures have recognized the fact that the safety of entheogens is optimized when people with expert knowledge use them in appropriately ritualized settings. Scholarly researchers have also realized that the nature of the entheogenic experience depends largely upon the mentality (the "set") of the individual ingesting the entheogen (i.e. expectations, preparedness, emotional stability), as well as on the physical and social "setting" in which they consume it (e.g. the difference between a laboratory experiment and a rock concert) (see Zinberg 1984). Likewise, members of Santo Daime, far removed from the nonchalant or recreational attitude towards entheogens that caused so much trouble in the 1960s, appreciate that the cooperative intentions (set) and context (setting) of ayahuasca drinking are imperative. For instance, when asked to state the difference between using and abusing entheogenic substances, the commander of CdAI said:

For me, using in a good way is: put yourself in connection with God, with your sacred part, putting yourself in prayer, and to be attentive along the process to what happens...it's important for me to do that in group, not alone. Santo Daime is not to do alone. The group: at least 2, 3, 4 people...It's also a tool: there's the plants, the prayer, the songs, the music, and the group. Because there is the 'egregore'⁵¹... the sum of the spiritual energies of the people is a whole thing in itself. It has its own strength and connection. Christ said: 'If 2 or 3 people are put together in my name, I will come.'

- Cécile (Liège)

Cécile is 56 years old and works as a nurse for the elderly. Born in Brussels and now living in Liège province, she has the rare trait of speaking both French and Flemish fluently, a talent she draws on to utter bilingual instructions in all CdAI works. She has been involved in Santo Daime since 2003 when she was introduced to the doctrine by her cousin, a woman who was present at the first Daime work in Belgium in 1989. Her exemplary reference to the “tool” analogy in the quotation above is crucial for understanding fardados’ views about Santo Daime rituals. It has been suggested thatentheogens can in themselves be considered as “cognitive tools” (Tupper 2002; see further discussion in Chapter 7). But fardados actually deem the entire structure of Santo Daime works as a composite tool made up of components that include specialized ritual constituents (like music), the group atmosphere, and the intention of participants, all essential elements of set and setting which work in concert with the Daime sacrament. This is similar to how shamanic “technology” has been depicted “as a group of techniques by which its practitioners enter the ‘spirit world,’ purportedly obtaining information that is used to help and to heal members of their social group” (Krippner 2000: 93). In a congruent manner, Labate (2011b) discusses the hybrid notion of *tecnologias do sagrado* (“technologies of the sacred”) throughout her recent dissertation

⁵¹ Her reference to the esoteric “egregore” concept evokes the metaphysical “theory that their exist immaterial energy complexes that are sustained by human beliefs and emotions, and consequently assume a quasi-independent, personal guise” (Godwin 2007: 63).

on global networks of Peruvian ayahuasquero shamanism.

According to a fardado who performs the role a fiscal at CdU, the particular setting of Santo Daime rituals are what he called a *kader* (Dutch for “framework”), which steers the ayahuasca experience towards specific goals. He contrasts this framework of ritualized works with the independent (or *psychonautic*⁵²) use of entheogens that he experimented with before he found Santo Daime:

To see the kader [framework], to be in relation with the experience but guided as a structure, so this was the whole thing which was missing...in all the times before [when he used entheogens independently]. Because that was just the experience by myself, going through and seeing what happened and what came by and what was there, but then most times you are left behind, not in a confused way but...it was always by itself, always in the moment. It was not so much related to...the bigger understanding...I think that...to get deeper into the plants, as you would say, I think [the framework is] needed. You need guidance, not a physical, but a sort of mental guidance towards awareness...

Music you can describe as a really close relation to energy, vibration. Energy is difficult to grasp, but with music it comes much closer, not for the understanding, but for the tensions in what the vibration did. So in this sense, it's full on, it's there. So, you can speak about tones and about the singing: bringing the music, the tones into your body in the vibration...that's it! [The lyrics of the hinos], they help with the process in that time in that moment for you. So everybody will read them on a different level, on a different reflection. And they help you to overcome fears, for example, to come into the trust, to come into the understanding.

- Hugo

So it is evident that Santo Daime works are considered a programmatic framework in which music guides what is simultaneously an individual and a collective experience.

Through this ritual format, fardados see themselves as coming into contact with astral energies through an entheogenic sacrament. But what about the schema or frame of mind of individual participants?

⁵² People who use entheogens without identifying with a specific religious affiliation designate themselves as *psychonauts*, or explorers of inner-space. This lifestyle is widespread on the internet, where individual psychonauts exchange their experiences and advice based on quasi-scientific knowledge (Móro et al. 2011; Schifano et al. 2006). Although psychonauts seek visions and personal spiritual fulfillment through substances like ayahuasca, they tend to prefer to do so in autonomous and less structured contexts rather than in formal religious organizations like Santo Daime (see Chapter 4). The ayahuasca tourists discussed in Chapter 2 are an example of independent psychonauts.

When fardados asserted that attending Santo Daime works helps them in their daily lives, I asked them to elaborate on how this process occurs. One fardada emphasized the importance of orienting her “intentions” according to the concept of *firmeza* (“firmness”) as a major factor determining the lessons about ego she receives during the Daime works:

For me firmeza is knowing your goal. It's not being distracted by bad thoughts, or by ego. It's knowing who you are and what you're part of. And it's having this connection with the universe: not being disturbed by bad things, by negative things...I just go there with certain intentions. For instance, when I have a fight with a person...sometimes I'm not even really aware that I'm struggling, but I know there's something wrong. And then I ask in the work 'Please Daime, help me to find out what the problem is.' And very often I get the solution. But very often I also feel that the Daime wants me to find it out for myself; that I need to do it myself. Or sometimes it's not the time to solve the issue already. But it always gets solved anyway. Daime or no Daime, it always gets solved anyway. But Daime gives me the strength to look at it and to handle it like I should. Sometimes you need to think about it but sometimes you just need to let it go...For me, ego is the thing that cuts off your connection with the universe and with other people...and it comes in different forms, it's a challenge. So, the good thing is it makes you grow. So we shouldn't say it's bad or not bad. It exists, and you need to overcome it in life. I think once you've done that, you can die peacefully (laughs).

- Astrid (Antwerpen)

Astrid is a 39-year-old receptionist from Antwerpen province who has been attending Daime works since 2006. Like other fardados who live in the northern part of Antwerpen, she prefers to make the trip to Amsterdam to attend the church of CdSM. Although she has dated fellow fardados, she was currently single at the time of our interview. In the quotation above, one witnesses the fundamental meaning of the word *Daime* (Portuguese: Dai-me [“Give me”]) as a request for personal aid concerning common human problems.⁵³ Astrid pronounces a typical explanation of how daimistas approach their Daime experiences as an orchestrated opportunity to ask questions to the

⁵³ For instance, hymn #35 of Germano Guilherme speaks from the point of view of the Daime spirit addressing a Daime initiate: “If you ask me, I will keep giving you.”

spirit world about problems in their lives. Here the Daime is a kind of divination practice of receiving knowledge from the astral otherworld through one's own subjective being. Depending on the nature of the problem, the otherworldly "teacher" that is conjured through the Daime is seen as a universal source of guidance and/or support that assists the daimista in overcoming the problem. When fardados speak about the mechanism of Santo Daime solutions, they use words such as "trigger," "transform," and "tool," describing it as a kind of catalyst or "key" that can unlock any personal obstacle:

Daime is the key to that state, to that conscious spirituality...if there's a solution in a room and you standing in front of that room but the door is locked (laughs)...you can't get to it...a lot of stuff is in front of us to go to an essence. Daime is the key to go through there, and go to the solution ...Daime, in a sense, it's already an oplosing [Dutch: solution] itself...what Daime does is confronts you to a condition which is not correct yet, makes you sick...what you do in Daime is actually alchemy. What is alchemy? You make from lead, you make gold. Ok, as a metaphor: you make from a very bad condition, jealousy, you make true love. Daime does that...Daime shows you, gives you a path, the key to find all these things that were incorrect or work against you, small parts of your ego, and turns them into gold. It's an alchemical process: make a goal of it, and just look, look, look. Then you take a solution, make another solution, to have an alchemical process in your own body. What is alchemy? Well, it's finding the Holy Grail at the end. Make the potion...For me...[it's] the entheogen, the sacrament basically, which helps you to go into the layers of your subconscious so it becomes conscious. You have to unravel, actually, all your conditions that make you sick or make you worried or make you afraid or make you angry and all that...what triggers that? Daime shows that, because if you do a work, you've done works, it brings you first into your everyday reality and you see yourself...So, it all boils down to your condition, what people mirror at you. Everybody mirrors each other, and we play a role towards each other.

- Karel

This quotation captures the essence of Belgian fardados' view that the liquid-spiritual "potion" of ayahuasca imbibed in Santo Daime rituals acts as both a physical and psychological "key" or catalyst to practical and metaphysical "solutions." But rather than searching for the "holy grail" or converting lead into gold in the outside world, these metaphors show how fardados seek "boiled down" solutions through mystical

experience. As mentioned above, this idea of Daime as a key that unlocks inner solutions is reinforced in the hymns, such as the lyrics of PA#91, which locates the source of “salvation” as the inner Jesus: “it is in me, it is in everyone...you are all light that illuminates all darkness...you are the key of the Astral.” According to fardados, having the right intentions (such as openness and trust towards what the Daime has to teach, as opposed to wanting the ego to control the experience) is a basic component of an ideal mind-“set.” Both Astrid and Karel place special importance on the “intention” to “look” at what is presented to one’s consciousness upon entering the Santo Daime experience.

European fardados’ notion of ayahuasca rituals as a “key” to accessing practical and metaphysical *solutions* evokes Michel Foucault’s (1988: 18) theorizing on “technologies of the self...specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves...so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”⁵⁴ Some authors have likened entheogens to technological utensils designed to help an observer peer into otherwise inaccessible realms; it was decades ago that philosopher Allan Watts (1965: 25-26) and psychiatrist Stanislav Grof (1976: 32-33) used the language of microscopes and telescopes to depict how entheogens can magnify normally hidden aspects of the subconscious self. More recently, psychologist William A. Richards (2005: 378) reiterated this analogy: “As the telescope is to astronomy, or the microscope is to biology, so are entheogens to psychiatry and especially, to the psychology of religious experience.” While these comparisons fit nicely with fardados’ conceptualization of Santo Daime rituals, no one has yet named this new type of “scope” instrument! I propose the term *suiscope* (Latin

⁵⁴ For a similar discussion of ayahuasca spirituality and Foucauldian concepts of transformative technologies, see Costa (2009).

suī- [“oneself”⁵⁵] + Greek *-skopein* [“to look at”⁵⁶]) as a neologism that best characterizes fardados’ technological portrayal of Santo Daime works. Thus, the ayahuasca is not so much a tool by itself as it is one essential cog in a multipart technology of the Santo Daime ceremony as a whole. Thus, the ritual apparatus of Santo Daime works acts as an introspective device that helps one to look at oneself (i.e. a sui-scope). So just as technologies like microscopes and telescopes allow humans to gaze upon distant realms of the very small and very far away, so does the suiscope of Santo Daime rituals allow the observing self to observe itself. Further, according to my informants, the suiscope of Santo Daime helps them to achieve medical and existential solutions by revealing new information about aspects of their emotions and psyche of which they were previously unaware. If these claims are seriously considered, it is possible that just as microscopes and telescopes have triggered revolutionary breakthroughs in microbiology and astrophysics, enteogenic rituals could divulge potential advances for psychiatry. So what is it that happens when one looks earnestly into the suiscope apparatus furnished in Santo Daime works? And how does this experience of looking through the suiscope provide solutions?

The collective task of each attendee making contact with this deepest dimension of selfhood is the main goal of Santo Daime works. According to my informants, when one looks inside oneself during a Daime work (i.e with eyes closed, as opposed to looking outside with eyes opened), one “confronts” the inner observer, the source of subjective consciousness located underneath the noise of our thoughts and emotions.

⁵⁵ The genitive case reflexive pronoun; see Collins (1985: 243, 248).

⁵⁶ <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/-scope>

One Belgian fardado with a background in Hindu meditation⁵⁷ called this inner observer the “witness,” the “light,” and the “True Self”:

Sometimes the confrontation with aspects of yourself that are painful, you don't want to see them because everybody is afraid. The Santo Daime is a big confrontation... When you don't know that you can find peace, happiness inside [yourself]... then you try to find that happiness and the things that you need (everybody needs to feel home, to feel good, to feel comfortable inside; I don't mean materially, but to feel the rest and the peace in yourself). When you don't have that experience, then you have to find it outside. So most people... they try to find that happiness outside but sometimes they do crazy things for it: sometimes they think 'When I have a lot of money, then I will be happy' or 'When I have a lot of sex all the time then I [will] feel good' or 'When I can eat very good things every day'... or drinking [alcohol]...

But most people, the first thing that you experience when you look inside is what is covering that happiness and that well-being, and that is your judgments and all your conditions. And you have to go through that before you reach the Light in yourself or the beauty in yourself... You have to look to clean, and that looking is cleaning yourself. And when the Daime came for me, it was a big cleaning. To clean all those layers that I was not, but I had that in my cells: the judgments, the hate, all these negative things I also had in me. Because you are the world. Everything that exists in the world exists in you. So you have to dive deep into yourself. And when you dive in yourself, you are confronted with all those doenças [diseases]. And you have to look at those doenças to clean them. Looking is the Light. Seeing it is the Light. When you see it, it disappears: When you see your fear, your fear disappears. When you see your hate, your hate disappears... All those experiences of hate, experiences of jealousy, experiences of happiness, are temporary. But behind all those experiences is the Silence... The Silence is the witness. It's the mirror in yourself that is your True Self... The goal is to connect with your True Self, that's the goal of life...

When there is fear, look at it. When there is jealousy, look at it. That looking at it is the Light in yourself. The Light makes that shadow (that is that fear or that hate⁵⁸), the Light makes [it] disappear. That's the doorway, that's a very simple thing... We are not this body, we are not our mind, but when you think you are that mind and your emotions... the emotions make you sick. Because that is not the truth. You are just being. That's what you are. It's the emotions that make the body sick... I have experienced fear in the Daime sometimes because I still have that fear in me. And it sometimes comes very heavy, the fear, and... just looking, and it's gone... The disconnection, when you think that you are your emotions... when you think that you

⁵⁷ As is seen in Appendix III, a large number of yoga and meditation teachers from India are highly respected by Belgian fardados, a testament to the continuity they see between Santo Daime and the Eastern spiritual traditions.

⁵⁸ Numerous fardados with whom I spoke claimed that the Daime shows the destructive aspects of one's subconscious (using the Jungian archetype of the “shadow” [Grof 1998: 21]), and that by illuminating this source of life's problems one can disengage from pathological fixations.

are your thoughts...when you think that you are a big man, or when you think that you are nothing. Because it's a lie...you are just being...

- Werner

What he calls the “mirror in yourself” is located at the source of subjective consciousness inside each human being. So just like some microscopes and telescopes employ mirrors to expose the very small and very distant, the Santo Daime suiscope also works with a mirror principle to reveal the observer to itself. Describing perhaps the most literal form of self-“reflection,” this mirror metaphor surfaced again when the commander of CdU was asked about his intentions in drinking Daime:

It is always to work on myself. To try to see what I do not see. To see the mirror, to look in the mirror...I can fulfill y very big hunger [for] spirituality in the Santo Daime. I do not need other things anymore. I have enough with this...to live without this spirituality, I would miss it very much...Spirituality, it is to go in yourself, and to connect with your Higher Self...It is difficult to make a connection with your Higher Self when you are not used [to it]. In the Santo Daime, you have a sacrament who is helping you to connect with your Higher Self...The lessons you get from your Higher Self, God in yourself, bring you to the harmony...and you feel better. You feel what you should not do and you feel what you should do. Your Higher Self knows what's good for you...It is God in yourself. God is everywhere, but He's also in yourself. So with the Daime, you connect with yourself, God in yourself...

- Lambert

By looking at that which looks, treating one's innermost self as an oracle, fardados say that the observer sees that it is essentially one and the same with whatever it observes.

All this talk of light and mirrors recalls how scholars have tried to put into words the utmost effects of ayahuasca (Shanon 2002: 273-283, 381-382) and entheogens in general (Smith 2000: 10-13, 74-75). According to Belgian fardados, when one observes the reflection in this inner mirror, one generally sees the impurities of one's ego reflected back as visions, insights, and lessons specifically geared to each individual's “conditions.” In general, my informants report experiences with ayahuasca similar to

those summarized by Sudhölter's (2012: 9) Dutch informants: "they go up to heaven or descend into hell; others travel through a wide range of 'other realities'...visions of, or communication with supernatural beings: from religious figures like Jesus and Mary to aliens and 'beings of darkness'" (the latter known also as *espíritos sofredores* ["suffering spirits"]). Yet in pinnacle moments of the Daime experience (i.e. after one has done the work of inner "cleaning"), the reflection is so clear that the ego barrier separating self and not-self dissolves, leaving only what is felt to be a vibrant, unadulterated Light. This revelation is not limited to entheogens, as the suiscope phenomenon is also a central facet of ancient mysticism. Recalling the biblical language of Paul,⁵⁹ the paraphrased view of a 4th century Christian monk named Evagrius, describing what happens in states of deep meditative prayer, is identical to how Belgian fardados describe the Holy Light:

The purified mind sees itself, its truest self, its true state. The self it sees is luminous. The luminosity that permits it to see itself is the divine light...It also sees and knows by seeing — indirectly, as in a mirror — the uncreated, immaterial light that God is (Harmless 2008: 153).

Or as a non-Christian example of the same suiscope principle, the following quote from Rumi, a renowned author from the mystical Islamic *Sufi* tradition:

Every time you really look at your false self, you die. After thousands of repeated deaths, you begin to realize what in you lives forever, lives beyond all schemes and fantasies. What you have been searching for all your life will start to appear. Rub and go on rubbing a filthy mirror and however filthy it is to start with, eventually the pure glass will begin to be revealed, and shine (Harvey 1996: 136).

Through mystical techniques like meditative prayer or Daime works, practitioners believe that one can work towards polishing the inner mirror. An unclean mirror is covered in the "filth" of ego fixations, repressed memories, and emotional hang-ups. By cleaning (or literally purging) these illusions through Daime, daimistas say they can bask in the

⁵⁹ 2 Corinthians 3-18: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Light of oneness with all that is.⁶⁰ As a collective, they believe that when many individuals are attuned to this Holy Light at the same time, they combine to open a portal to the astral.

Of course, as all daimistas are aware (and I can attest to this after undergoing dozens of Daime ceremonies), every work is different. Perhaps the best explanation would be to say that there are infinite varieties of ayahuasca experience. Even though one can never know what to expect, there is a continuum whereby Daime works fall within a range between the following: intensely “beautiful” (full of Light, love, and pleasant feelings of harmony), severely “heavy” (feelings of nausea and confronting fears, which daimistas consider as forms of *cura* [“healing”]), or disappointingly lackluster (boring, an absence of feeling the brew’s effects).⁶¹ Often combinations of these are experienced through the course of the work. The heavy cleaning works can be quite challenging, and more participants tend to vomit during these rituals. Nevertheless, in all works Belgian fardados have the same core intention of inner purification in search of mystical solutions to the ego. They then seek to enact these solutions in their daily lives (see Sudhölter [2012: 53-54, 58] for similar findings with Dutch fardados).

The hymns attest to the curative properties of this inner divine Light, as in PA#67:

*Eu entrei em entendimento
Entre meu eu e material
Sou luz expulso doença
E destrincho a causa dela*

*I entered an understanding
Between my self and matter
I am light, I expel sickness
And I unravel the cause of it*

⁶⁰ This notion also appears in the *Course in Miracles* text, which claims that “in this world you can become a spotless mirror, in which the Holiness of your Creator shines forth from you to all around you” (Schucman 2007[1976]: 292).

⁶¹ Referring to the faintness of the altered state of consciousness (not the inner luminosity of the Holy Light), fardados will call this as a “light work.”

The *Prece de Caritas* (“Prayer of Caritas”) text recited in Daime works⁶² concludes with the following appeal to God: “Give us the simplicity that will make our souls the mirror where Your image must be reflected.” Fardados concur with the mystics that when it is not obscured by an egocentric outlook, the root of our subjective consciousness = infinite Light = Absolute Oneness = God. Daimistas say this sensation emanates from the “heart” (chest) region where, unlike dualistic “thoughts” of the egotistic mind-brain, one has the “feeling” that everything in existence is an outgrowth of a unified “Higher Self” or “Higher Consciousness.” So whereas devotion to the ego creates an uncomfortable sense of isolation, leading to manifold types of emotional and physical sickness, the realization of total oneness with a panentheistic divinity erases this suffering, replacing it with inner peace and outer well-being. According to the methods of ethnophenomenology, I applied my informants’ suggested techniques of trying to look at my own sense of observation. Indeed, in doing so I frequently experienced what could be described as a deeply comforting sense of all-encompassing light. Even though I am not a fardado and did not adopt their belief system for myself, the suiscope device still had practical benefits for me; the arrival of this inner luminescence coincided with my most personally meaningful and rewarding Daime works. For instance, it often seemed that conceptual obstacles in my fieldwork and daily life were resolved in these intense meditative events that fardados would construe as a merging with the Holy Light.

After experiencing this type of mystical encounter for themselves, fardados are prone to interpret all of external reality in the same way, believing that the observed outside and the internal observer are two aspects of one self. Once again, the mirror

⁶² The main hymnbook used in Santo Daime works notes how the Prayer of Caritas was channeled on Christmas Day 1873 by the French medium Madam W. Krell.

principle applies, so that all of external reality is taken to be a reflection of the internal mirror. The Course in Miracles captures this insight thusly: “Perception is a mirror, not a fact. And what I look on is my state of mind, reflected outward” (Schucman 2007[1976]: workbook page 451, Lesson #304). In other words, fardados see an underlying “solution” of what is usually sensed as a divide/boundary/veil between the ego-self and not-self. Instead, everything in existence is conceived as an extension of one’s own self. But this is no narcissistic solipsism. Rather, in daimista logic it follows that when one sees that which is “other” (i.e. all other people and all of Nature) as part of one’s self, one is more likely to care about the well-being of the other; simultaneously, one is less likely to want to attack or hurt the other if one’s own well-being is acknowledged as being tied to the well-being of the other. Appreciating the “mystical” qualities of Santo Daime rituals, Soares (2010: 68) captures the implications of the *suiscope in-sight*:

“there is no paradox...the revelations being precisely the awareness of this coincidence, the matrix of acknowledgement of the holy unity, which reconciles, with the supreme connection it brings about, matter and spirit, self and other, individual and collectivity, the human and the natural, the natural and the cosmic whole, the cosmic whole and the deity, and – through this association – the human and the divine.”

To be sure, fardados are quick to point out that this is not unique to Santo Daime. They often state that different mystical practices from around the world and throughout history have provided the same basic teaching. But instead of living the ascetic life of monasticism, European fardados gather to attain this mystical *suiscope* through the Santo Daime ritual and then return to regular society after the works.

Prior to their membership in the Santo Daime, the overwhelming majority of my informants had been raised according to the beliefs and traditions of either a Christian or a secular-atheist background. These two main ideological options in Belgium flow from

the traditional and modern currents of Western culture in the 20th century. As my informants had experimented with different forms of traditional religious and modern secular routes throughout their lives, they ultimately found that Santo Daime satisfied their spiritual and existential needs. This brings us back to the central question of the present dissertation: why are some Europeans electing to follow an ayahuasca religion from Brazil instead of accepting the secular and religious traditions of their homeland? The next chapter situates the emergent Santo Daime movement within broader scholarly debates about religion and secularism in Europe.

CHAPTER 5

Religion and Secularism in Europe

Having now explored the ethnographic particularities of Santo Daime in Belgium, it is important to recognize the implications of the transnational movement of ayahuasca rituals for enduring disputes about religion (or lack thereof) in European society. One cannot tackle such issues without first addressing broader disagreements about whether religiosity in Europe is going extinct, stubbornly surviving, or undergoing evolution. Recall that religions are self-identified groups organized around moral principles and ritualized practices oriented toward entities that cannot be detected by scientific measures. This chapter reviews historic and current literature pertaining to religion and secularity in Europe as a means of contextualizing other chapters' analyses of Santo Daime spiritual practices in present-day Belgium. The investigation commences with a synopsis of the "secularization theory/thesis" (Berger 1999; Stark 1999), a paradigm that has dominated social scientific studies of Europe since the early 20th century. A representative overview is presented of the past and present anthropology of Europe, paying special attention to studies that have dealt with Belgium. Indeed, anthropologists have made important contributions to the study of localized religious cultures and conflicts across Europe.

Until now, scholars have been prone to focus on the binary opposition of dwindling European Christians and ascendant European secularists. Although grand theoretical discussions about the durability or disappearance of religion in Europe have

engaged sociologists, philosophers, and political theorists for many decades, anthropology has only recently entered this fray. Yet anthropology's late arrival into crucial debates about secularism does not put the discipline at a disadvantage; on the contrary, the unique methodological approach of ethnography complicates what had previously been a straightforward view that religious beliefs and practices are becoming obsolete in Europe. Starting with the landmark publications of anthropologist Talal Asad (2003) and social philosopher Charles Taylor (2007), the first decade of the 21st century has witnessed a renewed interdisciplinary critique of secularism. Santo Daime is an exemplary instance of how "new forms of religion are coming into Europe from outside...offering a significant challenge to the widely held assumptions about the place of religion in European societies" (Davie 2006: 33). The closing of this chapter frames one of the central concerns of the present text by delineating how the mere arrival of Santo Daime unsettles standard suppositions about secularism, modernity, and religious freedom in Europe.

In academic parlance, religion is habitually contrasted with the notion of the *secular*¹ (i.e. non-religion, a prioritization of this-worldliness). The "secular" designates those aspects of social life that do not involve any recourse to supernatural beings. Instead, secular affairs are organized according to a reliance on agnostic or non-theistic systems of logic. The classic sociological markers of a society's shift towards secularization are decreases in the number of people affiliated with religious institutions

¹ As explained in Charles Taylor's (2007: 264-265) *A Secular Age*, the term "secular" comes from "saeculum", the Latin word for a big tract of time, an age...the adjective 'secular', come[s] to be used in Latin Christendom as one term in a contrast; in fact, several related contrasts. As a description of time, it comes to mean ordinary time, the time which is measured in ages, over against higher time, God's time, or eternity...Or, by an easy extension, 'secular' can refer to the affairs of this world, 'temporal' affairs, and it contrasts with the affairs of the City of God, which are 'spiritual'."

and increased separation between church and state. For most of the 20th century, scholars and laypeople assumed that Europe stood at the forefront of a worldwide socio-political transformation where outdated religions would be progressively replaced by more advanced secular ideals. However, the dawn of this century has ushered in a thorough reassessment of the process of “secularization” and renewed debate about the status of religion in the world.

The Birth, Rise, and Overhaul of the “Secularization Thesis”

Nietzsche’s (1974[1882]: 279²) pronouncement that “God is Dead” holds true for many scholarly interpretations of European society. Dating back at least to the 18th century writings of Voltaire and Hume, various European intellectuals have prophesized the imminent demise of religion in their homeland (see Gorski and Altinordu 2008). In the 20th century, Max Weber (1948[1922]: 155) famously predicted that “the fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the ‘disenchantment of the world’.” Weber’s use of the term “disenchantment” (German: *entzauberung*) was meant to highlight that science’s capability to explain previously inexplicable natural phenomena progressively demystifies humans’ approach to reality; in this way “mystery was seen not as something to be entered into but something to be conquered by human reason, ingenuity, and the products of technology” (Swatos and

² It is interesting in terms of the 20th century secularization debate to consider the “prophetic” nature of Nietzsche’s (1884, section 343 [see also sections 108, 125]) most famous statement: “The meaning of our cheerfulness. — The greatest recent event, that ‘God is dead,’ that the belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable — is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe... This long plenitude and sequence of breakdown, destruction, ruin, and cataclysm that is now impending — who could guess enough of it today to be compelled to play the teacher and advance proclaimer of this monstrous logic of terror, the prophet of a gloom and an eclipse of the sun whose like has probably never yet occurred on earth?” Over a century later, many scholars would concur that Europe now lives in a “Nietzschean age” (see Eden 1983).

Christiano 1999: 212). The post-Enlightenment truism that the rise of scientific logic and secular politics would coincide with a decline in the social importance of religion came to be termed the “secularization theory/thesis,” a controversial proposition that has continued to inspire both supporters and detractors (Stark 1999). The “classic” variant of this paradigm reigned across the social sciences leading into the 1990s (Cannell 2010: 86). Then, the fact that Belgium’s population of committed Catholics appeared to be diminishing was cited as supporting evidence for the downfall of religion in Western Europe (Dobbelaere 1993: 19).³ What follows is a circumscribed sketch of the secularization paradigm’s evolution over the past century. Thereby, this chapter establishes the sociopolitical ambience into which European Santo Daime rituals are now being incorporated.

At present, continental Western Europe is considered to be the most secularized region on Earth (Soper and Fetzer 2002: 169). Of course, there is no denying how “disillusionment” following the horrors of the Second World War and waves of priest sex scandals⁴ across Europe has damaged public perceptions of church legitimacy (Dobbelaere 1999: 237; Jenkins 2006: 526). There has been a noticeable decay in the number of parishioners attending mainstream European (i.e. Christian) places of worship, and this fixture of the secularization thesis is not in doubt. Citing the comprehensive European/World Values⁵ surveys conducted between 1981 and 2001, Norris and Inglehart (2004: 86) confirm that “the existing evidence in Western Europe consistently

³ For a more comprehensive summary of the secularization thesis’ historical trajectory I refer the reader to reviews by Casanova (1994), Gorski and Altinordu (2008), and Swatos and Christiano (1999).

⁴ The global exposing of long-term pedophilia problems in the Catholic Church reached Belgium in the summer of 2010: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/13/world/europe/13belgium.html?pagewanted=all>

⁵ At the separate junctures of five “waves” (1981, 1990-1991, 1995-1997, 1999-2001, 2005-2007) over a time period of 20 years (1981-2001) “the World Values Survey has carried out representative national surveys in almost eighty societies, covering all of the world’s major faiths” (Norris and Inglehart 2004: 6). The results of the sixth wave are currently being tabulated; see <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>

and unequivocally shows two things: traditional religious beliefs and involvement in institutionalized religion (i) vary considerably from one country to another; and (ii) have steadily declined throughout Western Europe, particularly since the 1960s.” Between 1981 and 2001, surveys showed a steady decline in the percentage of citizens who attend traditional churches across Western Europe, including in Belgium (from 31% to 19% [a decline of -12%]), Ireland (82% to 65% [-17%]), Spain (40% to 26% [-14%]), the Netherlands (26% to 14% [-12%]), and France (11% to 8% [-3%]) (Norris and Inglehart 2004: 74). These declines in “traditional” church attendance are why many scholars and laypeople alike accept the notion that “in Western Europe, if nowhere else, the old secularization theory would seem to hold” (Berger 1999: 9). Others who look at the numbers showing chronological declines in European church attendance and membership see “a decisive, long-lasting, and ongoing trend toward secularization” (Bunzl 2005a: 535). Supporters of the secularization thesis point to a generational imbalance, where younger Europeans tend not to be as committed to religion as older generations (Voas and Doebler 2011: 45). But despite the drastic drops in church attendance throughout Europe, there remains a critical mass of spiritual believers on the continent today.

The apex of classic secularization theory came in the 1960’s, led by sociologists extending the ideas of Durkheim (1915) and Weber (1922) regarding relationships between increased modernization and the decline of mainstream religious practice. Eventually, a consensus formed around a diagnosis that modernization inevitably occasions the top-down spread of secular disenchantment, a stance most notably articulated in the work of Bryan R. Wilson (1976). On the final page of this same article, Wilson acknowledges that the loss of a sense of community and shared meaning formerly

supported by religious institutions is lamented by some; in fact he attributes the counter-cultural movements of the 1960's to precisely this "affective" longing for the enchanted camaraderie of pre-modern society. Nevertheless, he concludes with a confident prediction: "religion in secular society will remain peripheral, relatively weak, providing comfort for men in the interstices of a soulless social system of which men are the half-willing, half-restless prisoners" (Wilson 1976: 276). This downside of modern disenchanting society is expressed in Weber's German phrase *stahlhartes Gehäuse*, famously translated by Talcott Parsons as "iron cage" (Baehr and Wells 2002: xxiv, ix). Here, one sees the shortsightedness of classic secularization theory, which recognized the unpleasantness of "soulless" modernity without anticipating resurgences of religion incited by anti-secular political movements.

Originally, this classic secularization thesis was held as a model that could be applied to the entire world. Most social theorists anticipated that the superiority of modern Western technology and scientific knowledge would supplant more primitive lifeways. The one authoritative voice of opposition early on was David Martin (1965), whose work prefigured how the proclamations of his secularist colleagues would ultimately have to face social realities. When the "moral majority" exploded onto the U.S. political scene in the 1980's, sociologists scrambled to justify what was originally considered the "American exception" to global secularization. Yet over time, the upsurge in political influence of religious movements across the globe indicated that the real exception was the sustained strength of secularization in Europe (Berger 2001: 446). Of late, the most strident arguments in defense of the classic secularization thesis have been put forward by Steve Bruce, who reiterated Nietzsche's *God is Dead* statement as the title

of his treatise on secularization in the West (Bruce 2002). Still, despite the protests of such apologists, compelling sociological and anthropological critiques have arisen as a challenge to the classic secularization theory.

As Cannell (2006: 2-3) notes, “the prevailing orthodoxy for several decades has been a focus on the ostensible inevitability of secularization and of the advance of global modernity.” But despite this predisposition on the part of scholars, groups of devout believers have persevered. Sociology’s ensuing self-correction is witnessed in José Casanova’s (1994) dissection of how classic secularization theory conflates discrete “propositions” into a single statement. He has recently updated his threefold “reformulation” of the three separate meanings of secularization, which had been assumed to be one and the same process by earlier theorists: “1) secularization as a differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, 2) secularization as a decline of religious beliefs and practices, and 3) secularization as a marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere” (Casanova 2006a: 12). By showing that religion is “transforming” rather than dying out in Spain, Poland, Brazil, and the United States, Casanova’s book was meant as a refutation of claims 2 and 3. This leaves the practical “differentiation” of church and state as the only valid element of secularization predictions: “The analysis...holds the related proposition that modern differentiation *necessarily* entails the marginalization and privatization of religion, or its logical counterpart that public religions *necessarily* endanger the differentiated structures of modernity, to be no longer defensible” (Casanova 1994: 7). The viability of claims 2 and 3 thus hinges on the question of whether secularized politics and falling church attendance are factors pertinent to the larger issue of religiosity’s future in Europe. The

international public presence of religious politics, as for example with Evangelical-Pentecostal Christianity or Islamic activism, is why Asad (2003: 182) says “it makes little sense to measure the social significance of religion only in terms of such indices as church attendance.”

Sociologists have become more distrustful of statistical interpretations of declining church attendance, recognizing that responses to statistical surveys measuring personal religious commitments can be misleading. For example, Casanova (2006b: 84) argues that “secularization became a self-fulfilling prophesy in Europe, once large sectors of the population of Western European societies, including the Christian churches, accepted the basic premises of the theory of secularization” (Casanova 2006b: 84). Much of the disagreement between American and European sociologists stems from a North Atlantic cultural divide that has produced contradictory secularization levels in the United States and Europe (Berger et al. 2008; Howard 2011). As Casanova (2006a: 17) suggests about misreporting in attendance surveys, “Americans think that they are supposed to be religious, while Europeans think that they are supposed to be irreligious.” Although statistics show a steady decline of attendance and affiliation with traditional churches in Europe, a fixation on these numbers distracts attention from coexisting societal processes.

One example is the substantial influx of immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East, who have brought their strong devotion to Islam along with them. Much interethnic strife results from the critical disconnect between political “elites” and foreign-born citizens in Europe (Jenkins 2006: 546). In addition to this importation of religious belief from outside, some Europeans still ponder existential domains beyond the

scope of secularism. The French sociologist Lambert (1999: 314) remarks that even though modern technologies have made life more comfortable in many ways, “neither science nor technology has been able to answer the ultimate questions (Where do we come from? Where are we going? What is the meaning of life? Why do we suffer and die?), nor have they been able to eliminate sickness, injustice, misery, unhappiness, and death.” The material advances of modernity have been unable to usurp these prime jurisdictions of religion. It is not surprising that some people would look to old and/or new spiritual organizations to address these perennial concerns of the human condition.

Some other social indicators challenge the overly simplistic conjecture that theism is deteriorating alongside drops in mainstream European church membership and the supremacy of the scientific worldview. In their appraisal of the “supply-side” of religion in Europe, Stark and Iannaccone (1994) emphasize that personal faith (or “potential demand”) remains constant even as dedication to mainstream religious “suppliers” declines. Referencing the fact that generalized spiritual beliefs persist even though church attendance is negligible in the “most secularized European nations” (e.g. Iceland, Scandinavia, France, Great Britain), these social scientists go so far as to claim that they have “falsified” the secularization thesis (Stark and Iannaccone 1994: 249). These opponents of secularization are probably overstressing their “falsification” statement. Yet they do hit upon a disregarded segment of the European population that subsists between total retention and outright rejection of traditional religious beliefs. This logic stresses that individuals’ spiritual beliefs are not directly tied to whether or not they attend organized religious services (i.e. some believers do not attend mainstream churches). Critiquing the presumption that drops in church attendance imply equivalent

shifts in personal values, the statistical analyses of Halman and Pettersson (2003: 70) demonstrate that these two variables are “largely unrelated.” David Voas (2009: 161) identifies the presence of an aloof group of people maintaining “some loyalty to tradition, though in a rather uncommitted way” as exhibiting “fuzzy fidelity.” Such fuzzy fidelity is common in Belgium, where the ethical values of many non-practicing citizens remain “loosely and distantly connected with their Catholicism” (Fox 1994: 169). Indeed, Belgium is prototypical of Western Europe, in that while 27% of its citizens are non-believers and 43% are committed to traditional belief in God, 29% of respondents vaguely “believe there is some sort of spirit or life force” (European Commission, 2005: 9). This third segment of the population, made up by the 29% of individuals who have unorthodox spiritual convictions, is key to understanding how the shift away from mainstream churches in Europe does not imply that atheism is the only alternative. More will be said about this in Chapter 6.

Because Europe is not a homogeneous culture, regional diversity on the continent must be taken into consideration. Surveys show that the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Sweden are the most secularized nations in Europe, because they score the lowest on church attendance and “importance of God” measures. In contrast, Poland and Ireland maintain the highest European rates of church attendance and reliance on God (Halman and Pettersson 2003: 63). According to data reported by Melton and Baumann (2010: lxxv-lxxvii), during the decade of 2000-2010 the number of atheists (AT) and agnostics (AG) expanded modestly in most of Europe. In 2010, these non-religious groups represented 10.8% (2.1% AT, 8.7% AG) of Southern Europeans, 14.5% (2.4% AT, 12.1% AG) of Northern Europeans, and 21.6% (2.8% AT, 18.8% AG) of Western

Europeans. Yet during this same decade, the total proportion of non-believers actually contracted when the entire continent is considered, with annual rates of decline of -1.88% for agnostics and -2.2% for atheists. This skewing of the continent-wide data is due to pronounced declines of atheists and agnostics in Eastern Europe (where in 2010, they were 8.5% of the population, including 7.0% AG, 1.5% AT). As it develops beyond the post-communist legacy of religious suppression, Eastern Europe has experienced a “slight religious revival” since the end of the Cold War (Müller and Neundorf 2012: 559). In terms of Western Europe, Melton and Baumann’s (2010: lxxv-lxxvii) figures project that traditional Catholic and Protestant Christians will shrink from almost 131 million (67% of the population) in 2010 to just over 111 million (59% of the population) through 2050. Conversely, all other religious groups have seen increases at the beginning of the 21st century. From 2000-2010, the data show annual growth of atheists (+1.3%) and agnostics (+1.9%) occurring alongside growth in many non-Christian religions in Western Europe, including: Muslims (+0.59%), Jews (+0.45%), Buddhists (+1.07%), Hindus (+1.51%) and “New Religionists” (+0.45%). Belgium is again exemplary of the wider European social fabric, as it maintains a strong core of Catholic identity and non-affiliated spirituality, albeit with a reduced congregation size compared to pre-war times. In Belgium for the same decade of 2000-2010, atheists (2% of the population) and agnostics (11.4%) increased at an annual rate of 0.39% and 4.88% respectively. While Christian followers declined at an annual rate of -0.1%, all other religious groups increased in Belgium. Belgian followers of New Religions increased at 0.4%, a faster rate than that of Belgian atheists. The amount of “new religionists” in Belgium is projected to double from 2,200 to 4,400 followers between 2010 and 2025 (Fautré 2010:

319). All told, the persistence of residual believers in Europe casts doubt on the teleology of secularist predictions about religiosity's impending extinction.

So even though some theorists continue to cite declining participation in organized religions as a sign of the looming obsolescence of enchanted attitudes in Europe, scientific modernity has not outstripped all beliefs in the supernatural.⁶ The reading of whether the statistics indicate a decline of religious devotion in Europe or merely a shift from mainstream to unorthodox beliefs is ultimately in the eye of the beholder; commentators who ascribe to the secularization thesis see the social data as supporting their preformed assumptions, while others appeal to inconsistencies showing the adaptive perseverance of religious commitments in Europe. Through the course of the debate, both sides have had to make concessions. Proponents of the secularization thesis have now backed away from the grandiose claim that secularization entails the inevitable and irreversible extinction of theistic beliefs. They have repositioned their claims towards predictions of an increase in general "indifference" about religious concerns (Bruce 2002: 41-43). It is likewise difficult for secularism-deniers to dispute the fact that besides the significant exception of Islam, the public role of religion is being progressively eroded in Europe, so that "the principle context remaining to the religiously committed [is] in the private dispositions of individuals" (Wilson 1998: 55). Regardless of how one construes the data, the statistics enumerated above prove that declines of mainstream Christianity coincide with increases in both non-believing agnostics/atheists *and* the popularity of alternative religious options. This is why a reassessment of

⁶ Although the term "supernatural" has its pitfalls when used to describe the ideologies of believers, so long as the etic and emic definitions of the supernatural "are distinguished, the supernatural concept both clarifies a scientific position on a major source of religious behavior and improves our ability to understand religious worldviews" (Lohmann 2003: 176).

European secularization is now underway, as researchers begin to recognize the new trends of spirituality on the continent (see Lambert 2004).

Peter Berger, previously a steadfast proponent of the classic secularization theory, is now even more famous for recanting his earlier ideas. To the chagrin of some of his intellectual disciples (Bruce 2001), in his book *The Desecularization of the World*, Berger (1999: 2-3) states that the theory's premise about inevitable religious decline "has turned out to be wrong": "Certain religious institutions have lost power and influence in many societies, but both old and new religious beliefs and practices have nevertheless continued in the lives of individuals, sometimes taking new institutional forms and sometimes leading to great explosions of religious fervor." Rather than religiosity disappearing in Europe, it is apparent that extensive secularization trends in the public domain are paralleled by shifts in how some individual Europeans approach spiritual and existential questions in their private lives. It is impossible to predict whether the vacuum of potential demand left by the ebbing of mainstream Christianity will be satisfied by new strains of European religious belief. In terms of the present focus on Santo Daime congregations in Europe (mainly Belgium), it is clear that this new form of religious supply is meeting some people's demand. Hence, in order to situate this study of Santo Daime in Europe, one must consider the anthropological history of the region.

Anthropology of Europe: The Ethnographic and Religious Background

After over a century of defining itself as a discipline specializing in the culture of the non-Western "Other," the theory and methods of anthropology are now increasingly being applied to European society, the cradle of Western thought. For most of its history,

anthropology failed to see Europe as an opportunity to think ethnologically about industrialized Western societies. According to Susan Parman (1998a: 193), until recently, the discipline's "most promising candidate for critical self-reflection, Europe, remained largely orientalist — Europeanist anthropologists paying lip service to the notion of 'complex society'" while their writing concentrated on the lives of bucolic peasant communities. An example of this is the edited volume by Badone (1990), which assesses conflicts between official church doctrines and folk Christianity at the local level. The first major attempt to understand contemporary religion in Europe, this book only includes studies of villages on the rural margins of the continent. As outlined above, this dissertation draws attention to a new spirituality that is finding supporters in the metropole of Belgium and other urban centers across the continent.

Early anthropology's avoidance of the culture of modernized, industrialized, capitalist society is the result of the discipline's own cultural pedigree, where its identity had always been the scholarly study of the non-Western "Other." To turn the same critical eye and apply the same methods that had been developed for understanding the more "primitive" indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas did not seem a logical step at first. Even today:

The phrase 'anthropology of Europe' is considered by many to be an oxymoron, or self-contradictory. Anthropologists are supposed to study the exotic Other... To study Europe is considered problematic as an anthropological project... To study Europe is often construed as an excuse for a holiday. Suffering and exotica are the stigmata of anthropological initiation⁷ (Parman 1998b: 1).

The founding of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe (SAE) in 1986 coincided

⁷ Although it does not result in any visible stigmata, the ayahuasca experience undertaken anywhere in the world often involves intense periods of psychological and physical suffering. As the reader continues to digest this dissertation, descriptions of the nature of the ayahuasca experience will reveal that my fieldwork in Europe was in no way a holiday, but rather a demanding engagement with Santo Daime mysticism.

with the rise of “reflexive ethnography” (Davies 2002).⁸ In the words of Asad et al. (1997: 713), the SAE signified an inward turn of the discipline aimed at “the anthropologizing of Europe” as a “necessary methodological counterpart to the dethronement of Europe as the fount of all wisdom.” The SAE’s founding evokes the wider emergence of anthropological interest in continental Europe, signified by a concurrent surge in publications. Examples of this include general introductory texts to the anthropology of Europe (Delamont 1995; Goddard, Llobera, and Shore 1994) and theoretical histories of anthropological work in Europe (Parman 1998c). However, when one searches these volumes, as well as both the SAE’s journal (first published in 2001) and the *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*⁹ (published since 1990), there are no articles focusing on ethnography in Belgium. So even though scholars have ascertained the virtues of Europe as an ethnographic field site, a dearth of research about Belgian culture persists. Since anthropological scholarship dealing directly with the rich ethnographic opportunities of Belgium is still rare, the present dissertation can help to bolster scholarly interest in this cultural microcosm of Europe.

With regards to ideology and worldview, Belgium is a country steeped in its Catholic identity¹⁰ while nevertheless maintaining “a strong secular tradition” (European

⁸ As outlined in Charlotte Davies’ (2002: 15-16) book on the methods of reflexive ethnography, this “denial of authority, of a privileged voice...is part of the postmodern rejection of meta-narratives — that is, explanations of broad historical processes and grand theory.”

⁹ Formerly known as the *Anthropological Yearbook of European Cultures*.

¹⁰ Fox (1994: 16) describes the general religious identity of Belgium thusly: “Belgium has no state religion, and its constitution guarantees religious freedom and the non-interference of the government in religious matters. But it is the metaculture of Belgium — its ethos — that makes it a Catholic society, rather than its legal principles, religious demography, or its institutional religion. Many of the symbols and images, values and beliefs that pervade the economic and political, domestic and everyday life of the country, as well as its art and literature, have deep roots in the cultural tradition and cosmic outlook of Belgian Catholicism. In this sense its common culture is as Catholic as it is Belgian — not only visible in its fêtes [“feast” holidays], but also present in the meaning of bricks, houses, and the family, the relationship to things, to nature, to light, and in some of the basic values of the society, such as courage, solidarity, harmony, nonviolence, compassion, and attunement to the human condition.”

Commission 2005: 13). Despite its Catholic culture, the secular-progressive tendencies are fundamental in Belgian social life. In 2009, the Belgian government filed a complaint with the Vatican disapproving of the Pope's decree that condoms would exacerbate the AIDS crisis in Africa.¹¹ Belgian law also recognizes the right to abortion¹² and in 2003 Belgium became the second country in the world (after the Netherlands) to permit same-sex marriage.¹³ It is within this historical and cultural framework that the Santo Daime is now emerging.

In terms of the scant literature that does exist, anthropological considerations of Belgium begin with *Recherches sur l'Ethnologie de la Belgique* (Research on the Ethnology of Belgium) by Léon Vanderkindere (1872). It is important to note that as early as the second half of the 19th century, Vanderkindere attested that "Belgium has no real unity: it is the country of contrasts." Otherwise, his work is essentially an analysis and categorization of racial types constituting Belgian society, an obsolete style of proto-anthropology that was later rebuked entirely by Franz Boas (1911) and his students (see Balée 2009).

More recent ethnographic studies focusing on Belgium have largely restricted their attention to how immigrant communities are adapting to Belgian culture and vice versa (Leman 1997; Timmerman 2000). In a complete ethnographic monograph by Johan Leman (1987), the author observed that after a period of cultural adjustment, Sicilian immigrants to Belgium are prone to gradually orient their identity in accordance

¹¹ "Vatican rejects Belgian censure of pope on condoms." *Reuters*, April 3, 2009; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/04/03/idUSL3965391>

¹² "Belgian King, Unable to Sign Abortion Law, Takes Day Off." *New York Times*, April 5, 1990; <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/04/05/world/belgian-king-unable-to-sign-abortion-law-takes-day-off.html>

¹³ "Gay marriages 'deviant', Vatican says." ABC News [Australian Broadcasting Corporation], August 1, 2003; <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2003-07-31/gay-marriages-deviant-vatican-says/1457656>

with Belgian social norms. Another quirky ethnographic treatment by American Joan Gross (2001) explores the folklore and customs involved in Walloon puppet theatres. As with anthropologists from other colonial powers, most Belgian anthropologists¹⁴ have been inclined to conduct ethnography in what was formerly the Belgian Congo (for example, see De Boeck 1994; De Craemer 1977; Devisch 1985; Pype 2006). The few ethnographic projects by Belgians focused on their home country have been largely concerned with a practical approach of “clinical anthropology” as an analytical supplement to biomedical research. Again, other than two long-term studies (Roosens and Van De Walle 2007; Schurmans 1978) of psychiatric foster care traditions in two Belgian villages (one Flemish, one Walloon), these clinical applications of anthropological methods and theory are most often aimed at immigrant communities (Devisch 1986). One notable exception to this rule of immigrant and medical studies is Pinxten’s (2006) incisive analysis of the rise of extreme-right political parties in Europe through the lens of Belgium. By inquiring into why 60 Belgians and hundreds of other Europeans¹⁵ have chosen to convert to the Santo Daime instead of following a local religious tradition, my research confronts the more general issue of religion in Europe.

Religious Modernity in Belgium and Europe

Peter Beyer (1994: 111) acknowledges that the “diverse manifestations of religion in our world reflect the global context in which they operate.” As the multitude of cultural forms around the world are increasingly subject to forces of globalization, the economic and social relationships between the West and non-West are paralleled by the

¹⁴ Although his birthplace is often overshadowed by his French-Jewish heritage, the famous anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss was born in Brussels: <http://www.thestar.com/article/720827>

¹⁵ Of the 12 European countries where official Santo Daime works occur, the largest congregations are in the Netherlands (where works sometimes attract over 200 people). Spain and Germany also have substantial numbers of daimistas (50-100), but these are not much larger than that found in Belgium.

reciprocal transfer of religious traditions. Anthropology has traditionally studied the cultures of the non-Western “Other” (see McGrane 1989). This has led to some of the discipline’s greatest contributions to society, as anthropology’s unique theoretical standpoint discredits prejudice and xenophobia by advocating cultural relativity.

However, Hefner (1998: 86) observes that “anthropologists who rightly challenge the application of secular-modernization narratives to the non-Western world are sometimes less critical of these theories’ portrayal of religion in the modern West”. As pointed out by Paul Rabinow (1996: 36), the postmodern critique triggered appeals to “anthropologize the West,” venturing to show “how exotic its constitution of reality has been” and emphasizing “those domains most taken for granted as universal.”

Notwithstanding these advances, Csordas (2007: 259, 2009: 1) laments that “in one of the most vital contemporary arenas of scholarly debate in the human sciences, that which deals with world systems, transnationalism, and globalization, the role of religion remains understudied and under-theorized.” The spread of the Santo Daime in Europe in the late 20th and early 21st centuries is an occurrence of religious “glocalization,” whereby social trends imported from abroad are adjusted to fit cultural norms at the local level (Robertson 1992: 173-174). My study of the Belgian case discerns reasons for the transnational adoption of Santo Daime by Europeans, which occurs despite the presumption that Europe is undergoing a teleological process of secularization.

The most conspicuous challenge to assumptions about the impending disappearance of religion in Europe is the highly publicized discord between Islamic immigrants and the secular norms of modern European society. As the EU strives to cement a coherent identity of itself as a composite “Europe” unifying distinct

nationalities, Asad (2003: 160) suggests that incoming ethnic-religious minorities pose a predicament: “Can contemporary European practices and discourses represent a culturally diverse society of which Muslim migrants (Pakistanis in Britain, Turks in Germany, North Africans in France) are now a part?” There are some who are confident that continued negotiation and normalization can result in the successful integration of Muslim immigrants into European society (Lewis and Schnapper 1994; Abedin and Sardar 1995; Nonneman et al. 1996). However, Bunzl (2005b: 499) proposes a reinterpretation of “different projects of exclusion” in Europe. In citing synchronizations between the priorities of national politics and supranational institutions like the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), Bunzl contends that anti-Semitic political movements are in decline as Jews are increasingly accepted as archetypal Europeans. Quite the opposite is true of Islam because popular Islamophobia “functions less in the interest of national purification than as a means of fortifying Europe” (Bunzl 2005b: 502). These ideas provoked commentaries from Bunzl’s colleagues about the repercussions of secular chauvinism in Europe. For instance, Esra Özyürek (2005: 510) writes about how EU policies designed to curb inter-ethnic conflict actually end up discriminating against minorities: “despite universalistic claims, contemporary secularist policies...that seek equality among citizens...in fact, become ideological tools in the service of suppressing diverse religious expression and practice.” The most transparent examples of this quarrel are France’s and Belgium’s bans on Muslim females wearing *niqāb/burqa* face-veils in public places (Klausen 2005; Winet 2012). A less explicit but still evocative case is the popular attitude against allowing Turkey to become a member of the EU, even though it is a staunchly secular state that

has officially been a candidate for membership since 1963 (Gossman 2010: 218-219).

John Bowen (2005: 525) agrees with Bunzl that “many who oppose admitting Turkey to the European Union do so because it is a majority-Muslim country, and not only because of its human rights abuses and other social problems.”¹⁶

Indeed, whether it is the potential of an Islamic EU member-state or Muslim immigrants already in Europe, Asad (2003: 166) paraphrases Wintle’s (1996: 13) justification for why Muslims are considered alien to European “civilization”: whereas “the Roman Empire, Christianity, the Enlightenment, and industrialization” are “key influences on European experience...it is because these historical moments have not influenced Muslim immigrant experience that *they are not those whose home is Europe.*” It is evident that in ditching religious politics in favor of the “modern” values of universal human rights, secularism adds another identity marker Europeans can employ to distinguish themselves from the Muslim world.¹⁷ Yet outside of the recent eruption of literature on Islamic immigrants, there has been much less attention paid to religious beliefs and observance among non-immigrant Europeans.

As for the classic secularization theory’s claim that any surviving religious beliefs are increasingly confined to secluded domains, it is true that the public (i.e. governmental) influence of religion is on the wane in Europe. But undue preoccupation with this trend obscures the other intriguing social transformations looming as direct repudiations of the secular norm. While sociologists, historians, philosophers, and

¹⁶ The opposite concern has emerged with recent social upheavals in Greece, in response to what many citizens perceive as austerity measures imposed by external forces of the EU and IMF. In this case, some current EU citizens are now regretting their membership: “Greek Police Fire Teargas at Protesters in Athens.” *Reuters Canada*, September 25, 2011; <http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCATRE78O2D620110925>

¹⁷ This is why Dominic Boyer (2005: 523) says “welcome to the new Europe, in which the Jews are no longer persecuted but revered as cosmopolitan ancestors, but one that has reserved the right to define and exclude new supranationals for their very intolerance to the tolerance of the New Europe.”

religious scholars continue to debate chronological census data showing a decline in church attendance (Bruce 1992; McLeod and Ustorf 2003; Ziebertz and Riegel 2008), ethnographic facts are being ignored. Some anthropologists have demonstrated how Europeans are adapting Christianity (Badone 1990; Coleman 2000: 72-86), Judaism (Buckser 1999), and Buddhism (Obadia 1999) to global forces of modernity. Apart from the continued public presence of Islam and these larger world religions in Europe, some non-immigrant Europeans are also partaking in non-mainstream religious practices. Curiously, the secularization debate has been largely oblivious to the fact that in Western countries “the most dramatic and unanticipated” fluctuations in the spiritual landscape are due to the rise of New Religious Movements (Rambo 2003: 211).

Elisabeth Arweck (2006: 351) defines New Religious Movements (NRM) as “religious groups and movements which arose in the West since the Second World War, where they emerged as a new phenomenon, even if their roots reached further back in history.” The growth of these groups in Europe is detected as an inverse correlation. In places where attendance at traditional religious institutions is declining, the popularity of NRM is on the rise (Stark 1993: 389). Of the multiple types of NRM, Santo Daime beliefs are routinely tied to the so-called “New Age” (but there are important distinctions, as discussed in Chapter 6). New Age spirituality is notoriously difficult to define because of the ambiguity of its boundaries (Sutcliffe 2003: 9-30). However, it became clear through my fieldwork that fardados share with New Agers the belief that “the earth is a conscious, living organism” (Hanegraaff 1998: 157) and the “monistic assumption that the Self itself is sacred” (Heelas 1996: 3). But rather than lumping it into the nebulous category of New Age, it would be more accurate to link Santo Daime to the more

definitive class of Euro-American “nature spiritualities.” Followers of nature spiritualities are frustrated by materialism’s disenchantment of humanity’s relation to the natural world. They try to “overcome this cultural alienation and relate with nature as a living and inspirited cosmos” (Greenwood 2005: vii). Even though these nature-oriented rituals may appear new, practitioners are often keen to trace the origins of their spiritual practice to pre-modern traditions.

Ethnographers have published works on the subsistence of folk healing practices (Lambek 2007; Lüdtke 2009) as well as 20th century varieties of “paganism” related to nature spiritualities in Europe. Prominent examples of the latter include studies of *wicca* (modern witchcraft), which some European communities willingly espouse (Luhrmann 1989) while others fear it as sorcery that must be cast out by magical “unwitchers” (Favret-Saada 1980). There have also been studies of European neo-shamanism (Blain 2002), an assortment of new forms of spirituality alleging their authentic rehabilitation of rites inherited from ancient Europeans. Still, despite extensive sociological, historical, and psychological literature on conversions to NRM in the West, Lorne Dawson (2003: 125) indicates that “a crucial and easily overlooked element of mystery remains about why people choose to be religious, especially in so radical a manner.” It is possible to get a hint as to why this mystery endures when one considers how most ethnography is infused with secular presuppositions. For example, Luhrmann’s study of British witchcraft (1989: 13) ponders why “apparently irrational beliefs are held by apparently rational people.” My research endeavors to unravel this “mystery” as it pertains to a small group of Belgians whose embrace of a foreign ayahuasca religion presents an affront to post-Enlightenment standards of “rationality.” In so doing, the ethnographer

must maintain impartiality regarding whether Belgians' commitment to Santo Daime is any less "rational" than the worldviews of their mainstream secular and Catholic peers.

The only systematic anthropological examination of homegrown Belgian culture is the ethnography *Château-Gérard: The Life and Times of a Walloon Village* by Harry Holbert Turney-High (1953). An American veteran of World War II who completed a tour of duty in Wallonia during the winter of 1944-1945, Turney-High returned there in 1949 to conduct fieldwork with a small rural community in the Condroz region.

Wallonia is now known as the French-speaking area of Belgium, but the local Latin language called *Walon*¹⁸ was still present among some of Turney-High's (1953: 62) informants, although he declared that it was already "a dying dialect if not a dead one." While the statistical reliability of his study was questioned (Miner 1955), a German-turned-Belgian scholar remarked that Turney-High had composed a "vivid and accurate" portrait of life in the European countryside (Oppenheim 1954). Following the "community studies" approach popularized by mid-20th century ethnographies focused on towns in the U.S., Mexico, Ireland, Wales, and Norway (Arensberg and Kimball 1940; Barth 1952; Lynd and Lynd 1937; Redfield 1989[1955/1956]; Rees 1950; Warner and Lunt 1941), Turney-High proffered the first such investigation within continental Europe. His main goal was to show how despite the growing demands of the international postwar economy, many of the longstanding customs of Walloon peasant life endured. He argues that his research subjects retain an ancient tradition of resolute independence, which has withstood the onslaught of several foreign occupiers. But for the purposes of the present dissertation, it is especially important to note the details spelled out in Turney-High's

¹⁸ Walon has a remarkably rich literary tradition, exemplified today by the fact that it has its own Wikipedia database: <http://wa.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walonreye>

chapter on rural Walloons’ “magico-religious” worldview. Here, the author places special emphasis on his informants’ commitment to residual healing traditions of Celtic origin. The Celtic priests called Druids are depicted as a kind of ancient European shaman. He says that during his fieldwork, it was apparent that apart from the heavy influence of Catholicism, Walloons still hold mythical beliefs in gnomes, sacred trees, and magical folk remedies, and that *makrale* is a Walon “word for shamanism [containing] a root connected with death and the shades of the dead” (Turney-High 1953: 227-228). Coincidentally, aspects of Turney-High’s study are reflected in my own fieldwork, with many Belgian daimistas voicing similar neo-pagan beliefs.

During one of my interviews, a French-born fardado who is now a naturalized Belgian told me about why he follows Santo Daime and participates in “sweat lodge” ceremonies, both spiritual paths normally associated with the Americas:

People ask me: ‘Why do you go so far? Why don’t you work on a spiritual path that’s in your roots?’ But that’s my roots and that’s our roots! And I think it’s very important to understand that the Christian roots here in Belgium go back 1500 years more or less.¹⁹ So before, we’ve got...Celtic tradition...If you go deep, everywhere in the world there was more or less the same type of belief, the same type of structure, and the same type of tradition: to honor Nature, to honor the mystery, to see Man as part of Nature, and not Nature as part of Man. And so if you just look at the archaeological research of Belgium, when they find a very old place most of the time they will find a circular house where they did the sweat lodge! You know I’m not playing Indian when I’m doing sweat lodge, I’m just going back to my European roots. Here in Europe the Vatican killed tradition, just cut the line. Most of the time when I go to South America, they speak about how bad the White men were for the Indian. But please! They were bad before with us!

- Gilles (Brussels)

Living with his non-daimista wife and children in Brussels, Gilles is a 50-year-old human resources consultant who began his Santo Daime practice in 2001. He also teaches *Biodanza* (*bio-* [Greek = “life”] + *-danza* [Spanish = “dance”], or “dance of life”), a

¹⁹ Indeed, Christianity gained its initial foothold in Belgium between the 4th and 6th centuries A.D. (Milis 1999: 7-8)

globalized musical movement therapy developed in the 1960s and 1970s by Chilean psychologist-anthropologist Rolando Toro Araneda.²⁰ In travelling to the Andes mountains several times, Gilles underwent an extensive spiritual education with indigenous shamans so that he now also considers himself a “medicine man.” In this sense, he believes that his training in the ritual techniques of the New World is essential in order to revive the shamanic knowledge of his ancient Celtic ancestors. This sentiment expresses a common tendency of Belgian fardados to downplay the differences between peoples in favor of stressing a mystical or shamanistic inheritance shared across cultures. Fardados would agree with Turney-High that the Celtic “roots” of modern Belgians mean that they can claim the shamanic practices of Druidism as a legitimate aspect of their ethnic heritage.

Turney-High also makes mention of Antoinism, a Belgian-born religion founded in the province of Liège by a spiritual healer named Louis “Father” Antoine (1846-1912). Father Antoine was succeeded after his death by his wife, referred to as the “Mother.” After opening the first Antoinist “temple” in Jemeppe-sur-Meuse in 1910, this new religious movement expanded to include hundreds of thousands of adherents around Belgium and France, with smaller outposts in Italy, Germany, Brazil, DR Congo, and Canada (Ausloos 2012; Bégot 2000a; Jones 1983; Lemmens 1999: 90). Turney-High (1953: 239) asserts that this NRM is “a direct derivative of the old Celtic magic, or *makrale*,” because in Wallonia “a person cured of his bodily and spiritual ailments by Antoinism is still said to be *dismakralizé*” [de-*makral*-ized]. Whether or not Antoinists are upholding Celtic survivals is moot. More germane to the present text is the fact that Father Antoine broke with the Catholicism of his formative years and instead cultivated

²⁰ <http://www.biodanza.us/whatis.html>

unorthodox techniques of spiritual healing; these revolve around the manipulation of magnetic *fluides* (“fluids”), which can engender divine therapy when transmitted by outstretched hands to a faithful patient. Father Antoine and his disciples were partly inspired by the “spiritism” of the French medium Alan Kardec (Dericquebourg 2001: 154-155).²¹ Still, like the founder most Antoinists have a Catholic background and many maintain a syncretic approach that is a “synthesis of both Antoinist and Catholic teachings” (Bégot 2000b: 603, 606). In short, the Belgium-born Antoinism is just one of many examples of new religious movements in Belgium. During the 20th century, Fox (1988: 640) recounts that Belgium experienced a rise of “new political, community, charismatic, Pentecostal, and encounter groups inside the Catholic Church...and in comparable groups outside the Church, that define themselves as Christian and religious.” Santo Daime now joins this long list of alternative spiritualities. These new faiths illustrate that secularists were correct in noticing an overall decline in orthodox religious devotion, but wrong in presuming secularism to be the only other viable option in Europe today.

It is apparent that it is time to make better sense of Western culture’s original homeland. After being neglected for over a century in anthropology’s quest to understand the non-Western other, the recent turning of attention towards secular modernity has placed Europe at center stage of 21st century social science. Add to this the interrelated economic and identity crises now gripping both Europe and the global markets invested in the EU project. World events are converging with the maturation of

²¹ Coincidentally, the formation of Santo Daime in Brazil was also influenced by Kardecist spiritism. Like the Christian aspects of Daime were transformed and then exported back to Europe, Kardecism is another element derived from Europe that has returned back to its home continent in a new form through Daime. However, European fardados I talked to almost never spoke about Kardecism. It is apparent that these spiritist elements are at best implicitly included in European Daime practice, if they are recognized at all.

the anthropological lens aimed at Europe, and the secularist culture that dominates there (see Cannell 2010).

Anthropological Approaches to Secularism

An early rallying cry for the anthropology of secularism came in a 2001 “dossier” discussion in *Social Anthropology*, the flagship journal of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA). Charles Stewart (2001) provoked responses from colleagues with his incitement that “the majority of anthropologists are virtually card-carrying secularists.” Besides the popularity of Islam, Stewart notes that “conversion to Pentecostalism is rife in Latin America and Africa, and the upsurge of New Age and Neo-pagan religions in Europe and North America indicates that religion still matters to individuals”; he suggests that since secularist bias has become an “impediment to anthropological research...perhaps the time has come to re-think our commitment to secularism, or at least our positioning vis-à-vis secularism” (Stewart 2001: 323, 325, 327). In the responses from anthropologists based out of the UK, Portugal, Germany, and Norway, all agree that the secular viewpoint of anthropology complicates ethnographic efforts to understand religion. But they disagree on whether anthropologists need to uphold (Gellner 2001; Pina-Cabral 2001) or remain wary (Kapferer 2001; Yalçin-Heckmann 2001) of the ideals of secularism. Bruce Kapferer captures the most sensible approach by noting that anthropology is both indebted to Enlightenment-secular methods of “radical doubt” regarding metaphysical-spiritual claims, while at the same time the discipline champions the “willing suspension of disbelief”:

Anthropology is a practice of secularism that must often be anti-secular in an effort to break through what is often a blinding prejudice that can be the self-same

limitation of secularism...Anthropology's commitments are ideally open so as to challenge even rationality and reason as a necessary method for engaging with the possibilities of being human (Kapferer 2001: 344).

In highlighting the drawbacks of secularist studies of religion, Kapferer is drawing attention to the atheist and materialist biases that are sometimes treated as indisputable preconditions of anthropological analysis.

Certainly, it is undeniable that mainstream religious institutions no longer hold sway over political decision-making, as was previously the case in Europe. It is also obvious that religious obligations and belief in God no longer figure in the daily lives of a large proportion of the European populace. But as Cannell (2010: 97) points out, the concentration on the governmental and public decline of orthodox Christianity in Europe has distracted scholars from recognizing how new social phenomena continue to unfold in less publicized settings: "if this debate reminds us of anything, it is that these categorical distinctions, particularly that between the apparently urgent world of the political and the seemingly arcane or private domain of the religious, are themselves only a fiction of the historical processes we are examining." The main catalyst for this "emerging field of study that could tentatively be called the critical study of secularism" (Hirschkind and Scherer 2011) has been an increasing awareness that the culture of secularism is, like any other culture, based on mythic assumptions. Up until now, many ethnographers have "followed a long established anthropological tendency to privilege the sacred at the expense of the secular, and to insulate ceremonial action from quotidian practice" (Masquelier 2001: 121). It is precisely because secular humanism has now reached hegemonic proportions, especially in the elite realms of government and academia, that commentators have refrained from taking religious perspectives seriously.

Cannell's review paper sets the stage for anthropology's imminent scrutinizing of secularism's taken-for-granted dominion within modern Western states. To introduce the parameters, she notes that "recent debates on this topic have been heavily shaped by two paradigms: Asad's deconstructivism and Taylor's Catholic/Hegelian revisionism" (Cannell 2010: 85). The release of the books by Asad and Taylor to which she refers caused a respective stir inside (Scott and Hirschkind 2006) and outside (Warner et al. 2010) anthropology. With reference to some of the latest publications on the topic, let us now reflect on what is at stake in the anthropology of secularism.

The question of how modern disenchanted worldviews can be broached through anthropology was initiated by Asad's *Formations of the Secular* (2003), which now stands as the founding monograph for the anthropology of secularism. In observing that "religion is not disappearing," he states that "if anything is agreed upon, it is that a straightforward narrative of progress from the religious to the secular is no longer acceptable." He begins his book by asking how anthropology would take on the following question: "What is the connection between the 'secular' as an epistemic category and 'secularism' as a political doctrine?" (Asad 2003: 1). Asad's rendering of the "secular" as an ideological position buttressing a partisan social agenda characterizes the assumptions of secularization theorists as based on ethnocentric bias rather than ironclad rationality. Moreover, by setting up secularity as an object of anthropological analysis, Asad (2003: 17, 205) pioneers an innovative angle from which to interrogate secularism: all one has to do is look at the ways that secular states' ideals of tolerance camouflage laws that forbid some religious practices as intolerable. His unmasking of prejudices that underlie the political doctrine of secularism includes a critique of how

liberal policies pursue the defense of human rights for some while curtailing the personal freedoms of others.²² In this way, the belief that liberal nation-states enforce secular laws *always* for the greater good of their citizens (or invaded countries) is one of the tacit bigotries of secularism. So whereas my Santo Daime informants interpret the prohibition of ayahuasca as an infringement on their right to religious freedom, Western governments see this prohibition as saving people from themselves (since entheogens are predefined as dangerous, see Chapter 7). In essence, Asad opened a can of worms because secular logic is so often presumed to operate according to noble values that are beyond reproach. On the contrary, Asad shows that secularism and the “secular” are just as culturally-biased as anything else that ethnographers study, and thus must be brought under the purview of anthropology.

As Cannell (2010) makes plain, Asad’s work in anthropology has sprouted alongside a more exhaustive interdisciplinary exposition of secularism. Charles Taylor’s magnum opus *A Secular Age* is a philosophical, theological, and political tour through the ethnohistory of the Euro-American mindset (a culture area he rebrands as the “North Atlantic world,” to include Canada). The main question he explores throughout the book is “how we moved from a condition in 1500 in which it was hard not to believe in God, to our present situation just after 2000, where this has become quite easy for many” (Taylor 2007: 1, 25, 143). One of the main aims of Taylor’s tome is to question “straight path” narratives of inevitable religious decline which he refers to as “subtraction stories”:

“stories of modernity in general, and secularity in particular, which explain them by human beings having lost, or sloughed off, or liberated themselves from certain earlier,

²² For example, in a discussion of Western states’ bans on “torture,” Asad (2003: 115) points out that such policies are restricted to a culturally relative (and hypocritical) definition.

confining horizons, or illusions, or limitations of knowledge” (Taylor 2007: 22, 90). In contrast, he characterizes the shift over many centuries from an enchanted to a disenchanted society as simply a change in popular conceptualizations of the mind-body interface. Taylor (2007: 38) identifies the pre-modern outlook as that of a “porous” self, whereby “the source of its most powerful and important emotions are outside the ‘mind’; or better put, the very notion that there is a clear boundary, allowing us to define an inner base area...has no sense”; conversely, the modern “buffered” self sees “the boundary as a buffer, such that the things beyond don’t need to ‘get to me.’” For instance, whereas accusations of sorcery or possession involving demons or spirits were typical in pre-Enlightenment Europe (Certeau 2000; Ginzburg 1980: 6), the mainstream European ideology of today no longer accepts supernatural agency as legitimate grounds for legal defense or prosecution. Taylor’s notion of a “buffered” self, according to which modern individuals see their inner selves as separated from an exterior world, is what European fardados refer to as the “ego.” Like Taylor, European followers of Santo Daime contend that as the “buffered” ego erected a boundary to protect the inner self from superstitious fears of ghostly dangers, it has also acted to isolate the individual, severing him/her from a reassuring sense of connectedness with the universe.

Taking a diachronic view, Taylor demonstrates how what is now thought of as a secular overthrow of religious approaches to life is actually rooted in the ruptures brought about by the Protestant Reformation. He argues that in rejecting Catholicism’s privileging of ascetic transcendence above everyday pleasures (e.g. monasticism), the Reformation’s glorification of mundane life (“ordinary human flourishing”) created fertile space for “exclusive humanisms” to appear and thrive. So even though it was not

intended at the time, Taylor (2007: 627) contends that the Reformation “offered a kind of template in which later, more radical revisions could be shaped, including those which rejected Christianity altogether as sacrificing the joys of ordinary sensual, bodily existence in the name of illusory ideals of abstinence and renunciation.” Counter to the Weberian secularization narrative that sees a progressive replacement of irrational religious beliefs with rational science and technology, Taylor posits disenchantment as an attitudinal shift from otherworldly to this-worldly priorities. When “buffered” selves begin to esteem their own this-worldly flourishing instead of the presumed spiritual destiny of the entire human species, modernity opens up new avenues that pose new existential quandaries.

What one is left with is not the universal dominance of exclusive humanism, but a pluralism out of which countless new forms of belief can proliferate, particularly those revolving around a personal “spirituality of search/quest” (Taylor 2007: 532-533). Although Taylor agrees that exclusive humanism (secular unbelief) is now a widespread option in the West today, his own status as a believing Catholic intellectual belies the scholarly propensity to accept secularism by default. He concedes the fact that secularization is a strong force in North Atlantic cultures today. But he detects what he calls the “unthought” of many academics, pointing out that “the exclusion/irrelevance of religion is often part of the unnoticed background of social science, history, philosophy, psychology” (Taylor 2007: 429). He credits the implicit assumption that secular humanism ultimately proves “supernatural” beliefs to be childish delusions with scholars’ continued inability to make sense of religion’s relevance in the modern world. Taylor (2007: 5) recognizes that all people in all times, even “buffered” selves, have desire and

strive for “fullness,” a state wherein “life is fuller, richer, deeper, more worth while, more admirable, more what it should be.” The “malaise” of modern disenchantment is a symptom of “cross-pressures” where a large number of people still vacillate about “the opposition between orthodoxy and unbelief.” It is this cross-pressure, not wanting to choose between the extremes, which motivates a plethora of alternative quests for fullness that he calls the “nova effect, as more and more third ways are created” (Taylor 2007: 302). The relations between Taylor’s concept of “cross-pressures” and Europeans’ attraction to Santo Daime are examined below.

These developments in the critique of secularism have been amplified through a recent forum discussion in the pages of the journal *Cultural Anthropology*. Here, Asad (2011: 661) recaps his earlier verdict in a more forceful tone: “According to secularists...one has to have the right kind of beliefs to act reasonably and tolerantly, and because religious beliefs are by definition irrational and intolerant, they must be forcibly eliminated, even if this involves inflicting great distress and pain on the religious.” But what the new critics of secularization are divulging is that the secular ontology is really based in subjective beliefs sparked by a recoiling from mainstream religious doctrine. In the same volume, Charles Hirschkind (2011: 641) proposes that the secular is actually more of a “relational dynamic” than an independent identity: “a practice or a sensibility that we designate ‘secular’ is one that depends on, one that cannot be abstracted from, the secularist narrative of the progressive replacement of religious error by secular reason.” It may be that most “academic secularists in Euro-America assumed that the secular compromise...would deepen and expand,” but as political scientist William Connolly (2011: 649) affirms: hardline secularism “gives short shrift to the layered, embodied

character of cultural life, to the role of spirituality among theists and nontheists alike in all aspects of life, and it promotes a contestable conception of time unconsciously indebted to Christian providentialism.” In response, Connolly (2011: 651-652) prescribes “deep, multidimensional pluralism” as an alternative to exclusive secular humanism, one which “contains a spiritual element because it solicits gratitude for existence as such from a variety of faith minorities.” Similar ideas will be picked up with reference to Santo Daime in the concluding chapter of the present dissertation.

It is in these ways that Asad, Taylor and other social thinkers personify a surging rebuke of the overconfident attitudes displayed by teleological readings of the secularization thesis. Both Taylor and Asad unveil the secular myth that modernity leads inevitably to disenchantment; what Asad (2003: 25) and Habermas (2009: 63-64) refer to as the “triumphalist” historical narrative of secularism, Taylor (2007: 90-92, 569-575) calls the “straight path subtraction story.” Hardly anyone disputes the evidence that attendance and overall commitment at mainstream religious institutions has declined during the 20th century. But the “death of God” scenarios celebrated by atheist intellectuals betray their uncritical acceptance of the hegemony of materialism in the academy today (Taylor 2007: 546-569). Mainstream churches may be declining, but rather than this insinuating the end of all religion, the realities outside the confines of the ivory tower suggest that new spiritual varieties are emerging to fill the gap. The appearance of Santo Daime in Europe, even though it represents a tiny segment of the population, poses challenges to the norms of European society. This is because the act of ingesting a psychoactive substance for spiritual and therapeutic purposes upsets the opinion — held by both adherents of mainstream religion and the political doctrine of

secularism — that all such alterations of consciousness are dangerous and delusional.

Ayahuasca, the Secular State, and “Cross-Pressures” of Modernity

The debate about the legitimacy of the secularization thesis has emerged as a pivotal discussion in early-21st century anthropology. While the steep falloff in church attendance numbers is significant, one must be careful not to misinterpret abandonment of the old Christian institutions as equivalent to a rejection of all religiosity in Europe. It is possible that some researchers who are convinced of the veracity of Weber’s disenchantment theory are themselves personally invested in the ideological underpinnings of secularization. For instance, in scholarly treatments of religion, there is a tendency to acclaim the religious beliefs of non-Western ethnographic subjects, while discounting religious Euro-Americans as a “repugnant cultural other” (Harding 1991). The disagreement over whether or not religion will survive has persisted for many centuries since the Enlightenment. It is perhaps better to contemplate what this stalemate indicates about the co-existence of secular- and spiritually-minded people in Europe.

Recently, scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds have initiated discussions about the present academic and geopolitical age as “post-secular.” According to Hans Joas (2004; cited in de Vries 2006: 2) the “‘post-secular’...doesn’t express a sudden increase in religiosity, after its epochal decrease, but rather a change in the mindset of those, who, previously, felt justified in considering religions to be moribund.” Anthropology has yet to fully realize the post-secular standpoint that is being applied in other disciplines, in recognition of the limitations of the idea that secularization is all-encompassing, unidirectional, and inevitable (see Chapter 8). Yet anthropologists have a

key role to play in penetrating past the statistical haze into the living and breathing contexts in which Europeans are exploring new avenues of spiritual beliefs and practices. While sociologists and other scholars' still struggle to transcend their Western-centric faith in the secularization thesis, anthropology's focus on non-Western worldviews allows ethnographic methods and theory to be redeployed onto Europe. Therefore, the secularization thesis must be adjusted to account for the fact that despite the decline of religion as a dominant force within Western governments, there remains a considerable proportion of religiously-oriented citizens in Western nations, including Belgium. A persistence of spiritual enthusiasm parallels an upsurge in academic reassessments of Weber's "disenchantment of the world" prophesy.

Anthropologists are charged with the task of mediating the tensions within and between intercultural encounters. But until recently the discipline has been hesitant to fix its critical gaze on the secular ontology that is taken for granted in modern Western culture. In decrying anthropology's absence from the secularism debate throughout the 20th century, Asad (2003: 22) argues that any academic field that wants to comprehend the "nonrational" cultural practices of "'religion' must also try to understand its other." This contrast reflects the fact that anthropology's very identity is embedded in the paradoxical pursuit of employing secular rationality as a means of interrogating secular rationality (Kapferer 2001: 341-342). But the culture of Western secularism has long gone unchallenged as an axiom of anthropology. Hence, Jackson (1998: 193) can aver that "ethnography has yet to fulfill its potential as a powerful way of decentering and demystifying Western perspectives on the world, helping us question our own cultural assumptions, enabling us to see ourselves as others see us." Anthropology remains aloof

to what has been called a “re-enchantment of the West,” as 21st century Westerners discover and adopt new ways of being religious (Partridge 2004: 44). It is individuals seeking such opportunities for “re-enchantment” who are drawn to new ritual options such as Santo Daime.

For European fardados, Santo Daime offers a resolution to what Taylor called the “cross-pressures” of modern society, a fractious tension between belief and unbelief that dominates the public debate. This cross-pressure is felt personally by many modern subjects as a friction between two “extreme positions, represented by orthodox religion on one hand (that is, originally Christianity and Judaism, but now more and more joined by Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other faiths), and hardline materialistic atheism on the other” (Taylor 2007: 676). One Flemish fardado, who had previously studied theology after a “skeptical” atheist upbringing, explained in Hegelian terms how Santo Daime represents for him a historical “synthesis” between the cross-pressured extremes:

When I became a fardado, it did not mean that I said ‘I believe in Santo Daime and the rest is not good.’ For me, Santo Daime is terrific, but more and more Catholic religion is beginning to appeal. But it doesn’t mean that I’m less Santo Daime, it just adds... Very often, the works feel as a cure for me. It feels as if the tension is dissolving, and afterwards I can still feel that some tensions have left my body... A lot of people would consider [Daime tea] a drug. Taking a substance, that’s suspicious... The ritual with the uniform, that’s difficult for a lot of Flemish people because it seems very tied up... mostly the uniform, and Jesus, Mary... there are not many people left that go to church... there’s very little spirituality in Flemish churches... World War II, industrialization, Vatican II... I think we made a movement. There’s Hegel: thesis, antithesis, synthesis... so in the Middle Ages all of society was Christian here in Europe, everything was built around religion... and then you have the antithesis: people said ‘No, I want to be an individual’. The Medieval society was collective, [but] then the Renaissance: I am me, ‘Je pense, donc je suis’ [Descartes: “I think, therefore I am”]. So here in Belgium, in Flanders, we were very Catholic, and of course, there came the antithesis: ‘no, we don’t want those priests that are telling us you should not have sex, you should not do this, you should not do that.’ So, we don’t want it anymore... I think the antithesis prepared us to go back and make a synthesis between the two. Now we have rid ourselves from the obligation of the church... now we’re free to attend a [non-Catholic]

ceremony. And that's a good thing.

- **Godfried** (Vlaams-Brabant)

At 47 years of age, Godfried is now unemployed after having worked as a schoolteacher. He is a single man who has been attending Daime works since 2004. The above quotation exemplifies the avant-garde stance of Belgian fardados relative to secularist presumptions about the inherent defects of religion. In dismissing traditional European religion for its overly restrictive moralism, my informants frame Santo Daime as a renewed spirituality rooted in liberalist values of individual freedom. Chapters 6 and 7 will look more closely at how European fardados see Santo Daime as a transcending of cross-pressures imposed by the partisan poles of the modern debate.

Now in no way does the European expansion of Santo Daime in itself nullify the reality of rapid postwar declines in mainstream religious dedication across the continent. However, I argue that Santo Daime is emblematic of emerging religious anomalies that denote the endurance of an overlooked social undercurrent across the Western world. In both North America and Europe, a plurality of new spiritual options is now defying impulsive forecasts about the doom of enchanted epistemologies. Along with the emergence of political Islam, the rise of new religious movements in the West has “surprised” secularist academics, most of whom continue to disregard these anomalies with “puzzled amusement” (Pina-Cabral 2001: 330; see also Kepel 1994). As discussed in the next chapter, my informants epitomize a new Euro-American subculture that is committed to neither mainstream Christian beliefs nor the irreligious ideals of secularism.

It is worth noting that unlike Catholics in other parts of Europe, since the founding of their country Belgian Catholics assented to laws protecting religious freedom (Strikwerda 1997: 27-28). Yet, apart from this political cooperation in the early years of

Belgian nationhood, there were fierce public debates between more religiously minded Catholics and more secular Liberals. In essence, Belgium simultaneously embodies the pan-European tension between these two major streams of religious and secular thought, recognizing the progressive freedoms of the Enlightenment while remaining loyal to inherited Christian norms. Although modern Belgium mimics the French hostility towards non-traditional forms of religion (according to state-sponsored secularism, or *laïcité*²³), Belgians also adopted a more Dutch-style system of pillarization, where the freedoms of particular ideological communities are mutually protected. Dobbelaere (2008: 78) distinguishes Belgian *laïcité* from the French variety in that the rights of unbelieving secularists (*laïques*) in Belgium have been “institutionalized... alongside six recognized religions (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Anglican, Orthodox and Islamic).” This government-legal compromise regarding minority groups displays how Belgian liberalism exists as a fusion of qualities found among its neighbors to the north and south.

The nation of Belgium stands as a byproduct of the Christian schism wrought by the Reformation, its national borders having been formed out of the Catholic southern Netherlands when this region separated from the Protestant northern Netherlands in 1830 (Blom and Lamberts 1999: 480). The uncomfortable divide between Catholic and Liberal Belgians is a testament to the cultural context within which Belgium materialized out of 19th century ideological turmoil. It is a quirk of history that nation-states of

²³ A characteristically French form of secularism, *laïcité* (English: *secularity*) is not easily translated. Growing out of a desire to remove the Catholic-aristocratic alliance that was overthrown during the 1870s, it was in 1905 that the government of the Third French Republic enacted a law officially enshrining the separation of church and state. Although the “degree” to which secularism is now enforced in France is more “rigorous” than elsewhere in Europe, the 1905 French law also protected freedom of religion; that is, except for religious forms that pose a threat to “public order” (Jansen 2006: 475-476, 759 note 2). In essence, French “*Laïcité* strictly calls for a state that is free from an official or exclusive religion; however, this freedom is commonly understood in France as an absence of religious expression in the public sphere” (Chelini-Pont 2005: 612).

Europe, formed along religious borders, now represent the bastion of secularism. In Belgium it is difficult to discern whether religion has any significance at all. Fox (1988) struggled with this question in a paper entitled “Is Religion Important in Belgium?” She explains that even though there have been steady drops in church attendance and loss of interest in conventional Catholicism, this does not mean that Belgians have opted for secularism instead of spirituality. Amidst the prominent Catholicism and secularism, one finds an awkward cohabitation of enchanted and disenchanting leanings in the modern Belgian approach to life (Fox 1988: 305, 641). Speaking of this common Euro-American discomfort, Taylor’s (2007: 599) cross-pressure diagnosis notes how “we are torn between an anti-Christian thrust and a repulsion towards some (to us) extreme form of reduction”; considering this dilemma, it is only natural that some people would “invent new positions.” The arrival of Santo Daime, an unambiguous turn to enchantment through the ingestion of an entheogenic tea, brings these historical tensions underlying modern European social life to the fore.

As noted earlier, in Belgium all NRM are highly dubious until they receive official recognition from the government. With new religions about which very little is known, popular assumptions tend to lump different organizations that are collectively viewed as strange and out of the mainstream. Thus it is imperative that social scientists disseminate accurate information to counteract the lay inclination to dismiss all new religious groups as the same. For instance, the Church of Scientology is being prosecuted in Belgium because of charges that through aggressive recruiting practices church leaders

committed “extortion, fraud, illegal practice of medicine and violation of privacy laws.”²⁴

In contrast, it is taboo in Santo Daime to actively recruit new members. Fardados believe that people find their own way to the Daime if it is part of their spiritual path, so they see no need to pressure anyone to join the works. Santo Daime and Scientology do share the ideal of helping people to overcome suffering in their lives, but such therapeutic ends are also found amid traditional religions like Christianity and Hinduism. Potent objects are venerated in most religions, be they altars, prayer beads, an entheogenic sacrament, or Scientology’s Dianetics. But against the Euro-American propensity to attribute words like “cult” and “sect” to all new religions, important distinctions in the ideology and recruiting practices of Scientology and Santo Daime must be acknowledged. For instance, the mystical-shamanistic worldview of fardados relies on gaining intimate knowledge of one’s inner self through internal revelations instigated by the Daime tea. When one receives visions during Daime works, the interpretation of their meaning is left to the person who experiences them. In contrast, the technology of Scientology (the “e-meter”) is an external device registering electrical currents in a devotees’ body, the results of which are then interpreted by a designated church expert known as an “auditor” (Bromley 2009: 94). Santo Daime members’ openness to scientific observation and research also distinguishes this ayahuasca religion from the more secretive conduct of Scientology. Given the diversity of NRM, it is necessary to recognize that each group poses unique considerations for legislators trying to differentiate between safe spiritual formats and hazardous cults.

When fardados were asked if they consider Santo Daime a religion, most were

²⁴ “Belgium To Prosecute Scientology As Criminal Organization; Church Faces Charges Of Extortion, Fraud.” *Huffington Post*, December 28, 2012; http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/28/belgium-prosecutes-scientology-extortion-fraud_n_2375823.html

reticent, because like many Europeans they associate “religion” with the overbearing and dogmatic Christianity of their upbringing. On the other hand, the response of one Flemish fardada revealed a subtle linguistic distinction that had been concealed by the English catch-all word “religion”:

Yes. We have two words in Flemish. We say “godsdiens” and “religie.” Godsdiens is more negative, but religion is something good, it’s the more spiritual thing. Godsdiens has more to do with power... “serving God,” so it’s more the Christianity and the power of the Church, and the Cardinals and the Pope and this kind of thing, that’s Godsdiens. But religion is what’s behind it...

- Astrid

The Flemish word *godsdiens* can be translated literally as “God service/duty.” I eventually realized that when interpreting my question, it is this sense of ecclesiastical obligation that prompted fardados to set Santo Daime apart from what they see as the coerciveness of the Catholic “religion.” Astrid’s differentiation between the institutional Christian church (*godsdiens*) as “negative” and the “more spiritual” concept of *religie* emphasizes the idea of “re-linking” contained in the latter word’s origins. The lack of a distinction between these two connotations of “religion” in English is why today “people are rejecting the term religion itself, while attempting (sometimes in contradictory ways) to create forms of practice that many anthropologists would still classify as religion” (Cannell 2010: 88). So while the anti-institutional attitude is shared by many fardados, they value the ayahuasca experience because they believe it provides direct access to sacred knowledge. Or, according to another Belgian fardado:

I’m ok with the word ‘religion’ because it refers to religare: “re-connects” and “re-unification”...I have a hard time connecting with the word ‘faith’ or ‘belief’, because it implies something which is blind, which is something that you have to accept without it being explained. In part it’s true, but it’s not because I just believe it blindly, it’s because I’ve experienced it through the ayahuasca...so it’s more experience than blind faith.

- Felix (Antwerpen)

When I first met Felix early on in my fieldwork, we were both newcomers to the Daime. At age 36, he works as a graphic designer. Felix's curiosity about my research project led to us becoming fast friends, and I observed as he transitioned from uncommitted *firmado* to a deeply devoted *fardado* now playing guitar in all the CdU works. At the time, Felix lived near the building where Flemish Daime works are held (he has since moved back to his home province of Antwerpen); upon his invitation, I stayed the night on the couch in Felix's apartment following almost every CdU ritual. Since it is difficult to sleep the night after a Daime ritual (a common side-effect of ayahuasca is temporary insomnia), Felix and I would converse for a few hours after each work. The topic of the aforementioned quotation would frequently arise in these late-night chats. In a process that is common in the conversion narratives of my informants, Felix initially strained to reconcile his estrangement from traditional Christianity (which he rejects as authoritarian) with his growing esteem for the Daime doctrine. Eventually, he decided to become a *fardado* because he did not perceive Daime as domineering, the same emic distinction with Catholicism described above by Astrid. Even though the true origin of the word is controversial, my informants cited their approval of the etymology of "religion" as meaning "'to reconnect'—from the Latin *re* (again) and *ligare* (to connect)" (B. Taylor 2007: 11). They believe that the entheogenic action of Daime tea allows them to experientially "reconnect" with God inside their own consciousness. It was along these lines that another *fardada* agreed that Santo Daime could be considered a religion. Henriette, a 35-year-old school teacher, discovered the Santo Daime while travelling in Brazil during her 20s. She met and married a Brazilian *fardado*, who now lives with her and their two children in a fully detached house in suburban Brussels. She alternates

between attending works with RaS and CdU, and concurs with other Belgian fardados that Santo Daime meets her needs more effectively than the spirituality of her upbringing:

Yes, because “religion” is you restore the bond with God. So, that’s what happened for me [with Santo Daime]. Because before, the Catholic religion didn’t function as a religion for me because I couldn’t really feel God. Well, I could think about it, like a man with a beard that’s watching you or something, but not really.

- **Henriette** (Brussels)

From the above quotations one can extrapolate a more nuanced reading of the secularization trend in Europe. What has declined is the European dedication to *godsdiens* (“God-Duty”). But scholars have made an overextension if they insist that this decline of mainstream religious institutions infers an identical decline in people’s seeking a personal relationship with something holy.

Fardados are people who attribute various contemporary maladies to the disenchanting momentum of modern Western civilization. It is not that they reject or denounce science, technology, or globalization (in fact they admire these achievements as ultimately good for humanity); rather, it is the lopsided dominance of self-seeking materialism and atheism that they see as a hollowing out of the transcendent aspects of humanity. They assert that the exclusion of the spiritual qualities of life causes an imbalance (at both the individual and collective level) leading to undue suffering, illness, and confusion. As seen above, European fardados are not alone in their search for a third alternative to both mainstream religion and secular disenchantment. Fardados’ spiritual practice is criminalized as the popular assumption that substances like ayahuasca are dangerous “drugs” persists, even though there is no scientific evidence that the brew is inherently harmful (see Chapter 7).

Despite some European governments’ reluctant concessions, Santo Daime’s

sacramental use of ayahuasca is still illegal outside the Netherlands and Spain (Labate, MacRae, and Goulart 2010: 15; Labate and Jungaberle 2011). However, as noted by Tupper (2011: 176, 160-190), so far “the general international trend...has been initial legal action, followed by jurisprudential acceptance and governmental acquiescence to religious freedom arguments over drug control imperatives.” Through attending dozens of Santo Daime works and spending time getting to know fardados in Belgium, a central objective of my long-term fieldwork was to acquire an intimate knowledge of why people are defying the societal taboos that outlaw “hallucinogens” like ayahuasca. It is important to remember that the way governments deal with the small number of Santo Daime members will have much wider ramifications concerning the current prohibition of psychoactive substances. Thus, the question of Santo Daime’s legality poses a test for secular notions of tolerance and freedoms of both religion and thought: in order to bestow these rights, the secular state would have to reconsider its oppositional stance to the possession and use of entheogenic substances more broadly.

In conversations with Belgian fardados, it was clear that the use of ayahuasca and the Santo Daime’s eclectic beliefs are appealing to them as a sort of antidote to the imbalance of present-day Euro-American life. In his recent Ph.D. thesis, Kenneth Tupper (2011) identifies the “malaises” of modernity as incentivizing Euro-Americans’ search for experiences of “wonder” and “awe,” a sense of mystery that has been cut off by shifts to secular disenchantment. Tupper (2009: 125) also surmises a correlation between Euro-Americans’ disillusionment with Judeo-Christian traditions and “increased interest in other spiritual traditions – such as those whose nexus is the ayahuasca brew – the exoticism of which may provide a veneer of authenticity in contrast to more banal,

familiar faiths.” Transnational ayahuasca practices are one example of the appeal of unconventional spiritualities in Europe.

The arrival of Santo Daime in Europe does not fit into the teleological assumptions of the secularization thesis nor with the standard dichotomy between mainstream religion and modern secularism. Like the rise of Islam in the European public sphere, Santo Daime’s religious use of an illicit substance offers a dilemma to the liberalist propensities of secularist governments. The most significant challenge that Santo Daime members present to secular society is that merely by requesting to have their religious rights upheld, they confront indiscriminate laws that censure the basis of their religion. The next chapters will identify the kinds of Belgian personalities who choose to follow Santo Daime and will demonstrate the reasons why these individuals have chosen to convert to a foreign religion.

For fardados who believe that the global spread of Santo Daime is not a coincidence, the Christianity brought by Europeans to South America has come back to Europe in a new form. They consider the Santo Daime not only as a medicinal remedy to psychophysical illnesses; fardados believe that when one is committed to integrating the lessons of the works into daily life, the Daime sacrament is a divine source of “solutions” more broadly. In the next chapter, it is suggested that Belgian members of Santo Daime signify a still underappreciated shifting of cultural values now underway within the Euro-American populace.

CHAPTER 6

Timeless Wisdom: Situating Belgian Fardados' Cultural Values

To date, the most direct attempt to answer the question of *why* some people across Europe are adopting Santo Daime is found in the work of Alberto Groisman (2009). In a recent book chapter, Groisman (2009: 186) speculates that since some Dutch fardados expressed regret about the history of European colonialism, they have become members of Santo Daime to bestow “reparations” to the native peoples of the Americas. While his efforts are commendable, Groisman’s conclusions have certain shortcomings. When I showed Groisman’s¹ theory to European fardados, they all rejected it as a reason for their participation in Santo Daime. For example, when the commander of CdU was asked if he agrees with Groisman’s theory that European daimistas are motivated by the history of colonization he responded:

Not at all. I haven't thought about this, no. I do not at all have a feeling with this. Here [Groisman 2009], this is something in the past with the people who were living then, and in this sense I do not have anything to do with it...yes, of course [colonization] happened, indeed...[but] I do not feel guilty.

- Lambert

In fact, my Dutch and Belgian informants recognized that Groisman’s interpretation is based on his excessive reliance on the idiosyncratic ideas of a single Dutch daimista. My informants said that these ideas do not represent European daimistas as a collective.

¹ Groisman (2009: 186) hypothesizes that: “The presence of *daimista* religious groups in Europe, and especially in the Netherlands, has been sustained by (1) an empirical interest in sharing and appropriating the knowledge based in the experiences of ‘indigenous’ populations — in particular, focusing on the exploration of modified states of consciousness and shamanism; and (2) a sense of reparation for the revision and exploitative forms of European expansion to the ‘New World’ in the past five centuries.”

By citing Paul Heelas (1996), Groisman (2000: 110) does correctly identify some of the traits that European fardados share with “New Age” devotees: “New Age introduced in its project of self a new type of individualism, which replaced what can be called ‘modern’ ‘libertarian’ individualism, in which the material ‘necessities’ of the ‘ego’, consumerism, prosperity and pleasure – were the main concerns, with a ‘postmodern’ individualism, in which the ‘sacred’ ‘necessities’ of the spirit – transcendence, creativity and aesthetics...could be satisfied.” Yet the terms “postmodern” and “New Age” are not in themselves accurate labels for Santo Daime in Europe. The postmodern is defined as “incredulity toward metanarratives” (Lyotard 1984: xxiv), but fardados are inclined to trust in the cosmological and theological doctrines of various mystical traditions. As Wouter Hanegraaff (Hanegraaff 1998: 9) has noted, the “‘New Age’ is primarily a poorly defined label which has different meanings and connotations for different people.” For this reason the “New Age” is more of a “buzzword” with a “wide and often vague use” for describing “the amorphous nature of the phenomena it refers to” (Hanegraaff 2002: 249). Although this movement began to crystalize during the 1960s, the moniker “New Age” is now being abandoned as denoting “a superficial and ‘flaky’ spirituality” (Znamenski 2007: xi). Since the subsequent “commercialization” of this nebulous “counterculture” renders it inauthentic to many, “the term ‘New Age’ will probably not survive the twentieth century as a generally-used label” (Hanegraaff 1998: 17, note 49).² Moreover, identifying New Age groups apart from the rest of the population is practically impossible because New Age ideas have become fashionable beyond their point of origin. In fact, many mainstream Christians

² One sees this in how the scholarly study of this cultural category has shifted away from the “New Age” label, rebranding these pursuits as “spiritualities of life” (Heelas 2008).

assent to characteristically New Age beliefs like channeling, astrology, and reincarnation (Gallup and Lindsay 1999; Lewis 2004: 16). The boundaries of the New Age concept are so fluid that it becomes impossible to tell who does and does not belong to such groups.

Besides these terminological issues, the main problem with Groisman's assessment is that the New Age³ category only captures a small slice of European fardados' eclectic worldview. Of course, some New Age enthusiasts are attracted to Santo Daime by the promise of ecstatic visions and personal exploration. But the intense exertion and dedication that is required for long-term learning in the Santo Daime eventually deters those looking for a spiritual quick fix. In contrast, Soares' (2010: 66) linking of Santo Daime to an upsurge of a "new religious consciousness" is more applicable because he notes how fardados' commitment is "closer to Spartan discipline than to a vague, pervasive 'hedonistic narcissism.'" My informants do accept that some New Age ideas have been absorbed as one among many other elements within Santo Daime's multifarious cosmology. But in general, my Belgian informants dismiss the "New Age" as *zweverig* (Dutch: "woolly") or as "faith without *firmeza* [firmness]" because they see it as a shallow pseudo-spirituality. As one Belgian fardado reacted when asked about Groisman's labeling of Santo Daime as New Age: "I don't think so. I think New Age began in the 60s in the hippie time, [whereas] Santo Daime is really old." Although the "hippie" era of the 1960s can be traced to the Romantic period of the 19th century⁴ (see Ray and Anderson: 2000: 142, 148), my daimista informants assume that

³ The first hymn of Padrinho Alfredo's "New Age" hymnal is translated as *Nova Era* ("New Age"), and it is true that some ideas associated with the New Age have been incorporated as one of many elements in the eclectic and constantly expanding Santo Daime inventory.

⁴ In his comprehensive historical review, Taylor (2007: 510) observes that "much of the spirituality we call 'New Age' is informed by a humanism which is inspired by the Romantic critique of the modern disciplined, instrumental agent, which was central as we saw above to the 60s; the stress is on unity, integrity, holism, individuality"; see also Taylor (2007: 380-389/505-535).

Daime dates back to the invention of ayahuasca in Pre-Columbian South America. Even if the New Age does not suffice, there must nevertheless be a home-grown aspect of European fardados' worldview that engendered a receptivity to the Santo Daime. This brings us back to our original problem: if people's concept of self is culturally constructed, why are some Europeans reared in a secular or traditional Christian context attracted to a foreign spiritual practice like the ritual use of ayahuasca? Breaking new theoretical ground, the present dissertation seeks to satisfy Hanegraaff's (2011: 99) petition that insofar as the rise of Santo Daime in Europe is concerned: "the very foundations for an adequate scholarly study of 'entheogenic religions,' including ayahuasca religions, still need to be created."

Although it may seem perplexing from a secularization perspective, the fact that some Europeans are joining the Santo Daime is comprehensible as part of a long-term historical trend in Western culture. There have always been subcultures resisting the secular ideals of the Enlightenment due to a deep personal preference for enchanted approaches to reality. Isaiah Berlin (1979: 1) coined the concept of a "Counter-Enlightenment" (dating back to the ancient Greeks) as a fixed opposition to the Enlightenment "proclamation of the autonomy of reason and the methods of the natural sciences, based on observation as the sole reliable method of knowledge, and the consequent rejection of the authority of revelation, sacred writings...and every form of non-rational and transcendent source of knowledge" (see also Hanegraaff 1998: 411-412). Rather than viewing the rise of the Santo Daime and other new religious movements as a sudden resurgence of religious zeal following a period of universal secularization, it is more plausible that this is a continuation of an ever-present sub-group

of Europeans with spiritual affinities. This proclivity for spiritual belief and practice has endured, albeit underground, as a dissident Counter-Enlightenment discourse in modern European consciousness. It is evident from interactions with Belgian fardados that they share a penchant for spiritual pursuits. On the other hand, fardados are like most other Europeans in their acceptance that the Judeo-Christian institutions of Europe are eroding. Santo Daime is being adopted by Europeans who are inspired by the fact that secular “disenchantment” has not triumphed in other parts of the world.

Fardados show distaste for the dominance of materialism that was ushered in with post-Enlightenment modernity. Charles Taylor (who was Isaiah Berlin’s student at Oxford), is also intrigued by persisting doubts about the modern narrative of secularization, and is not surprised that spiritual alternatives continue to pop up in the West. In his book *Sources of the Self*, Taylor (1989: 32-43) traces the historical development of Western concepts of the self, critiquing the “ethnocentrism” of the Euro-American view that “what we are ‘really’ is separated individuals.”⁵ In his more recent book, Taylor (2007) updates his discussion of how the notion of a “buffered identity” (roughly equivalent to fardados’ notion of the *ego*) has acquired an unquestioned status in secular modernity. He contrasts the “transcendent” worldview of pre-modern enchantment with the “imminent frame” of disenchanted secularism: convinced that the source of mind is confined to individual animal selves rather than imbued throughout Nature, “the buffered self begins to find the idea of spirits, moral forces, causal powers

⁵ In detail, Taylor (1989: 526, note 20) echoes Berlin’s identification of the counter-Enlightenment that is often obscured by the dominance of the post-Enlightenment values of liberalist individualism: “We are also ethnocentric, or at least too narrow in our understanding and sympathy, if we take it as axiomatic that a self is what we ought to want to have to be. There are influential spiritual outlooks which want to have us escape or transcend the self. Buddhism is the best known. But there are also certain strands of modern Western culture, for who the demands in any case of the Western identity of the disengaged and independent agent have seemed unreal, or intolerably restricting, or oppressive.”

with a purposive bent, close to incomprehensible” (Taylor 2007: 539). But while Taylor (2007: 552-553) recognizes that this “immanent” view is now the established norm, he also stresses the “sense of loss” that many modern subjects feel as a latent longing for transcendence, such that receptivity to enchantment persists. Contrary to Weber’s prediction that modern scientific rationalism would breed “disenchantment,” psychological anthropologist Pascal Boyer (2008: 1038-1039) summarizes how the latest:

...findings from cognitive psychology, neuroscience, cultural anthropology and archaeology promise to change our view of religion... The evidence shows that the mind has no single belief network, but myriad distinct networks that contribute to making religious claims quite natural to many people... By contrast, disbelief is generally the result of deliberate, effortful work against our natural cognitive dispositions — hardly the easiest ideology to propagate.

The previous chapter exhibited how overconfidence on the part of secular scholars led to an uncritical adoption of the secularization thesis in the mid-to-late 20th century. At the turn of this new century, social scientists are recognizing that the decline of conventional religions does not portend a waning of all spiritual strivings. As follows, this present chapter outlines how Santo Daime is not so much an anomaly as it is one indicator of an extensive revival of innovative spirituality in Western societies.

Belgian Fardados’ Conception of Great Spiritual Teachers

In order to get a more precise sense of Belgian fardados’ shared spiritual values, I administered two “freelisting” exercises (see Quinlan 2005). The first freelist questionnaire (which is the springboard of this chapter) elicited the names of people that fardados regard as Great Spiritual Teachers. In the second freelist (the results of which are presented in Chapter 7) I asked fardados to list all the plants they consider sacred.

Once enough freelists were collected,⁶ the data was processed using Anthropac (Borgatti 1991), software that sorts how a social group prioritizes items within a “cultural domain.” Stephen Borgatti (1994: 265), the creator of Anthropac, defines a cultural domain as “a set of items which are, according to informants, of a kind”. Once a cultural domain is identified, freelists provide information about the relative significance of specific domain items. Such inferences are based on the notion that entities that are more significant in the minds of informants are mentioned earlier in the freelist than less significant entities (de Munck and Sobo 1998: 79).

When 32 fardados (16 males, 16 females) were asked to list all the Great Spiritual Teachers⁷ (GST) that they know, I had expected to acquire a list that would show a heavy emphasis on Christian figures and leaders of the Santo Daime. But the names they mentioned spanned a wide array of spiritual traditions from different historical eras. Below is a chart of the top ten names generated by the Anthropac program (n = 32), which organized items from all 32 lists according to the “Smith’s s” measure of cognitive salience⁸:

⁶ Borgatti (1999: 122) says that “a conventional rule-of-thumb is to obtain lists from a minimum of 30 lists.” In determining whether one has collected enough freelists, Borgatti (1999: 122-123) states: “one heuristic for determining whether it is necessary to interview more informants, recommended by Gery Ryan, is to compute the frequency count after 20 or so lists from randomly chosen informants, then repeat the count after 30 lists. If the relative frequencies of the top items have not changed, this suggests that no more informants are needed.” See also Borgatti (1994: 264).

⁷ “Great Spiritual Teachers” is an emic category that Lars made known in early interviews.

⁸ “Smith’s s” is a statistical measure of the number of informants who mentioned an item relative to that item’s average ranking among all the freelists as a whole (Smith, 1993).

Table 1: Belgian Fardados' Domain of Great Spiritual Teachers ranked by Smith's <i>s</i>				
Rank	GST Name	Frequency	% of Freelists that include item (n = 32)	Smith's <i>s</i>
1	Jesus Christ	27	84 %	0.639
2	Buddha	22	69 %	0.535
3	<i>Mestre Irineu</i>	15	47 %	0.313
4	Gandhi	10	31 %	0.212
5	<i>Pd. Sebastião</i>	8	25 %	0.171
6	Mohammed	6	19 %	0.141
7	Krishna	5	16 %	0.134
8	Virgin Mary	8	25 %	0.105
9	Dalai Lama	7	22 %	0.105
10	Eckhart Tolle	6	19 %	0.090

After the interviews were conducted and the freelist results tabulated (the entire list can be found in Appendix IV), I realized that informants could not just be categorized as a subgroup of New Age hippies (as Groisman had suggested) because they were simultaneously committed to age-old religious values. Instead, Belgian fardados' mixing of admiration for founding figures of the ancient world religions with 20th century spiritual leaders demands an entirely different template to explain the worldview they espouse. Their blurring of the lines between old and new is puzzling until one looks to some innovative research regarding the values of a Euro-American subculture called *Cultural Creatives* (Ray and Anderson 2000⁹).

The Cultural Creatives (glossed herein as CCs) is the label of a momentous but underappreciated demographic event in Western societies, of which Santo Daime expansion is a conspicuous symptom. Anthropologists directly reference the Euro-American CC subculture in analyzing emergent social realms, such as “green” anti-

⁹ For anyone trying to understand the expansion of Santo Daime into Western culture, this book by Ray and Anderson (2000) is an indispensable source of data about the broader social trends underlying some Euro-Americans' interest in entheogenic spirituality.

consumption movements (Isenhour 2012: 171), the fair trade movement (Grimes and Saxton 2003), and the ethics of globalized consumer culture (Sherry 2008). However CCs have thus far been ignored in anthropological debates about secularization, which are mostly restricted to the binary opposition of the Traditional vs. Modern subcultures. Unlike the ambiguity built into the New Age concept, an analysis of the CCs offers a clear-cut demarcation of the wider community to which European fardados belong. The “solutions” theme arises again as fardados share the CC preference for “an integral culture that can bring together the traditional and the modern” by incorporating “a great heterogeneous *mélange* of movements, organizations, and trends” (Ray and Anderson 2000: 93, 171). So rather than seeing a dichotomy between science and religion, fardados appreciate that both immanence and transcendence are necessary considerations in human life. Or as Ken Wilber (1998: 102) writes: “physics deals with matter, biology deals with the living body, psychology deals with the mind, theology deals with the soul, and mysticism deals with the direct experience of spirit — so an integral approach to reality would include physics, biology, psychology, theology, and mysticism.” Below, a theory is presented about how Santo Daime offers a unique glimpse into the surfacing of this *integral* CC subculture, which in turn will help to disclose why Santo Daime is expanding in Europe.

Interpreting the Freelists

The collective list of 146 Great Spiritual Teachers (GST) cited by Belgian fardados includes not only religious personalities, but also ancient philosophers, modern scholars, famous musicians, informants’ personal friends, and even supernatural entities like angels. Broken down by geography, the list includes 54 (37%) people from Europe,

33 (23%) from Asia, 14 (10%) from South America, 13 (9%) from North America, 13 (9%) from the Middle East, and 1 (<1%) from Africa.¹⁰ The list also included 11 names of non-human entities from various spiritual traditions (e.g. 4 angels, 2 bodhisattvas), 7 items that cannot be fixed geographically (e.g. “Daime people”), and 3 entire cultures (e.g. Maya, India, Arabs). Setting aside two ambiguous items (“friend” and “my psychotherapist”), the remaining list of 123 items designating past or present human beings includes 102 (83%) males and 21 (17%) females. This list of 123 human names also can be divided historically, with 31 (25%) of the personalities having lived before the Enlightenment (17th century) and 92 (75%) having lived during or after the Enlightenment. These breakdowns of the collective freelists suggest that fardados tend to revere a geographically and historically diverse range of spiritual teachers, but with more emphasis placed on post-Enlightenment males from Europe and Asia. However, with the most salient teachers (those that were mentioned many times and occurred at the top of individuals’ freelists), there is a balance between ancient and more modern names.

After the freelists were compiled, I visited the 8 fardados who had provided the longest freelists to carry out follow-up interviews¹¹ (coincidentally, this group consisted of 4 males and 4 females). Below is a review of how fardados interpreted the occurrence of the top-10 names on the GST freelists.

(1) Jesus Christ (7–5 BCE – 30–33 CE¹²): Regarding Jesus Christ, a fardado from CdAI said “I’m not astonished that Jesus came in first position here in Belgium, because

¹⁰ To be certain, the vast majority of the names on the list were only mentioned by two or three fardados, and so these names were tangential to the broader cognitive domain I was seeking to tease out.

¹¹ Follow-up interviews were conducted with those Belgian fardados who provided the longest lists because “individuals who know a lot about a subject list more terms than do people who know less” (Quinlan 2005: 2; see also de Munck and Sobo 1998: 79).

¹² Unless otherwise indicated, birth-death dates of ancient GST are derived from the Encyclopedia of Religion, 2nd edition (Jones et al. 2005).

most of the people here (even if they don't believe in Christ), they grow [up] in this type of approach." All these informants concurred that due to their Belgian Catholic upbringings and the Christian background of Santo Daime, Jesus' appearance as the most prominent spiritual teacher is to be expected. Most Belgian fardados are former Catholics, having rejected what they see as a corrupt institution more interested in power and moral guilt than in teaching about love and forgiveness. On the other hand, many credit the Santo Daime with helping them to rediscover their connection to Jesus Christ, a deep bond that dates back to their childhood education:

Because of our history. Because of our faith. We are a very, very Catholic country. And although many say we are not Catholic anymore, we still are. I think a lot of fardados took a teaching of Jesus out of the very narrow-minded kind of Catholic religion and put it into perspective. And I think that the Daime also opens the other dimensions of the energy of Jesus, and not the narrow-minded things that we all learned here in school.

- Frederik

The culture of Catholicism in Belgium gives a partial explanation for why Jesus is the most prominent GST on fardados' freelists. But as discussed in Chapter 4, my informants' conception of Jesus is quite distinct from the average Belgian. As one fardada told me: "Ayahuasca, we say that it's Jesus, that it's the same, it's Jesus in another form." This recalls the notions of transubstantiation evoked in the #14 hymn of Padrinho Valdete (brother of Pd. Alfredo, son of Pd. Sebastião), which says:

<i>Eu tomo Daime</i>	<i>I drink Daime</i>
<i>E considero este vinho</i>	<i>And consider this wine</i>
<i>O mesmo vinho</i>	<i>The same wine</i>
<i>Que Jesus deu pra tomar</i>	<i>Jesus offered his apostles</i>

Thus, for fardados, the Daime sacrament is a vehicle or tool through which they can develop an intimate relationship with the spirit of Jesus' teachings.

(2) Gautama Buddha (c. 566 – 486 BCE): Unlike Jesus' foreseeable appearance as

an important figure in a Christian context, Buddha is not so predictable here because he is not traditionally part of Belgian culture nor Santo Daime doctrine. However, fardados did affirm that “Buddhism is quite well known” in Belgium. Lars explained why he admires Buddha:

Buddha is an important message. He gave a teaching of how you can fulfill your life without illusion, without suffering, and he gave all the steps: follow this and you have rebirth in Nirvana, you'll become one again with the One. And he doesn't speak about God, it's only about humans, about our psychology, our mind...

So even though their hymns officially evoke Christian, Afro-Brazilian, and indigenous Amazonian entities, Belgian fardados see the teachings of the Buddha and Santo Daime doctrine as “complementary” ways to reach personal enlightenment.

(3) Mestre Irineu (1892 – 1971 CE): Since the founder of Santo Daime was very prominent in the minds of Belgian fardados (placing third on the collective freelist after Jesus Christ and the Buddha), let us delve a bit more deeply into Mestre Irineu's background. Raimundo Irineu Serra spent his childhood and young adulthood in his hometown of São Vicente Ferrer (Maranhão state, Brazil), a village of about 18,000 present-day inhabitants located 280 km southwest of the state capital of São Luis (Labate and Pacheco 2004). Extending from roots in the slave-trade diaspora, the Afro-Brazilian religious tradition of Maranhão is known as *Tambor de Mina*.¹³ The Tambor de Mina,

¹³ Tambor de Mina is somewhat distinct from Afro-Brazilian traditions found in the rest of Brazil. While Maranhão “cult houses” are related to some Bahian Afro-Brazilian churches of the “Jeje nation (*nação Jeje*)...in Maranhão the Jeje are known as Mina-Jeje and this denomination of Candomblé is mainly associated with the Casa das Minas, a cult house with strong Fon influences” (Parés 2001: 92). The Jeje nation of Brazil is headquartered in two primary locales, each boasting unique interpretations of their shared religious heritage: “The Candomblé in Bahia and the Tambor de Mina in Maranhão, although possessing basic conceptual and ritual similarities (i.e. drum-song-dance ritual format, spirit possession, initiation, sacrifice, healing, celebration aspects), present a wide range of differences in terms of ritual calendars, spiritual entities, song repertoires, drums, dances, costumes, and initiation rituals, making clear distinctions between both cults” (Parés 2001: 100). Most significant for our purposes here are the predilections of Jeje religions, which use drumming and dancing as techniques that encourage an ecstatic trance state. The initiate's altered consciousness is viewed as a way of accessing and communicating with the spiritual realm where healing and self-knowledge can be attained, much like in Santo Daime.

with its hub and main *casas* (“houses”) in São Luis, was the core religion of Afro-Brazilians in turn-of-the-century Maranhão. Since Tambor de Mina is a branch of the broader Afro-Brazilian spirituality known in Brazil as Candomblé, it is important to recognize how the wider cultural context of Irineu’s upbringing influenced his creation of Santo Daime. The sway of Tambor de Mina was weaker with populations located outside the capital, where Afro-Brazilian communities tended to incorporate indigenous Amazonian elements into their spiritual practices.¹⁴ J. Lorand Matory (2005: 120) reports that many established Candomblé temples “were quite comfortable with the simultaneous or hybrid adoration of Roman Catholic and African divinities.” During the 1890s an individual such as Irineu Serra, having been raised by former slaves, would have been taught whatever vestiges of Afro-Brazilian religion had endured with his parents in the face of a dominant Catholic hegemony. Living in the hinterland outside of São Luis, Irineu Serra was separated from the more regulated forms of Tambor de Mina because of the lack of any means of swift transport between his hometown and the capital in the early 20th century. He was most likely exposed to a hyper-syncretic rural faith called *pajelança*, what Labate and Pacheco (2004: 315) define as “a religious manifestation formed from elements of popular Catholicism, indigenous cultures, Tambor de Mina, [and] folk medicine.” Therefore, it is evident that the intermixing propensities of Santo Daime date back to the diverse religious initiation that the founder received in northeast

¹⁴ In this way, it is known that: “there exists between the capital city of Maranhão and the *sertão* [wilderness] a transitional zone where the African religions intermixed with the Indian *catimbó*...In the rural areas, the white masters would not allow their slaves to perform their ritual dances, thus making priesthood impossible. All the blacks could do was to cherish and secretly hand down the names of a few especially powerful or revered gods and a nostalgia for their proscribed religion. Any of them who succeeded in escaping or revolting quickly merged with the Indians and found, in the *pajelança*, ceremonies that were in some ways similar to their ancestral ones, notably in the passionate pursuit of ecstasy” (Bastide 1978: 184).

Brazil.¹⁵

While social scientists have been very interested in piecing together Mestre Irineu's personal history (Dawson 2007; Labate and Pacheco 2004), Belgian fardados are less concerned with his ethnic heritage. Instead, my informants emphasize the exemplary persona of the *Mestre* (Portuguese: the "master") as a distillation of all the values espoused by the Santo Daime doctrine. For instance, an elder Belgian fardada (Waudru) claimed that when she was travelling in Brazil with Luiz Mendes, a contemporary of the Mestre, he told her that Mestre Irineu was distinguished by his "nobility and simplicity." Frederik said that he is not surprised that Mestre Irineu appeared as high on Belgian fardados' list of GST "because you're asking the question to people in the Daime, so he's there...my line in the Santo Daime is the Mestre, he's my compass." Mestre Irineu is seen to embody the ethical and mystical values of the doctrine that he founded. Hence, fardados turn their awareness to his image as a spiritual "compass" both during works and in daily life.

(4) Mohandas Gandhi (1869 – 1948 CE): The moral leader in India's quest for independence from British colonization, Gandhi is revered the world over. Belgian fardados dislike of barriers erected between religious identities is evoked in Gandhi's refusal to limit his own spiritual affiliation when he said, "I am a Christian and a Hindu and a Moslem and a Jew." The Belgian fardados would concur with Gandhi's critique of modern Christianity:

If then I had to face only the Sermon on the Mount and my own interpretation of it, I should not hesitate to say 'Oh yes, I am a Christian'. But negatively I can tell you that much of what passes as Christianity is a negation of the Sermon on the

¹⁵ The most famous early followers of Mestre Irineu were also from northeastern Brazil and are still revered for the hymnals they received; e.g. Maria Damião from Belém (Pará state), Germano Guilherme from Piauí state, João Pereira from Ceará state, and Antônio Gomes from Ceará state.

Mount... Jesus possessed a great force, the love force, but Christianity became disfigured when it went to the West. It became the religion of kings” (quoted in Fischer 1954: 130-131).

Belgian fardados likewise disparage the corruption and hypocrisy of powerful religious institutions. In contrast, Jeannette explained why she admires Gandhi:

He showed the power of integrity... His belief and his life were one: he believed that you have to go this way and he [went] this way, and he took responsibility... and he communicated a lot, and he's near to us; the words of Jesus and Buddha, they are far away, but Gandhi is in a closer time to us.

The attention to different time-periods in which GST lived is an important chronological feature of fardados' spiritual orientation, which is discussed in more detail below.

(5) Padrinho Sebastião (1920 – 1990 CE): Sebastião Mota de Melo was born into meager circumstances on a *seringal* (latex production area) near Eurinepé, on the Juruá River in the Brazilian state of Amazonas. His family was derived from ““traditional’ mixed-race populations, known locally as *caboclos*, formed over the centuries through the mixing of indians with a small but steady stream of white and Afro-Brazilian immigrants to Amazonia” (Hall 2007: 153). It appears that he was raised in some sort of spiritualist tradition, since his mother was “a medium, but because her gift was not developed correctly, she became possessed by obsessive spirits, which tormented her with increasing frequency” (Polari de Alverga 1999: 66). Following in his mother’s footsteps, the young Sebastião eventually encountered an Afro-Brazilian man from São Paulo named Mestre Oswaldo¹⁶, who practiced a form of spiritist mediumship in the

¹⁶ Mestre Oswaldo was part of a World War II-era wave of “migrations into the Amazon from the coastal areas during an economic boom, the same process that had earlier brought Afro-Brazilian religions to this area...[brought] several Umandista religious specialists and federation leaders who had undergone their religious training and orientation in Rio and São Paulo and who began to organize federations in Manaus” (Brown 1994: 211). The Umbanda religion is a 20th century outgrowth of Macumba, a loose religious affiliation that developed in the southern states of Brazil in response to the need of people from diverse African backgrounds to harmonize their common experiences of subalterity. Eventually, Christian and Kardecist doctrine was incorporated into the already syncretic Macumba in its reconfiguration as Umbanda.

Kardecist tradition (MacRae 1992: 56). Sebastião eventually became a spiritist medium himself. By invoking the astral powers given to him when he summoned “two spiritual guides, Professor Antônio Jorge and Dr. Bezerra de Menezes,” he achieved fame as a healer throughout the vicinity of Rio Branco (Polari de Alverga 1999: 67-68).

But it would not be until 1965 (at age 45) that he would cross paths with Mestre Irineu (Groisman 2000: 75, 82). As legend has it, Sebastião was eventually afflicted with his own illness, a severe liver ailment for which he sought treatment from the eminent Mestre Irineu, whose supervised ayahuasca sessions were said to have curative qualities (see Chapter 3). Sebastião became a regular attendee at Mestre Irineu’s Alto Santo gatherings, and became a prominent member of Alto Santo in his own right. After the Mestre’s death in 1971, Sebastião formed the *Centro Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal Raimundo Irineu Serra* (CEFLURIS), which is now the most popular and widespread Santo Daime organization in the world (Goldman 1999: xxvi-xxvii; MacRae 1992: 56). His CEFLURIS doctrine included mediumistic innovations that were previously absent in Mestre Irineu’s practice, such as the Afro-Brazilian *Umbanda*¹⁷ tradition from southeast

Spiritualist beliefs and practices predominate in Umbanda alongside reverence for individual mediums whose primary purpose is to alleviate various health afflictions by conjuring help from a host of Afro-Brazilian, Christian, indigenous, and/or Kardecist characters (Bastide 1978: 322, 332; Bramly 1977: 6-7). In Umbanda, the healing of human mental and physical sicknesses is carried out by mediums: “Umbanda spirits temporarily possess trained mediums...Enacting the character traits and wielding the paraphernalia typical of the spirit whose possession has been induced, the medium serves as a conduit through which higher spirits offer counsel as to the most propitious means of remedying the supplicant’s ills and staving off further spiritual assault. Prescribed remedies range from spiritual cleansing through ritual exorcism, the making of placatory offerings and counter alliances with other spirits, to visiting a doctor or adopting a more positive outlook on life. In acting as its conduit, the medium is considered to have faithfully served his adoptive spirit, furthering the likelihood of future success” (Dawson 2007: 26; see Brown 1994: 94-95).¹⁷ The associations between the Santo Daime and Umbanda continue to this day, as there is now a mutual exchange of practice and belief between the two otherwise distinct religions. Accordingly, Umbanda is now “an explicit component of the CEFLURIS ritual repertoire, the established place of mediumistic possession and the rites within which it is practiced...were exemplified by the construction of an Umbanda *terreiro* on the *Céu do Mapiá* site” (Dawson 2007: 84). There are now branches of CEFLURIS in southern Brazil and Europe who actively combine Umbanda spiritualism within Santo Daime ceremonies, a practice known as *Umbadaime*. This combination of the two faiths occurs according to the rationale that the complex and often ambiguous visions induced by ayahuasca can be translated by Umbanda mediums into expressions

Brazil. After his death in 1990, Padrinho Sebastião was himself succeeded by his son, Padrinho Alfredo, who now serves as head of the worldwide CEFLURIS movement (Groisman 2000: 85-86, 93). In recounting the importance of Padrinho Sebastião, Lars said:

He brought the same message as Mestre Irineu, but he brought it to the West. He brought this message all over the planet...He said we have to live ecologically. We must be in harmony with Nature, and that's something Padrinho Sebastião added. Mestre didn't talk too much about it [in his hymns]...I always followed the line of Padrinho Sebastião because this contact with Nature was important for me; we Western people, we need Nature, don't forget that.

As discussed earlier, Santo Daime can be categorized as an eco-religious movement (Schmidt 2007) or nature spirituality. The global expansion of Santo Daime's environmentalist message is thus attributed to the efforts of Padrinho Sebastião.

(6) Mohammed (570 – 632 CE): As the founder of Islam, the name of Mohammed was well-known to Belgian fardados, even if they were not familiar with the details of his life and teachings. Fardados' ecumenical leanings welcome the teachings of all religions that are founded on love of God and fellow human beings. They believe that this was the central message of both Christ and Mohammed, but that the original teachings of the founders of Christianity and Islam have been distorted by ego. For Saskia, who works as a language instructor teaching Muslim immigrants how to speak Flemish, there is a distinction between the teachings of Mohammed and that of fundamentalist Islam:

If you grew up in Islam...he will be a great teacher...For me that's a difficult thing because of the Islam of today. For them...they said the only right teaching is the teaching of Mohammed, because he was the last prophet...So for me, it's sure that

that are personally meaningful for the supplicant (Groisman 2000: 148-150). The emergence of Umbadaime embodies a rebound effect where Santo Daime interpretations of Umbanda, which had originally been introduced into the Santo Daime by Padrinho Sebastião are being reflected back onto contemporary Umbanda in its southern Brazil homeland. Hence, whereas Padrinho Sebastião had initially sought out Santo Daime as a supplement to his Umbanda training, some modern daimistas are now going back to Umbanda to complement their experiences with ayahuasca. However, unlike in Brazil, the Umbanda-mediumistic practices are muted, and in some places completely absent in Europe.

he was a great prophet, but not greater than others. So he's near the line of Jesus...it's beautiful when people become the light, when people are enlightened, you cannot be greater than that...That's one of the beautiful things in the Daime, I think, because [it's] culture mixed together...Daime is open, that's the beautiful thing for me from Daime, that it's not godsdienst [god-service], it's not a belief system...the Daime is a religion but not with the strict rules, it's more open.

So while fardados embrace Mohammed as a GST, they critique any narrow dogma that fails to notice the universal truths promoted by all great spiritual traditions. They admire the peaceful and devout aspects of Islam, particularly the mystical school of Sufism.

(7) Krishna (??? BCE): Unlike the other GST mentioned here, according to Hindu lore Krishna is a deity that incarnated on earth in multiple different forms throughout ancient history.¹⁸ Fardados are aware of this distinction, and as one informant put it: “Krishna is more a concept than a person.” But they nevertheless express fondness for the enlightened qualities ascribed to Krishna, who “more than any other figure symbolizes divine love...divine beauty...and a quality of purposeless, playful, yet fascinating action” (Jones et al. 2005: 5248). Jeannette smiled as she said:

[Krishna] is a happy one. Krishna is the possibility to have more than one life because you have the different [forms] of Krishna. The living Krishna is one, but then you have Krishna in this form and Krishna in this form. It's very nice because I think it is what will happen with us...that we have more than one life in one body. And it's kind, it's very nice with Krishna, no? When you look at a picture of Krishna it's all love, it's all pleasure, it's all colors.

Much like Krishna represents the death and rebirth of the soul in Hinduism, reincarnation of the soul over many lifetimes is also accepted as a cosmological principle in Santo Daime. The prominence of Hinduism in the minds of Belgian fardados is evident in the fact that the majority of GST mentioned in their freelists are mystics from India.

¹⁸ The mythic life history of Krishna's various incarnations are documented in the ancient Hindu text called the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Jones et al. 2005).

(8) Virgin Mary (c. 2nd decade BCE – 1st century CE¹⁹): It is noteworthy that the only female name in fardados' top-ten GST is a historical figure of which very little is known. Fardados were asked why Mary was the only female on their list. In the words of Lars:

The Virgin Mary, she didn't give a message, she has no teachings, she's only the mother of Jesus. But she became the symbol of the Eternal Feminine, and she gives this message. What makes her a saint, a divinity, is that she said to God 'Do with me what You want'. She's humble, she gives a message of humility, of confidence in God...She's the Great Mother, it's the Rainha da Floresta [Queen of the Forest].

- Lars

All interviewees agreed that even though females' contributions are understated throughout paternalistic history, the Virgin Mary epitomizes the qualities of both human and divine motherhood. For example, Clara is a 34-year-old school teacher who began her Daime practice in 2002 at the age of 26. Despite their youth, she and Saskia provided some of the longest GST freelists, indicating their extensive knowledge of this cultural domain. A soft-spoken single woman who attends CdU, Clara explained the importance of the Virgin Mary this way:

We don't know so many female teachers in history. Maybe they were there, I don't know. Like the stories about Mary Magdalene, that she was the woman next to Jesus, or probably before Jesus also there were more women that were more important. But I think that history changed that way of seeing. Like also Maria, she's well known but she also was the mother of Jesus. So it was he who took the most important part. It's like she was in the background...

I think at the moment [the Virgin Mary is] one of my favorites. There's a lot of pain in the world at the moment, and it goes fast, and for me I can feel very unsure. Maybe that's also something collective. I think it's a very important energy that she embodies. For me she embodies the most loving mother. Like even if you're totally at the end and there's nobody anymore, then she is still there with her arms open and with her softness, to take you and bring you to her heart.

- Clara (West Flanders)

As a universal source of unconditional motherly love, the Virgin Mary is an archetypal

¹⁹ It is estimated that Mary was 13 years old at the time of Jesus' conception-birth, but there are conflicting reports about exactly when she died/ascended, some time in the 1st century CE (Tavard 1996: 24-28, 210).

figure for fardados, representing a primeval femininity that can be called upon for support and comfort in times of disquietude. Unlike the previous eight, Belgian fardados' ninth and tenth most salient GST are still alive.

(9) Dalai Lama (1935 CE - present): A tireless advocate for universal compassion as humanity's greatest ideal, the Dalai Lama (a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate) is credited with bridging the cultural and spiritual gap between East and West. In speaking about his place in a cyclical history, Lars tied the Dalai Lama's message to all the GST:

He's of our times, and that's his importance. He translates again this ancient message of brotherhood...and he's an example for it...[the Dalai Lama] also says... 'Oh, it's good that the Chinese kicked us out of Tibet, because now our religion is spread all over the world...Thank you Chinese' (laughs). So he's a very great example of love and tolerance and spiritual life.

But in fact, he doesn't bring a new message. He's Buddhist, he's a follower of Buddha. He incarnates it again. The history of philosophy is a history of incarnation, and every few hundred or thousand years there's a person who brings the same message adapted to that era. Like Buddha in his era, then later there's Jesus, later there's Mohammed, and in several parts of the world also...[Santo Daime is] all over the world by now and it says 'Preserve Nature, have love, believe in God, believe in the Higher Self, have spirituality, Awake!' In the Daime hinos, they speak about 'o povo' [the people]. Most people are sleeping, are living the world of illusion. What Buddha [and] Jesus talk about: be awake! Be awake for the Higher message! Make your life spiritual!

The Dalai Lama is a living representative of what fardados believe is a universal truth that has been preached by all GST throughout history. Just like Daime, fardados say that GST provide the opportunity for individuals to "awake" to inner peace and happiness instead of sleeping in an illusory world of dualistic conflict and ego suffering. But while GST appear in all cultures in all time periods, they cannot force people to believe them. My informants stress that it is up to each person to recognize the truth when it is imparted to them.

(10) Eckhart Tolle (1948 CE - present): Eckhart Tolle is a German-born Canadian

author. After having been touted by Oprah Winfrey, Tolle (1999) became world famous as the author of a book called *The Power of Now*. He is now one of the most well-known spokespersons of the integral subculture. Some fardados did not agree with the inclusion of Tolle as a GST alongside the other names discussed above. However, six fardados mentioned him on their freelists because they believe he is reiterating the same mystical truths championed by the other GST in a way that is recognizable to modern Euro-Americans. Clara was especially enthusiastic about Tolle's placement among the other GST on the collective freelist:

I am very happy to see him here because he's really a person of these days, and these days are so different than the days before. It's so hard to find stability or some teaching that can bring you stability...[Tolle] can show people to find rest in your heart at those moments. He really does his very best without big prophesies; still he gives very important lessons. If you read his books or if you see his DVDs, it really touches you directly. You see that he lives it and he's a great teacher because he knows [how] to bring over this knowledge that he embodies.

It is clear that Tolle's ideas match Belgian fardados' integral worldview. The way that my informants talk about the "ego" is identical to Tolle's (1999: 22, 181) discussion of the ego as "a false self, created by unconscious identification with the mind...the ego perceives itself as a separate fragment in a hostile universe, with no real inner connection to any other being, surrounded by other egos which it either sees as a potential threat or which it will attempt to use for its own ends." An elder Belgian fardada referred to all the GST as the "flowers of humanity," a phrase she no doubt adopted from Tolle's (2005) book *A New Earth*. In also grouping together the teachings of GST such as Jesus and Buddha, Tolle (2005: 6) suggests that the human species is now prepared to "flower" or "awaken" beyond ego consciousness on a grand scale. My informants concur with Tolle that all GST teach the same message of shifting from an egotistic self to a sense of

personal connection with a cosmic oneness. However, for Belgian fardados the historical context of each GST is still important for considering the applicability of their common message today. The temporal connotations of these GST became even more clear-cut when the cultural domain data was tabulated further.

Triads and Hierarchical Cluster Analysis

The mixture of historical and geographical backgrounds exemplified by the most prominent names on the GST freelist made more sense after dispensing “triad” tests to fardados from Belgium.²⁰ A pen-and-paper triad test involved taking the top ten names from the freelists²¹ and combining them into multiple groups of three called “triplets” (Borgatti 1994: 271) or “triples” (Borgatti 1999). The function of a triad test is to prompt informants to make “similarity judgments” (D’Andrade 1995: 48), in that it gets “people to define what attributes they use to distinguish among items” in a cultural domain (Borgatti 1999: 142). In the triad test, informants are asked to circle the one item that they judge to be “the most different” (Borgatti 1999: 142). By doing so, the informant implies that the other two items are comparatively alike²² (Borgatti 1994: 271). Many fardados found the triad task difficult, expressing their aversion to making distinctions

²⁰ Triad tests are only useful for “very small domains (12 items or less)” (Borgatti 1999: 142). Anthropac will generate “a series of individually randomized questionnaires in a standard format” to avoid “order bias” (Borgatti 1994: 266-267). These randomized questionnaires are then printed and distributed to informants.

²¹ Weller and Romney (1988: 16) confirm that “there are no absolute rules for inclusion and exclusion of items... The researcher should be sure that items included in the study domain are known by the vast majority of the informants.” Although there is no rigid rule about where to make the “cutoff” of freelist items to include on the triads, I included the top ten names because these were mentioned with relatively high frequency and they are names familiar to all informants.

²² Since including all possible groupings of 3 items from the top ten items would produce 120 separate triads (which is too burdensome for respondents, see D’andrade: 48-54). Following Borgatti (1999: 143), I used a “balanced incomplete block or BIB design... In a BIB design, every pair of items occurs a fixed number of times. The number of times the pair occurs is known as lambda (λ)... Thus, it is much better to have at least a $\lambda=2$ design, where each pair of items occurs against two different third items.” Thus, using a $\lambda=2$ BIB design allowed me to gather the same information about the ten GST items with only 30 triads by taking a controlled and “manageable sample of triples” (Borgatti 1999: 143).

between wise spiritual masters that they believe are teaching the same mystical truths. Two fardados (one male, one female) even refused to complete the triad test because they claimed it was impossible to identify differences between items. This reticence to segregate is consistent with daimistas' general proclivity for seeing "solutions" or unifying resemblance between what outsiders would consider as disparate elements.

Nevertheless, 26 Belgian fardados completed the triads test (13 male, 13 female, 22 had also provided freelist data, four were newly recruited informants). Anthropic utilizes these data to produce various kinds of diagrams that portray a visual illustration of how informants view the similarity-dissimilarity of items within a cultural domain. In digging deeper into the meaning of GST for Belgian fardados, Anthropic generated two diagrams that display the similarity judgments made by respondents in the triad tests. First, the software created a two-dimensional map (called *multidimensional scaling* [MDS]²³) that gives a general idea of how fardados cluster items into groups (D'Andrade 1995: 64-69). Secondly, the database also yielded quantitative relations that can be depicted as a bar-graph of *hierarchical cluster analysis*.²⁴ The results of the triad test (n = 26) demonstrate how the different spiritual teachers are arranged relative to each other in the minds of Belgian fardados (refer to Appendix VI). For follow-up interviews with the eight informants who provided the longest freelists, the levels of similarity formulated

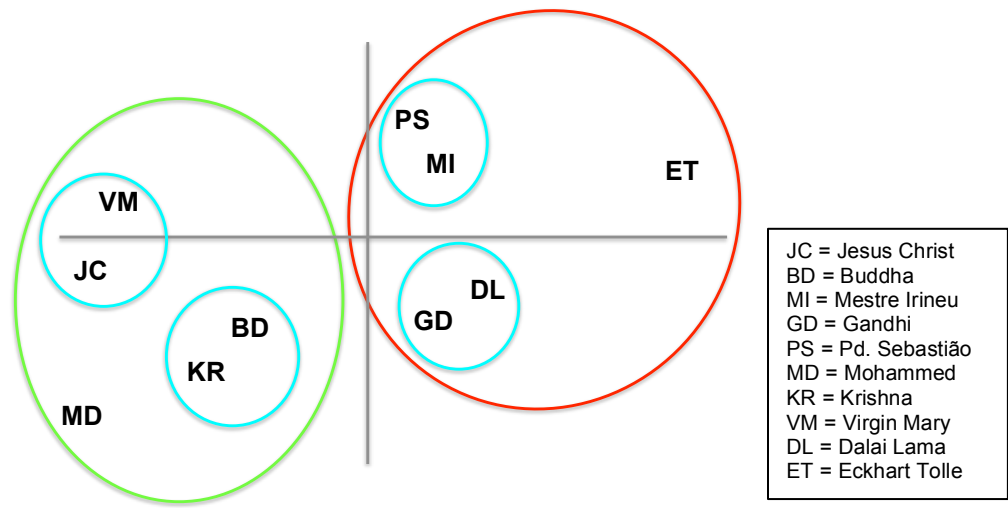
²³ It is important to check the "stress" measure for multidimensional scaling (MDS) maps: "Of course, it is not necessary that an MDS map have zero stress in order to be useful. A certain amount of distortion is tolerable. Different people have different standards regarding the amount of stress to tolerate. The rule of thumb we use is that anything under 0.1 is excellent and anything over 0.15 is unacceptable." (Borgatti 1996 [Methods]: 31,33). The stress of the MDS produced from Belgian fardados' triad tests had an acceptable stress of 0.121 (see Appendix VI).

²⁴ With triad data, it is necessary to determine that informants actually do share common cognitive models regarding the cultural domain being explored. Thus, one must run a "consensus analysis" on the triad data (Romney et al. 1986). In the consensus analysis for Belgian fardados' GST triads (see Appendix VI) the first eigenvalue was more than 4 times larger than the second eigenvalue (a ratio of 4:1). This means that the GST triad data are acceptable, since one only need have a 3:1 ratio between the first and second eigenvalues to show that there is sufficient consensus between informants (Borgatti and Halgin 2011: 176).

by the hierarchical cluster analysis were inserted into the MDS map, which resulted in the visual diagram below (see Bernard 2011: 363; Bernard and Ryan 2010: 117-119, 180-183).

	M	K	B	J	V	M	P	G	D	E
	D	R	D	C	M	I	S	D	L	T
Level	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1	.	.	.	XXX	.	.	.	.	.	.
2	.	.	.	XXX	XXX	.	.	.	.	.
3	.	.	.	XXX	XXX	XXX	.	.	.	.
4	.	.	.	XXXXX	XXX	XXX	.	.	.	.
5	.	.	.	XXXXXXXX	XXX	XXX	.	.	.	.
6	XXXXXXXXXX	XXX	XXX	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
7	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
8	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
9	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Figure 21:
 - **Above:** Hierarchical cluster analysis of triads from Belgian fardados' GST domain
 - **Below:** A graph based on the output of triads for Belgian fardados' GST domain; the image combines a multidimensional scaling map with results from the hierarchical cluster analysis



Fardados were asked to give their interpretations of the top ten GST and the distribution of these names in the multidimensional scaling map (Figure 21). One fardada stated it simply: “They are all good examples of the positive vibrations we are looking for.” Another fardada agreed that these GST “are examples,” and elaborated by saying that “they are a little bit [of] consciousness that came into the material, so they bring things for the whole world, all of them...from the source of being.” This agrees

with fardados' view of the astral as a heavenly place of oneness that can be accessed through mystical practices like Santo Daime. The GST are those who incarnate this essence and bring it into the human world. But when Saskia looked just at the list of ten names (*before* she had seen the hierarchical cluster diagram) she observed three distinct groups: (1) "great masters of the world that [are] well known to everybody" (Jesus [JC], Buddha [BD], Krishna [KR], Virgin Mary [VM], Mohammed [MD]); (2) teachers associated with Santo Daime (Mestre Irineu [MI], Padrinho Sebastião [PS]); and (3) "teachers of today" (Eckhart Tolle [ET], Dalai Lama [DL], Gandhi [GD]). After considering the significance of each GST individually, informants were asked to survey the different levels of similarity identified by the hierarchical cluster chart.²⁵

In the follow-up interviews, fardados provided consistent and straightforward justifications for why certain items clustered together the way they did. For instance, for Level 1 there was a general consensus that Jesus and the Virgin Mary were considered the most similar GST names because of Belgian fardados' Christian heritage. I interviewed a 42-year-old fardada in the rural Walloon homestead she shares with her fardado husband. Paulette is a kinesiologist who has been attending CdAI works since 2008. She reasoned that:

We are in a Catholic region [in Belgium]...The Virgin Maria is the mother of Jesus, and she has a very big importance for Christians: she is the mother, and Jesus is a little bit the father. The masculine and feminine divinity in Christianity [is] a representation of even power, yin-yang.

- Paulette (Liège)

This central value of complementarity, balance, and equality of the genders is seen by

²⁵ In order to get each informant to focus on one level of clustering at a time, I showed them each hierarchical cluster level sequentially from the most similar to the least similar as they appeared in the hierarchical clustering graph (see Appendix VI). For instance, I showed them the map with only JC and VM circled, and recorded their interpretation. Then I showed them a second page with MI and PS circled, then one with GD and DL circled, and so on until they had interpreted each hierarchical cluster level.

fardados as a quality shared by mystical Christianity and Daoism. My informants were similarly frank about why Mestre Irineu and Padrinho Sebastião were strongly linked (Level 2): “That’s the Daime of course!”

For Level 3, Saskia explained why fardados would consider Buddha as closely related to Christian figures like Jesus and the Virgin Mary:

He was also an enlightened person. The difference, I think, between Christ and Buddha (you can put them both near each other because they both are enlightened people), Jesus shows us how to be the light and Buddha shows us the way to the light, how you can go to the light, shows that path.

With regards to the perceived similarity between Gandhi and the Dalai Lama (Level 4), while some fardados surmised that they are alike because they are both from Asia, the most common interpretation was that both these GST are known as champions of nonviolence. A biography relates how “Gandhi’s nonviolence was first of all a creed of personal ethics which included truth, love, service, scrupulous methods and means, nonhurting by deed or word, tender tolerance of differences, and desirelessness or, at least, moderation in the pursuit of material things” (Fischer 1954: 132). This statement could also apply seamlessly to the values cherished by both the Dalai Lama and fardados.

For Level 5, when Krishna joined the group on the left, most fardados were stumped as to how he fit with Jesus, Mary, and Buddha, but Saskia suggested that it had something to do with time: “Krishna is ancient... older than Buddha and Jesus but still, ancient time.” With Level 6, fardados also had less to say about why Mohammed was clustered with the group on the left, but Lars suggested that he is “one of the important teachers of mankind, and...his inspiration is Christianity and Judaism.” As the levels of clustering were revealed to them, fardados tended to focus more on the aspect of time.

The division based on the historical time when GST lived really emerged for

people when they were shown the Level 7 cluster, where Mestre Irineu and Padrinho Sebastião join Gandhi and the Dalai Lama. Saskia rationalized the division this way:

For two reasons: [On the Left], these are more people from history, years and years ago, and where all the big religions came from like Islam, Christianity and Hinduism...and these are also the really enlightened persons. And these persons [on the right] they have levels of enlightenment, but I think they are not so high as [on the left]. These [on the right] are more recent people...

Other fardados concurred that the reason there is this perceived difference between the famous names of ancient people (on the left) and the names of well-known modern spiritual teachers (on the right) is because only the most exceptional spiritual figures remain relevant over long periods of time. In this way, they did not expect all the names on the right to still be well-known thousands of years from now. For example, at Level 8 Eckhart Tolle is the furthest outlier. Looking at this, fardados all acknowledged that they have read his books and that “he’s very popular in Europe.” But as is demonstrated by the response of Thibault (a 56-year-old psychologist and CdAI musician from Liège), those GST on the left had a “big mission” to fulfill. He said those on the right have a “little mission” to pursue “in a particular time” period. Like other fardados, Thibault approved of Tolle’s remote place on the cluster analysis because he is literally on a lower “level” relative to the “big big big geniuses”: “there is no comparison...the same difference between me and Beethoven, that’s Eckhart Tolle in front of Buddha or Krishna.” Nevertheless, the unifying factor of this cultural domain is that all the GST have important spiritual lessons to teach humanity.

For daimistas, life is a “school” and all people are students in this school trying to learn lessons in order to advance to greater self-awareness. By extension, they see the Santo Daime doctrine as the curriculum of a “spiritual school” or a “school of being.” In

my interview with a Dutch fiscal, he called the Daime the “University of Universities.” My informants testify that the Santo Daime “university” teaches them the same lessons that the GST teach. They contrast these mystical lessons with both the scientific materialism instilled by secular education and the moralism of dogmatic religious institutions. After hearing many of my informants refer to Santo Daime as a “school,” a Belgian fardada who is an elementary school teacher was asked how she distinguishes between her career and the teachings of the great spiritual teachers. She responded:

The things in school are things that are important for the structure of the way we are living here. So the government chooses what is important for students to know to help develop the country. While I think Great Spiritual Teachers are universal knowledge...some collective wisdom that can help to have a positive development in the world, in yourself, and without boundaries...If you study psychology or philosophy at university, there are subjects that can teach the matter, but that's not the same as the person who lives the matter...I think a big difference can be that [Santo Daime is] the experience, you go into the experience. So it's not only theory, but...you sometimes get insights because you live it; or as the Santo Daime says: maybe you can change your way of thinking...So a spiritual school is more like living and searching and trying out things more than only studying the theory.

- Clara

In sum, the GST mentioned by Belgian fardados represent for them the ideal human being. In the Santo Daime school, daimistas are all “pupils” or “students” learning directly from the examples set by saintly figures throughout the ages.

The Trans-Modern Values of Belgian Fardados

Although my informants are acutely aware of how the element of time is an important factor (because divine lessons are expressed in different ways in different eras), they are adamant that all the GST teach the same mystical lessons. When fardados were shown the clustering map, they concurred in their explanation for its division into the two main clusters at Level 9 (one on the left with JC, BD, VM, MD, and KR, and one on the right with MI, PS, GD, DL, and ET). As an example, one of them stated upon looking at

the cluster map:

I think these [on the right] are the contemporary representers of some of the teachings of these great souls [on the left]. They come from a different religion, but when you put them all together it all comes down to the same thing. It's Buddhism, it's the Daime, it's Christianity, it's all the same message: love, understanding, humility, no ego, peace, all that... The pure messages are all the same. But when power is involved in the message, then it goes wrong. Then you have a religion that says women are less important than men, for example. That already is enough for me to stand aside, because then we're leaving the truth... And it also happens in the Daime, that people say 'Daime is the only pure religion'. Ugh, there we go again!

- Frederik

So while Belgian fardados respect the teachings of all GST, they mostly isolate the individual spiritual teachers from the churches they are associated with.²⁶ While systematic dissection is important for the researcher administering a cultural domain analysis, for fardados the distinctions between different religions or between religious figures are of little importance. In accord with the basic themes of Santo Daime worldview, my informants believe that the same existential truths are universally applicable, cross-culturally and throughout history. Their focus on the valuable lessons they can learn from every different spiritual tradition, past or present, infers that fardados favor a *trans-modern*²⁷ outlook on the world.

Unlike the rejection of both traditional and modernist “meta-narratives” by postmodernism (Taylor 2007: 716-719), which Latour (1993: 46) diagnosed as “a symptom [of modernism], not a fresh solution,” the trans-modern embraces new hybrid metanarratives. Transmodernity, as a conscientious blending of pre-modern and modern

²⁶ Fardados are deeply suspicious of institutionalized religions that build up around the GST, which they see as a corruption of the original message. As their doctrine expands, some fardados are concerned that Santo Daime may one day make the same mistakes.

²⁷ Anthropologist Jane Granskog (2003) links *transmodernism* with the emerging *integral culture* discussed at the outset of this chapter: “Integral Culture is concerned with values focused on spiritual transformation, self actualization, ecological sustainability, and the worth of the feminine; one that places primary emphasis on personal accountability, taking individual responsibility for finding new creative ways to bring balance and harmony back into a world gone awry.”

ideas, has been heralded by European scholars in the field of *futurology*²⁸ as “signifying simply that this is the era we find ourselves in when we have moved *through* (trans-) modernity to the stage beyond it” (Tibbs 2011: 27). In seeking resolutions to diachronic conflicts, the trans-modern implements compromises between the wisdom of old and new with:

...a spirit of hopefulness; a desire for wisdom; a concern with religious and transcendent and spiritual themes; a rediscovery of the importance of truth, beauty, goodness and harmony; a concern with simplicity and the quest for a mature and balanced understanding of experience. It will not be so much a spirit of new theories or ideologies, but of an integration of existing valid intellectual approaches, including those from the pre-modern tradition (Vitz 1998: 113-114).

For Marc Luyckx (1999: 972), a Belgian theologian and futurologist, transmodernity “means keeping the best of modernity but going beyond it: the exclusion of spiritual and religious considerations from politics and public affairs is no longer appropriate, even though the distinction between the two realms needs to be maintained” (see also Luyckx 2010). This is precisely the kind of all-encompassing position, a compromise “solution” that combines ancient and modern worldviews into a coherent new whole, that one sees expressed in Belgian fardados’ GST list. Fardados display optimism that it is possible to resolve ethnic conflict, heal economic disparities, cure psychological illnesses, and avoid ecological crises through the integration of what are usually seen as mutually exclusive categories. The trans-modern outlook is also now appealing to some academics, who assent to the development of compromises between religion and secularism (see Chapter 8). As it is demonstrated below, fardados’ trans-modern worldview is associated with the broader surfacing of a new Euro-American subculture called the “Cultural Creatives.”

²⁸ Futurology (or future studies) is a scholarly study of statistical prognostication, a field which businesses and governments consult for predictions about the future based on trends in social scientific data.

Santo Daime and the “Cultural Creatives”

Prior to tabulating the freelist data pertaining to Belgian fardados’ ideas about GST, it was difficult to distinguish the demographics of daimistas from the rest of the European population. In seeking to understand the shared existential-spiritual values of Belgian fardados, the results of this cultural domain analysis pointed me towards a large subculture in North America and Europe that scholars have classified as *Cultural Creatives* (CCs). In *The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People are Changing the World*, sociologist Paul Ray and his psychologist spouse Sherry Ruth Anderson initiate the study of this heretofore undervalued demographic trend. These researchers report on “thirteen years of survey research on more than 100,000 Americans, hundreds of focus groups, and about sixty in-depth interviews that reveal the emergence of an entire subculture of Americans” (Ray and Anderson 2000: 4; 349-350). They contrast the CCs with two other broad Euro-American subcultures that they label *Traditionals* and *Moderns*. These three Western subcultures are characterized according to their divergent values, as explained by the originators of this new paradigm.

Members of what Ray and Anderson (2000: 30-32) call the *Traditional* subculture (estimated to make up “24.5 % of the U.S. population, or 48 million adults”) “are not primarily about politics” but more fundamentally “about beliefs, ways of life, and personal identity.” Here is the authors’ catalogue of Traditionals’ shared values:

- Feminism is a swearword
- Men need to keep their traditional roles and women need to keep theirs
- Family, church, and community are where you belong
- The conservative version of their own particular religious traditions must be upheld
- It’s important to regulate sex—pornography, teen sex, extramarital sex—and abortion
- All the guidance you need for your life can be found in the Bible

- Country and small-town life is more virtuous than big-city or suburban life
- Preserving civil liberties is less important than restricting immoral behavior
- Freedom to carry arms is essential
- Foreigners are not welcome

Existing as polar opposite view of human life, the subculture of *Moderns* is identified as the dominant “taken-for-granted perspective” in secular politics and popular culture.

Moderns represent 48% of the U.S. populace (93 million adults), a mainstream ideology in Western society, made up of “people who accept the commercialized urban-industrial world as the obvious right way to live” (Ray and Anderson 2000: 25-30). The authors identify Moderns’ common worldview as including the following values and opinions:

- Making or having a lot of money
- “Looking good” or being stylish
- Being on top of the latest trends, styles, and innovations (as a consumer or on the job)
- Rejecting the values and concerns of native peoples, rural people, Traditionals, New Agers, religious mystics
- It’s flaky to be concerned about your inner or spiritual life
- Your body is pretty much like a machine
- Either big business knows best, or big government knows best
- Analyzing things into their parts is the best way to solve problems
- Science and engineering are the models for truth
- The mainstream media’s awe for and sense of importance of the very rich is about right

Fardados are people seeking “solutions” to the cross-pressures between traditional religion and secular modernity in 21st century life; fardados do not see this conflict as necessary, preferring to emphasize options for integrating the value systems of Traditionals and Moderns. Indeed, fardados share CCs’ aversion to both extreme sides in the “culture war,” opting instead to “head off in a third direction that’s neither left nor right, neither modern nor traditional” (Ray and Anderson 2000: 94). This proclivity is in line with what Ray and Anderson (2000: xiv) pinpoint as the basic values of CCs, who typically:

- love nature and are deeply concerned about its destruction
- would pay more taxes or pay more for consumer goods if they knew the money would go to clean up the environment and to stop global warming
- care intensely about both psychological and spiritual development
- see spirituality or religion as important in their life but are also concerned about the role of the Religious Right in politics
- want our politics and government spending to put more emphasis on children's education and well-being, on rebuilding our neighborhoods and communities, and on creating an ecologically sustainable future
- are unhappy with both the left and the right in politics and want to find a new way that is not in the mushy middle
- tend to be rather optimistic about our future and distrust the cynical and pessimistic view that is given by the media
- are concerned about what the big corporations are doing in the name of making more profits: downsizing, creating environmental problems, and exploiting poorer countries
- dislike all the emphasis in modern culture on success and "making it," on getting and spending, on wealth and luxury goods
- like people and places that are exotic and foreign, and like experiencing and learning about other ways of life [a xenophilia that is clearly shared by European daimistas]

Ray and Anderson (2000: 4-5) report on a "comprehensive shift" of worldview, as the CC subculture comprises 26% of U.S. citizens (50 million adults) and at least the same proportion of the population in Europe. This means that out of 500 million people in the European Union populace, roughly 123 million (24.5%) are Traditionals, 240 million (48%) are Moderns, and about 130 million (26%) hold values that fit the Cultural Creatives category (CIA World Factbook 2008²⁹).

As Ray and Anderson (2000: 215-223) point out, the CC subculture grew out of the civil rights and women's movements of the 1960s-1970s, and these activists became key players in the subsequent environmental and LGBT movements. With significance to the present discussion, a central facet in the historical development of the integral subculture is the interest of many CCs in the "consciousness movements." This

²⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ee.html>

collection of spiritual techniques imported into Western culture in the late 20th century reads like a list of Santo Daime traits as they have been discussed herein.³⁰ In combing the literature, only one researcher has made a connection between the CC subculture and the emerging Euro-American interest in ayahuasca spirituality; however, this researcher mistakenly conflates CCs with New Age consumerism (Owen 2006: 66-67). Ray and Anderson (2000: 189) explicitly denounce this faulty correlation as an invention of the media, noting that “the vast majority of people concerned with consciousness issues are not New Agers at all.” CCs do not see consumerism as way to achieve their goal, which is the main distinction between the New Age and CCs. What marks the CCs as a subculture to which European fardados belong is both groups’ trans-modern desire to bridge “an old way of life and a new one” in order to “carry forward what is valuable from the past and integrate it with what’s needed for the future” (Ray and Anderson 2000: 87).

As noted earlier, Santo Daime can be classified as a nature spirituality (Greenwood 2005: vii) because like neo-paganism and *wicca* groups across Europe, Daime rituals and spiritual beliefs are oriented towards the Earth and its biosphere. In underscoring that “all Cultural Creatives have ‘green’ values,” Ray and Anderson (2000: 14) demarcate two “wings” of the CC subculture: “the Core group is far more intense and activist...[and] has strong values of personal growth and spirituality...[while] the values and social concerns of the second group, the Green Cultural Creatives, are more secular

³⁰ Ray and Anderson (2000: 171) itemize in detail what is meant by the label “consciousness movements”: “they include the human potential movement; psychedelic explorations; the so-called new spirituality, which is extensively based on quite ancient Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Native American traditions, Celtic practices, and mystical Judaism and Sufisim and Christianity, as well as Wicca (which is very old or very new, or both); bodywork, yoga, and the various marital arts; healing practices, including acupuncture, therapeutic touch, and laying on of hands; and a wide spectrum of prayer and meditation.”

and extroverted; they tend to follow the opinions of the Core group.” Like fardados, CCs’ environmentalism grows out of a belief that individuals’ true interests are tied to ecological sustainability and all humanity, rather than the selfish interests of the ego. In fact, as an example of how CC environmentalism manifests in spirituality, the Santo Daime could be called an “eco-religion” (Schmidt 2007) or a “Dark green religion” (B. Taylor 2010). Such “eco-centric” or “biocentric” values espoused by daimistas and CCs resemble the cosmologies of aboriginal cultures in the New World: “Rather than seeing the planet as a pyramid with humans on top, it sees the Earth as a web of life, and humans as just one strand in the web: what we do to the Earth, we do to ourselves; we belong to Nature, not nature to us; we have obligations to Mother Nature, not just for us” (Ray and Anderson 2000: 167). Fardados believe that ayahuasca embodies the spirit of Father-Mother Nature. Through the sacramental beverage, fardados believe this Nature-deity teaches humanity how to live in harmony with the natural environment. So in summary, with CCs one can recognize a subculture of Euro-Americans whose values harmonize with those of Belgian fardados.³¹ Since CCs are characterized by Ray and Anderson (2000: 39, 94) as still isolated and lacking “self awareness” as a coherent subculture, Santo Daime displays how some “core CCs” are beginning to coalesce; in this way, the salão is offering a place for some European CCs to gather together in collective devotion.

Concerning the fervent disputes over how to interpret contrasting trends of declining church attendance and sociopolitical secularization on the one hand and the persistence of new or evolving spiritual beliefs on the other, the arrival of Santo Daime in

³¹ Following Ray and Anderson (2000: 17), both CCs and Belgian fardados “are disenchanted with ‘owning more stuff’, materialism, greed, me-firstism, status display, glaring social inequalities of race and class, society’s failure to care adequately for elders, women, and children, and the hedonism and cynicism that pass for realism in modern society”; at the same time, fardados are like CCs in that they “reject the intolerance and narrowness of social conservatives.”

Europe is an instructive case study. The debate about secularism has thus far focused only on Traditionals and Moderns, totally missing the millions of CCs in their midst. The small congregations of Santo Daime are just the tip of the iceberg, but fardados nonetheless provide a rare chance to study emergent religious trends of CCs in Europe. Instead of throwing out either the ideals of the Enlightenment or the counter-Enlightenment, this new integral culture views the re-enchantment of Euro-American society as an inevitable reaction to materialism. In the words of one Belgian fardado:

It is a phase...People will have more and more material and say 'How can we not be very happy? Why are we unhappy with all our material?' And then they will have to look for something else, because more and more and more and more doesn't satisfy them anymore. And where's satisfaction? Where's happiness? What is true happiness? True happiness is giving to somebody and seeing that you get it back almost immediately...it's not like taking and grabbing it and defending it and fighting about it. No, it's actually giving it away and all of a sudden you get more. I might lose all the wealth I want, I don't need more because I'm not attached to it. And then all of a sudden you find, oh my goodness, this happiness (laughs).

- Karel

Here Karel is basically restating the theories of Charles Taylor. Taylor (2007: 310) also remarks on how many modern subjects are seeking meaning and “a recovery of transcendence” by reconnecting to “Nature,” because in their view “we are cut off, divided from ourselves; we have to be brought back to the ‘natural’.” He links the feelings of malaise in this era of secular disenchantment with many people taking “a position between the two extremes, shying away from materialism...and yet not wanting to return to...far-reaching beliefs about the power of God in our lives” (Taylor 2007: 431). Even though the majority of attention is paid to Traditionals and Moderns, the CC subculture is exploring alternatives to this polarization. Indeed, fardados see both extreme secularist atheism and extreme religious fundamentalism as merely two expressions of the same ego problems.

Santo Daime members are distinct from the general thrust of the counter-Enlightenment because fardados are not really “counter” or adversarial to the Enlightenment the way that Traditionals are. In fact they share Moderns’ embrace of the technological advances and civil rights achieved through industrial modernity and liberalism. As one newly-minted fardado from Belgium declared:

Science doesn't give a spiritual heaven. All existing people have something which is superior to them, like a religion...They believe in something higher, spiritual. But science has broken down all these structures and said 'No, no. Just believe what we say is right' and 'We can measure it, we take tests in laboratories.' But that leaves people without...they have nothing to hold onto in their life. Just objective facts like science gives, but that's not enough...I think we need something which is higher than us, it makes us humble. Humbleness...it's important because I think all the negative things in the world, like wars and even rows between people or disagreements or fighting, all the negative aspects in society, they come from all these egos which are fighting. And if your ego is going down, then you feel united. Ego disunites people...

To see that we are only tiny...Daime makes surely my ego less, because it gives you lessons. Because if you take Daime, it gives you like a slap in the face: 'Oh you think you are The Man?'...Actually, [Santo Daime is] going back to the roots of Catholicism and Christianity, but we don't have all these popes and priests. We talk directly to the spirits of heaven. So it leaves one more free I think, because you have no intermediates...Nobody imposes on me...that's what I also really appreciate in Daime: they leave you free. There's no obligation whatsoever...

Harmony. It's like something timeless. Something very ancient, like a tribe performing a ritual. It can be five centuries ago we are dancing there, or in the future. It has no time. For me it's one of the most difficult things to describe how you feel when you do a Daime work. It's hard to describe feelings, I think, because even words can have a different meaning for me than for you. You can read a book about a fire...but you won't know what fire is unless you feel it, you see it, you touch it, and you burn yourself, and you know what a fire is...It's like very subtle energy...

I think you can be a scientist and a daimista at the same time. It would be good if more scientists were daimistas, because as I told you if you take science as your new God and you don't have this spiritual framework to place yourself into the universe, you forget that you're only so tiny...

- **Emmanuel** (East Flanders)

At 59 years of age, Emmanuel is a retired arborist who now lives by himself in a small apartment. He related how he suffered from social anxiety prior to getting involved with

Santo Daime in 2009 (he had taken his star in the fardamento ceremony only 2 weeks prior to my interview with him in late 2010). His spiritual journey began with a strict Catholic upbringing, which he subsequently rebelled against during his 20s. After studying philosophy in university he became an atheist who believed that “science is God.” Eventually he began to thirst for spirituality, which led him into a deep personal study of Zen Buddhism and yoga. But he realized that he was missing a connection with fellow human beings, and he says that ayahuasca rituals have offered him “a highway into a spiritual life.” He credits the Santo Daime for resolving his unease with group worship and with reviving his Christian faith. He now views his atheist phase as naïvely conflating Christ’s message with institutional Catholicism. Fardados lament most Moderns’ unbridled dismissal of all spirituality, viewing this an unwise reliance on a myopic materialism. Many Moderns are certain that technological progress proves Western societies’ superiority over more primitive pre-modern ideologies. But as with the CC subculture in general, fardados see achievements in manipulating the material world as distinct from the universal mystical truths that have remained unchanged since ancient times. Like all CCs, fardados want a compromise that celebrates the achievements of both ancient spirituality and modern science (see Ray and Anderson 2000: 298-301).

The way that Ray and Anderson (2000: 316) assess the CC subculture applies directly to fardados, who can be considered a group of mystically inclined core CCs:

In the twenty-first century, a new era is taking hold. The biggest challenges are to preserve and sustain life on the planet and find a new way past the overwhelming spiritual and psychological emptiness of modern life. Though these issues have been building for a century, only now can the Western world bring itself to publicly consider them. The Cultural Creatives are responding to these overwhelming challenges by creating a new culture. With responses directed toward healing and

integration rather than conflict and battle, they may be leading the way.

Fardados agree with other mystically-inclined CCs that narrow self-interest on a global scale fuels mutual destruction, whether through war or the escalating ecological crisis. According to this logic, if humans choose instead to recognize that each individual's health is bound to the health of other people and of Nature, than future calamities can be avoided. Like other members of the CC subculture, fardados focus on the this-worldly and otherworldly simultaneously. As the Daime hymns constantly remind: *Eu vivo neste mundo*, "I live in this world" (e.g. MD#5, PS#98). The basic message of many Daime hymns is that one must deal with this world, but one can also appeal to the astral realm for grace. The ultimate goal is to become like the GST: permanently melding the ordinary world of one's senses with the spiritual "otherworld" of infinite light and oneness, such that mystical love becomes part of everyday life. For fardados, the ritual consumption of ayahuasca helps them to perpetually achieve personal growth and improvement. They believe that by communing with the sacramental beverage, they can learn to follow the examples set by the GST. Yet this belief in the healing potential of entheogenic plants is not currently tolerated in Euro-American societies, an issue that is developed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

The Disputed Status of “Sacred Plants” in Western Society

The term “entheogen” invokes contexts where people use substances like ayahuasca not for just a casual “trip,” but rather with the intent of getting in touch with their innermost memories, emotions, and metaphysical beliefs. In this way, cultures throughout history and across the world have treated entheogens as holy sacraments. Examples of these practices range from the entheogenic Eleusinian cult of ancient Greece¹ to the modern-day use of mescaline-containing cacti by indigenous North Americans (McGraw 2004: 204-251; Smith 2000). Santo Daime members believe that the ayahuasca they drink in their ceremonies contains the conscious spirit of Nature, a primordial being that imparts existential teachings to humans when they consume the tea.

Entheogenic practices are presumed dangerous in mainstream Western culture. Yet the ethnographer researching entheogen-users is charged with earnestly considering informants’ claim that these substances are safe and beneficial when used in ritual contexts. The ethnographer thus establishes him/herself at the intersection of a cultural disagreement: mainstream edicts in the West outlaw substances that non-Western cultures have long used as medicinal sacraments. Therefore, it is the anthropologist’s duty to examine how “intra-cultural variation” is potentially obscured by the “uniformist”

¹ In history it is known that a beverage called the *kykeon* was imbibed in the ancient Greek mystery rites at the temple of Eleusis. Wasson, Hofmann, and Ruck (2008) hypothesize that the ecstatic transcendence achieved in these Eleusinian rituals occurred as a result of the kykeon containing *ergot*, a parasitic fungus (*Claviceps purpurea*) containing entheogenic ergotamine that grows on common grain crops. As these authors note, the inadvertent long-term ingestion of ergot can be poisonous, such as when contaminated grains are used to make bread, leading to public outbreaks of what is colloquially termed “St. Anthony’s Fire” (Wasson et al. 2008: 36).

hegemony of secularism in Europe (Pelto and Pelto 1975). This is a crucial matter for Belgian fardados, whose use of ayahuasca is imperiled because it has been deemed as irrational and unsafe.

Ethnometaphysics can help to orient social research by underscoring “the study of how and why human cultures encourage individuals to assume degrees of assenting, dissenting, or neutral attitudinal stances regarding particular claims about the nature of reality” (Blainey 2010b: 114). The ethnological scheme of anthropologist Charles Laughlin (1992, 1997) categorizes as *polyphasic* those cultures that treat different states of consciousness as sources of distinct cognitive abilities and benefits. It is clear from Belgian fardados’ testimonies presented above that they hold this polyphasic view regarding the Daime brew’s mind-altering effects. Distrust of entheogens is linked with the *monophasic* cultural category, which underscores how the modern Western worldview restricts knowledge claims to information that can be gleaned in the normal waking state of consciousness (Laughlin 1997: 479). So, polyphasic claims strike the monophasic worldview as illogical, and monophasic claims appear blinkered to the polyphasic worldview (see T. Roberts 2006: 105). The anthropologist’s role in this conflict between subcultures is to bring to light how a polyphasic view (such as that of Santo Daime members) is disqualified in Europe, where the monophasic view is taken for granted (Walsh and Grob 2005: 1).

Not all Euro-Americans agree with the rationale that “hallucinogens” are dangerous. The daimista minority group believes that the ritual consumption of plants like those in ayahuasca helps them to achieve spiritual, existential, and psychotherapeutic insights. Yet at present, their religious practices are not formally accepted outside of

Holland, Spain, Brazil, and the U.S. state of Oregon. From the culturally relative standpoint of anthropology, this chapter compares the results of scientific research with current Western policies concerning entheogens. The analysis begins by examining results from a second freelist test with Belgian fardados, and then considers mounting empirical evidence that the structured consumption of entheogens is not harmful.

Freelist 2: “Sacred Plants”

A second freelist elicited items in my informants’ cultural domain of “sacred plants.”² Upon being asked to list all the plants they consider sacred, Belgian fardados mentioned a total of 57 specific items. The six most salient items are all psychoactive substances that are employed by some cultures in entheogenic rites:

Rank	“Sacred Plants”	Frequency	% of Freelists that include item (n = 32)	Smith’s <i>s</i>
1	Ayahuasca	31	97 %	0.830
2	Cannabis	25	78 %	0.517
3	Mushrooms	19	59 %	0.345
4	Peyote	14	44 %	0.270
5	San Pedro	13	41 %	0.266
6	Iboga	10	31 %	0.141

Only psychoactive plants occurred with a Smith’s *s* value > 0.1. In total, 25 (44%) of the 57 “sacred plant” items have psychoactive properties. The remaining collection of 32 non-psychoactive items included eight plants used as folk remedies (e.g. Bach flower essences), five trees (e.g. oak), four plants with ritual significance (e.g. white sage used as incense), two flowers, one grass (sedge), and 12 plants used primarily as foods or spices

² Like the Great Spiritual Teachers domain, “sacred plants” is an emic category common to European fardados (they used this term when speaking English). Though many fardados stated that “all plants are sacred,” they proceeded to mention specific plants that are prototypical for the domain of “sacred plants.”

(e.g. broccoli, basil). The majority of these plants have nothing to do with Santo Daime, but Belgian fardados were aware that they have been employed elsewhere for spiritual or medicinal purposes. The complete list of sacred plants they mentioned can be found in Appendix V.

The six most prominent items in Belgian fardados' cultural domain of sacred plants include examples of psychoactive flora and fungi that have been valued as holy sacraments at one time or another. First, ayahuasca has been and continues to be employed in traditional indigenous and new syncretic settings (see Chapters 3 and 4). Second, various crossbred species of *Cannabis* (containing the psychoactive molecule Tetrahydrocannabinol [THC]) were used for entheogenic purposes in ancient Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic traditions, and are a central feature of modern-day religions like Rastafarianism (Barrett 1997[1977]; Emboden Jr. 1990[1972]; Schultes et al. 2001). Third, ancient Mesoamericans and 20th century Mazatec shamans in Mexico engaged in the ritual use of mushrooms containing the entheogenic alkaloid *psilocybin* (Wasson 1968, 1980). Fourth, resuming a traditional indigenous practice of northern Mexico, the Native American Church's use of the peyote cactus (containing *mescaline*) is now recognized by the United States and Canadian governments as a protected religious freedom (La Barre 1969[1938]; Schultes 1937; Smith and Snake 1996). Fifth, the pre-Columbian consumption of the mescaline-containing San Pedro cactus is mirrored among present-day aboriginal groups in the South American Andes region (Schultes et al. 2001; Sharon 1990[1972]). Finally, followers of the Bwiti religion of West-Central Africa ingest the *Iboga* root (containing *ibogaine*) in initiation rites (Fernandez 1982, 1990[1972]).

Just as their shared interest in altered states of consciousness inspired them to seek out ayahuasca, I met European fardados who had experimented with the other “sacred plants” listed in Table 2 above. Although I was unable to verify exact numbers, during fieldwork numerous fardados divulged that they had experienced cannabis (i.e. marijuana) and psilocybin mushrooms during their lifetimes. The former is not surprising, considering that cannabis is “the world’s most widely used illicit drug” (Hall and Degenhardt 2007: 393). A recent survey by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA 2011) found that 78 million people (23.2% of the EU populace aged 15-64) had smoked cannabis at least once during their lifetime.³ In Belgium, where the possession of three grams of personally grown marijuana has been decriminalized since 2003, a 2001 survey found that 10.8% of adult Belgians had smoked cannabis at some point in their lives (Decorte 2007: 29-30). Psilocybin or “magic” mushrooms are also a popular psychoactive option throughout Europe. Across EU countries at the beginning of this century, between 1% and 8% of youths (aged 15 to 24) admitted to having experimented with mind-altering mushrooms; a substantial demand within Belgium is suggested by the fact that border police routinely seize dried psilocybin mushrooms imported from the Netherlands (van Amsterdam et al. 2011: 424, 427). With some of the more exotic plants that are not easily available in Europe, I met two fardados (one Frenchman, one Dutchman) who had tried San Pedro cactus, the same Frenchman was the only informant who reported experience with peyote, and three fardados (one French woman, one Dutchman, and one Finnish man) claimed to have sampled Iboga. A few informants professed that they had no prior experience with illicit psychoactive substances prior to their encounter with ayahuasca. Though the recreational use of

³ <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/online/annual-report/2011/cannabis/3>

“hallucinogens” is common knowledge in Western societies, many fardados around Europe mentioned that they first learned about sacred entheogenic ceremonies through their own private research.

Just as the broader CC subculture is aware of “psychedelic” spirituality (Ray and Anderson 2000: 115), fardados are remarkably well-read concerning the topic of sacred plants. Most often, it was by searching for mystical and shamanistic websites on the internet that they first stumbled upon entheogenic literature. On their bookshelves I noticed that Belgian daimistas own many volumes that deal with entheogens, including some scholarly monographs that have been referenced herein (e.g. Narby 1998; Shanon 2002; Strassman 2001). The famous writings of Carlos Castaneda (1968⁴), which discuss the shamanistic use of peyote, mushrooms, and the deliriant *Datura*⁵ genus, were also cited by some fardados as having stimulated their interest in entheogens and indigenous spirituality. The links between Santo Daime’s use of ayahuasca and the employing of entheogens in other spiritual systems is a popular topic of conversation in the social interactions between Santo Daime members. Whenever they meet, daimistas are inclined to exchange their respective knowledge about entheogenic plants. They regard the use of the Daime beverage (ayahuasca) as akin to all the other entheogenic plants mentioned above, in that it is a sacred plant employed in mystical ceremonies.

When they were shown the output for both freelists, fardados stated that all spiritual masters and sacred plants teach the same lesson. In fardados’ view, this lesson is that the entire universe *is* God, a pantheistic notion of primordial unity at the base of all reality.

⁴ Although Castaneda presented his work as authentic ethnography, anthropologists are now aware that his books were largely the result of invented informants and data (de Mille 1976). Thus, Castaneda’s publications are not genuine anthropology, and instead they are best read as works of literary fiction.

⁵ <http://www.erowid.org/plants/datura/>

When asked about her suggestion that the Great Spiritual Teachers and sacred plants teach the same lessons, a Belgian fardada explained:

Yes, of course, absolutely! It's just another way to get there... You have these plants who open [you] up, so you can see what the Cosmos is about (or inside you, outside, it's everywhere of course). Like Jesus was here on Earth, [the Great Spiritual Teachers] come from the other side; like the plants bring you up, [the GST] came down to help us... in fact it's just different representatives of the same thing... it comes from the same source. Like you say 'God' or 'Allah' or whoever, it's the same... it's just another name for something... [The sacred plants] are a tool to bring this connection back with the universe.

- Astrid

This quotation demonstrates fundamental elements of the Santo Daime worldview. In particular, Belgian fardados value a homogenized *solution* of spiritualities, seeing all religious traditions as growing out of the “same source.” Additionally, Astrid’s folk theory evokes a complementarity of contact between the human realm and the astral world. As another Belgian fardada said:

I think it's kind of complementary. I think the plants help us to understand the teachings of those [great spiritual] teachers. So for me, it's just a way of opening your mind to those teachings. Because sometimes the hymns, when you read them at home, it's such simple language. Sometimes it seems like it doesn't say anything... [But] then you get in the work and you do the whole sequence of hymns, and you can get really profound teachings that you couldn't have ever imagined.

- Henriette

In this view, great spiritual teachers are divine beings who incarnate in human form in order to impart knowledge about the perfect oneness of all things.⁶ Followers of Santo Daime believe the sacred plants make the lessons of the great spiritual teachers more accessible. They propose that these plants transport the person who ingests them directly to that otherworldly place of oneness. Fardados also call the entheogens “teacher plants,”

⁶ This idea corresponds to the teachings of a Course in Miracles, with its special focus on how every individual can choose to be a spiritual teacher by exemplifying their understanding that all is one and that this world is an illusion. Or in the words of the supplementary Manual for Teachers: “...Into this hopeless and closed learning situation, which teaches nothing but despair and death, God sends His teachers...” (Schucman 2007[1976], Manual for Teachers: 2)

a designation that harkens back to the indigenous origins of ayahuasca. In likening the entheogens to human educators, Belgian fardados concur with the approach of shamanistic cultures like aboriginal Amazonians and neo-pagan Westerners (MacRae 1992; York 2005: 96). This idea is typical of the *animistic* worldview associated with shamanism, which posits that all of Nature is alive. In animism natural entities like animals, plants, and geographical locations are associated with attendant “spirit” beings (Descola 1994; Harvey 2006). The following section explores how this animistic approach to entheogens conflicts with the mainstream Euro-American view of “hallucinogens” as harmful drugs.

Assessing Entheogens’ Prohibited Status: Risks, Benefits, and Science

Beginning in the 1940s, hundreds of scientific studies demonstrated the promise of LSD⁷ as a relatively safe and effective psychiatric medicine (see review by Grinspoon and Bakalar 1997[1979]). But during the 1960s millions of young people were influenced by Timothy Leary’s zealous call for social revolution through psychedelic experimentation: “turn on, tune in, drop out” (Cornwell and Linders 2002; Goode 2008; Grinspoon and Bakalar 1997[1979]). A perceived threat to the existing sociopolitical order fed the emergence of popular hysteria. As noted by Beyerstein and Kalchik (2003: 13), the recreational use of LSD and similar substances “among disaffected youth in the 1960s ‘Counterculture’ spawned a moral panic that led to its prohibition.” Myths arose, such as that LSD contains deadly poisons, causes chromosome damage and birth defects, and that this chemical can drive normal people to become permanently insane (Presti and

⁷ *Lysergic acid diethylamide* (LSD) is closely related to the tryptamines, the same chemical class to which the psychoactive compound found in ayahuasca (DMT) belongs (see Strassman 2001: 35).

Beck 2001). During the 1960s, a similar spread of fear ensued in the U.K. and across Europe (Snelders and Kaplan 2002: 223). Governments reacted to these concerns by banning LSD and all other “hallucinogens.” However, subsequent scholarly assessments have shown that this decision was not based on confirmed dangers: “Opposition to LSD developed as LSD became a focus or symbol for generational conflict, parental worries, political dissent, irrational behavior and violence, personal cognitive dissonance, and threat to traditional values and institutions” (Baumeister and Placidi 1983; see also Connolly 1999: 106-107).

Following the U.S. *Harrison Narcotics Act* of 1914 (restricting opiates and cocaine), it is widely acknowledged that the United States applied geopolitical pressure to establish and expand an international “war on drugs” (Sinha 2001: 30, 37).⁸ Current laws in most nations subscribe to the notion that there is something fundamentally wrong with ingesting psychoactive substances like ayahuasca. Recall that since 1971, a UN treaty banning all “hallucinogens” has been signed by 184 nations, including all the states of Europe and North America (see Spillane and McAllister 2003).⁹ This 1971 convention was passed in response to an “urgent” recommendation expressed in a 1968 resolution of the UN’s Economic and Social Council: the council was “deeply concerned at reports of serious damage to health being caused by LSD and similar hallucinogenic substances.”¹⁰ It is now commonly assumed that “hallucinogens” pose serious threats to those who ingest them, like uncontrollable addiction and other psychophysical harms.

⁸ <http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/SEN/Committee/371/ille/library/history-e.pdf>

⁹ The United Nations “Convention on Psychotropic Substances” was enacted in 1971. Subsequently, some nations have decreed national exceptions to this treaty, including the Canadian and American governments’ exception for the ritual use of the peyote cactus in aboriginal churches; see: <http://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/MTDSG/Volume%20I/Chapter%20VI/VI-16.en.pdf>

¹⁰ http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/Resolutions/resolution_1968-05-23_6.html

“Hallucinogens” are thus classified as “Schedule I drugs” in the United States under the Controlled Substances Act of 1970, “listed as having ‘no medical use and a high potential for abuse’” (Forte 1997: 2; Shulgin 2003: 116). However, a current clinical handbook indicates that, unlike legal alcohol and tobacco products, entheogens are low-risk substances: “Toxicity of [LSD], psilocybin, and other classical hallucinogens is very low...no case of lethal overdose is known, and...users do not experience withdrawal symptoms as seen with other substances of abuse” (Johnson 2010: 1089). Scholars who study these substances have long known that the positive or negative quality of the experience hinges mainly upon the *mind-set* of the individual ingesting the entheogen, as well as on the physical and social *setting* in which they take it (see Leary et al. 1995[1964]; Strassman 1997: 156; Zinberg 1984).¹¹ Current legislation makes no distinction between different sets and settings of entheogen use.

Parallel to legal canons, it has been shown that many of the popular views about the dangers of “hallucinogens” are based on an absence of evidence, or poor or outdated evidence (Tupper 2008a, 2012). Some medical researchers note that:

There is more to these myths than simply inaccurate information. They have had a major impact on public, scientific, clinical, and governmental perceptions of hallucinogens as well as on user experiences. These myths were a primary factor in the termination of the clinical research [forty] years ago and continue to interfere with the resumption of legitimate investigation of the therapeutic and entheogenic properties of LSD and similar substances (Presti and Beck 2001: 135).

Still today, an online “factsheet” on LSD produced by the U.S. Drug Enforcement

¹¹ For example, in his study of the effects of DMT on humans, Strassman (2001: 276) claims “DMT was not inherently therapeutic...What volunteers brought to their sessions, and the fuller context of their lives, was as important, if not more so, than the drug itself in determining how they dealt with their experiences. Without a suitable framework — spiritual, psychotherapeutic, or otherwise — in which to process their journeys with DMT, their sessions became just another series of intense psychedelic encounters.”

Agency conjoins all hallucinogen “overdoses” as leading to psychosis and death.¹² This misinformation persists even though personnel at the U.S. *National Institute on Drug Abuse* (NIDA) have confirmed that such statements are inaccurate (Henderson and Glass 1994). All to suggest that there remain inconsistencies between government research and the continued enforcement of prohibition.

Western governments’ initial outlawing of “hallucinogens” reflected a truth that these substances have potential dangers when used recreationally. For example, psychologist Phil Dalgarno (2008) has warned of the dangers of ingesting entheogenic materials ordered online, an underground trend that has appeared as a way to circumvent prohibition (see also Dawson 2006; Montagne 2008; Walsh 2011). If someone with no training or preparation consumes a powerful entheogen without any professional training or supervision, the resulting altered states of consciousness can engender anxiety, fear, and disorientation. Such behavior perpetuates the unsafe sets and settings that caused detrimental LSD experiences among members of the 1960s counterculture.

An adverse effect of LSD, called *hallucinogen persisting perception disorder* (a.k.a. “flashbacks”), has been reported in clinical studies (Abraham and Aldridge 1993). However, the assertion that LSD consistently causes people to experience temporary reappearance of psychoactive effects has recently been called into question (see Henderson and Glass 1994). In particular, a review of reported flashbacks observes that these occur largely with unstructured uses of LSD, and such symptoms have not been documented as occurring with other kinds of “hallucinogens” (Halpern and Pope 2003).

The manifest dangers of entheogens have been shown to lie largely with people using certain kinds of medications, those with schizophrenic or psychotic tendencies, and

¹² http://www.justice.gov/dea/druginfo/drug_data_sheets/LSD.pdf

persons who ingest these chemicals in uncontrolled environments (see Gable 2007; McWilliams and Tuttle 1973). In over 1000 publications reporting on clinical trials with entheogenic substances in structured settings, negative outcomes are very rare and no mortalities have occurred (Walsh and Grob 2005: 3). Rather, adverse reactions represent less than 1% of all research subjects and most of these cases occurred with people being treated for pre-existing psychiatric disorders (Strassman 1997: 154-155).

Contraindicated Populations for Ayahuasca

As a precautionary measure until conclusive empirical evidence is supplied, medical professionals recommend that anti-depressant drugs called *serotonin reuptake inhibitors* (SSRIs) should not be used with ayahuasca. This is because the interaction of SSRIs with MAOI chemicals in the brew might cause a potentially lethal reaction, called *serotonin syndrome* (Callaway and Grob 1998). Schizophrenics or psychotics (estimated to comprise 1.3% of the general population) are not considered psychologically stable enough to handle the entheogenic experience; however, psychologist Robert Gable avows that for typical, healthy adults, ingesting the psychoactive chemical found in ayahuasca (DMT) “is not a triggering event for sustained psychosis” (Gable 2007: 30). He further concludes that when used in religious ceremonies, “the dependence potential of oral DMT and the risk of sustained psychological disturbance are minimal” (Gable 2007: 24). However, this same confidence about ayahuasca’s safety cannot be extended to all groups.

Various toxic outcomes have been observed in pregnant rats and their offspring when the mothers were administered high doses of ayahuasca throughout the period of gestation (Oliveira et al. 2010). Yet the extrapolation of these results in non-human

animals to humans has been critiqued as unreliable; this is chiefly because every day the rodents were treated with doses five-to-ten times the amount normally consumed by participants in ayahuasca rituals. In contrast, pregnant members of ayahuasca religions in Brazil do not typically ingest ayahuasca on a daily basis and tend to consume smaller amounts of the brew when they are with child (dos Santos 2010; Labate 2011a).

Although empirical studies have established the relative safety of organized ayahuasca consumption for normal adult humans, scholars caution that there is still a need for more research to determine how the brew affects children, infants, and pregnant women (Barbosa et al. 2012; dos Santos 2013; Labate 2011a: 33). As ayahuasca consumption remains a controversial issue, the results of future investigations will continue to illuminate the risks and benefits of this psychoactive beverage.

There have been at least five reported mortalities in relation to ayahuasca, none of which were due to any toxicity of the brew itself. For instance, in his assessment of two of these fatalities, Gable (2007: Table 3) affirms that neither was attributable to any lethal effect of the traditional ayahuasca recipe; nevertheless, he cautions against imbibing ayahuasca when other non-traditional psychoactive substances have been added to the liquid. Further, he warns that ayahuasca is a greater risk for those “who have an abnormal metabolism or a compromised health status” (Gable 2007: 29). Two other deaths occurred in 2010, when a troubled young man with a history of drug abuse shot and killed Glauco Vilas Boas (a famous Brazilian cartoonist who led a Santo Daime church in São Paulo) and his son. The assassin had been attending Glauco’s Daime church seeking a cure for his addictions. This event led to a mediatized debate in the Brazilian public sphere about whether Santo Daime should be permitted (Labate, Alves

Jr. et al. 2010). Although this was a very unusual event in the history of Daime, it also shocked the global daimista community. My Belgian informants cited this incident as demonstrating the need for careful screening of new Daime initiates.

One further incident came in August 2012, when an 18 year-old American tourist died while participating in an ayahuasca tourist retreat in Peru. A conclusive autopsy has not been performed, but there is speculation that this was the result of human action and not any toxic effects of the beverage.¹³ As of yet, there have been no reported deaths or hospital visits having resulted in over 20 years of people attending Santo Daime rituals in Europe. At present, Santo Daime's emergence is occurring alongside renewed scholarly reconsiderations of entheogenic substances. Not only are the psychophysical risks of these substances demonstrably minimal, the evidence indicates that entheogens used in controlled ritual or laboratory contexts can offer health benefits.

Recent Empirical Studies of the Entheogens

In considering whether or not a routine activity is an “addiction” that constitutes “abuse,” one might reasonably distinguish between behaviors that do not fundamentally cause harm (e.g. watching movies, physical exercise, riding a bicycle), and those that are proven to be harmful to a person's health (e.g. drinking alcohol, consuming opiates, compulsive gambling). For many people, the latter activities are difficult to cease even when it negatively impacts one's ability to maintain personal relationships and responsibilities. Although current laws do not recognize it, scientists and social scientists confirm that all entheogens are non-addictive and do not result in toxic overdose (Furst 1990[1972]: xiii; Johnson 2010: 1089). Recently, a study in the UK found that illegal

¹³ “Father of Teen Dead in Peru Ritual Thinks Son Was Murdered”, *NBC-Bay Area*, Sep 26, 2012; <http://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/Father-of-Teen-Dead-in-Peru-Ritual-Thinks-Son-Was-Murdered-171382471.html>

chemicals like LSD (alias “acid”) and MDMA (alias “ecstasy”) cause less harm to both self and society than either alcohol or tobacco (Nutt et al. 2007: 1050).

Santo Daime members regularly attend three to four ayahuasca works per month. They claim that they have no desire to attend these rituals more frequently. Indeed, Santo Daime rituals are called “works” for a reason, as ayahuasca can involve arduous introspection, compelling individuals to confront their subconscious (see Shanon 2002). Also, symptoms of physiological or psychological withdrawal do not appear when a person stops attending Santo Daime works. My informants emphasize the therapeutic impact that regular ayahuasca use has had on their lives, rather than a physical dependency on the substance itself. Indeed, psychiatrists have concluded that Santo Daime members are generally healthy individuals (Fábregas et al. 2010; Halpern et al. 2008; Harris and Gurel 2012). These observations contradict the “addiction” and “abuse” terminology relied upon in current drug legislation.

Another argument to classify entheogens as part of the “Schedule I” drugs category states that they have “no medical use.” However, both past and present-day research suggests that the healing properties of these substances are considerable. Ben Sessa (2005) refers to investigations conducted in the 1950s and 1960s. These studies pointed to positive therapeutic results for people suffering from a wide range of problems, including anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders, depression, bereavement, and alcoholism (see also Vollenweider and Kometer 2010; Walsh and Grob 2005). When the rationale for prohibition is compared with current medical knowledge, it is apparent that the current legal definition of entheogens as harmful is discordant with the scientific evidence.

After decades of strict prohibition, U.S. regulators have begun to grant permissions for a small but increasing number of research projects to examine the psychological and physiological effects of entheogens on human subjects. This has largely resulted from a growing awareness that both mind-“set” and environmental “setting” critically impact whether people have positive or negative experiences with entheogens. Recent human trials with psilocybin (the entheogen found in some mushroom species) had pertinent results:

67% of the volunteers rated the experience with psilocybin to be either the single most meaningful experience of his or her life or among the top five most meaningful experiences of his or her life. In written comments, the volunteers judged the meaningfulness of the experience to be similar, for example, to the birth of a first child or death of a parent (Griffiths et al. 2006: 276-277).

In this study, set and setting were rigorously controlled; importantly, “no volunteer rated the experience as having decreased their sense of well being or life satisfaction” (Griffiths et al. 2006: 279). This study set standards for ensuing laboratory research into the effects of entheogens: subjects were chosen based on their lack of prior experience with entheogens, were instructed about what to expect, and were examined individually in a comfortable setting, accompanied by a qualified monitor.

Charles Grob is currently carrying out trials at UCLA to test the benefits of psilocybin for diminishing death-anxiety in terminally ill cancer patients. He offers a case study of a 58-year old woman who was filled with intense anger and regret following her previous doctors’ misdiagnosis of her colon cancer. The lapse led to her missing the opportunity to stop the illness prior to it becoming incurable. However, her fear and rage subsided after she participated in Dr. Grob’s psilocybin study:

In the months following her single active treatment, [the patient] reported sustained positive mood, less anxiety, and greater acceptance of her situation. In particular,

she has described a further strengthening of her bond with her husband as well as greater interest and motivation in spending “quality time” with important friends in her life...[She] strongly expressed her viewpoint that an additional “booster” session or two might further amplify the positive effects she attributes to her experience with the psilocybin treatment model (Grob 2007: 210-211).

This study likewise reports that no subject experienced adverse effects from psilocybin when it was administered in this controlled setting (see also Grob et al. 2011).

Relatedly, the chemical MDMA (commonly known as “ecstasy”) is showing promise as an effective catalyst for treating posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Researchers found that when otherwise “treatment-resistant” PTSD patients were given MDMA in combination with conventional psychotherapeutic counseling, the majority had a positive response (Mithoefer et al. 2011). Specifically, they note:

There were no drug-related serious adverse events, adverse neurocognitive effects or clinically significant blood pressure increases. MDMA-assisted psychotherapy can be administered to posttraumatic stress disorder patients without evidence of harm, and it may be useful in patients refractory to other treatments (Mithoefer et al. 2011: 439).

MDMA has a negative reputation as a “street drug.” However, the results of this research demonstrate that when it is used in a controlled setting, its dangers can be mitigated and its therapeutic benefits optimized. Similar clinical potentials have been proposed for ayahuasca (Andritzky 1989; Kjellgren, Eriksson and Norlander 2009; McKenna 2004; Labate, dos Santos et al. 2010; Labate and Bouso 2013; Palladino 2009). The reverent use of ayahuasca in religious groups like Santo Daime has continued to expand around the world (see Labate and Jungaberle 2011), in part because people find that it helps them with common ailments. The analysis now turns to how scientific verification of ayahuasca’s healing properties is still refused in mainstream Western culture.

The Science of Ayahuasca

While this dissertation focuses more on the social and cultural implications of ritual ayahuasca use, any future prospects of integrating entheogens into Western medicine require validation from the “harder” sciences of chemistry and biology. In a 1998 review paper, three leading experts assess the major evolution in ayahuasca scholarship that is coinciding with the intensifying export of the tea outside the Amazon: “As the world observes this process unfolding (with joyous anticipation for some, and with considerable trepidation for others), the focus for the scientific study and understanding of ayahuasca has shifted from the ethnographer’s field notes and the ethnobotanist’s herbarium specimens, to the neurophysiologist’s laboratory and the psychiatrist’s examining room” (McKenna et al. 1998: 73). Progress has since been made on measuring the physiological and psychological effects of ayahuasca in humans (e.g. Barbanoj et al. 2008; Barbosa et al. 2009; Callaway et al. 1999; Frecska et al. 2004; McIlhenny 2012; McIlhenny et al. 2012; Riba et al. 2002; Riba et al. 2004; Santos et al. 2007) and mice (e.g. Freedland and Mansbach 1999; Lima et al. 2006). What follows is a representative overview of some of the basic “hard” science¹⁴ on ayahuasca published since 1998.

The first comprehensive research concerning ayahuasca came to be known as the “Hoasca project.” Commenced in 1992, the study consisted of an international assembly of scientific and medical professionals examining 15 long-time members of the União do Vegetal (UDV), a Brazilian ayahuasca tradition akin to the Santo Daime. The Hoasca project spanned a remarkably broad range of disciplinary themes, acquiring data about the ethnobotany and phytochemistry of the tea, as well as questions about

¹⁴ see http://iceers.org/uploads/media/ICEERS_Ayahuasca_Scientific_Literature_Overview_2010_01.pdf

neuropharmacology, enzymology and psychiatry regarding its subsequent ingestion. The abridged version of the final results yielded evidence that the UDV members showed a significant “remission in psychopathology following the initiation of ayahuasca use along with no evidence of personality or cognitive deterioration” (Grob et al. 1996: 86). More specifically, “prior to membership in the UDV, eleven of the UDV subjects had diagnoses of alcohol abuse disorders, two had had past major depressive disorders, four had past histories of drug abuse (cocaine and amphetamines), eleven were addicted to tobacco, and three had past phobic anxiety disorders”; the researchers report that “all of these pathological diagnoses had remitted following entry into the UDV” (McKenna et al. 1998: 70). The safety of ayahuasca and remissions in drug-dependence were also demonstrated in a study evaluating Santo Daime members in Brazil. This latter study concludes that when employed in ritual contexts, ayahuasca “does not seem to be associated with the psychosocial problems that other drugs of abuse typically cause” (Fábregas et al. 2010: 260).

Further insights into how physiological and psychological systems are impacted by ayahuasca can be gained by looking to clinical results of injecting pure DMT¹⁵ directly into human subjects. DMT is an intriguing chemical since it occurs naturally in the human pineal gland, “the only singleton organ of the brain” that was believed by René Descartes to be the “secretor” of thoughts and the seat of the soul (Strassman 2001: 59-60). As with all studies of the human body that yield connotations for more popular philosophical debates, the precise functions of DMT and its relation to the pineal gland have often been abused for the pseudoscientific goals of New Age spiritual movements (Lokhorst 2006). Nevertheless, the study of endogenous DMT was first brought into the

¹⁵ Unlike orally administered DMT, intravenous DMT avoids a breakdown by MAO stomach enzymes.

medical and scientific mainstream with the publication of Rick Strassman's long-awaited monograph *DMT: The Spirit Molecule*. Based on the results of five years of research on the effects of DMT administered intravenously to human volunteers, Strassman describes the correlated outcomes that occur in the body as "a typical 'fight-or-flight' stress reaction"¹⁶ (Strassman 2001: 144). In the mind, sometimes DMT can foster feelings of intense fear and anxiety while at other times it can encourage personal sensations and convictions similar to "an enlightenment experience" (Strassman 2001: 246).¹⁷ These findings correspond with results collected by Riba et al. (2001, 2003) in trials testing dehydrated ayahuasca powder on human volunteers (swallowed in capsule form). These studies indicate that many of the same effects that have been experienced by Amazonian peoples for centuries can be replicated when DMT is administered in the laboratory. Explorations of the associations between the experiential and physiological consequences of DMT are yielding the proliferation of many exciting new questions, establishing this field as one of the most promising scientific frontiers. In attempting to instigate a priority for future research, Strassman (2001) dedicates two chapters to the pineal gland, surmising that the resemblance between DMT-induced and naturally occurring mystical/near-death experiences infer this gland's role in the production and regulation of endogenous DMT. DMT is produced naturally in the human body through a standard metabolic pathway, and some researchers claim that its action mimics that of drugs prescribed to treat anxiety (Jacob and Presti 2005). More precisely, a recent

¹⁶ For test subjects injected with a high dose of DMT: "Heart rate and blood pressure jumped radically, their time course closely following the psychological responses. After a while we could almost predict how intense a volunteer's session was by the rise in their blood pressure" (Strassman 2001: 144).

¹⁷ By "enlightenment experience", Strassman (2001: 246) means that subjects experienced "timelessness; ineffability; coexistence of opposites; contact and merging with a supremely powerful, wise, and loving presence, sometimes experienced as a white light; the certainty that consciousness continues after death of the body; and a first-hand knowledge of the basic 'facts' of creation and consciousness."

breakthrough published in the journal *Science* reveals DMT's neurological function as acting upon the previously inexplicable "sigma-1 receptor" (Fontanilla et al. 2009).

According to one study, release of endogenous DMT from the pineal gland through experiences of spiritual and sexual ecstasy is linked to stimulation of the immune system, while the lack of such ecstatic encounters can result in immunosuppression (Lissoni et al. 2001). Despite the momentum gained by these physiological correlations, "efforts to find a relationship between levels of these natural alkaloids and the mental health of humans have been futile" (Shulgin 2003: 98). It is clear from the dizzying array of research and theories discussed above that much more substantiating evidence is required before the precise functions of the pineal gland and DMT in the human body can be determined.

The subjective experience that is induced by the ayahuasca beverage (with its combination of DMT and MAOI alkaloids) exhibits both similarities and differences to the ingestion of pure DMT. Both pure DMT and ayahuasca commonly produce intense feelings and images that can range from extreme terror to gleeful delight. But unlike the acute effects of injecting or smoking pure DMT, which are felt in less than a minute and usually last no more than ½ hour (Strassman 2001: 38), the oral ingestion of the mixture of plants in ayahuasca means that the digestion of DMT is drawn out over several hours. In this way, whereas pure DMT induces an abrupt but short-lived transfer of the subject into the visionary realms of inner consciousness, ayahuasca provides a lengthier altered state that approaches mystical awareness more gradually.

This dissertation presents an insiders' perspective without prejudging it as wrong-headed relative to preordained metaphysical suppositions of what is rational and what is

not. Belgian fardados believe that contact with paranormal forces in ayahuasca rituals helps to cure some of their physical illnesses. This belief may clash with a materialist worldview, but there is also a way that the brew's curative properties for physiological sickness can be explained according to conventional medical logic:

Vomiting is generally associated with the ayahuasca sessions, making the plant widely known as a purgative. The "cleansing" and "purifying" properties attributed to ayahuasca and other hallucinogenic plants derive from alkaloids characteristic of many of these species of plants. The alkaloids have emetic and purgative properties, as well as antimicrobial and anthelmintic effects, acting against parasites, protozoa and other infectious conditions (Schultes and Winkelman 1996:218)

On the other hand, fardados view the vomiting and diarrhea sometimes associated with ayahuasca drinking as the release of psycho-spiritual neuroses, which are transmuted into a material substance so that it can be expelled out of the organism.

Past publications suggest the enormous prospects for future scientific research pertaining to ayahuasca. Yet it is clear that a qualitative approach is required to understand the otherworldly effects so cherished by people who consume the brew regularly. For example, the indigenous-Amazonian Cashinahua people imbibe ayahuasca to learn about the future and to diagnose otherwise invisible sources of sickness. Kenneth Kensinger (1973: 12) reports how his Cashinahua informants' beliefs became starkly evident when "on the day following one ayahuasca party six of the nine men informed me of seeing the death of my *chai*, 'my mother's father'...This occurred two days before I was informed by radio of his death." Uncanny incidents that occur during ethnographic research are what Cara Richards (2003) has classified as "anomalous phenomena." Such scientifically inexplicable events are a common feature of ayahuasca drinking.

Belgian Fardados' View of Science

Scientific methods have uncovered many interesting facts about the chemical nature of ayahuasca and the physiological effects resulting from its ingestion by humans. But there is a prominent aspect of ayahuasca and other entheogenic plants that is beyond measurement. While all the Santo Daime members welcome scientific investigations,¹⁸ they are also adamant that any efforts to provide an accurate account of ayahuasca must recognize the subjective experience of what it is like to consume the brew. This sentiment is conveyed by Lars, a veteran Belgian fardado who served as one my key informants:

Science is the consequence of ratio, rational thinking...it's just another step. Buddha was a step. Christ...they're more steps in consciousness...Science says 'we don't know anything about what we don't know; what we can't see or feel or touch.' It's only about the material world, and they say all the rest doesn't exist. Enlightenment in the 18th century was a very good thing, it has done a lot for humanity, and science is a very good thing...There is science and science: Real scientists, they only stick to their territory, and they say 'about religion, we can't prove it, we don't know anything about it.' But others who are scientists who are more stupid, they say 'Oh God doesn't exist because we can't touch him or see him'. That's going too far. But an intelligent scientist says 'Well, we don't know anything about God'.

- Lars

In the above quotation, Lars makes a shrewd observation: while the rational knowledge generated by science has undoubtedly improved many aspects of human life, generic materialism (also called physicalism) still cannot account for consciousness. My informants do express a deep respect for the methods and technological achievements of science. However, just as many scientists view religious fundamentalists as blindly ignoring empirical proofs, fardados tend to regard faith in a materialist worldview as naïvely ignorant of the therapeutic potential of entheogens like ayahuasca.

¹⁸A major Santo Daime website links to scientific articles: <http://www.santodaime.org/doctrine/science.htm>

Ayahuasca as Ritual Medicine

An event in Canada in 2011 exemplifies the incongruities between mainstream government positions and the budding community of entheogen enthusiasts. Dr. Gabor Maté (2010), a physician in Vancouver, has spent his career treating individuals with addictions to heroin, cocaine, and other street drugs. Maté began to treat his patients with a form of ayahuasca-assisted therapy after hearing of the brew's efficacy with helping drug addicts break their habits. His search for a workable cure for otherwise treatment-resistant addicts was profiled on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's documentary program *The Nature of Things* (Ellam et al. 2011). Immediately after the documentary aired, Dr. Maté was sent an order from Health Canada, which threatened to involve the police if he continued to pursue clandestine ayahuasca treatments with his patients. Upon receipt of the government's notice, Dr. Maté "reluctantly" complied.¹⁹

One of Dr. Maté's patients, who credits her ayahuasca sessions with healing psychological wounds and helping her to overcome her addictions to alcohol and other drugs, explains it in frank terms: "Ayahuasca saved my life...It enabled me to look at all those dark things I buried long ago...to unleash them and the pain, so that I could move forward." The idea that a "hallucinogenic" drug could offer a cure for addictions to alcohol and other substances of abuse challenges the presumptions of existing drug laws. However, as Dr. Maté states:

Ayahuasca is not a drug in the Western sense, something you take to get rid of something. Properly used, it opens up parts of yourself that you usually have no access to. The parts of the brain that hold emotional memories come together with those parts that modulate insight and awareness, so you see past experiences in a

¹⁹ "B.C. Doctor Agrees to Stop Using Amazonian Plant to Treat Addictions." *The Globe and Mail*, Nov. 09, 2011; <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/bc-doctor-agrees-to-stop-using-amazonian-plant-to-treat-addictions/article4250579/>

new way.²⁰

The central problem here is that the ritual use of ayahuasca for “alternative” therapeutic purposes blurs the line our culture maintains between religion and medical science. Certainly, any substance must be subjected to tests of safety and effects before it is approved for medical use. The empirical evidence reviewed above suggests that ayahuasca is not a harmful or addictive substance.

Wholesale prohibition disregards scientific evidence that the effects of entheogens depend on whether or not they are used in a suitable setting by capable people with an appropriate mind-set. This is apparent in European newspaper articles that have portrayed the Santo Daime as a “drug-fuelled religion” (Boggan 2008) whose use of ayahuasca is “risky” (Anonymous 1994). The popular media’s assumption that substances like ayahuasca are risky “drugs” persists even though there is no existing scientific evidence that Santo Daime is unduly dangerous (Labate and Feeney 2012: 160). Rather, the emerging scholarly evidence does not support the grounds for arresting, jailing, and prosecuting European fardados.

With regards to the difficult subjective challenges occasionally faced by individuals undergoing an entheogen experience, scholars have argued “for psychological screening of potential users (it may be safe for most people, but it is not for everyone), as well as careful attention to the set and setting of the drug session” (Presti and Beck 2001: 132). As reviewed above, a revival of scientific studies are taking this into account. Scientists are developing guidelines of “carefully conducted research that respects

²⁰ In this section, all quotations concerning Dr. Maté’s work are derived from a newspaper article: “B.C. Doctor Agrees to Stop Using Amazonian Plant to Treat Addictions.” *The Globe and Mail*, Nov. 09, 2011; <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/bc-doctor-agrees-to-stop-using-amazonian-plant-to-treat-addictions/article4250579/>

hallucinogens' unique and often powerful psychological effects," such that "this class of compounds can be studied safely in humans" (Johnson, Richards, and Griffiths 2008: 616). Organized churches like Santo Daime also account for the potential risks of entheogen-use. European Daime groups conduct in-depth "intake" interviews that screen out those with psychotic or schizophrenic tendencies. Newcomers are required to sign a waiver form which provides a basic overview of the Santo Daime ritual and a stipulation that "all participants are expected to stay until the end of the ritual." During Daime works, trained *fiscais* ("supervisors") are on hand to care for anyone undergoing processes of psychophysical discomfort (see Chapter 4). Thus, the Daime ritual structure embodies a controlled setting within which an entheogen can be safely administered.

For instance, two psychiatric studies of rituals organized by ayahuasca religions in North America have assessed participants' physical and mental health. The first such study found that Santo Daime members in Oregon showed no signs of negative health effects from ayahuasca; conversely, researchers found that long-term ayahuasca drinking resulted in marked remissions of psychiatric disorders and drug/alcohol dependence (Halpern et al. 2008). Another study determined that North American "ayahuasca users reduced their alcohol intake, ate healthier diets, enjoyed improved mood and greater self-acceptance and felt more loving and compassionate in their relationships" (Harris and Gurel 2012: 209). Even after the U.S. government officially recognized the religious freedom of the UDV and Native American Church (NAC) to use ayahuasca and peyote respectively (Bronfman 2011; Smith and Snake 1996), these specific rulings do not apply to Santo Daime. Although the argument for religious freedom is making inroads, therapeutic uses of entheogens have not been recognized in any country.

Mystical Healing in the Belgian Santo Daime

Numerous Belgian fardados claimed that health problems in their lives had been healed or alleviated through participating in Santo Daime, including:

- addictions (cigarettes, alcohol, and cocaine)
- depression
- social anxiety
- mourning (divorce and death)
- attention deficit disorder (A.D.D.)
- arthritis
- chronic fatigue syndrome

My informants also reported improvements in their general quality of life, including positive increases in:

- happiness
- confidence
- inner peace
- humility
- serenity in both their personal and social lives

For example, one fardado from Belgium explained it simply: “I was in depression before, but after 3 or 4 times of Daime, my depression was over...it was a breaking through, I really saw the light!” (see Anderson 2012; Sobiecki 2013). When Belgian fardados were asked if ayahuasca rituals had impacted their lives negatively in any way, most could not think of anything. Some said the only negatives were temporary insomnia and feeling tired the day after a difficult Santo Daime work. Others expressed regret that they could

not speak openly about their Santo Daime practice to their friends and family. Although they carry on with mainstream social lives, daimistas said that they felt isolated before having access to like-minded people in Santo Daime. They do express some fear about being arrested. They are careful to remain discreet about their entheogenic practice, but they also view the prospect of legal action as part of a necessary process of the Daime's struggle for religious freedom.

Entheogens have been criminalized because it is presumed that they inherently harmful, and that lawmakers are trying to protect the physical and psychological health of citizens. Entheogens do induce psychological states in which people must confront uncomfortable memories and subconscious neuroses. In ayahuasca rituals these personal confrontations can be frightening and painful. However, my informants see this unpleasant disclosure of the hidden aspects of self as a therapeutic feature of Santo Daime works. As explained by a fardada from Belgium:

I think Daime can heal. But not Daime, belief can heal. Daime helps...only if you're open for it. If you are still closed, you get ill...It's not the ayahuasca that heals you, but it helps you to have more insight in your life so that you can change it. But if you can look at it but not change your life, then the illness will stay.

- Saskia

Referencing psychological "blocks" as a major cause of illness, another young Belgian fardada expressed her belief that Santo Daime cures at a psychospiritual level rather than through mechanisms of physiology. At 35 years of age, Helma is a dance teacher who lives in a large Brussels house with her fardado boyfriend and his children from a previous marriage. It was her boyfriend Alwin who introduced her to Daime in 2008, and she became a fardada in 2010. Helma recounted how she had pre-existing convictions that spirituality could have the power to heal; but before drinking Daime for

the first time she had never consumed an entheogenic substance. Conveying her current viewpoint she said:

I believe that every disease...comes out because you have emotional or energetic blocks, because by your own thoughts and by your own emotions you create these patterns of energy which cannot flow through anymore...For me, I believe that the Daime can help you with that...to open up your mind and your soul so that you can free yourself from all these things which are blocked into your body.

- **Helma** (Brussels)

Based on their experiences, fardados believe that the medicinal qualities of Daime are not the result of the brew's chemical properties. Instead, they argue that ayahuasca rituals can uncover repressed emotions and thought-patterns. Then, the drinker must choose to address these damaging aspects of their self. Whether the extraordinary sensations produced by entheogens like ayahuasca are viewed as positive or negative by the person experiencing them has everything to do with the mind-set and the environmental setting in which the substance is ingested. Belgian fardados approach their Santo Daime experiences as a mystical pursuit, asserting that ritual ayahuasca ingestion can occasion an awakening of a Higher Consciousness.

Beyond the Ego-centered Life: Cosmic Consciousness in the Santo Daime

Preceding chapters demonstrated how fardados value what they call "Higher Consciousness" or the "Higher Self." They believe that this Higher Consciousness is a divine aspect of the self, wherein each human being is linked with a universal Godhead. The explicit suggestion that entheogenic substances can encourage truly mystical experiences has been advanced by various scholars through the years (e.g. Grof 1998: 260-261; MacLean, Johnson, and Griffiths 2011; Pahnke 1963). Psychologist Walter H. Clark (1969: 18-19) likened the "chemical ecstasy" of entheogens to the sense of union

with the divine written about by the 14th century Belgian Catholic priest Jan van Ruysbroeck. There are also those who are skeptical that the ingestion of a psychoactive substance could result in authentic mysticism. The most well-known detractor was R. C. Zaehner (1961), who denied Aldous Huxley's (1990[1956]) claim that mescaline could produce mystical awareness because no outside "drug" could possibly replicate true theistic contact. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre evinced a similar dismissal of the mescaline experience as fruitless (see Riedlinger 2002). Religious scholar Huston Smith (2000: 20, 23-24) disagrees with this skepticism. He accentuates set and setting as important stimuli that regulate how one interprets the entheogenic experience. He acknowledges that when hallucinogens are taken with non-religious intent, at best one gets a fleeting sense of holiness. On the contrary, in a context of "faith" and "discipline," such as that found with entheogenic churches like the Native American Church and Santo Daime, real mystical content can transpire (Smith 2000: 31). Smith (2000: 74-75) refocuses attention on the correlations between the aspiration for entheogenic awakening and the adage of William Blake: "If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite."

Likewise, Belgian fardados describe being physically and psychologically healed by Daime as a process of "cleaning" or "purifying" the ego to uncover the "infinite" light of the Higher Self. Brazilian fardados have also been documented as claiming that Santo Daime aids in revealing the Higher Self. This is the same *suiscope* phenomenon discussed in Chapter 4, where "the individual self dissolves and becomes an observer that is fused with what is observed and with the very act of observing" (Schmidt 2007: 159). Belgian and Brazilian fardados share the belief that anyone can embark on the path to

Higher Consciousness through mystical practices, such as meditation, yoga, praying, or the ritual ingestion of entheogens like ayahuasca. At present, all except the last of these practices is accepted as a healthy pursuit in mainstream Western culture. Fardados reckon that within the proper set and setting, the ritualized use of the Daime sacrament is just as safe and effective as other mystical practices.

Through a detailed survey of cross-cultural mysticism, Richard M. Bucke²¹ (1995[1901]) traced similarities in the experiences, teachings, and life course of some of the great spiritual and artistic sages of world history. He proposed *Cosmic Consciousness* as an official designation of traits that comprise an as-of-yet unacknowledged human faculty of enlightenment. Bucke's list of those who display the genius qualities of Cosmic Consciousness includes many of the same names that Belgian fardados listed as GST, such as Gautama the Buddha, Jesus the Christ, Mohammed, William Blake, Moses, Lao-Tse, and Socrates (see Appendix IV). One sees in both Bucke's list and fardados' GST lists the same kind of mystic persona occurring in both Western and non-Western contexts.²² Bucke's (1995[1901]: 357) theory of Cosmic Consciousness as the attainment of universal mystical realization includes a formula that recalls the typical Santo Daime awakening: "subjective light...moral elevation...intellectual illumination...the sense of immortality." In essence, my informants' explanations of the ayahuasca experience and the teachings of the GST resemble the notion of *Cosmic Consciousness*. Smith and Tart (1998: 98) were the first to compare the entheogenic experience with Cosmic Consciousness as "a specific type of mystical experience." Based on the lead author's comparison of his own LSD experiences and his purported encounter with a spontaneous

²¹ Like the author of the present text, Bucke hailed from southern Ontario.

²² My informants evinced an affinity for the kinds of ideas associated with Cosmic Consciousness, even though it was clear that they had never read the classic book of the same name by Bucke (1995[1901])

mystical episode, these researchers conclude that the LSD experience does not in itself bring about Cosmic Consciousness (Smith and Tart 1998). As was noted above, even if mystical states are set apart as ecstatic union with the divine, entheogenic states vary according to the set and setting of their ingestion. So it is true that the ingestion of substances like LSD and ayahuasca do not *cause* states of Cosmic Consciousness. Then again, the resemblance of Bucke's list of those who attained Cosmic Consciousness and fardados' list of GST hints at a common ideational paradigm. Even though no Belgian interviewees had read Bucke's book, their repeated claim that the Daime sacrament helps them to access a "Higher Consciousness" suggests that they are using a different name for the same mystical state.

To test if fardados consider the lessons of Santo Daime as equivalent to how Bucke describes the outcomes of Cosmic Consciousness, informants were asked (after responding to the GST freelist) whether they agree that the Santo Daime experience:

...shows the cosmos to consist not of dead matter governed by unconscious, rigid, and un-intending law; it shows it on the contrary as entirely immaterial, entirely spiritual and entirely alive; it shows that death is an absurdity, that everyone and everything has eternal life; it shows that the universe is God and that God is the universe, and that no evil ever did or ever will enter into it (Bucke 1995[1901]: 17).

Fardado interviewees who were shown Bucke's definition agreed that their participation in Daime works had revealed to them a condition resembling Bucke's concept of Cosmic Consciousness. As Eleonora responded upon reading the above quotation: "Yes, I agree...I can really find myself in it." One of my key informants, whose over 20 years in the Daime makes him the most experienced fardado in Belgium, reacted to Bucke's portrayal of Cosmic Consciousness thusly:

I completely agree. It's very beautiful...a lot of religions say the same. But Hinduism comes close to this: Everything is spiritual. You see, there's no

separation between material life and spiritual life, it's all the same. It's science and we who made this separation... We are part of Nature, but a lot of people forget that. We live like we are not a part of it: We live in cities, you never see a tree, or you never feel the sunshine, we have air-conditioning. If you want, you can live like that, without being in contact with Nature.

During my life, I was like that. I lost this contact. Before then, Nature was like a friend, a mother, it was interesting and a lot of joy. I felt good in it, I was always in the woods. And then I went to live in the cities and I got ill, and I forgot that, because you can forget. Then I took Daime. The first time...I saw the trees alive and I saw the sun, the moon, it was magic! And then later I went in the woods for a walk and I said 'Whoa! Everything is alive again!'

- Lars

The way Bucke, writing over a century ago, sketches the features of Cosmic Consciousness is reminiscent of fardados' testimonies about the Daime: "Like a flash there is presented to his consciousness a clear conception...an immense WHOLE, as dwarfs all conception, imagination or speculation, springing from and belonging to ordinary self consciousness, such a conception as makes the old attempts to mentally grasp the universe and its meaning petty and even ridiculous" (Bucke 1995[1901]: 73-74). By "self consciousness" Bucke means the common perception of oneself as an individuated observer distinct from other such selves and the rest of reality. This is what fardados refer to as "ego" consciousness. In asserting that through Santo Daime "it's possible to realize" the same state of enlightenment demonstrated by the GST, one informant told me that "in the Daime, there are several holy people...they are like living saints." In answering our original problem of why some Europeans are committing to Santo Daime, Belgian fardados told me that through their ayahuasca rituals they are not only seeking but also finding a Cosmic/Higher Consciousness beyond the ego.

Both Bucke (1995[1901]: 22-82) and Belgian fardados view Cosmic/Higher consciousness as a potential evolutionary advance in the human species. In contrast, both Bucke and fardados view hardline dualism, or the belief that mind does not have causal

effects upon the physical body, as an outmoded approach to life.²³ For instance, Marta is a 37-year-old single mother who prefers to travel to CdSM in Amsterdam with other fardados from Antwerpen. As a Belgian fardada who is also a professional physician, she admonished egotistical thinking as a pervasive infirmity:

That's old thinking. That's a separation of dualistic thinking. The dualistic is a cause of a lot of pain and suffering, and in Nature you can get above it... So, the outside, inside, it's the same. I think that if we make connection with our nature again, then healing is being aware of the bigger context... Because we live in a world with a lot of what we call 'civilization', we're getting apart from our own nature... [Daime shows] that everybody's really unique, but that at the same time we're connected, and that we are part of a bigger thing. Like, you have cells in the body making tissue, and those tissues make organs, and then organs make a human person; and also we are cells in another tissue, and we're forming also the world... It's like microscopic: I am a collection of different things, small things, and at the same time I'm a small thing in a bigger context, and so to be connected again with the smaller parts and with the bigger parts at the same time... [Daime is] parts of the forest that you drink, so you have the vibrations of the forest in your being, so it makes resonance with your own nature.²⁴

- **Marta** (Antwerpen)

Belgian daimistas agree with author Charles Eisenstein (2011: 1) that the major problems facing today's world are the result of fundamental errors in Western culture's "story of self," which glamorizes "the discrete and separate self: a bubble of psychology, a skin-encapsulated soul, a biological phenotype driven by its genes to seek reproductive self-interest, a rational actor seeking economic self-interest, a physical observer of an objective universe, a mote of consciousness in a prison of flesh." In contrast to fardados' view that each human self is intimately connected to and continuous with all other selves and entities in the universe, the ego is the ordinary view that each self is an isolated unit.

²³ This thinking matches the scheme of futurologist Willis Harman (1998: 30), whereby "Transcendental monism" would eventually replace the "materialistic monism" that has reigned since the Enlightenment: Transcendental Monism "finds the ultimate stuff of the universe to be consciousness. Mind (or consciousness, or spirit) is primary, and matter-energy arises in some sense out of mind. The physical world is to the greater mind as a dream image is to the individual mind... Consciousness is not the end-product of material evolution; rather, consciousness was here first" (for an anthropological treatment of these ideas, see Granskog [2003]):

²⁴ See the lyrics in the Santo Daime hymn PA#126, entitled "Connected to Nature."

According to Fardados, the ego is the source of suffering and conflict in human life. They describe the ego as the conviction that the perceiving self is divided off from the observed world. This is the same self propounded in secular modernity, what Charles Taylor (2007: 711) called the “carefully erected boundaries of the buffered identity, which neatly divides mind from nature.” When one looks at the problem of the present dissertation, the question of why Europeans are joining Santo Daime, it is because they believe that Santo Daime provides them solutions to the ego by dissolving the sense that they are separated. For my informants, allegiance to the “conditions” of the ego (that is, all one’s habitual thoughts, beliefs, convictions, and attitudes) is the primary source of malevolence in human life, both on the individual and social scale. Of course, Belgian Daime members understand that the ego is necessary for maintaining a personal sense of self relative to others in daily life. However, they consider this ego to be a superficial and utilitarian aspect of everyday reality, which is actually undergirded by a more fundamental unity of all beings.

“The Daime is for Everyone, but Not Everyone is for the Daime”

This is a common proverb recited in daimista circles, emphasizing that the Santo Daime is open to anyone who wants to participate, but that there are many whose disposition is not suited to the ayahuasca experience. Fardados can be distinguished from religious groups that attempt to “brain-wash” new recruits because proselytizing is sternly disapproved of in Santo Daime. Since the ayahuasca experience is so deeply personal, Santo Daime morality strongly discourages inviting or pressuring outsiders to partake in the ceremonies. One sees this in the waiver that all newcomers must sign

before attending a Santo Daime work, which demands a “Yes” answer to the question: “Are you here by your own free will?”

Santo Daime ritual organizers take great pains to ensure that they account for each individual’s well-being and safety. Fardados are acutely aware of how one individual’s estrangement from the collective structure can disturb the work for the entire group. The overtly ritualized set and setting of Santo Daime works contrasts with recreational uses of psychoactive substances. My informants seek out this structured ritual setting because they believe that it encourages the healing they seek in a way that they could not achieve alone. Because fardados have experienced the difficult psychological and spiritual crises that arise occasionally in Santo Daime works, they are mindful of the importance of having support from other participants. The focus on developing ritual proficiency, especially by fardados who have travelled to Brazil, illustrates how Daime works in Europe offer a controlled environment for administering an entheogenic substance.

It is important to note that despite the positive results experienced by the majority of those who participate in carefully orchestrated ayahuasca rituals, the consumption of Daime tea does carry a risk of experiencing an existential crisis. One Belgian fardado, who claims Santo Daime helps him to solve his ego problems, was also candid about the hazards of drinking ayahuasca:

I became less inhibited, especially in expressing myself: singing, talking, less captured in myself, more free to go outside and make a connection with another person and with the world (before, I was more imprisoned in myself, captured in my ego)....[However], some experiences can be pretty scary at the beginning. Especially for people who don't have much experience with looking in themselves, who haven't worked on themselves. It can be very frightening, very scary, sometimes. Or overwhelming!...I feel it has a danger if you are not aware that sometimes you can lose yourself in this wonderful experience. And instead of integrating what you're learning into your life, you are just always continuing to look for the nice feelings in the work. And although the Daime shows you these

things, I know people who are not able to understand the lessons. And they always come back to the Daime and they don't make progress in their lives because there's no integration of the lessons they are learning in their daily life.

- **Oscar** (East Flanders)

Oscar, a 44-year-old piano teacher, plays accordion in the CdU works. He says that he drinks less Daime when he plays his instrument with his Belgian church because he sees it as more of a musical service to his fellow daimistas. He told me that he savors his opportunities to go to international Daime meetings with CdSM in Amsterdam. Here he does not have to play music and can instead focus more on his own personal work. Oscar is outspoken about his concern that new inductees to Santo Daime are inevitably dealing with an underground movement. Like his fardado colleagues, he is aware that occasionally neophytes may have a psychological breakdown in the face of the intense fears and doubts that can accompany the ayahuasca experience.

In Belgium, informants reported two incidents that occurred during the 20 years that Daime works have taken place in this country. In one instance, a paranoid newcomer ran out into the streets in the middle of a work. Another time, fiscal supervisors had to physically restrain a man that tried to distract and disrupt other participants with loud vocal outbursts. In the latter case, the person who had this difficulty wrote down his experiences in his English diary, which he shared openly with me:

Now I'm back home and I'm still flinching with embarrassment every time a memory comes up. I don't know what it all meant. I can see different possibilities, other than that it meant nothing at all and was just a heap of ugliness.

One meaning is that I went through one of my worst fears. Another is that – in a very extreme way – I dropped all masks and said everything that was going on inside me uncensored. It was complete, raw honesty. Perhaps I wanted to know the effect that would have on people's appreciation of me. Perhaps I wanted to see how they would feel about me if they saw me sabotage a beautiful session with all the ugliness that was inside of me (a lot of things I said to be provocative, without meaning them).

I'll see what the next days bring. For now, I'm not sure if I ever want to do this again, but on the other hand, I don't want to end like this either.

He did end up going back to CdU a few times, and when interviewed as a part of the current study, he expressed deep gratitude for the lessons he had learned through Daime. Regarding this specific incident, fardados voiced their empathy for those who have a painful ego-death in Daime, but they view it as ultimately a curative event. It bears repeating that this is a very uncommon occurrence and the results are temporary. All powerful tool technologies carry some risk, but unless one is already aware of possessing an acute psychiatric illness, the risks of participating in structured ayahuasca rituals are very low for normal adults.

With the relatively recent expansion of Santo Daime into Europe and North America, Western governments face a conundrum: existing laws forbidding “hallucinogens,” originally designed to stamp out recreational use of these substances, now also criminalize entheogenic religious practices. One Belgian fardado explained his belief that it would be optimal for his society to make accommodations for consecrated uses of “sacred plants”:

I think the sacred plants are there to help us. They make it more easy for us to contact the spiritual worlds...I think the people who make the laws prohibiting sacred plants should first try it and experience it, and then judge about it. Because of course, they have the power to say 'No, it's forbidden, and we're going to take it from you.' But how can you judge about something if you've just read the [media] reports of it?

It's about how you use it...The young people also want to try all these different substances...But they are using them without guides. I think it's good to use these sacred plants or even the derived chemical substances...Instead of saying 'No, no, no', they should say 'Yes, yes, yes, but in special contexts', like religious contexts, or even without religious contexts...Let's take it wisely and in a good setting and not in a dance hall where there's alcohol...that would be a good thing.

- Emmanuel

All daimistas share this conviction, asserting that drug enforcement legislation could be

nuanced in light of scientific evidence. According to my informants, new legal controls could be put in place that protect daimistas' religious freedom by regulating the distinction between safe and unsafe sets and settings for ingesting entheogens.

The scholarly findings of entheogen-assisted healing enumerated above correspond to Santo Daime members' descriptions of the ayahuasca experience. For instance, a Belgian informant spoke of his first Santo Daime work:

I had the experience of oneness the first time. It was everybody: when I looked at the people in the room who were singing, it was like I was in heaven! The feeling that I had was so divine! So the feeling of everything is so beautiful, everything, we are all one!...Everything is God.

- Werner

Such a powerful experience is common to many mystical traditions (see Kornfield 2000: 86-94). It may appear to outsiders that daimistas are modern-day hippies. On the contrary, fardados' rigorous self-discipline makes them more like Buddhist, Christian, Sufi, or Hindu monks. I observed that fardados enjoy meditation or saying prayers on a rosary during their free time, and they regularly practice the Santo Daime hymns at home. Fardados attribute their calm and temperate demeanor to the lessons they learn through prayer and meditation inside and outside the Daime works. However, the purposeful generation of mystical experiences through the use of a psychoactive substance remains a divisive concept in mainstream Euro-American culture. When entheogens surfaced as "psychedelics" in the 1960s, the Western "counterculture" was fundamentally ignorant about how to use them responsibly. Scholars and entheogenic devotees are now instigating a renewed discussion in our society about how to incorporate the therapeutic capacities of these substances while diminishing the negative impact of naïve and

unstructured uses.²⁵

The established and emergent scientific evidence necessitates a re-evaluation of how entheogens are legally regulated. According to an anthropological perspective, one can see how the tension between monophasic and polyphasic ideologies is simply a misunderstanding between a dominant culture and an unfamiliar subculture. A review of empirical findings has indicated that entheogens are of low toxicity, do not cause dependency, and have potential medical applications. From the standpoint of human rights (see Tupper and Labate 2012), policies forbidding “hallucinogens” could be framed as a direct breach of polyphasic believers’ *cognitive liberty*; this is the freedom that neuro-ethicist Wrye Sententia (2004: 223) explains as respect for “every person’s fundamental right to think independently, to use the full spectrum of his or her own mind, and to have autonomy over his or her own brain chemistry.” The Santo Daime religion endorses principles of honesty, selflessness, and the cognitive liberty stance of leaving each person to make his/her own decisions about personal states of consciousness. Present bans on entheogens are based on the dangers of their recreational use, as the law does not yet recognize the scientific verdict that structured uses can be beneficial. In the concluding chapter, the analysis turns to a discussion of how this intra-cultural debate could be settled through open-minded compromise.

²⁵ “High Hopes: Why Science is Seeking a Pardon for Psychedelics.” *Globe and Mail*, Jan. 18 2013; <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/technology/science/brain/high-hopes-why-science-is-seeking-a-pardon-for-psychedelics/article7529135/>

CHAPTER 8

Conclusions: Santo Daime's Place in a *Post-Secular* Europe

Over the past few decades, the entheogenic practice of Santo Daime has expanded across the world. After first establishing small congregations in Spain and Belgium, there are now Santo Daime churches operating in 12 European countries. Preceding chapters have shown that Belgian fardados believe their Santo Daime rituals help them find workable solutions to common physical and psychological problems. My informants consider ayahuasca a holy sacrament. These ideas conflict with current policies that prohibit the possession and consumption of this psychoactive beverage. The initial response from Western governments has been to arrest and prosecute people who engage in Daime rituals.

In approaching this intra-cultural discord, one can refer to Jürgen Habermas' (1989[1962]) contemplations on the *public sphere*. In post-Enlightenment societies, the public sphere is composed of mediated "social arenas in which...a conflict of opinions is fought out more or less discursively" (Habermas 1992: 430). Charles Taylor (2007: 192) maintains that the Euro-American public sphere is characterized by its "radical secularity." Existing in a "relational dynamic" with "religion," secularity delimits the operations of the state as segregated from theistic dogma (Hirschkind 2011: 641). Breaking with the teleological secularization narratives of Max Weber (1948[1922]: 155), recent critiques have analyzed how minority groups are disenfranchised by Euro-American secularist hegemonies.

Scholars engaged in the emerging subfield of the anthropology of secularism have begun to deconstruct how “liberal secularism’s claims to tolerance” can veil an exclusionary political agenda that “permits and develops certain ways of being and living while disdain, tacitly prohibiting, or stunting others” (Cannell 2010: 90-91). These scholars now scrutinize how “the Enlightenment doctrine of secularism that enabled the delimiting of a public sphere, in which tolerance and neutrality could be practiced, has been critical to a particular kind of authoritative definition of religion — that is, the demarcation of a line between what does and does not constitute the terms of *authentic religion*” (Abeysekara 2008: 176). As noted by Asad (2003: 183-185), “from the beginning the liberal public sphere excluded certain kinds of people: women, subjects without property, and members of religious minorities”; but “the introduction of new discourses may result in the disruption of established assumptions structuring debates in the public sphere.” These anthropologists identify how the secularist assumption that there are no supernatural phenomena outside the material realm is a metaphysical claim that is just as improvable as any religious belief.

How can liberalist societies reconcile their commitment to protecting citizens’ freedom of religion with the arrival of foreign religious practices that violate existing legal norms? This question addresses what Klassen and Bender (2010: 4) identify as a present “urgency”: “‘new’ religious diversity becomes a condition through which commentators, politicians, and scholars can focus their various concerns about how personal liberties and minority self-determination will shape the futures of modern democratic engagement.” From the perspective of anthropology, the present dissertation tackles the pressing concern of minority religious rights by examining a belief system

organized around the ritual ingestion of a mind-altering substance. Since Europe is a “secular” society dominated by attitudes that interpret Daime practices as irrational, my objective was to understand why this foreign spirituality is attracting European devotees.

The Post-Secular Approach to Entheogens

The first step towards a healthier dialogue about entheogens requires that governments acknowledge the results of empirical science, which suggest that the mystical pursuits of groups like Santo Daime might offer breakthroughs for social health. But such a step is hampered by monophasic suppositions in mainstream Western society, according to which no knowledge or truths can be found outside the normal waking state of consciousness (see Walsh and Grob 2005: 224). A resolution to this intra-cultural conflict requires a *post-secular* outlook, as Habermas (2005: 26-27) observes: “the expectation of a persisting disagreement between worldly knowledge and religious tradition deserves the predicate ‘reasonable’ only if religious convictions are granted, from the perspective of secular knowledge, an epistemic status that is not simply ‘irrational’.”¹ Habermas (2010a: 16) argues that believers must reciprocate this gesture when it comes to the practical concern of governing civil societies. Rather than project their religious values onto the state, religious minorities must accept that the secular value of separating church and state is necessary for arbitrating in diverse democratic societies.

The post-secular paradigm proposed by Habermas and others is a normative scheme, which endorses a conciliatory program for how Euro-American governments ought to cherish the positive contributions that religions make to society. Post-secularism is thus a call for inter- and intra-cultural dialogue rooted in basic anthropological

¹ See also Habermas’ (2008) article *Notes on Post-Secular Society* and the chapter on “Faith and Knowledge,” in his book *The Future of Human Nature* (Habermas 2003: 101-115)

principles. Anthropologists are now engaging with other social scientists in a transdisciplinary discourse about the post-secular. This is witnessed in a volume exploring the issue of *Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, co-edited by a philosopher and an anthropologist (de Vries and Sullivan 2006). Anthropological contributions to this book include an account of secularism in France (Asad 2006b), an analysis of legislative sexism (Das 2006), and an historical ethnology of civil disobedience in India and the West (Singh 2006). As an anthropologist committed to values of cultural relativism, I like Habermas' post-secular paradigm because it tenders a strategy for considering how my informants unorthodox claims have gone unheard in the public sphere. Santo Daime's criminal status embodies an example of how post-secular thinking can aid in settling intra-cultural disputes.

A major purpose of Euro-American anthropology is to translate otherness into terms that can be understood by mainstream Western culture. But social scientists fail when instead of taking seriously the challenge that entheogens pose for Enlightenment presumptions about the nature of reality, they dismiss it as "veriest nonsense":

Despite all the protestations of 'entheogen' users, I can detect nothing of interest in what they claim to have learned. Their insights are trivial. They have brought nothing to the world that has been of any use. Interest in passing through doors in our minds seems to me to be self-indulgent, if not addictive in the worst sense of the word. Indeed, there is no evidence that there is any sort of 'other realm' filled with wisdom, be it tucked away in our brains or 'out there' in another dimension (Lewis-Williams 2010: 172).

Belgian fardados were shown the above statement from archaeologist David Lewis-Williams, to get their reaction. They all critiqued his lack of scientific rigor and his confident uttering of an uninformed opinion. One informant said: "He's a scientist, but he says something about something he doesn't know, so that's not very scientific." Of

course, Lewis-Williams merely reiterates mainstream assumptions. In contrast, the ethnographic results presented in this dissertation show that entheogens like ayahuasca are safe and potentially beneficial for people when ingested in a proper set and setting. Thus, my research highlights an ostracized group of individuals who “might otherwise remain forgotten, with attention to the ways their own struggles and visions of themselves create holes in dominant theories and policies” (Biehl and Moran-Thomas 2009: 282). Following a summary of preceding chapters, this concluding section reframes the emergence of entheogenic religions as tied to the broader initiative for post-secular compromises in the public sphere.

Chapter Review

Chapters 1 and 2 introduced the research problem, providing a basic overview of the Santo Daime in Belgium and how this ethnographic project strives to understand the importation of a new spiritual behavior from Brazil. Chapter 1 stated the main problem to be explored in this dissertation: *Why are some Europeans choosing to dedicate themselves to Santo Daime spiritual practice?* After presenting the basic characteristics of Santo Daime, Belgium was rendered as a frequently overlooked exemplar of European history and culture. Chapter 2 outlined the methodological and theoretical tactics involved in this research. Guided by the tenets of ethnophenomenology, whereby the researcher immerses him/herself in their informants’ worldview, the ethnographer gains insights into otherwise esoteric lifeways. Belgian fardados claim that the ritual use of ayahuasca can induce mystical experiences that help people to wake up from the slumber of egotism. When the ethnographer takes seriously the claims of fardado informants, the emic (insider’s) perspective regarding this controversial practice can come to light.

Chapter 3 comprised a literature review of ayahuasca and Santo Daime. The ayahuasca beverage and the various indigenous, semi-indigenous, and non-indigenous spiritualities associated with it have attracted the attention of scientists and social scientists from multiple disciplines. However, only recently have scholars begun to focus attention on the transnational expansion of the ayahuasca religions outside of Brazil. The present study represents the first ethnographic research concerning ayahuasca rituals in Belgium. Moreover, this dissertation breaks new theoretical ground by analyzing the wider sociopolitical implications of Santo Daime's emergence within a predominantly secular culture.

Chapter 4 introduced readers to the Belgian daimista community and illustrated the basic structure of Santo Daime works as they are carried out in Belgium. According to followers of Santo Daime, this disciplined use of ayahuasca in ritual contexts can act as a veritable antidote to the human condition. But as much as the first step to healing through Daime is to connect into the introspective *suiscope*, this is only the beginning of the labor towards lasting solutions; many fardados impressed on me that the real work begins after leaving the salão following the ritual. Fardados avow that it is not important how many mystical visions and extraordinary experiences one has in the Daime. What is essential is that one carries forth the lessons received into one's everyday life, like the example set by the renowned saints of the great world religions. Only through this practice of integration can *suiscope* lessons result in lasting solutions.

Chapter 5 looked at how the secularization thesis fails to recognize that a substantial proportion of the Euro-American population is not satisfied with disenchanting explanations for the meaning of life. The conventional religious institutions of Europe

are declining in popularity and influence. However, as Charles Taylor points out, since the rise of exclusive humanism after the Enlightenment in Europe, there has been a coinciding rise in a sense of “malaise.” According to Taylor (2007: 302-303), many modern subjects’ “cross-pressured” frustration with both traditional religion and secular disenchantment has impelled them to search for a “third way,” pushing “us to explore and try out new solutions, new formulae.” The latest statistics in Europe show that the declines of Christianity are paralleled by increases in non-belief *and* non-mainstream forms of belief. Thus, future amendments to the secularization thesis can include the acknowledgement that there remains a portion of humanity for whom spirituality is an attractive option. The data show that in the West today there is a vacuum of existential fulfillment being filled by new spiritual organizations, one of which is the Santo Daime doctrine profiled here.

With reference to freelist and triad data collected with Belgian members of Santo Daime, Chapter 6 introduced the idea that European fardados are an example of a large demographic shift towards a more “integral” worldview. My informants’ cultural domain of “great spiritual teachers” (GST) displays a “trans-modern” appreciation for both ancient and modern answers to the question of how best to be a human being. Fardados’ integral/trans-modern perspective associates them with an emergent subculture that social scientists have defined as the “Cultural Creatives” (CCs). As with all CCs, fardados demonstrate that one can believe in science and something beyond science at the same time: they reserve the rational mind for dealing with the material world while allowing for an appreciation of spiritual wisdom. If mystical experiences such as Santo Daime can indeed provide practical solutions for people’s problems, CCs deem it foolish to deny

these therapeutic benefits just because they outstrip the logic of materialism.

Chapter 7 referenced a second freelist collected for Belgian fardados' notion of "sacred plants" as a springboard for contemplating the illicit status of entheogens in Euro-American society. The thrust of this chapter centered upon a crucial distinction between the monophasic stance that outlaws mind-altering substances, and the polyphasic esteem for entheogens found in cultures such as Santo Daime. Belgian fardados say that entheogens can serve to awaken human beings to a state of Higher Consciousness. Because fardados believe that many physiological and psychological sicknesses are the result of dualistic disharmony or ego conflicts enduring inside and between human selves, they trust that the Daime experience can heal by dissolving these conflicts.

Towards Ethnographically-Informed Regulations of *Set* and *Setting*

In a paper on the potential value of entheogens as "cognitive tools" for the strengthening of existential intelligence,² Tupper (2002: 510) notes that our culture's strong distrust regarding entheogenic substances has more to do with propaganda than with "any properties intrinsic to the substances themselves." Like heavy machinery, weapons, and human belief systems, entheogens can be used for good or bad ends depending upon the motivations (*set*) and the environmental context (*setting*) of their use (see also Smith 2000: 1). As indicated by the scientific findings reviewed above, the culture of prohibition continues to deny the therapeutic promise of entheogens when these substances are used as psychiatric medicines or ritual sacraments.

The scholarly evidence shows that like all powerful tool technology, entheogens

² The measurement of existential intelligence is the degree to which a person can aptly conceptualize and manage universal problems of meaning and being. This notion is derived from psychologist Howard Gardner's (1999) theory of "multiple intelligences."

can be used destructively or constructively. This suggests that entheogens could be regulated by governments so that only sanctioned uses are permitted. Hence, the misuse of these powerful psychoactive substances (i.e. outside of ritualized, clinical, or other controlled contexts) would be akin to the misuse of any other tool, like driving a car without a driver's license. As Beyerstein and Kalchik (2003: 30) observe: "Where drug use becomes problematical is usually when another culture's socially approved drug is parachuted into a society that has not had the time and experience to adapt its informal controls to handle it...problems are most likely to arise when the newly exposed users lack models for safe usage that they can emulate." Unfortunately, resistance to such "models for safe usage" relegates all use of entheogens to the underground, an unregulated set and setting where these substances can be dangerous.

Tupper (2008b) recommends a governmental policy approach for monitoring the set and setting of ayahuasca drinking. He advocates laws that regulate the credentials of people dispensing the brew, inspections of sites where rituals are performed, and regular testing of the quality of the entheogenic substances being distributed (Tupper 2008b: 302). With the present dissertation as an example, ethnography can be a useful resource for devising new government controls of substances that have been introduced into Euro-American culture. Trained ethnographers can conduct fieldwork and interviews to help translate foreign concepts into regulatory principles and precautions that make sense within a Western framework.

Fardados describe the transcendent state of consciousness afforded by the Daime beverage as a "key to a lot of solutions." But they are careful to mention that Daime is not a magic panacea that will cure just by being popped like a pain pill. Veteran fardados

warned that there is a danger when the material sacrament becomes an object of idolatry.³ Instead, they view Daime tea as a divinely molded vehicle, an astral “tool” that helps humans to explore and repair themselves only when its suiscope mechanism is used wisely. With a judiciousness paralleling Trungpa’s (1973) warnings about humans’ tendency to confuse spiritual values and egotistical attachment (i.e. Spiritual Materialism), one fardado put it this way:

It never occurred to me to put a word to this beverage. I don’t see it as Christ or Light or whatever, I see it as Daime, just a drink. By drinking the Daime there is another part of my consciousness that opens, and it gives me a sort of doorway to that other realm. And then through that I can see some things that are useful to myself and to others...I think the drink helps us to get in contact with the consciousness, the drink itself is not the consciousness. It’s a key, and there are many keys: meditation, the Daime, there are other plants that are used by indigenous people. There are all sorts of keys; you pick up the key that suits you best...

I’m afraid that [Daime] is like the other keys. It helps people who are aware that the key is just a key to the other thing...I hear many people in the Daime say ‘The Daime will do it for me’; for me personally that’s not correct. You have to do it! The Daime doesn’t do it in your place, it just shows you [aspects] of your self and of your consciousness, and that’s it! So you have to work very hard, because it shows you all the elements of your ego, and then you know what you have to work on. I also do meditation and it’s the same thing: you get in a very beautiful layer where you see these wonderful visions, and then you have these layers where they show you all these elements in the ego that are still not cured, so you know what you have to do. But the meditation doesn’t do it for you; it just makes you see it better, brighter.

- Frederik

Belgian fardados proclaim that drinking ayahuasca in Santo Daime works affords them an improved sense of well-being; in general, they portray ayahuasca as a teacher that instructs individuals how to overcome their selfish ego, a narcissistic impulse which they view as the source of much suffering. Through the careful implementation of the Santo

³ While European fardados do not worship the Daime liquid itself, some of my informants do evince a belief that the physical beverage contains powerful spiritual properties. Like fardados in the Brazilian Amazon, my informants agree that the physical presence of the Daime brew can act as a kind of “talisman product...a form of protection” (Cemin 2006: 282).

Daime ritual apparatus, the ayahuasca sacrament is dispensed and ingested in the presence of trained supervisors and the mutual support of experienced fardados.

Tolerating Santo Daime in a Post-Secular Europe

Today, Belgians' practice of Santo Daime persists in the face of legal codes prohibiting the entheogen that my informants use in their ceremonies. As stated in Chapter 4, the Belgian government initiated a formal investigation of Santo Daime activities in late 2011. Since the conclusion of my fieldwork, government inspectors have interrogated at least eight Belgian fardados, all of whom were consulted as informants in the present study. Additionally, authorities conducted a search of the home of the CdU commander and his wife, and detained a shipment of ayahuasca at customs, confiscating a total of 45 liters of the Daime brew. To be fair, fardados report that the government interrogations were not overly aggressive. They say that investigators seemed to me concerned mainly with whether the ayahuasca was being used as a means of "drugging" unsuspecting participants and taking their money against their will. Hopefully the present text can serve to help dispel such presumptions about Santo Daime being a manipulative "sect." Still, out of fear of further police raids all Belgian Santo Daime groups (including CdU, CdAI, RaS, and CCMI) now organize their ritual works outside of Belgium. This means that unless the Belgian government bestows a favorable ruling recognizing their religious right to employ their entheogenic sacrament, daimistas in Belgium have effectively been forced into exile. As outlined in a joint statement released by scholarly experts in the field of ayahuasca studies:

Persecution of the Brazilian ayahuasca religions has been mostly based on misinformed prejudice against the use of psychedelic substances in what are

reasonably safe and socially controlled ritual contexts, and which constitute authentic cultural traditions and expressions that must be respected as such (Anderson et al. 2012).

It would thus be in accordance with Western liberalist values to reevaluate drug policies that currently deny daimistas their right to religious freedom.

More broadly, Santo Daime signifies the need to reassess scholarly paradigms about secularism and spirituality in 21st century Europe. In some circles, spiritual faith is disdained by hardline secular critics, who point to the tortures, murders, and wars attributable to religion both throughout history and today (e.g. the bestselling books of Richard Dawkins [2006] and Michel Onfray [2011]). Inversely, there is now a rapidly growing critique of the old European secularization story being stoked by Habermas, who has softened his previously strong secularist convictions (Reder and Schmidt 2010: 5). Habermas is exemplary of a trend in prominent European intellectuals now questioning the fundamental assumptions of secularism. These include the French philosopher Alain Badiou (2003), Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2005), and Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2005). Yet even though several of this new group of post-secular scholars “have openly declared they are atheists, or at least agnostics...their intention is not to oppose religious faith, but to understand it and its inherent power – particularly its political potential” (Liedman 2010: 53). Jointly, they question the presumption that religious worldviews are obsolete and inferior compared to disenchanting science.

In carefully distinguishing it from “esteem” for those one disagrees with, Habermas (2009: 69) builds his template for a post-secular society upon the value of tolerance: “Toleration means that believers, members of other religions, and non-believers must concede each other’s right to observe convictions, practices, and ways of

life which they themselves reject.” The members of Santo Daime in Belgium agree. They applaud the ideals of both secularism and traditional religion, and they expect toleration of their mystical practices in return. According to Michele Dillon⁴ (2012: 255), “Habermas’ view of religion’s potential as a remedial cultural resource for contemporary societal ills is shared by many religious leaders.” Among scholars there is now a lively debate about the future prospects of a “post-secular society” (e.g. Abeysekara 2008; de Vries and Sullivan 2006; Gorski et al. 2012; Harrington 2007; Ziebertz and Riegel 2008, 2010).

German thinkers have been at the forefront of engagements with Habermas’ call for a post-secular society. A group of them published their interactive deliberations on the topic of “faith and reason in a post-secular age” (Habermas et al. 2010). Habermas (2010a: 15, 19) conceives this conversation in terms of the “awareness of what’s missing” in disenchanted secularism; that is, secularism lacks a capacity to provide some modern subjects with a coherent narrative of existential meaning. His interlocutors interpret Habermas’ post-secularism as insisting that secular reason can benefit from speaking and listening to religious thinkers (Brieskorn 2010: 35); that religions have an important role in modern civic life (Reder 2010: 37); and that debates in the public sphere are enhanced through “open” and “inclusive” negotiations between secularists and spiritual traditions (Schmidt 2010: 59-60). In short, what is missing in the Euro-American public sphere is a post-secular dialogue based on a compassionate cooperation

⁴ As department chair at the University of New Hampshire, Dillon is “president-elect of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, past president of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, and past chair of the American Sociological Association section on the sociology of religion” (Gorski et al. 2012: 365). Although Habermas’ post-secularism is remarkable as a conciliatory approach to the secularism vs. religion debate, in her take on the post-secular Dillon’s (2012) critiques Habermas for not giving religion enough credit!

between non-believers and believers.

Atheist Alain de Botton (2012) displays this moderate compromise position for those modern agents who are tired of the intractable debate between extreme believers and non-believers. In a genuinely post-secular spirit, de Botton praises religions' facility for promoting community, kindness, aesthetic achievements, education, and intellectual rigor, while also providing existential comfort for those who are suffering. Instead of dismissing the theistic beliefs of religions (which he personally believes to be untrue), de Botton (2012: 11-12) advocates a "balanced" approach that acknowledges what atheists can learn from their religious counterparts: "it must be possible to remain a committed atheist and nevertheless find religions sporadically useful, interesting and consoling – and be curious as to the possibilities of importing certain of their ideas and practices into the secular realm." It is with this same spirit that Habermas (2010b: 82) cautions his hardline secularist peers not to abandon the advantages of spiritual worldviews "too hastily." The post-secular view still curbs the negative consequences of religion (e.g. violence, brainwashing, and sectarian oppression), while it also urges secularists to recognize the many benefits that religions can bestow on society (e.g. community, charity, education, and refuge). Therefore, the post-secular embodies a *solution* to the religion-secularism conflict by *integrating* the positive social contributions supplied by both interests.⁵ Santo Daime offers a readymade test for the future of post-secular consensus in Europe.

In principle, fardados' struggle for liberty around the world is akin to the struggles of any other religious minority. Because they were born and raised within a late-20th century European culture, Belgian fardados' outlook acknowledges that science is really

⁵ A similar ideal of mutual tolerance is endorsed by Canadian public intellectuals. With reference to contentious debates about religious pluralism in secular Québécois society, Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor (2011) recast secularism as the liberalist project to protect every citizen's "freedom of conscience."

good at accounting for the material world. But they also believe that mystical contemplation allows individuals to acquire inner self-knowledge. As a group of polyphasic believers that gathers periodically, Belgian fardados evince a post-secular approach to the larger monophasic society in which they live. They merely desire a willingness on the part of secular society to work towards a reconsideration of Daime's criminal status in recognition of their religious freedom. Of course, European secular governments will not tolerate actions that bring harm to people. But as has been demonstrated throughout this dissertation, empirical evidence verifies that entheogens like ayahuasca are not harmful when used in structured contexts. Correspondingly, a renewed communal dialogue about the optimal way to regulate entheogens can commence in the European public sphere.

Conclusion: Solutions in Self through Santo Daime Mysticism

For my informants, the suiscope process of the self observing itself in Daime works has inspired their Cosmic Consciousness worldview. As one Belgian fardada argued, the healing of conflicts within her self through ayahuasca rituals logically fuels her desire to transcend interpersonal conflicts and seek more social harmony:

At this time there's more and more separation and it's so hard to find unity, to find priorities that you want to serve...I think also in the Daime if you feel that feeling of oneness, then I think it's the most happy feeling you can feel, because you recognize the other and you recognize yourself. It brings more love if you can make a puzzle together than if you do it by yourself. If you see God or the power that can be God as a oneness, then we are all making this together, we are all parts of the puzzle. It's so much more beautiful if you can help each other and bring all knowledge together. We try to see God in ourselves and in the other.

- Clara

These sentiments echo the spirit of the post-secular, contending that both believers and

non-believers would profit from paying attention to each other's perspectives. The two sides can be seen as partners rather than adversaries. Religious groups can recognize the need for the secular state to operate apart from the rule of one religious code. Like an anthropologist, the secular state can suspend its monophasic disbelief so as to revisit the permissibility of entheogens in religious and psychotherapeutic contexts.

Surprisingly, despite my lack of allegiance to the religious tenets of Santo Daime, simply by employing the ethnographic methods of direct participant-observation I obtained major personal benefits anyway. It is not uncommon for ethnographers to undergo personal transformations after experiencing scientifically inexplicable anomalies through indulging in the spiritual practices of their informants (see Richards 2003; Young and Goulet 1994). I can say that simply by attending Santo Daime works, I experienced lasting improvements in my own sense of well-being, including: a lost desire to consume alcohol to excess, more patience and inner peace, a substantial decrease in my bad temper, and a striking improvement in my "picky" eating habits. All of this prompted my wife to comment that I was becoming a better husband. Evoking the *solutions* and technological themes weaved throughout this study, Lars expressed what he thought about having an anthropologist attend the works and conduct research with his church:

It's a good thing, because you translate the Santo Daime, this very weird religion or doctrine, into scientific terms. You investigate it by the scientific method. So it's good for us to learn from it, it's good also for legal things. And it's good for us as fardados to have a scientific approach to it. Because we are curious also, we don't know what is happening, what is this strange thing? It's very interesting! It's in this one big melting pot of things happening around the Santo Daime. You're an instrument, like we are all instruments in the Santo Daime. But instruments of what? For what goal? That's the mystery that makes it interesting.

- Lars

This tendency to see scholars as just another "instrument" in the mystical (suiscope)

apparatus of Santo Daime displays fardados' characteristic receptivity. It is this determined willingness on the part of fardados to merge and find common truths between seemingly distinct perspectives that arises repeatedly in conversations with them. As they face legal challenges around the world, Santo Daime groups want to work with rather than against scientists and legal systems.

As the ethnographic evidence was reviewed, the reader was exposed to some meaningful facts about what Santo Daime is not: Santo Daime is not a drug-crazed cult whose members are seeking to "trip out" or get "high." Santo Daime is not a hedonistic indulgence into dangerous intoxication. On the contrary, throughout this dissertation the reader has witnessed how Santo Daime is many things at the same time. Santo Daime is Christian and it is shamanistic. Santo Daime is a sincere form of mysticism, a spiritual school of the self. Santo Daime is a periodic social group where people with a polyphasic worldview can assemble and tap into what they see as a personal connection with an inner God. Over the past 80 years Santo Daime has evolved and diversified its eclectic reach, incorporating a wide range of different religious traditions into its perpetually diversified "melting pot." But as with the more highly publicized challenges to secularism raised by Islamic immigrant populations, the Santo Daime's use of ayahuasca introduces a complex political problem for the European Union: trying to enforce laws against the use of substances like ayahuasca (commonly vilified as "hallucinogens"), while respecting religious freedoms. The continued prohibition of ayahuasca rituals relies upon a circular logic, inferring that because their religion is unlawful, fardados' religious rights are not subject to constitutional protections. So even though this dissertation has focused on the seemingly minor issue of small Santo Daime

congregations in Europe, the question of whether accommodations are made for fardados speaks to broader conflicts in Western societies today.

Fardados insisted to me that their lives are palpably more stable and joyous because Santo Daime acts as a “key” to solutions for their problems. These claims may appear incredible to some, but the empirical evidence shows that there are very profound therapeutic results occurring for participants in these entheogenic rituals. Fardados believe that rather than being illegal, the proper use of ayahuasca could help to assuage many rampant plights: drug/alcohol abuse, anxiety/depression, existential malaise, ecological degradation, and so on. It remains to be seen whether the potential benefits of entheogens will be accepted by Euro-American democracies. But with the continued growth of post-secular tolerance, the therapeutic potential of the ayahuasca religions may one day be as admired in the West as Buddhist meditation or Hindu yoga. Time will tell.

Since this text opened with quotations from two males, it now closes with illustrative excerpts from hymns received by two female leaders in Santo Daime, one from Brazil and one from Belgium:

*Eu vivo na floresta
Aprendendo a me curar
Eu convido os meus irmãos
Vamos todos se cuidar*

*I live in the forest
Learning to heal myself
I invite my brothers and sisters
Let's all take care of ourselves*

*Estou dentro da batalha
Sofrendo mas sou feliz
Nela estou aprendendo
O que eu ainda não sabia*

*I am inside the battle
Suffering but I'm happy
In it I'm learning
What I didn't know yet*



- from hymn #25, *Eu Vivo na Floresta* ("I Live in the Forest"), in the hinário *Lua Branca* ("White Moon"), received by **Madrinha Rita Gregório de Melo**

*A humildade, a humildade
É a chave*

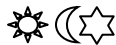
*Humility, humility
Is the key*

Ele é a chave da porta estreita

It is the key of the narrow door

*Seja humilde, seja humilde
Para teu Ser se libertar*

*Be humble, be humble
To free your Being*



- from hymn #9, *Humildade* ("Humility," dedicated to **Thibault**), received by **Cécile** in *Doçura da Luz* ("Sweetness of the Light"), Céu do Arco-Íris, Belgium

Appendix I

Glossary of Portuguese Santo Daime Terms

<i>bailado</i>	“dance”; the three types of movement (march, waltz, and <i>mazurka</i>) performed during special Daime rituals
<i>comandante comitivas</i>	“commander,” the church leader who directs the Daime work “entourages” of fardados that leave their home country to visit Santo Daime congregations in another country
<i>daimistas</i>	a generic term that refers to committed Santo Daime followers, both fardados and firmados
<i>doutrina</i>	“doctrine,” the corpus of hymns, ritual techniques, and moral teachings comprising the Santo Daime tradition
<i>fardados / fardadas</i>	male/female official members of Santo Daime, those who wear the farda uniform
<i>fardas</i>	“uniform” worn by fardados; in blue and white varieties
<i>fardamento</i>	initiation rite where the aspirant receives their “star” and wears the official farda (uniform) for the first time
<i>feitio</i>	“fabrication,” the ritual of preparing and cooking the Daime beverage
<i>firmados</i>	those who regularly attend Daime works without a formal commitment
<i>firmeza</i>	“firmness”; a trait denoting a person’s capacity to gracefully cope with the ordeals encountered in both Santo Daime works and life in general
<i>fiscal</i> (plural: <i>fiscais</i>)	“supervisor” or “guardian”; trained fardados designated with the task of overseeing the ritual work; it is their responsibility to come to the aid of individuals having difficulty during the ritual
<i>fiscalização</i>	“fiscalization” or “supervision”; the role of overseeing the safety and harmony of a work by a trained fiscal
<i>hinos</i>	“hymns”; considered as “received” by individual fardados from the astral plane; contain teachings and knowledge that is imparted to the devotee while they are sung during ritual works
<i>hinário</i>	“hymnal”; bound collections of multiple hymns received by past and present leaders of Santo Daime; sung in entirety at special works
<i>igreja</i>	“church”; official Santo Daime churches in Europe usually have names starting with Céu do/da “Sky/Heaven of”
<i>Jagube</i>	The name of the <i>Banisteriopsis caapi</i> vine in Santo Daime
<i>Madrinha</i>	“Godmother,” a term of endearment for an elder female fardada
<i>Mestre Ensinador</i>	“Master Teacher”; the mystical presence that is contacted through

<i>músicos</i>	the Santo Daime sacrament “musicians” who play instruments to provide musical accompaniment for singing hymns during the works
<i>Padrinho</i>	“Godfather,” a term of endearment for an elder male fardada
<i>puxadoras</i>	“pullers,” young females who lead the singing of the hymns
<i>Rainha</i>	The name of the <i>Psychotria viridis</i> shrub in Santo Daime
<i>trabalhos</i>	“works”; the name for rituals of the Santo Daime
<i>salão</i>	“hall” or “salon”; the physical space in which Daime works take place
<i>Santo Daime</i>	“Holy Give-me”; the name for the religion and the ayahuasca sacrament
<i>união</i>	union; a cosmological value of monism; for daimistas, this is the epitome of the Daime experience, a feeling of oneness with all things

Short Form abbreviations of specific hinários quoted in the text:

MI = Mestre Irineu
MD = Maria Damião
PA = Padrinho Alfredo
PS = Padrinho Sebastião

Church Names / Locations:

CCMI	Casa da Cura Mestre Irineu / Brussels Capital Region, Belgium
CdAI	Céu do Arco-Íris / Namur province, Belgium
CdSM	Céu do Santa Maria / Amsterdam, the Netherlands
CdU	Céu da União / East Flanders, Belgium
RaS	Rendezvous avec Soi / Brussels Capital Region, Belgium

Appendix II**Liturgical Calendar of Santo Daime**

- In CEFLURIS, the official annual calendar of works is established in the “Norms of Ritual” handbook (see CEFLURIS 1997: 21-22):

Day	Festivity	Hinário Sung at this work	Time	Farda
07 th Jan	Pd. Alfredo's Birthday	Padrinho Sebastião	9:00	White
19 th Jan	Saint Sebastian	P. Sebastião + Missa	18.30	White
18 th March	Saint Joseph	Padrinho Alfredo	18.30	White
White Thursday	Holy Week	Hinário dos Mortos	18.30	Blue
Good Friday	Holy Week	Missa	16.00	Blue
2 nd Sunday of May	Mother's Day	Madrinhas Julia + Rita + Cristina	16.00	White
12 th June	Saint Anthony	Maria Brilhante	18.30	White
23 th June	São João	Mestre Irineu	18.30	White
25 th June	Md. Rita's Birthday	Padrinho Sebastião	9.00	White
28 th June	Saint Peter	Padrinho Alfredo	18.30	White
06 th July	Day that Mestre Irineu died	Teté + Missa	18.30	White
2 nd Sunday of August	Father's Day	Padrinho Sebastião	09.00	White
06 th Oct	Pd. Sebastião's Birthday	Mestre Irineu	18.30	White
1 th Nov	All Souls' Day	Hinário Dos Mortos + Missa	18.30	Blue
07 th Dec	Immaculate Conception	Mestre Irineu	18.30	White
14 th Dec	M. Irineu's Birthday	Padrinho Sebastião	18.30	White
24 th Dec	Christmas	Mestre Irineu	18.30	White
31 th Dec	New Years Eve	Padrinho Alfredo	18.30	White
05 th Jan	Three Holy Kings	Mestre Irineu Entrega do trabalho	18.30	White

Since each participant must sign a record book, I was able to confirm the total attendance numbers for each of the June Festival works in Amsterdam, 2010. The division of the

attendance by males and females gives an indication of the slight female majority in an otherwise gender-balanced congregation:

	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>
Santo Antônio	80	66
São João	105	102 (The bookkeeper said that for CEFLURIS churches this [the feast day of St. John the Baptist] is the most important work of the year, because Pd. Sebastião is considered an avatar of St. John the Baptist)
Md. Rita's Birthday	54	53
São Pedro	72	71
Day M. Irineu died	61	50

Appendix III

- freelist responses from individual informants

	I "Great Spiritual Teachers"	II "Sacred Plants"
Lars ♂ Age: 55 Born: Limburg Lives: West Flanders Job: Landscaper	Buddha	Ayahuasca
	Jesus	Cannabis
	Moses	Iboga
	Mohammed	Amanita
	Mestre Irineu	Psilocybin mushrooms
	Pd Sebastiao	Zegge (or Rietgras [<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>])
	Hermes Trismegistos	Nootmusboot
	Zarathustra	Harmala
	Confusius	Soma
	Lao Tse	Ololiuqui
	Dalai Lama	Morning Glory
	Pythagoras	Datura
	Plato	Brugmansia
		Mandragona
	Bilzenkruid (<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i> [henbane])	
	Atropia	
	Salvia divinorum	
Lambert ♂ Age: 58 Born: West Flanders Lives: West Flanders Job: Art Teacher	Mestre Irineu	Banisteriopsis caapi
	Jesus Christ	Viridis Psychotria
	Boeddha	Salvia Divinorum
		Datura
		Marijuana
		Amanita Muscaria
		Mushroom
		Peyote
Mathieu ♂	Buddha	Santo Daime / Ayahuasca
	Jesus Christ	Marijuana

<p>Age: 37</p> <p>Born: West Flanders</p> <p>Lives: Brussels</p> <p>Job: Unemployed</p>		
	Mestre Irineu	Mushrooms
	Pd. Sebastiao	San Pedro
	Osho	Peyote
	Pd. Alfredo	Iboga
		Jurema
		Khat
<p>Geneviève ♀</p> <p>Age: 55</p> <p>Born: Hainaut</p> <p>Lives: Luxembourg</p> <p>Job: Nurse</p>	ma Mere (my mother)	Sauge
	My psychotherapist	Tabac [Tabaco]
	Eckart Tolle	ayawaska
	her daughter	Ginseng
	an old friend, a wise elderly woman	droséra ("plant de saucieres")
	leader of CdAI	Gui (<i>Viscum album</i>)
	Sathya Sai Baba	cannabis
	Bruno Bettelheim	
	Mon pere [my father]	
	Her sons	
<p>Saskia ♀</p> <p>Age: 36</p> <p>Born: Vlaams-Brabant</p> <p>Lives: East Flanders</p> <p>Job: Teaches Dutch to immigrants</p>	Jesus	Ayahuasca
	Buddha	Cannabis
	Ghandi	Mushrooms [said "but that is not a plant"...but then wanted to keep it on the list anyway]
	Maria Alice	Peyotl
	Madrinha Rita	Stevia
	Mestre Irineu	Passiflora
	My friends	paardenbloem
	My Grandmother	cameela
	Edward Bach	lavender
	Baird T. Spalding	chocolate
	Gabriel Cousens	ginger
	The Maya Culture	tulse (from India, like basil)
	Jan Dries	
	Dirk Ghekiere	
	Nelson Mandela	

	Blue Eagle	
	Man from Ashram in India [forgets his name]	
Cornelis ♂	Luis Mendes	Ayahuasca
Age: 29	Mestre Irineu	Food
Born: Vlaams-Brabant	Pd. Sebastiao	Cannabis (if used right)
Lives: Vlaams-Brabant	our self	Dr. Bach flowers [essences]
Job: Security guard		
Izaäk ♂	Lao Tsu	Cannabis
Age: 48	Alan Watts	Santo Daime
Born: Antwerpen	Terence McKenna	Psilocybin
Lives: East Flanders	Mestre Irineu	San Pedro
Job: Graphic Designer and Shiatzu practitioner		Salvia (the psychoactive plant, as opposed to the "white sage" incense used in defumacao)
		Iboga
		Datura
Godfried ♂	Jesus	Ayahuasca ("of course it is two plants, but 2 plants make 1" and why he lists as one plant: "need 2 combined to have an effect")
Age: 47	Buddha	San Pedro
Born: Vlaams-Brabant	Milarepa	Cannabis
Lives: Vlaams-Brabant	Ruusbroek	mushrooms
Job: teacher (retired)	Socrates	peyote
	Gurdjieff	
	St Francis of Assisi	
	Bagwan (Osho)	
	Jiddu Krishnamurti	
Werner ♂	Krishna	mushrooms
Age: 58	Buddha	peyotl
	Jiddu Krishnamurti	san pedro

<p>Born: East Flanders</p> <p>Lives: East Flanders</p> <p>Job: telephone operator (retired)</p>		
	Yogananda	ayahuasca
	Mahavatar Babaji	cannabis
	Swami Sri Yoekteswar	sage
	Anandamoyi Ma	
	Ramana Maharshi	
	Eckhart Tolle	
	Alan Parsons	
	Jesus	
	Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj	
<p>Helma ♀</p> <p>Age: 35</p> <p>Born: Antwerpen</p> <p>Lives: Brussels</p> <p>Job: Dance and Movement teacher</p>	Mandela	Daime (ayahuasca)
	Budha	Poddo's (mushrooms)
	Dalai Lama	Cannabis
	Ghandi	Coca
	M. L. King	LSD
	Deepak Chopra	Snuff (Tabaco)
	friends	
	Osho	
	Omraham [Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov]	
	Jesus	
<p>Eleonora ♀</p> <p>Age: 37</p> <p>Born: East Flanders</p> <p>Lives: East Flanders</p> <p>Job: Energetic healer</p>	Ghandi	Marijuana
	Buddha	San Pedro
	Jesus	Peyote
	Echcart Tolle	Plants used in Ayahuasca
	Byron Katie	
<p>Etienne ♂</p> <p>Age: 39</p> <p>Born: Brussels</p>	Buddha	Grapes (wine)
	Jesus	Cannabis
	Mohamed	Opium

Lives: Luxembourg Job: Nurse	"Le Pâle " ("the pale" prophet)	coca leaves
	Chaman Arco Iris	Iboga
	Mother Meera	Ayahuasca
	Zen Deshimaru	Peyote
	D.T. Suzuki	San Pedro
	Dalai Lama	Noix de muscade (Nutmeg)
	Omraam Mikhael Aivanhov	Bella Donna
	Father François Brune	ergot
	Hinduism	Datura
	Alejandro Jodorowsky	Roseau (reed, <i>Arundo donax</i>)
	Amma	Bullfrogs
	Blue Eagle	mushrooms
	Santo Daime	acacia
		Wild Laitue (<i>Salvia divinorum</i>)
Sylvain ♂ Age: 43 Born: West Flanders Lives: West Flanders Job: Architect	Padrinho Fernando do Ceu Sagrado	N/A (he could not think of any)
	his wife	
	Sonia Dini	
	Ze Ricardo	
	Luiz Mendez	
	Alex Polari	
	Luciano Dini	
Cécile ♀ Age: 56 Born: Brussels Lives: Liège Job: Nurse for the elderly and Luthier	Socrates	Peyotl
	Buddha	Sao Pedro
	Christ	Santo Daime / Ayahuasca
	Sri Aurobindo	Iboga
	Mere [her mother]	the forest
	Karlfried Dürckheim	
Abraham ♂ Age: 50 Born: Liège Lives: Liège Job: Draftsman	Jesus	Daime
	Buddha	Vigne (grape wine from vine)
	Mohamed	Salade
	Krishna	Brocoli
	Jiddu Krishnamurti	Tomate

	Luong Minh Dang	Petits Pod
	Zorastre [same as Zarathustra]	Haricots
	Confucius	courgette
	Mami (ma mere)	potiron
	Swami Premananda	epinard
	Sai Baba	
	Ghandi	
Paulette ♀	Buddha	Ayahuasca (Jagube and rainha)
Age: 42	Krishna	Sauge
Born: Liège	Jesus	Tulasi
Lives: Liège	Mohammed	San Pedro
Job: Kinesiologist, Dream Analyst/Therapist	Ghandi	mushroom
	(Sathya) Sai Baba	Rose
	Mother Meera	Buis
	Sri Aurobindo	
	Babaji	
	Ma Anandamayi	
	Amma	
	Eckhart Tolle	
	Sainte Therese	
	St Jean Baptiste	
	St. Francois	
	Marie Madeleine	
	Marie Mere du Christ	
	Maitre Ireneu	
	Maitre Eckhart	
Thibault ♂	Krishna	Psylocibine
Age: 56	Bouddha	Belladona
Born: Liège	Ramanuja	Sauge
Lives: Liège	Shankara	Basilicum
Job: Psychologist	Ramakrishna	Tulasi
	Lao Tseu	Jagube
	Confucius	Rainha
	Socrates	Iboga
	Marcus Aurelius	Chanure [French colloquialism for cannabis]
	Jesus Christ	Noix de Muscade [nutmeg]
	Voltaire	
	Sri Aurobindo	

	Ramana Maharshi	
	Mohamed	
	Ghazali	
	Ibn Arabi	
	Attar [of Nishapur]	
	René Guénon	
Oscar ♂	Jesus	Ayahuasca
Age: 44	Rananda	Sao Pedro
Born: West Flanders	Jiddu Krishnamurti	Iboga
Lives: East Flanders	Eva Perragos	Marijuana
Job: Piano Teacher	Osho	
Juliana ♀	Dalai Lama	Ayahuasca
Age: 39	Ghandi	
Born: West Flanders	Maria	
Lives: East Flanders	Jesus	
Job: Photographer	Deepak Chopra	
	Caroline Myss	
Frederik ♂	Hans Stolp	Santo Daime
Age: 47	Teresa of Avilla	Cannabis
Born: West Flanders	Saint John of the Cross	Peyote
Lives: East Flanders	Francis of Assisi	Mushrooms
Job: Psycho-therapist, Spiritual Councilor and Supervisor for Paliative Health Care (Hospice)	Teilhard de Chardin	Doornappel [<i>Datura stramonium</i>]
	Carl Gustav Jung	Belladonna
	Rudyard Kipling	Nootmuskaat [nutmeg]
	Antoine de Saint-Exupéry	
	Erich Fromm	
	Josef	
	Avalokiteśvara	
	Hildegard van Bingen	
	Mellie Uydert	
	Jeff Green	
	Father Damien	

	Mestre Irineu	
Emmanuel ♂	Jesus	Ayahuasca
Age: 59	Buddha	Cannabis
Born: East Flanders	B. K. S. Iyengar	Iboga
Lives: East Flanders	K. Pattabhi Jois	Psilycbe
Job: Arborist (retired)	Krishnamacharya	Amanita
	People from Daime	
	Dalai Lama	
Nadia ♀	Jesus	Ayahuasca
Age: 42	Mestre Irineu	Mushrooms
Born: West Flanders	Pd. Sebastiao	Cannabis
Lives: Antwerpen	Buddha	Iboga
Job: Massage Therapist	Mother Amma	
	Maria	
Astrid ♀	Jesus	Santo Daime ["two plants of course"]
Age: 39	Buddha	Peyote
Born: Antwerpen	all prophets	Cannabis
Lives: Antwerpen	all people I know	Brugmansia
Job: Receptionist	Dalai Lama	Mushrooms
	some writers, artists	
	Eckhart Tolle	
	Steve Rother	
	Virgem Maria	
	Sao Joao	
Charlotte ♀	Pd. Sebastiao	Cannabis
Age: 52	Mestre Irineu	Ayahuasca
Born: Antwerpen	Pd. Valdete	Paddestoelen
Lives: Antwerpen	Luis Mendes	
Job: Social Worker	Roberval	

Felix ♂ Age: 36 Born in: Antwerpen Lives in: Antwerpen Job: Graphic Designer	Jesus	The green plant of Daime
	Buddha (Guatama)	The vine in the Daime
	Ghandi	Peyote
	Confucius	San Pedro
	Sri nisargadath Maharhi	Mushrooms
	Eckhart Tolle	Marihuana
	Deepak Chopra	Jimson Weed
	Maharishi Mahesh Yogi	Salvia
	Daime	Ibogain
	Me [himself]	
Karel ♂ Age: 50 Born: West Flanders Lives: West Flanders Job: Hotel Manager	"Everybody doing something with Spirituality...Everyone has the potential [to be a GST"	"Every plant is sacred"
	Karmapa	Oak
	Pd. Sebastiao	Sequoia
	Pd. Alfredo	B. caapi
	Mestre Irineu	Ps. viridis
	Christ	
	Maria	
	Gregg Braden	
	St. Machutus	
	St. Michael	
Clara ♀ Age: 34 Born: West Flanders Lives: West Flanders Job: Elementary School Teacher and "Movement Therapist"	Jesus	Marijuana
	Mohammed	Mushrooms
	Sri Aurobindu	Ayahuasca
	Mirra Alfassa	Peyote
	Ghandi	
	Mother Teresa	
	Old Egyptian Teachers (Osiris...)	
	The person who translated the Mayan Knowledge	
	Saint Germain	
	Leonardo Da Vinci	
	Jung	
	Buddha	
	Dalai lama	

Jeannette ♀ Age: 60 Born: Hainaut Lives: East Flanders Job: Astrologer	Buddha	Daime
	Christus (Jesus)	Cannabis
	Ghandi	"Every plant is sacred when you use it as a sacred plant"
	Rudyard Kipling	
	Shakespeare	
	William Blake	
	Rudolf Steiner	
	Isis	
	Maria	
	Quan-Yin	
	Walt Disney	
	Mozart	
	Bach	
	Arthur Rackham	
	Mandela	
	Martin Luthar King	
	Archangels like: Michael	
	Raphael	
	Uriel	
Gabriel		
Henriette ♀ Age: 35 Born: West Flanders Lives: Brussels Job: School Teacher	Jesus	Jagube (B. caapi)
	Mary	Rainha
	Saint John	Peyote
	Saint Peter	Marijuana
	Krishna	Jesus' wine (grape)
	Mestre Irineu	San Pedro
	Pad. Sebastiao	Quat
	Arab Culture	plant in India (can't remember)
	India Culture	Coca leaves
	Chuck Berry	
Irena ♀ Age: 39 Born: Antwerpen Lives: Antwerpen	Mestre Irineu	Daime
	Jesus	
	Buddha	

Job: Nurse		
Marta ♀	Mestre Irineu	Ayahuasca
Age: 37	Pd. Sebastiao	San Pedro
Born: Limburg	Md. Julia	Peyote
Lives: Antwerpen	Md. Rita	Cannabis
Job: Medical Doctor	All the people of the Daime	Jurema
	Jesus	
	Buddha	
	Mirra Alfassa	
	Ghandi	
	Amma	
Hendrickje ♀	Mestre Irineu	Daime
Age: 55	Jesus	Cannabis
Born: West Flanders	Buddha (Siddhartha)	Sao pedro
Lives: West Flanders	Martin Luther King	Mushrooms
Job: Teacher for the Disabled	Mother Teresa	

Appendix IV

- Anthropac tabulation of “Great Spiritual Teachers” freelist results (n = 32)
 - *all time-periods are Common Era [after 1 CE/AD] unless otherwise noted*

FREELIST - SORTED BY “SMITH’S S”

ITEM	FREQUENCY	RESP PCT	AVG RANK	Smith's s
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1 JESUS CHRIST - Israeli-Palestinian spiritual teacher, founder of Christianity (1 st century)	27	84	3.370	0.639
2 BUDDHA - Nepalese spiritual teacher, founder of Buddhism (6 th -5 th century BCE)	22	69	2.682	0.535
3 MESTRE IRINEU - Brazilian spiritual teacher, founder of Santo Daime (19 th -20 th century)	15	47	5.067	0.313
4 GANDHI - Indian political activist (19 th -20 th century)	10	31	4.700	0.212
5 PD. SEBASTIÃO - Brazilian spiritual teacher, Santo Daime elder (20 th century)	8	25	3.500	0.171
6 MOHAMMED - religious/political/military leader, prophet, founder of Islam (6 th -7 th century)	6	19	5.000	0.141
7 KRISHNA - Hindu deity, avatar of Vishnu	5	16	2.600	0.134
8 VIRGIN MARY - mother of Jesus Christ (1 st century BCE-1 st century CE)	8	25	8.125	0.105
9 DALAI LAMA - Tibetan Buddhist leader, spiritual teacher (20 th -21 st century)	7	22	7.000	0.105
10 ECKHART TOLLE - German-Canadian spiritual teacher, author (20 th -21 st century)	6	19	6.833	0.090
11 A FRIEND - they mentioned the name of a specific friend (a natural cut-off for triads)	4	13	5.750	0.074
12 SRI AUROBINDO - Indian public intellectual, spiritual leader (19 th -20 th century)	4	13	6.750	0.074
13 KRISHNAMURTI - Indian philosopher (20 th century)	4	13	5.000	0.069

14	CONFUCIUS	4	13	7.000	0.068
	- Chinese philosopher (6 th century BCE)				
15	SOCRATES	3	9	4.667	0.068
	- Greek Philosopher (5 th century BCE)				
16	LAO TSE	3	9	5.667	0.063
	- Chinese philosopher (6 th century BCE)				
17	DEEPAK CHOPRA	3	9	4.667	0.059
	- Indian physician (20 th century)				
18	LUIZ MENDES	3	9	3.333	0.057
	- Brazilian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)				
19	MY MOTHER	3	9	5.000	0.052
	- some fardados mentioned their own mother				
20	NELSON MANDELA	3	9	10.333	0.046
	- South African politician (20 th -21 st century)				
21	MD. RITA	2	6	4.500	0.046
	- Brazilian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)				
22	RUDYARD KIPLING	2	6	6.500	0.045
	- English writer (19 th -20 th century)				
23	MOTHER MEERA	2	6	6.500	0.043
	- Indian spiritual leader (20 th -21 st century)				
24	SAI BABA	3	9	8.000	0.042
	- Indian guru (20 th -21 st century)				
25	ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI	3	9	9.333	0.042
	- Italian Catholic Friar (12-13 th century)				
26	MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.	3	9	8.333	0.039
	- American spiritual and civil rights leader (20 th century)				
27	MAHAVATAR BABAJI	2	6	7.000	0.039
	- Indian saint (19 th -20 th century)				
28	ST. TERESA OF AVILA	2	6	8.500	0.038
	- Spanish Catholic nun, mystic (16 th century)				
29	ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST	3	9	9.000	0.038
	- Jewish-Christian preacher, prophet (1 st century)				
30	AMMA	4	13	10.000	0.034
	- Indian spiritual leader, guru (20 th -21 st century)				
31	MIRRA ALFASSA	2	6	6.000	0.033
	- French spiritual leader, known as "The Mother" (19 th -20 th century)				
32	OSHO	4	13	6.500	0.033
	- Indian guru, mystic (20 th century)				
33	ANANDAMAYI MA	2	6	8.500	0.032
	- Indian spiritual leader (20 th century)				

34	KARMAPA	1	3	1.000	0.031
	- Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, Tibetan Buddhist Spiritual leader (20 th century)				
35	PD. FERNANDO	1	3	1.000	0.031
	- Brazilian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)				
36	ZARATHUSTRA	2	6	7.500	0.030
	- ancient Persian founder of Zoroastrianism				
37	CAROLINE MYSS	1	3	2.000	0.030
	- American spiritual author (20 th -21 st century)				
38	PD. ALFREDO	2	6	4.500	0.030
	- Brazilian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)				
39	MY PSYCHOTHERAPIST	1	3	2.000	0.028
40	HANS STOLP	1	3	3.000	0.028
	- Dutch theologian and author (20 th -21 st century)				
41	RAMANUJA	1	3	3.000	0.028
	- Indian theologian (11 th -12 th century)				
42	DAIME PEOPLE	2	6	5.500	0.028
43	CARL JUNG	2	6	9.500	0.028
	- Swiss psychotherapist (19 th -20 th century)				
44	WIFE	1	3	2.000	0.027
45	MOSES	1	3	3.000	0.026
	- Jewish religious leader, prophet (14 th -13 th century BCE)				
46	ADI SHANKARA	1	3	4.000	0.026
	- Indian philosopher (8 th -9 th century)				
47	MARIA ALICE	1	3	4.000	0.026
	- Brazilian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)				
48	MOTHER TERESA	2	6	5.500	0.025
	- Albanian-Indian Catholic Nun (20 th century)				
49	THE MAYA	2	6	10.000	0.025
	- the ancient civilization of Mesoamerica				
50	LE PÂLE	1	3	4.000	0.025
	- "the pale" prophet, a legend that Jesus visited the Americas in Pre-Columbian times				
51	SHAKESPEARE	1	3	5.000	0.025
	- English playwright (16 th -17 th century)				
52	RANANDA	1	3	2.000	0.025
	- American Guru (20 th -21 st century)				
53	MD. JULIA	1	3	3.000	0.025
	- Brazilian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)				

54	PROPHETS	1	3	3.000	0.025
55	ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS	1	3	5.000	0.025
	- Spanish Catholic friar, mystic (16 th century)				
56	RAMAKRISHNA	1	3	5.000	0.024
	- Indian mystic (19 th century)				
57	MILAREPA	1	3	3.000	0.024
	- Tibetan Buddhist poet, yogi (11 th -12 th century)				
58	YOGANANDA	1	3	4.000	0.023
	- Indian yogi, guru (20 th century)				
59	CHAMAN ARCO IRIS	1	3	5.000	0.023
	- a stone sculpture in St. Augustine, Columbia				
60	ALAN WATTS	1	3	2.000	0.023
	- English-American spiritual author (20 th century)				
61	WILLIAM BLAKE	1	3	6.000	0.023
	- English artist, poet, mystic (18 th -19 th century)				
62	RAMANA MAHARSHI	2	6	10.500	0.023
	- Indian mystical ascetic (19 th -20 th century)				
63	DAUGHTER	1	3	4.000	0.023
64	B.K.S IYENGAR	1	3	3.000	0.022
	- Indian yoga teacher, author (20 th -21 st century)				
65	SONIA DINI	1	3	3.000	0.022
	- Brazilian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)				
66	RUDOLF STEINER	1	3	7.000	0.022
	- Austrian philosopher (19 th -20 th century)				
67	P. TEILHARD de CHARDIN	1	3	7.000	0.022
	- French Catholic priest, philosopher (19 th -20 th century)				
68	ST. PETER	1	3	4.000	0.022
	- Israeli-Palestinian spiritual leader (1 st century)				
69	NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ	2	6	8.500	0.021
	- Indian philosopher, guru (20 th century)				
70	JAN VAN RUYSBROECK	1	3	4.000	0.021
	- Flemish priest, mystic (14 th century)				
71	ISIS	1	3	8.000	0.020
	- ancient Egyptian goddess				
72	OMRAAM M. AÏVANHOV	2	6	9.500	0.020
	- Bulgarian philosopher, mystic (20 th century)				
73	TAISEN DESHIMARU	1	3	7.000	0.020
	- Japaense Zen Buddhist teacher (20 th century)				

74	PD. VALDETE	1	3	3.000	0.019
	- Brazilian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)				
75	GRANDMOTHER	1	3	8.000	0.018
76	LUONG MINH DANG	1	3	6.000	0.018
	- Vietnamese founder of Spiritual Human Yoga (20 th -21 st century)				
77	SRI YUKTESWAR GIRI	1	3	6.000	0.018
	- Indian spiritual teacher (19 th -20 th century)				
78	PATTABHI JOIS	1	3	4.000	0.018
	- Indian yoga teacher (20 th -21 st century)				
79	ZÉ RICARDO	1	3	4.000	0.018
	- Brazilian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)				
80	D.T. SUZUKI	1	3	8.000	0.018
	- Japanese spiritual teacher (19 th -20 th century)				
81	MARCUS AURELIUS	1	3	9.000	0.017
	- Roman Emperor (2 nd century)				
82	GUANYIN	1	3	10.000	0.017
	- Buddhist <i>bodhisattva</i> (enlightened being)				
83	ANTOINE de ST-EXUPÉRY	1	3	10.000	0.017
	- French writer (20 th century)				
84	CDAI COMMANDER	1	3	6.000	0.017
	- Belgian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)				
85	HERMES TRISMEGISTUS	1	3	7.000	0.017
	- ancient Mediterranean spiritual author				
86	OSIRIS	1	3	7.000	0.017
	- ancient Egyptian god				
87	EDWARD BACH	1	3	9.000	0.017
	- English physician, spiritual author (19 th -20 th century)				
88	WRITERS and ARTISTS	1	3	6.000	0.016
89	ERICH FROMM	1	3	11.000	0.016
	- German social scientist (20 th century)				
90	WALT DISNEY	1	3	11.000	0.016
	- American animator, film director, businessman (20 th century)				
91	TERENCE MCKENNA	1	3	3.000	0.016
	- American ethnobotanists, philosopher, author (20 th century)				
92	BAIRD SPALDING	1	3	10.000	0.015
	- American author (19 th -20 th century)				
93	MOZART	1	3	12.000	0.014
	- Austrian composer, musician (18 th century)				

94	G.I. GURDJIEFF	1	3	6.000	0.014
	- Armenian spiritual teacher, author (19 th -20 th century)				
95	VOLTAIRE	1	3	11.000	0.014
	- French philosopher (18 th century)				
96	KRISHNAMACHARYA	1	3	5.000	0.013
	- Indian yoga teacher (19 th -20 th century)				
97	GABRIEL COUSENS	1	3	11.000	0.013
	- American physician, nutritionist, spiritual author (20 th -21 st century)				
98	EVA PIERRAKOS	1	3	4.000	0.013
	- Austrian spiritual teacher (20 th century)				
99	J. SEBASTIAN BACH	1	3	13.000	0.013
	- German composer, musician (17 th -18 th century)				
100	ST. GERMAIN	1	3	9.000	0.012
	- a.k.a. "Master Rakoczi," fabled master of theosophy				
101	FR. FRANÇOIS BRUNE	1	3	11.000	0.012
	- French Catholic priest, author (20 th -21 st century)				
102	BRUNO BETTELHEIM	1	3	8.000	0.011
	- Austrian-American psychologist, writer (20 th century)				
103	ST. JOSEPH	1	3	14.000	0.011
	- Israeli-Palestinian carpenter, Father of Jesus Christ (1 st century BCE-1 st century CE)				
104	ONESELF	2	6	7.000	0.011
105	ARTHUR RACKHAM	1	3	14.000	0.011
	- English book illustrator (19 th -20 th century)				
106	GREGG BRADEN	1	3	7.000	0.010
	- American spiritual teacher, author (20 th -21 st century)				
107	HINDUISM	1	3	12.000	0.010
	- the religion				
108	ST. MICHAEL	2	6	13.000	0.010
	- archangel, leader of the Army of God				
109	LEONARDO da VINCI	1	3	10.000	0.010
	- Italian artist, polymath (15 th -16 th century)				
110	STEVE ROTHER	1	3	8.000	0.009
	- American spiritual teacher (20 th -21 st century)				
111	MAHARISHI M. YOGI	1	3	8.000	0.009
	- Indian yogi, guru (20 th -21 st century)				
112	ARABS	1	3	8.000	0.009
	- the ethnicity/culture centered in the Middle East				
113	AVALOKITEŚVARA	1	3	15.000	0.009
	- Buddhist <i>bodhisattva</i> (enlightened being)				

114	JAN DRIES	1	3	13.000	0.009
	- Dutch nutritionist, dietician (20 th -21 st century)				
115	ALEX POLARI	1	3	6.000	0.009
	- Brazilian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)				
116	FATHER	1	3	9.000	0.009
117	SANTO DAIME	2	6	12.500	0.008
	- the divine being in the ayahuasca drink				
118	ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY	1	3	13.000	0.008
	- Chilean-French filmmaker, spiritual guru (20 th -21 st century)				
119	SWAMI PREMANANDA	1	3	10.000	0.008
	- Sri-Lankan/Indian spiritual teacher (20 th -21 st century)				
120	ALAN PARSONS	1	3	10.000	0.008
	- English musician, record producer (20 th -21 st century)				
121	HILDEGARD von BINGEN	1	3	16.000	0.008
	- German nun, mystic, author (12 th century)				
122	BLUE EAGLE	2	6	15.500	0.008
	- spiritual blogger (20 th -21 st century)				
123	DIRK GHEKIERE	1	3	14.000	0.007
	- Belgian spiritual teacher, shaman (20 th -21 st century)				
124	ST. MACHUTUS	1	3	8.000	0.007
	- Welsh Catholic evangelist (6 th -7 th century)				
125	AL-GHAZALI	1	3	15.000	0.007
	- Persian theologian, mystic (11 th -12 th century)				
126	MARY MAGDALENE	1	3	16.000	0.007
	- disciple of Jesus Christ (1 st century)				
127	ROBERVAL	1	3	5.000	0.006
	- Brazilian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)				
128	BYRON KATIE	1	3	5.000	0.006
	- American author (20 th -21 st century)				
129	INDIA	1	3	9.000	0.006
	- the country				
130	MELLIE UYLDERT	1	3	17.000	0.006
	- Dutch writer, alternative healer, occultist, astrologer (20 th -21 st century)				
131	KARLFRIED DÜRCKHEIM	1	3	6.000	0.005
	- German diplomat, psychotherapist and Zen-Master (20 th century)				
132	IBN ARABI	1	3	16.000	0.005
	- Iberian-Arab Sufi mystic, philosopher (12 th -13 th century)				
133	PYTHAGORAS	1	3	12.000	0.005
	- Greek philosopher, mathematician, spiritual leader (6 th -5 th century BCE)				

134	RAPHAEL - the archangel	1	3	18.000	0.005
135	JEFF GREEN - American astrologer (20 th -21 st century)	1	3	18.000	0.005
136	LUCIANO DINI - Brazilian Santo Daime elder (20 th -21 st century)	1	3	7.000	0.004
137	ATTAR of NISHAPUR - Persian Sufi poet, hagiographer (12 th -13 th century)	1	3	17.000	0.003
138	FATHER DAMIEN - Belgian Catholic priest (19 th century)	1	3	19.000	0.003
139	URIEL - the archangel	1	3	19.000	0.003
140	CHUCK BERRY - American musician (20 th -21 st century)	1	3	10.000	0.003
141	SON	1	3	11.000	0.003
142	PLATO - Greek philosopher (5 th -4 th century BCE)	1	3	13.000	0.002
143	UNKNOWN - ???	1	3	17.000	0.002
144	RENÉ GUÉNON - French metaphysiciaian, author (19 th -20 th century)	1	3	18.000	0.002
145	MEISTER ECKHART - German mystic, theologian (13th-14th century)	1	3	19.000	0.002
146	GABRIEL - the archangel	1	3	20.000	0.002

Total Items/Average Length of List:			308	9.625	

Appendix V

- Anthropac tabulation of “Sacred Plants” freelist results (n = 32)

FREELIST - SORTED BY “SMITH’S S”

ITEM	FREQUENCY	RESP PCT	AVG RANK	Smith's s
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1 AYAHUASCA - combination of at least 2 plants: most commonly <i>Banisteriopsis caapi</i> + <i>Psychotria viridis</i>	31	97	1.839	0.830
2 CANNABIS - i.e. marijuana: <i>Cannabis sativa</i> , <i>Cannabis indica</i>	25	78	3.000	0.517
3 MUSHROOMS - species containing the entheogenic chemicals <i>psilocybin</i> and/or <i>psilocin</i>	19	59	4.000	0.345
4 PEYOTE - cactus species <i>Lophophora williamsii</i>	14	44	3.571	0.270
5 SAN PEDRO - cactus species <i>Echinopsis pachanoi</i> (a.k.a. <i>Trichocereus pachanoi</i>)	13	41	3.385	0.266
6 IBOGA - <i>Tabernanthe iboga</i>	10	31	4.900	0.141
7 WHITE SAGE - incense, <i>Salvia apiana</i>	4	13	3.000	0.088
8 GRAPES - a food used to make wine, <i>Vitis vinifera</i>	3	9	2.333	0.075
9 DATURA - a genus of psychoactive plant categorized as a “deliriant”	6	19	7.333	0.075
10 BELLADONNA - <i>Atropa belladonna</i> , categorized as a “deliriant”	4	13	8.250	0.055
11 SALVIA - psychoactive <i>Salvia divinorum</i>	5	16	9.400	0.052
12 AMANITA - <i>Amanita muscaria</i> mushroom, containing psychoactive <i>muscimol</i>	3	9	4.667	0.045
13 NUTMEG - a culinary spice that is a “deliriant” psychoactive (but toxic/poisonous) in high doses	4	13	8.000	0.044

14	TULASI	3	9	6.667	0.042
	- <i>Ocimum tenuiflorum</i> , “holy basil”				
15	COCA	2	6	4.000	0.041
	- genus <i>Erythroxylum</i> , used as a sacred and medicinal plant in South America				
16	TOBACCO	2	6	4.000	0.032
	- genus <i>Nicotiana</i>				
17	OAK TREE	1	3	1.000	0.031
	- genus <i>Quercus</i>				
18	OPIUM	1	3	3.000	0.028
	- dried latex of <i>Papaver somniferum</i>				
19	LETTUCE	1	3	3.000	0.025
	- <i>Lactuca sativa</i>				
20	FOOD	1	3	2.000	0.023
21	BRUGMANSIA	2	6	8.000	0.022
	- a genus of psychoactive plant categorized as a “deliriant”				
22	BROCCOLI	1	3	4.000	0.022
	- <i>Brassica oleracea</i> cultivar				
23	SEDGE	1	3	6.000	0.021
	- genus <i>Cyperaceae</i>				
24	SEQUOIA	1	3	2.000	0.021
	- tree genus				
25	STEVIA	1	3	5.000	0.021
	- genus of natural sweeteners				
26	BASIL	1	3	4.000	0.021
	- herb, <i>Ocimum basilicum</i>				
27	TOMATO	1	3	5.000	0.019
	- <i>Solanum lycopersicum</i>				
28	PASSIFLORA	1	3	6.000	0.018
	- genus of passionflowers/passionvines, some with medicinal and entheogenic properties				
29	GINSENG	1	3	4.000	0.018
	- genus <i>Panax</i> , used in cooking and folk medicine				
30	SYRIAN RUE	1	3	8.000	0.018
	- <i>Peganum harmala</i> , medicinal				
31	SOMA	1	3	9.000	0.016
	- ritual sacrament of ancient Hinduism (possibly <i>Amanita muscaria</i>)				
32	GREEN PEAS	1	3	6.000	0.016
	- <i>Pisum sativum</i>				
33	DANDELION	1	3	7.000	0.016
	- genus <i>Taraxacum</i> , used in cooking and folk medicine				

34	JUREMA	2	6	6.000	0.014
	- <i>Mimosa tenuiflora</i> (a.k.a. <i>Mimosa hostilis</i>), medicinal and entheogenic properties				
35	OLOLIUQUI	1	3	10.000	0.014
	- <i>Turbina corymbosa</i> , (a.k.a. <i>Rivea corymbosa</i>), contains entheogenic <i>ergine</i>				
36	DROSER	1	3	5.000	0.013
	- “sundew” genus, folk remedies				
37	CAMELLIA	1	3	8.000	0.013
	- genus of flowering plants				
38	ERGOT	1	3	11.000	0.013
	- rye fungus <i>Claviceps purpurea</i> , contains entheogenic <i>ergotamine</i>				
39	BEANS	1	3	7.000	0.013
	- legume food of <i>Fabaceae</i> (a.k.a. <i>Leguminosae</i>) family, or “green bean” species <i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>				
40	LAVENDER	1	3	9.000	0.010
	- genus <i>Lavandula</i> , for fragrance and medicinal uses				
41	LSD	1	3	5.000	0.010
	- artificial compound <i>Lysergic acid diethylamide</i> , synthesized from <i>ergotamine</i>				
42	ZUCCHINI	1	3	8.000	0.009
	- <i>Cucurbita pepo</i>				
43	ARUNDO DONAX	1	3	13.000	0.009
	- tall, grass-like cane plant that contains DMT				
44	KHAT	2	6	7.000	0.009
	- stimulant plant <i>Catha edulis</i>				
45	GUI	1	3	6.000	0.009
	- <i>Viscum album</i> , a species of mistletoe				
46	ROSE	1	3	6.000	0.009
	- flowering plants of the genus <i>Rosa</i>				
47	MANDRAKE	1	3	13.000	0.008
	- a psychoactive plant of the species <i>Mandragora</i> , categorized as a “deliriant”				
48	BACH FLOWER ESSENCES	1	3	4.000	0.008
	- liquid flower dilutions used as folk remedy				
49	CHOCOLATE	1	3	10.000	0.008
	- food product of <i>Theobroma cacao</i>				
50	BULLFROGS	1	3	14.000	0.007
	- probably referring to toad species <i>Bufo alvarius</i> , the glands of which secrete the entheogenic compounds 5-MeO-DMT and bufotenin				
51	FOREST	1	3	5.000	0.006
52	PUMPKIN	1	3	9.000	0.006
	- gourd-like squashes of the genus <i>Cucurbita</i>				
53	HENBANE	1	3	14.000	0.006
	- <i>Hyoscyamus niger</i> , categorized as a “deliriant”				

54	GINGER	1	3	11.000	0.005
	- rhizome of the plant <i>Zingiber officinale</i> , used as a spice and in folk medicine				
55	BUIS	1	3	7.000	0.004
	- <i>Buxus</i> spp., "boxwood" tree				
56	ACACIA	1	3	16.000	0.004
	- genus of shrub/tree				
57	SPINACH	1	3	10.000	0.003
	- <i>Spinacia oleracea</i>				
-----		-----	-----		
Total Items/Average Length of List:			193	6.031	

Appendix VI

- Triad Test results for top ten “Great Spiritual Teachers” (GST) from freelists (n = 26)

Acronym Key:
 JC = Jesus Christ
 BD = Buddha
 MI = Mestre Irineu
 GD = Gandhi
 PS = Pd. Sebastião
 MD = Mohammed
 KR = Krishna
 VM = Virgin Mary
 DL = Dalai-Lama
 ET = Eckhart Tolle

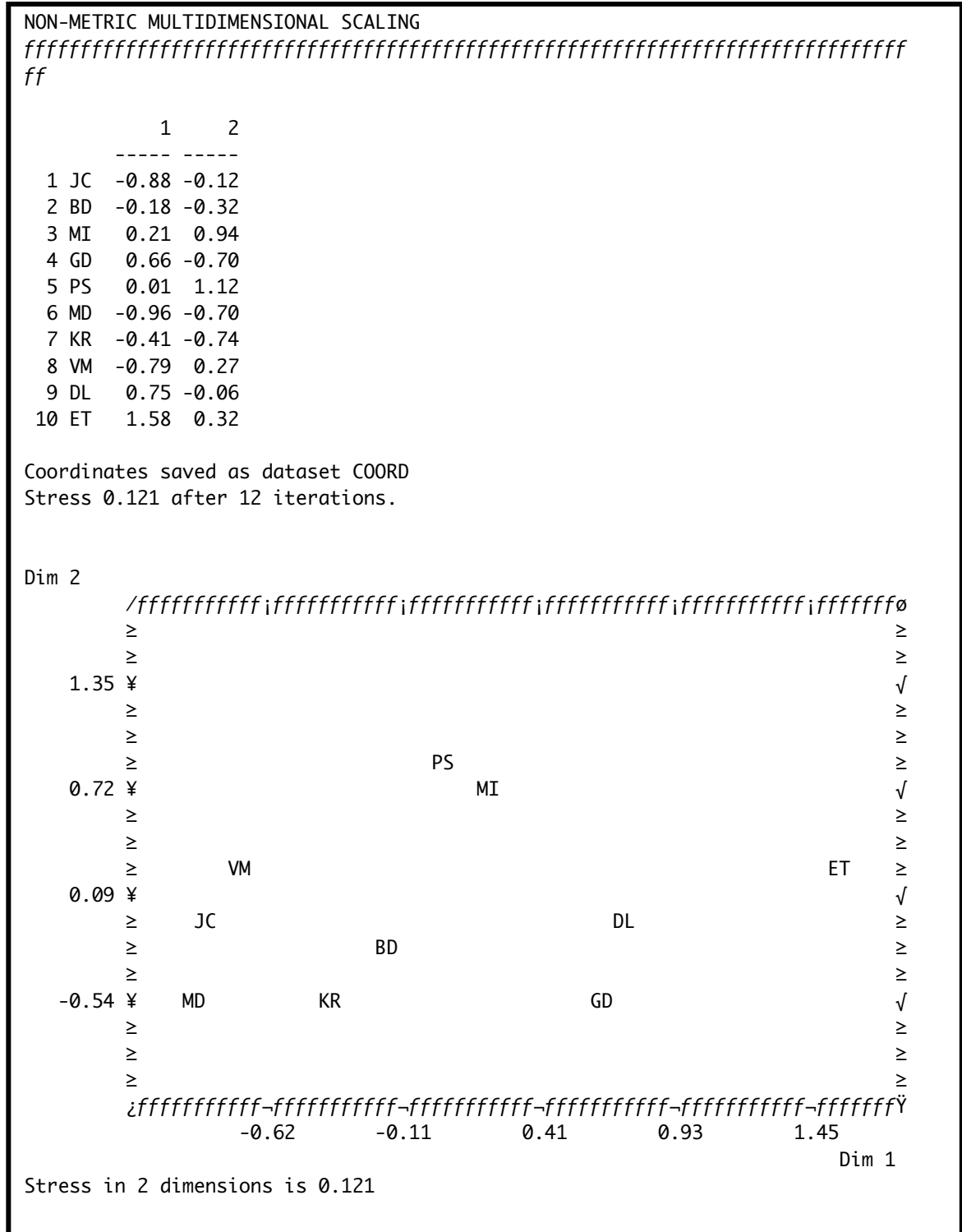
TRIADS
 ff
 ff

New design each quest.? NO
 Input dataset: C:\APAC\TRIAD-BE

Number of times each item was chosen in each triad:

MD (16)	KR (5)	BD (5)
VM (7)	ET (19)	BD (0)
MI (6)	VM (9)	GD (11)
DL (2)	JC (10)	ET (14)
VM (11)	DL (9)	MI (6)
ET (13)	GD (4)	PS (9)
KR (2)	MD (4)	ET (20)
JC (5)	DL (16)	KR (5)
JC (1)	KR (8)	PS (17)
BD (2)	JC (5)	GD (19)
MD (5)	VM (5)	DL (16)
DL (3)	MI (9)	ET (14)
BD (3)	KR (8)	DL (15)
BD (7)	PS (14)	VM (5)
ET (17)	GD (6)	BD (2)
MI (4)	KR (11)	ET (11)
ET (23)	JC (0)	VM (3)
GD (3)	MD (17)	DL (6)
KR (8)	MI (14)	GD (4)
MI (17)	JC (2)	BD (7)
MD (4)	JC (4)	GD (18)
PS (18)	DL (4)	GD (4)
BD (10)	DL (4)	PS (12)
ET (12)	PS (2)	MD (12)
BD (3)	MD (6)	MI (17)
KR (10)	VM (4)	PS (12)
JC (17)	MI (1)	PS (7)
MD (17)	JC (1)	VM (8)
PS (3)	MD (20)	MI (2)
GD (11)	KR (5)	VM (10)

- GST Triad Multidimensional Scaling Map



- GST Triad Hierarchical Cluster Graph

```

JOHNSON'S HIERARCHICAL CLUSTERING
ffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffff
ff

Input dataset:      C:\APAC\AGPROX
Method:            AVERAGE
Type of Data:      Similarities

HIERARCHICAL CLUSTERING

      M K B J V M P G D E
      D R D C M I S D L T

                                1
Level  6 7 2 1 8 3 5 4 9 0
-----  - - - - - - - - -
0.7692  . . . XXX . . . . .
0.7500  . . . XXX XXX . . .
0.6731  . . . XXX XXX XXX .
0.6538  . . XXXXX XXX XXX .
0.5288  . XXXXXXX XXX XXX .
0.4115  XXXXXXXXX XXX XXX .
0.3355  XXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX .
0.3077  XXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXX
0.1671  XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
    
```

- GST Triad Consensus Analysis

```

CONSENSUS ANALYSIS
ffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffff
ff

Type:            MULTIPLE CHOICE
Proximity data? NO
Input dataset:   C:\APAC\UNRANDOM.##D

Pseudo-Reliability = 0.908

EIGENVALUES

  FACTOR  VALUE  PERCENT  CUM %  RATIO
  -----  -----  -----  -----  -----
    1:    8.292   71.2    71.2   4.577
    2:    1.812   15.5    86.7   1.169
    3:    1.549   13.3   100.0
  =====  =====  =====  =====  =====
                11.653   100.0
    
```

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Biography

Marc G. Blainey was born in Scarborough, Ontario, Canada. He attended St. Joseph's Elementary School, Cardinal Carter Catholic High School, and Aurora Public High School, all in Aurora, Ontario. He has a B.A. in anthropology (University of Western Ontario, 2005) and M.A. degrees in archaeological (Trent University, 2007) and socio-cultural anthropology (Tulane University 2009). He has previously conducted research concerning the shamanistic use of iron-ore mirrors and entheogens by the ancient Maya culture. He has published articles in academic journals such as *Anthropology of Consciousness* and *Time & Mind*, as well as a paper co-authored with Paul Healy in the journal *Ancient Mesoamerica*. More broadly, he is interested in the domains of Anthropology of Religion, Medical Anthropology, Environmental Anthropology, and Consciousness Studies.

Upon the completion of his Ph.D. at Tulane, Marc will be moving back to his hometown to work as a post-doctoral fellow in the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. In this next phase of research, he will be expanding upon his doctoral project by conducting new ethnographic fieldwork with ayahuasca practitioners across North America. During his free time, he enjoys playing/watching sports like golf, baseball, hockey, and (fantasy) football, as well as travelling, walks in Nature, reading, and spending time with friends/family located between Stouffville, St. Mary's, Manitoulin Island, and the greater Toronto area of his native Ontario.

And yes, he now knows what it means to miss New Orleans.