

# The Expanding World Ayahuasca Diaspora

During its expansion from the Amazon jungle to Western societies, ayahuasca use has encountered different legal and cultural responses. Following on from the earlier edited collection, *The Expanding World Ayahuasca Diaspora* continues to explore how certain alternative global religious groups, shamanic tourism industries, and recreational drug milieus grounded in the consumption of the traditionally Amazonian psychoactive drink ayahuasca embody various challenges associated with modern societies.

Each contributor explores the symbolic effects of a “bureaucratization of enchantment” in religious practice and the “sanitizing” of indigenous rituals for tourist markets. Chapters include ethnographic investigations of ritual practice, transnational religious ideology, the politics of healing, and the invention of tradition. Larger questions on the commodification of ayahuasca and the categories of sacred and profane are also addressed.

Exploring classic and contemporary issues in social science and the humanities, this book provides rich material on the burgeoning expansion of ayahuasca use around the globe. As such, it will appeal to students and academics in religious studies, anthropology, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, biology, ecology, law, and conservation.

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*Edited by Beatriz Caiuby Labate and Clancy Cavnar*

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Appropriation, Integration  
and Legislation

Edited by Beatriz Caiuby Labate  
and Clancy Cavnar

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## Preface

This timely follow up to the first volume of *The World Ayahuasca Diaspora: Reinvention and Controversies* explores ayahuasca in the context of classic and contemporary issues in social sciences and the humanities, providing rich material on the burgeoning expansion of ayahuasca as it situates itself in various circumstances around the globe and reveals its tendency to connect and transform people, beings, networks and ideas. The challenges associated with alternative global religious groups, shamanic tourism industries, and recreational drug milieus, expand to the same degree that the brew itself spreads. In this collection, space is given to discussions on the global intercultural exchange of ayahuasca affecting indigenous modernization, political and moral dimensions of ritual healing, drug policy, religious persecution, public controversies, gender stereotypes, and dilemmas of integration into mainstream society. Ayahuasca's travels from the Amazon jungle to Western societies and back to the jungle has entailed encounters with different legal and cultural contexts; disparate and competing ideas on authenticity have emerged among ayahuasca drinkers and between them and the state, creating an international patchwork of laws and representations regarding ayahuasca, all deserving of detailed explorations, some of which are provided herein. Cultural appropriation and commodification of indigenous traditions are also highly germane as ayahuasca expands into new sectors of society; it is in this arena that some of the most charged discussions may be found. This book tackles these issues and more in an attempt to capture the arguments and proofs of some of the most qualified ongoing research in social sciences regarding the vine. The rapid rise of ayahuasca in the public imagination has created an urgent need for ethnographically sound and unbiased reports and analysis such as we hope is provided here in this second volume. We hope you enjoy reading it!

Beatriz Caiuby Labate and Clancy Cavnar

# Foreword

## Ayahuasca and its controversies

Before leaving its first home on the Upper Amazon, ayahuasca had spent a long time mediating between peoples, languages, and cultures, between different shamanic traditions, between the waking world and the world of visions. Between humans and spirits. It was a thread connecting something that no religion, no political power, had yet unified. This mediating power multiplied afterwards, when ayahuasca began to become popularized in urban environments and offered, through its visions, an immediate immersion in what had, until then, appeared insurmountably distant and wild.

The chapter that opens this volume (Labate and Assis) shows how far this embassy has reached: from the forest to the cities and the capitals, to the old and new metropolises, and to other poles of the global panorama. Ayahuasca has already become established throughout Latin America, in the United States, and Western Europe, and, more incipiently, in Eastern Europe, but also in South Africa, Australia, and Japan. As Conrad's chapter reminds us, this expansion is virtually coextensive and coeval with the growth of the Internet, which has played an important role in its diffusion. But although the Internet has been an instrument in the expansion of ayahuasca, it is also perhaps another allegory for it. Amazonian indigenous peoples – who, for decades, have freely compared ayahuasca with cinema and television – surely have no problem extending this analogy to the network of networks.

As with the Internet, this wide-ranging mediation cannot occur without the traversed borders becoming more sensitive and increasingly disputed. This book explores these controversies, and this foreword also addresses them, in dialogue with the rich collection of chapters offered up by the book, albeit without looking to summarize them – nor concur with them on all their points.

One of these controversies is probably the most extensive and decisive of the Western tradition; namely, the separation between culture and nature. Here, we are not talking about archaeology or about outmoded prejudices; this dividing line is one of the foundations of our legal systems, and traces,

for example, the difference between what can be a subject of intellectual property and what cannot, between what is no more than a plant and what constitutes an illegal drug.

These two issues have already given rise to polemics in the world of ayahuasca. Twenty years ago, the patenting of a *Banisteriopsis* plant provoked one of the biggest scandals in biopiracy, while the growing police repression of the trade in the components of ayahuasca has been based, as the article by Hobbs points out, on the degree of alteration through human manipulation. The nature/culture divide is worth exploring, since it succeeds in penalizing actions like drying and packing, or, more effectively, in criminalizing not the plant itself, but the information relating to it, seen as an incentive to drug use. The nature-culture divide is always like a border drawn in the middle of a metropolis: it serves more to create contraband than prevent it, and ayahuasca is a perfect example of this effect. Typically, its followers, like the judges, place it on the side of nature, thereby eclipsing the considerable human action needed for the activity of a set of plants and their combined possibilities to be known by humans.

Another issue concerns the difference between drug and food (Gearin and Labate). Many of the Amazonian uses of ayahuasca are subsumed under a more general framework of a shamanism of food and are conceived more as “purgés” or “diets” than as visionary experiences. The alimentary prescriptions and taboos that surround the use of ayahuasca form a continuum with those that govern the local norms of elaborating the body. For Pano peoples, for example, ayahuasca is included in a set of bitter substances, indispensable to the perfecting of the human body, but prejudicial to the beginnings of its formation; that is, for young infants and for women during pregnancy and while feeding. None of this necessarily presumes a contrast with the West, where a growing proportion of the population shows itself obsessed by the ethical implications of foods and their interpretation as either “medicines” or “poisons.” New users of ayahuasca frequently display much more concern with these interactions than the indigenous users for whom, to give one example, ayahuasca is often carefully separated from alcohol, yet is not infrequently taken to be its equivalent. Ayahuasca may form the center of a comprehensive health practice, or of a religious or speculative quest – without clear boundaries demarcating it from recreational use – and this applies indiscriminately to the entire global trajectory traced by ayahuasca.

The contrast between a primitive authenticity and New Age inventions has become of less and less interest. The professionals and amateurs of anthropology have little by little abandoned their belligerence against neo-shamanism. Sustaining a hostile stance had become difficult, since many intermediary forms – here we can think of Santo Daime or the UDV – had already acquired a patina of respect over time. Moreover, the subjects who supposedly represented the purest tradition – indigenous shamans – had been directly involved in openly hybrid ventures. Also, it is worth noting, in passing, the traditionalist prosopopoeia of neo-shamanism, with its

solemn ritualism and priestly attire, provides an insight into how little the indigenous shamanism of the past was “traditional” itself, as it was characterized by widespread borrowing and experimentation. We can no longer understand ayahuasca as simply an extension of Amazonian shamanism (in itself, a very risky generalization): it already has a field of its own, organized around very different techniques and cosmologies.

However, the fact that the tension between tradition and invention has lost its edge has not prevented the conflict from reappearing now in more pragmatic forms. The encounter between the ayahuasca of native Amazonians and more or less wealthy urbanites produces, after the initial euphoria, tensions that, as usual, tend to have more impact on the financially weaker pole. A local resource has become the object of foreign avidity, and what was a means of dealing with vital conflicts has turned into a way of life. From being a singular subject, often situated at the outer limit of alterity, the shaman has become the archetype of the indigenous person, an archetype that needs to be embodied as decisively as possible, since he or she faces competition from new protagonists, coming from all parts of the world to appropriate this role.

On the other hand, as Echazu and Carew note, the same clients, patients, or users who seek out the forest to escape the Euro-American conventions end up importing demands to regulate and control the use of ayahuasca and the relations between its actors. The moral ambiguity that pervades the original world of ayahuasca – a means of healing, but equally a means of aggression, including as a weapon of war – suddenly becomes caught up in a game in which all these ambiguities are no longer parts of the complexity of being, but elements of the penal code. Globalized ayahuasca has its discontents, just like globalization as a whole.

The case of Taita Orlando Gaitán, related by Caicedo, and his prosecution for sexual abuse provides a clear parable of the many equivocations and conflicts surrounding the globalization of ayahuasca, ranging from the management of indigenous identity to the transformation of the shaman into a businessman straddled between religion and the third sector (the NGOs), passing through the readjustment of shamanic codes to a new clientele, and through the blurred overlapping between the power of a leader and the power of the plant.

The chapters by Cavnar and Mesturini touch, in different ways, on another famous duality, the opposition between the individual and the collective: two aspirations that have both equally sought to drink from “primitive” sources. Ayahuasca originates from a world, Amazonia, that has been presented sometimes as a model of community life, sometimes as an anarchic refuge of personal freedom. Mesturini points to a peculiar virtue of ayahuasca that distances it from both these poles: the virtue of, despite its expansion, remaining entangled, propagating itself through networks, and creating them. The virtue of not transforming simply into a *substance*, into an *active principle*: the question is always ayahuasca and all the relations

that it involves, not DMT. This fact distinguishes ayahuasca from other psychoactives of Amerindian origin that seem more liable to become associated with individual experiences and their auto-referential metaphysic. Cavnar focuses, on the contrary, on the relationship between ayahuasca and the most definitive aspect of individuality today: sexual orientation and identity. For many users from the LGBT scene, the visionary experience – not the social context in which it takes place, for the most part highly orthodox in sexual matters – has played a valuable role in developing a positive perception of a sexual identity challenged by its surroundings.

Cavnar's chapter brings up another interesting dimension: ayahuasca's value in the affirmation of homosexuality contrasts with the use, decades ago, of psychedelic drugs (LSD) in order to try to "cure" it. The relation between psychoactives and gender models seems to be equally ambiguous: the chapters of this volume offer different, and even discordant, opinions on this point. Echazu and Carew criticize the masculine bias that has dominated New Age trends like Peruvian *vegetalismo* and highlight the frequent presence of female shamans in the indigenous world. In contrast, Mesturini observes that the neo-shamanisms have incorporated – unsurprisingly, given the public to which they are directed – a more egalitarian and even feminist conception of gender, including the assimilation of ayahuasca with feminine symbols or archetypes, altering a landscape previously dominated by a masculine ethos. Perhaps these two appraisals are not so incompatible as they first seem: what changes as we shift from one world to another is not so much the gender models but the status attributed to norm and transgression. Women can be shamans in one world, the indigenous world, where spiritual power is a matter of fact, not law. Shamanism is not a priesthood whose efficacy depends on institutional consecration. One can be a shaman despite not taking the usual paths to becoming a shaman: by stealing secrets, for example, or by inventing resources that regular transmission had denied. One can also become a shaman by eluding the male norm. Moreover, such abnormality is not always an impairment to shamanic capacity; in fact, it may heighten it, since the exceptional has powers of which the normal is unaware. In the new situation, women are granted something of this role that previously they seized for themselves, and this points, at the same time, to a kind of liberalization and a species of domestication.

The use of ayahuasca oscillates between a "religion" and being some antithesis of the latter. For a long time, the dualities of this series – religion versus sorcery, magic, superstition, and so on – served to stigmatize any practice not subjected to the frameworks of an institution. But recently, the poles have reversed, and terms like "spirituality" or "holistic therapy" have proven useful to sectors that, having abjured religion and its means, remain interested in what religion proposed as an end. The choice between "religion" and "spirituality" (and related terms) also has other consequences, of course. Depending on time and place, the assimilation of the use of ayahuasca with a religious practice can contribute to its legitimization or the

complete opposite. In Uruguay, as Scuro shows, ayahuasca has been careful to avoid becoming associated with religion, something undesirable in a country with a strongly secular tradition. Forming part of a religion is, on the contrary, what has helped legitimize ayahuasca in Brazil and the United States: countries with harsh anti-drug policies. The Irish case, presented in the chapter by Watt, is an interesting example because it unites the two poles. For a time, ayahuasca found a safe niche in its identification as a native variant of Catholicism. Santo Daime was none other than the Amazonian version of this alliance between the Christian message and the pre-Christian religious world that centuries earlier had also given rise to an Irish Catholicism impregnated with Celtic remnants. Ayahuasca was thus a new avatar of this deep-rooted community religion of such importance to the Irish national identity. Later, however, the country's growing modernization and the moral crisis caused by the sexual abuse scandals within the Catholic Church wiped out the political value of this association, and it became advisable to defend ayahuasca outside the religious model. The story does not end there, though. The growing repression of the components used in the potion, necessarily imported from South America, has led to the realization of ayahuasca cults – almost without ayahuasca. Centered now on another “root” practice, possession, the religion of Barquinha, in Brazil, had already shown the possibility of combining possession and visionary trance.

The chapter by Goldstein and Labate on the relations between contemporary art and ayahuasca, including the art inspired by the latter, may be the most complex. Just as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro argued in a famous text, that inconstancy was the one true constant of indigenous thought, here we could say that there is nothing more “Western” than contemporary art's passion to abolish all Western norms, dichotomies, and categories, starting with the category of art itself. Enough of contrasting author and public, artwork and everyday object, visual art and theatre, mastery and chance, conventions of beauty and ugliness. Contemporary art strives to overcome these limits, although unfortunately, it fails to show the same determination, or success, in relation to other traditional conditions of the art world; namely, the speculative environment of the market and the dubious world of patronage.

It is in these conditions that indigenous art, or the ayahuasca that served as its inspiration in so many cases, is convoked as an ally. This convocation is ambiguous, since it may be inspired both by the perception of indigenous productions as “art” and by the desire for symbolic demolition to which the new actor is invited to contribute. Of course, the demolition of Western categories is of no more interest to indigenous actors than the categories themselves, making their role somewhat dubious. Artists? Diacritics whose presence serves to enhance the iconoclastic value of an exhibition or performance? Authors or coauthors, duly recognized and remunerated as such? Exotic figurants? The authors note that these experiences of intercultural art frequently explicitly preclude the collaboration of anthropologists in



order to establish a purer relation, free of the colonial and academic vestiges of anthropology; although, this good intention may sometimes result in no more than a new staging of old plays that are always easier to applaud in the absence of critics.

Allow me to conclude with a couple of notes of concern that pervade the chapters of this book. The more somber is the observation that the forces that led to the War on Drugs – one of the most dismal legacies of the twentieth century – has not yet run its course, and, while the legalization or de-penalization of marijuana seems on the verge of acceptance, use of ayahuasca – which, for a long time, benefitted from a legal vacuum – is, little by little, being restricted.

It is worth noting that it is not now a question of a war *on* drugs but a war *between* drugs. The ideal of a life or a body without drugs was always an illusion; the use of drugs is as old as humankind, and strictly speaking, exceeds the limits of our species; but, it becomes completely hypocritical when announced in the middle of a system that makes massive use of psychotropic drugs from childhood. The real debate is not between the substances and their respective dangers, but between the agencies that control them: the subjects themselves, the networks in which they are embedded, the medical-pharmaceutical complex and its legal apparatus. It remains a paradox that public opinion still trusts the latter more than the former. Hobbs's chapter reveals the deafness of legislators to scientific works when it comes to ascertaining the danger posed by a substance: the sensationalist press, stirring up phantasms, has always been much more esteemed as an advisor. Perhaps this is because the fear of drugs, rather than being good for public health, is simply “good for banning,” for multiplying draconian laws that the state is incapable of enforcing, but maintains as a reserve of arbitrary power.

Another concern relates to the limitations of multiculturalism. Thirty years ago, when this current of thought became absorbed into legislative frameworks and public policies, it seemed a good way of dealing with the colonial legacy, balancing equality and differences. Thirty years later, everything is governed more than ever by a single criterion from one corner of the planet to the other, and what little remains of cultural difference falls into the hands of an active market of symbolic goods. The contemporary literature on ayahuasca, to which this book adds, conveys the malaise created by this pincer movement, contrasting with the sense of surprise felt years ago when the first steps in an unsuspected diaspora became perceptible. A more amenable vision can only come from this intuition, evident throughout a large part of the book's chapters, that we are dealing with new networks and objects, created from the clashes and equivocations of the colonial encounter, albeit not fated to perpetuate them forever.

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## 4 Santo Daime in a “post-Catholic” Ireland

Reflecting and moving on<sup>1</sup>

Gillian Watt<sup>2</sup>

### History of Santo Daime in Ireland

Santo Daime is one of the Brazilian ayahuasca religions that developed out of Amazonia with the relocation of migrant rubber tappers to urban areas in the early twentieth century (Macrae, 1992; Labate & Pacheco, 2011). Raimundo Irineu Serra, the founder, was a Catholic rubber tapper of Afro-Brazilian parentage from the northeast of Brazil who came to the Amazon, where he encountered and participated in indigenous ayahuasca rituals. He received an instruction from a figure he described as the Queen of the Forest to start a healing ministry and amalgamated this vision with Catholic themes. Irineu also added militaristic elements, possibly as a result of his experience as a member of the territorial guard in the 1920s, resulting in strict ritual dance choreographies, uniforms, and a hierarchical structure that includes control of the positions of the body.

This hierarchical structure may be defined by various factors, including age, marriage status, gender, experience, and, sometimes, even height (the factors are not listed here in order of importance). Further additions of urban Brazilian European esotericism in the form of Spiritism, as codified by Kardec,<sup>3</sup> combined to create a rich bricolage of influences in the Santo Daime tradition and in other similar religious groups (União do Vegetal, Barquinha). The religion was formally established in the city of Rio Branco, in the Brazilian State of Acre in northwest Brazil, in 1930 (Macrae, 1992; Pacheco & Labate, 2011; Dawson, 2013). As Santo Daime spread globally out of Amazonia, it has absorbed many different influences, such as: Afro-Brazilian religions Umbanda and Candomblé (Alves Junior, 2009; Dawson 2012), Eastern religions (Dawson, 2013; Watt, 2014), the multifarious themes contained within the category “New Age,” and European pagan (Watt, 2014).

The Republic of Ireland (henceforth known here as Ireland) is a small island nation on the periphery of continental Europe, bordering the Atlantic Ocean on its western seaboard. Despite its small population of 4.76m (Central Statistics Office, 2016) and somewhat marginalized position, Ireland has had Santo Daime since the late 1990s, when Dutch *daimistas*

(practitioners of the Santo Daime) first introduced the religion. However, it was not until 2000 and 2001 that significant numbers of people in Ireland started to attend “works” (Santo Daime ceremonies (*trabalhos*). Interestingly, most of the people attending Santo Daime works in Ireland are not Brazilian. There are Brazilian communities in Ireland, especially in the west of the country, in Gort, in County Galway. However, on enquiry, and through interviews with informants, it appears that, in general, there is not much interest in Santo Daime from Brazilians living in Gort or in the rest of Ireland. It has been suggested that this may be because Brazilians in Gort are from Southern Brazil, where Santo Daime is not as popular, and, in Gort itself, there is, rather, a strong interest in Pentecostal churches among Brazilians living there.

A practitioner from the UK who brought daime for works across the UK/Ireland borders established Santo Daime in Ireland in the early 2000s. (Watt, 2014). Ayahuasca and daime were not as well known at this time, and there were not the current problems that there are in bringing the daime into the country. During these early years of the 2000s, the decline of Catholicism was steadily gaining momentum, due to many influences, including globalization through the expanding influence of the Internet; increased immigration, resulting in a more pluralistic society in Ireland; and the revelations of institutional abuse within the Catholic Church itself in Ireland and in Irish Church/State run institutions. However, self-identifying as “Irish Catholic” still remained a powerful cultural and social signifier in the Republic at that time with, for example, the 2006 Census indicating 87% marking themselves as Roman Catholic (Central Statistics Office, Ireland, 2016).

Ireland, then, was also at the height of what was known as the “Celtic Tiger” period; a gradual, but intense, economic “boom” that led to large amounts of money being made available in the population for approximately ten years, until the global economic crash in 2008. It was in this transforming socio-religious climate that Santo Daime became established, and, in 2013, there were two clearly defined centers of Santo Daime activity: one in Dublin, and one in Monaghan, bordering Northern Ireland. One group, Group A (called “traditional” by Watt, 2014) followed a strict ritual code, similar to that which might be found in Brazil, and was a “closed” group, other than by personal invitation; another, Group B (called “hybrid” by Watt, 2014), was more varied in approach and was open to one-time participants. This latter group was also perhaps more influenced by Eastern religious practices than the former, and also facilitated ceremonies that had elements of the neo-shamanic (derived from South American practices) ayahuasca circle; both groups self-identified as Santo Daime (Watt, 2014). There were, in 2013, approximately 100 regular practitioners of the “stricter” Santo Daime group, and several hundred occasional attendees of the more varied group. Both groups identified as being under the ICEFLU lineage, which has been the main conveyor of Santo Daime outside Brazil (Dawson, 2013; Labate & Pacheco, 2011; Groisman, 2013).

These works in the early 2000s were haphazard and loosely regulated. It appears that, at these very early stages, ceremonies may have been informed by an experimental, psychonautic perspective, as different substances were used before and during the works; the works were advertised freely and openly, something that would not happen in 2017, and people "dropped in after a night in the pub" (Watt, 2014). Despite this early "casual" approach and the popular and psychonautic appeal of an ayahuasca/daime experience, the emphasis did remain steadily within the framework of Catholicism; this was likely to have been an important element in the migration and establishment of Santo Daime practice in Ireland. Many of the works adhered to Catholic symbolism firmly, with the formalities of taking the sacrament from the group leader, uniforms, the regulated order of events with hymns (*binos*), interactive responses, and the control of bodily movements and position through strictly choreographed dance steps. These are ritual practices closely akin to a Catholic Mass – such as in the control of the body, regulated order, the taking of the sacrament, hymns, references to a God-like figure, and to the saints – which many of the members of the groups would have grown up with. And yet, simultaneously, Santo Daime contains non-conformist and "spiritual" self-development elements that led to numinous and spiritually meaningful personal experiences.

In this way, Santo Daime is likely to have been a cogent and compelling combination for religious and spiritual expression in Ireland at that time. Furthermore, this non-mainstream religious movement that, at the same time, readily and non-apologetically claimed a Catholic content, could be perceived as an appeasement to an historically intense, and still pervasive, "anti-cult" discourse in Ireland that is quickly attached to any new religious movements (see Cosgrove, Cox, Kuhling, & Mulholland, 2011). In other words, Santo Daime's ritual form could be said to "match" especially well at this time with Irish socio-cultural and religious identities.

Irish identities have been heavily influenced both by a history of British colonialism and religious oppression, and the subsequent hegemony of the Catholic Church working closely with the state. Understandings of religious and national identity have also been strongly informed by the force of Catholicism as a cultural signifier in the formation of an independent nation state, separate from English Protestant domination. Catholicism, even in 2017, holds significant influence in Ireland. For example, it is still the case that 96% of primary schools in Ireland are under the patronage of, or are owned by, the Catholic Church (Coughlan, 2014; Dept. of Education and Skills, 2016).

As Tom Inglis says:

Between the home and the Catholic school, most children develop a Catholic habitus (Bourdieu 1977, pp. 82–83) a deeply embodied, almost automatic way of being spiritual and moral that becomes second nature and creates a Catholic sense of self and way of behaving and

interpreting the world. Being Catholic becomes a fundamental part of their social and personal identity – the way they are seen and understood by others and the way they see and understand themselves.

(Inglis, 2007, p. 2)

Despite challenges to Catholic faith in Ireland, it could still be said, in 2004 at least, that the Catholic habitus “lingers on, deeply embedded in our people’s identity and sense of self” (Inglis, 2004, p. 13).

### **The Santo Daime legal case in Ireland**

It was this lingering Catholic habitus that surely influenced the narrative of a legal case regarding Santo Daime in Ireland, and the diminishing of the power of this Catholic habitus that perhaps had a role in its ultimate outcome. A prolonged legal Constitutional Case against the Irish State from a Santo Daime leader with regard to Religious Freedoms as enshrined in the Irish Constitution<sup>4</sup> began in 2007. A Santo Daime leader from a group in Ireland was charged with unlawful possession of DMT in contravention of Section 3 of Misuse of Drugs Act of 1977 and on a second charge of selling and otherwise supplying DMT in contravention of Section 15 and Section 27 of the Misuse of Drugs act 1977. The arrest took place after an increase of shipments from Brazil into Ireland came to the attention of Customs and Excise. On testing a sample of one of these packages of daime and finding minute amounts of the prohibited DMT, the same package was intercepted by a plain-clothes policeman pretending to be a postman at the home of the leader, where he was in the midst of preparing for a Santo Daime work (Watt, 2014). When the case came to trial a disproportionately heavy fine was imposed (5,000 euros); however, an appeal was permitted. A year later, at the subsequent judicial review, the presiding Irish judge reflected on the case and stated that he understood that Santo Daime “was a Christian sect with Catholic influences” (O’Dea, 2010, p. 3). He also asserted that freedom of religion was an element of the Irish Constitution. In this way, the judge noted that the leader had been given “standing” and could now make a legal constitutional challenge (O’Dea, 2010; M. McCabe, personal communication, July 30, 2013), both regarding rights to worship under religious freedom as laid out in the Irish Constitution, and regarding the use of chosen sacraments in that worship. This was an interesting reflection of the continuing importance of Catholicism in the state’s functioning and structures of social and legal process in the Republic in the twenty-first century.

The court case remained pending for many years. Two influential and pervasive trends emerged in the intervening time (2007–2015). Firstly, the challenges to the popularity of Catholicism in Ireland continued unabated. In response to increased media reporting of systemic abuse in Catholic-run institutions concerned with care of children, as well as reports of abuse and

misconduct from Catholic clerics, the Irish government commissioned two investigations. An inquiry (the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse) was initiated in 2000 and released publicly in 2009. This was widely known as the Ryan Report, and it contained graphic testimonies of abuse inflicted in 250 Church-run "industrial schools" between the years of 1930 and the 1970s. This was followed in the same year by what was known as The Murphy Report, which was an account of an investigation into sex abuse in the Catholic archdiocese of Dublin. There is criticism from the church regarding the broad brushstrokes of this report. For example, the refusals within the report to name state officials in the cover-up of abuse (Barry, 2013). These reports made a shocking public impact and were widely covered by media discussion and debate in Ireland. They became generally known as "the scandals" associated with the Catholic Church. These scandals were followed by further revelations about the cruelty and state collusion involved in the Church-run Magdalene Laundries, where mostly unmarried mothers (and their born or unborn children) were sent out of "respectable" society to do other people's laundry in conditions of abuse and exploitation. The impact of such a level of disappointment and anger towards the Church/state was intense and led to an increase of disidentification with "being Catholic." Indeed, a website was set up in 2009 where a person could "defect" from the Irish Catholic Church via their Parish priest, who would note the change on their baptism register. The site, [countmeout.ie](http://countmeout.ie), was operational until 2011, when the Catholic Church removed the option to formally defect. An informal and symbolic method of disidentification continues with [notme.ie](http://notme.ie).

Surprisingly though, the 2011 census shows 84% of the population stating Roman Catholicism as their religion – a small drop from the 2006 number – but the census states that this figure included a large increase of Roman Catholic identification statements from non-Irish who had migrated to the country. There was, however, a 45% increase in 2011 in those people who stated "no religion" in the census, and an impressive 320% increase in those who considered themselves "atheist" (Spillane, 2016). There has also been, in Ireland, the growth of a younger urban middle class that has grown up through the "Celtic Tiger" economic boom in Ireland, where the "cathedrals of consumption" may have usurped the position of the Church (quoted in Kuhling, 2011, p. 207). These younger people appear to be less interested in religion, as shown by the 2011 census, noting a 13% growth in 25–29 year olds who stated "no religion" on the census form, the highest increase in this category than any other age group. The same-sex marriage referendum was held in Ireland in 2015. This referendum decided, through popular vote, for the legalization of marriage between people of the same sex. This was a referendum younger people, and many students, campaigned widely for, and it was amply discussed in the media as a symbol of a post-Catholic Ireland and, in some cases, "the end of Irish Catholicism" (Moorhead, 2015; Kenny, 2015; Donnelly, 2015). The complete 2016

census results are unavailable at the time of this writing but will surely reveal more about the religious landscape in Ireland and the “Catholic habitus.”

Secondly, alongside this seemingly diminished loyalty and faith in Catholicism, there was, in these years, an increase in public discussion about the dangers of “drugs,” in particular, a high-profile and widespread discourse about “head shops.” Head shops are retail outlets where it is possible to buy substances that may elicit various psychoactive effects on the body and mind: so-called “legal highs.” The head shop controversy in Ireland peaked in 2010, with dramatic and saturated media coverage of head shops, discussing the increase of outlets, the effect on young people, and the danger of various substances being legally available. The controversy was volatile, and several head shops in the country suffered arson attacks in early 2010. The issue culminated in the banning of various popular head shop products under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977, and the tightening of legislation regarding psychoactive substances with a new criminal justice act – the Criminal Justice (Psychoactive Substances) Act 2010 – which effectively closed down almost every head shop (Ryall & Butler, 2011). Neither of these changes in the law affected the status of DMT, which remained a Schedule 1 substance throughout.

In the same time period, between 2007 and 2015, there were several important developments in the ayahuasca field. There was increased media coverage of ayahuasca, especially the use of ayahuasca by “celebrities,” and an increase in ayahuasca commercialism in Peru, information about which was rapidly spread globally through the Internet and social media. There were some tragedies reported that became associated with ayahuasca. In 2010, a double murder in Brazil of a high-profile personality, the cartoonist and leader of one of the largest Santo Daime centers outside of the Amazon, Glauco Villas Boas, and his son, led eventually to criticism and suspicion of the Santo Daime church and its use of ayahuasca (daime) (see Labate, Alves Jr., de Rose, & Lemos, 2010). The death of 18-year-old US citizen Kyle Nolan in 2012 in Peru was extensively and internationally reported as being as a result of an ayahuasca experience with a Peruvian “shaman.” Finally, a widely publicized and heavily sentenced (15 months in jail) charge of possession and supply in the neighboring UK in 2011 of Peter Aziz, who was running healing ayahuasca circles, did not help the Irish commander’s case, which still remained pending. Peter Aziz was jailed for 15 months for “producing and supplying a Class A drug” (see Morris, 2011; Bickler, 2011; and, for excellent analysis of the Aziz case, Walsh, 2017).

In this climate, the chances of success of the constitutional case were considerably weakened. To sum up, there were two developments that were likely to affect the outcome of a constitutional case regarding Santo Daime in Ireland. Firstly, the increasing unpopularity of the Catholic view in the intervening years reduced the power of Catholic content as ballast for the legalization of Santo Daime in court on the strength of it being a Catholic-based religion in a Catholic Ireland; secondly, the generally unfavorable

developments in public perception of ayahuasca as part of a "drug culture," which had also been conflated with the public discourse on head shops and plant-based psychoactive use, would weaken the argument for religious use of entheogens. Finally, with the prospect of increasing legal costs, and an unfavorable report comparing the DMT found in ayahuasca with LSD, the Irish leader dropped the constitutional case.

### Current Santo Daime practice in Ireland

In the years between the first investigation of Santo Daime in Ireland in 2013 (Watt, 2014) and 2017, Santo Daime practice in Ireland has appeared to keep pace with the transformation and transmuting of the socio-religious field. The changes in practice also appear to reflect a decline in a traditional Catholicism and to difficulties in accessing daime.

In 2013, there were two groups that followed the Santo Daime ICEFLU line; each with their own preferred "style" (Watt, 2014). In 2016, these two distinct Santo Daime groups remain; neither currently claims to follow the ICEFLU line, and in both, changes have emerged. The most striking changes in their Santo Daime practice in three years appears to be a loosening of the strict control of the body through the choreographed ritual dances in both groups, and in one group, the development of increased focus on spontaneous bodily expression and direct and expressed "incorporation" ("possession") of daimistas by deities and other beings through the introduction of Umbandaime into the ritual repertoire.

The origins of both Umbanda and Santo Daime are similar. Umbanda also developed in Brazil during the 1920s, from the fusion of Brazilian spiritism (Kardecism) and elements of Afro-Brazilian religiosity (Alves Jr., 2009; Dawson, 2012, 2013). Umbanda adds emphasis on communication with spirits of deceased personalities, in particular, the spirits of African slaves (*preto velhos*) and spirits of indigenous and European heritage, usually *caboclos*. Umbandaime also includes the practice of the incorporation of supernatural beings in the form of the Orixas. They are seen as divine personalities equivalent in some cases to Christian counterparts.

To develop an analysis of the possible reasons for the great response to Umbanda amidst Daimistas, we must see that both religions are composed of the same matrices, recombined in quite distinct ways, but which share the profile of being highly inclusive.

(Alves Jr., 2009, p. 57)

Since approximately 2015, there have been Umbandaime-like works in Ireland. This is seen as a trend that is occurring all over Europe (Interview with fardada, July 3, 2016). This trend also supports the notion of "miscibility" in Santo Daime as discussed by Labate and Loures de Assis (2017). Its miscibility makes the movement theologically porous and capable of



adapting to different cultures, localities, and religious concepts, permitting various arrangements and bricolage of beliefs.

Specifically, in Ireland, I would add that there are, (at least), two factors involved in the development of Umbandaime. One factor I suggest here is the need to provide “ritual relief” from a strictly controlled ritual repertoire. I contend, here in the Irish context, that this is also in line with general changes in the socio-religious field in Ireland and dissatisfaction with rigid and hegemonic institutional Catholic religiosity, especially regarding control over the body and the range of communication with the “spirit world.” Another factor is the practical difficulty in obtaining daime/ayahuasca due to increased regulation by Irish Customs and Excise, along with intensification of vigilance at national borders.

The Santo Daime Group A used to follow a highly structured and formalized ritual (see Watt, 2014) with a clear hierarchy of gender and status position, and carefully choreographed works with specific movements (or not) of body (especially arms and feet) as the requirement of the “current” and the “containment” of the work. This Group A is now (2017) only involved in Umbanda-type works and no longer offers “traditional” Santo Daime works as it used to (this is not to imply that “traditional” is worse or better but, rather, that it follows a formalized and “strict” ritual repertoire as might be found in formal Santo Daime practices in Brazil). The majority of participants are the same ones who attended the “traditional” works. A fardada from Group A told me: “There’s no Santo Daime in Ireland now, you know *traditional*, there’s no people sitting around the star in their traditional form. There is not” (Personal communication Louise July 3, 2016 [author’s emphasis]). Unknown to my interviewee and myself at the time of the interview, the star table was, in fact, the symbol used for the establishment of Umbanda into Santo Daime in Brazil (Dawson, 2013).

Umbandaime works in Ireland were described to me as follows:

[People are dancing free-style to] . . . the Umbanda music, which is congas and *pontos*, instead of the hymns, you have pontos. The pontos are the points . . . the first ponto you sing might be Oxala, who is the Christian counterpart of Jesus Christ. This is not coming from Umbandaime – this is Candomble – so in Candomble, Macumba, and Umbanda, they say Oxala is Jesus Christ, and they say he also, like, represents elemental, he’s white, he has loads of different principles and qualities. And then you have Iemanja; that might be the next ponto that you sing. So, you’ll sing loads of songs for Iemanja and, you know, she is like the mother, the Queen of the Sea; her counterpart in Christianity is Mary. So then, the next one you have is, say, Ogum and he’s, Ogum is Saint George, actually Saõ Jorge, you know, he’s the patriarch of Brazil, and he’s like the power and the force and the sea . . . So each ponto, each orixa of the work will have a section of the work that is for them, and all the songs there and everything that happens is offered to them,

and people who have those orixas as their guides will be more active in those parts of the work as well . . .

(personal communication Louise, July 3, 2016)

The new works have been introduced to Ireland by a Brazilian teacher who travels around Europe offering works that include Umbandaime. The sacrament of daime is still used, but in much smaller amounts. These works will occur two to three times a year in Ireland in 2017. The daimista calendar is no longer closely adhered to. The Umbandaime-like work occurs over a two-day period. There is a "sitting down" Santo Daime-like concentration work at night, where uniforms may or may not be worn, followed by an externally applied "herbal cleanse" and food and rest. The following day, from about midday, there is body movement instructed by the leader, culminating, finally, with a *gira*, the name for an Umbanda ritual ceremony with drumming and singing that "calls in" different spiritual beings (Hale, 2009). There might also be an interval for a "shamanic" fire ritual where the group goes outside between the two types of ceremony. There may also be tobacco ceremonies and offerings, depending on whether a relative of the Guarani indigenous group has accompanied the leader at that time (personal communication Louise, July 3, 2016).

This is very different from the highly structured and formalized Santo Daime works that had been taking place entirely inside a closed room with electric lights that resembled, to the author at least, an unusual kind of Catholic Christian Mass with choreography and, certainly, transformative aspects through the effects of the daime. Incorporation and mediumship are not discouraged in the new works, and in the Umbandaime worldview, they are actively encouraged. Again, this is quite different from how Santo Daime was in Ireland before the introduction of Umbandaime. Although incorporation took place – "It comes with the medicine (daime)" (personal communication Eoin, July 4, 2016) – participants were encouraged to experience it as a less expressive event, and of overarching importance was keeping the current contained and secure; the "firm" and flowing unity of the moving mandala of the Santo Daime battalion. In my own limited experience of Santo Daime in Ireland, there was an occasion where a daimista was noisily incorporating through a loudly whispered voice in an unknown language, and was raising her arms and moving in ways that did not conform to the permitted choreographed movements. This was perceived as disruptive to the group, and to myself, as well as to the current. She was gently "removed" from the group and sat away from the rest of the people. At the end of the work, she was prayed over with the Catholic Rosary prayer and there was a sense, to a Santo Daime novice like myself, that there was a type of "exorcism-like" activity occurring to "remove" the "possession." This occurred even though, afterwards, the person concerned told me that she did not feel that she was "possessed" by anything outside of herself, but rather, that this activity was an expression of something that she felt was part of herself.

However, two to three years later, these formalities have changed, with the introduction of expressive Umbanda-like practices of incorporation. Free expression of the body, without necessarily “incorporating,” is also an important element during the ceremonies.

*Author:* So do you do . . . the choreographed dance moves anymore or . . .

*Interviewee:* No.

*Author:* Wow, it’s a big change.

*Interviewee:* Yeah, there might be a little bit, but it would be in a circle and it would be just getting ready to warm up to, like, kinda free-style movement, basically (laughs).

*Author:* So people are dancing free-style now, to the music?

*Interviewee:* No, no, not to Santo Daime music; to Umbanda music.

(Personal communication, Louise, July 3, 2016)

Also, once again, the New Age bricoleur tendency has been introduced with the addition of a shamanic-type fire ceremony and movement practices. The author shared a group interview with members of the Santo Daime who are entitled to wear the uniform (called *fardados*) from both groups (A and B) (August 4, 2016). In 2013, Group B (referred to as “hybrid” by Watt [2014]) were offering different kinds of works. They continue, in 2017, to offer a variety of works, all without uniform: “The uniform has gone forever” (personal communication, Eoin, Group B, August 4, 2016). Umbandaime-like works are not offered as such, although the people I interviewed have experienced an Umbandaime work in Ireland, and the works they do offer they consider to be very similar to Umbandaime: “yeah, and it’s very similar to the Umbanda, it’s the same kind of feel in the work, you know, same kind of things going on” (personal communication, Eoin, August 4, 2016). And, regarding incorporation,

The thing with incorporation, my idea is, my interpretation of incorporation, is that it is something external, and when we do our works that look like incorporation, it’s definitely not external; it’s very much internal expression of . . . of what we’ve controlled for years, the control mechanisms that we use on ourselves, and that it’s just about kundalini moving, actually, and that’s what our teachers are telling us; that it’s the kundalini, that it’s that energy.

(Personal communication, Norah, August 4, 2016)

“Lying down works” is the name given by Eoin and Norah of Group B to ayahuasca neo-shamanic-type circles. These types of ceremonies are no longer offered in 2017, as the “community” aspects of Santo Daime are seen as far outweighing any benefits of the ayahuasca circle, where individuals are seen as taking an individual and more solitary journey of discovery and

transformation. Reasons given for “community” aspects of Santo Daime were that, in a Santo Daime-type work, there is less separation between leaders and participants, a sense of cohesion to the ceremony, and that the ritual performance of each person is an equally valued part of the work. These representatives from both Groups A and B agreed that the structure of the Santo Daime practice was advantageous, especially in the beginning years of Santo Daime in Ireland, but were reluctant to continue an attachment to “rigid” forms of ritual.

### **Concluding remarks**

Changes in Santo Daime practices in Ireland, and the introduction of Umbanda and Umbandaime into the religious field, might be seen as developments that, in several respects, appear to diverge dramatically from what might have been considered “a Christian sect with Catholic influences” in 2007 (O’Dea, 2010, p. 3); that is, in other words, a religious movement that could be considered as a variant of Irish Catholicism. However, the introduction of Umbandaime-like rituals to Santo Daime in Ireland might be said only to parallel a “relaxing” of a rigid Catholic habitus generally and, at the same time, that Inglis’s (2004) “lingering” Catholic habitus still persists,

The Catholic thing is just kind of in the background; it’s just like where we all started, it was the culture we were born into, but also the culture we were born into is a whole kind of modern worldview . . . it is more a kind of more of atheistic doctrine actually. It’s very present in society in general.

(Personal communication, Eoin August 4, 2016)

Changes in the socio-religious landscape of Ireland are reflected in Santo Daime practice in Ireland. A “cultural Catholicism” of Irish identities appears to continue through Santo Daime, especially in the desire for “community” in the spiritual/religious field. This desire to maintain the “community” aspects can be said to be present with regard to Irish attitudes toward Catholicism generally. Although it is evident that we can now talk about a “post-Catholic” Ireland (Ganiel, 2016), and it is clear that there is a steep decline of attachment to how Catholicism has dominated many aspects of Irish lives in the past (Twomey, 2003; Inglis 2004, 2007; Ganiel, 2016), there remains in the mainstream a deep attachment to the community and socially cohesive aspects of the Church. These community aspects of Catholicism remain a fundamental part of Irish society. Major life events continue to be held under the “sacred canopy” of the Catholic Church, even though it may not be considered quite as “sacred” as in the past. Despite dwindling attendance to Mass on a regular basis, in 2014, 56.7% of the population of Ireland were still marrying in the Roman Catholic Church (Central Statistics Office, Ireland) and up to 93% of people continue to

baptize their children in the Catholic Church (O'Brien, 2015) (although this may be associated with Church patronage of most primary schools).

Santo Daime in Ireland, with the introduction of Umbandaime and Umbandaime-like practice, has brought a degree of liberation from tight controls on the body and of its movements, and a more obviously personalized relationship with the spirit world through expressed incorporation; both of which formal Santo Daime limits, and the traditional Catholic church institution does not offer. "In that respect, if the Catholic Church, let's say, is being cracked open and there's less people practicing . . . maybe people are being more experimental because they don't have the ball and chain of the Catholic Church" (personal communication Norah, August 4, 2016). It must be said though, that Umbanda and Umbandaime are themselves also deeply secured within a Catholic frame (Hale, 2009) and daimistas in Ireland do not discard their "Catholicism," but rather, weave it into current practices.

The New Age bricoleur tendency (see Dawson, 2013) also continues to be found in Ireland with the merging of "shamanic" considerations within the worldview of Santo Daime. This is also present in the group (B) that has not obviously embraced Umbandaime practice. However, in both groups, the overtly neo-shamanic "ayahuasca circle" is not included under the broad umbrella of Santo Daime because they believe it does not add to a sense of community and cohesion among the group.

Ganiel (2016) talks about "extra-institutional" religion to describe how Catholicism in the island of Ireland has changed. By this is meant, the "various methods and strategies people use to keep their faith alive, outside or in addition to the institutional church" (Ganiel, 2016, p. 5) "Extra-institutional religions fit well within a mixed religious economy, providing people with an option that allows personalized, experiential religious expression, yet remains linked, however tenuously and critically, to traditional religious institutions" (Ganiel, 2016, p. 21). If one considers that Santo Daime in Ireland is "extra institutional" to the Catholic Church in Ireland, we can also perhaps say that current practices are also "extra-institutional" to formal or "traditional" Santo Daime. With this understanding, it makes sense when fardadas representing both Groups A and B firmly state that they self-identify within the Santo Daime world view as daimistas. Norah, from Group B, told me: "I would, without a question of a doubt, consider myself a daimista, not an ayahuasquero" (personal communication, August 4, 2016), while at the same time, Louise (Group A) said, "I would never, I can say, go back to drinking Santo Daime the way I was; you know, maybe one day I won't drink at all, I don't know" (personal communication, July 3, 2016). Thus, it might be stated that "Santo Daime" in Ireland reflects the fluidity of a transforming and ambivalent religious "market" in what can now be called a "post-Catholic" Ireland (Ganiel, 2016).

Finally, regarding practicalities, the increased restrictions and regulation regarding the use of psychoactives in Ireland, and in Europe generally, and

an increase in persecution of people who use ayahuasca and daime, alongside high profiling of tragedies that are circumstantially (but by no means conclusively) associated with ayahuasca and daime, have also changed Santo Daime practice in Ireland. Daime and ayahuasca are "almost impossible" (personal communication, Eoin, August 4, 2016) to obtain. The use of plant psychoactives in Ireland is perceived as highly dangerous, more dangerous than the use of "street drugs" (Louise, personal communication, December 8, 2016), perhaps as a result of the influence of the media in the head shop controversy in 2010, and the widespread implication, also through the media, of "ayahuasca tragedies." This, combined with the unfortunate series of Church-related scandals, and revelations of the moral failure of church and state that emerged in the years while the Constitutional case was pending, makes the practice of a Catholic-based ayahuasca religion deeply contentious within the general socio-religious milieu in Ireland. The dramatic diminishing of the longstanding influence of Irish Catholicism on Irish cultural identities, furthermore, would appear to have a significant influence on the particularities of changes that are emerging in Santo Daime practice in Ireland.

## Notes

- 1 Acknowledgement to and gratitude for the collaboration of Jean de Souza and daimistas in Ireland without whose openness and willingness to be of assistance, this chapter would not have been written. All mistakes are author's own.
- 2 Gillian Watt is a PhD candidate at the Department of the Study of Religions, University College Cork, Ireland. gillywatt@hotmail.com
- 3 Allen Kardec was the pseudonym of Hippolyte Leon Denizard Rivali (1804–1869), who taught that reincarnation and mediumship were realities, and that there was a spiritual origin to life (see Moreira-Almeida, 2008).
- 4 Article 44 of the Irish Constitution states that: "The State shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious profession, belief or status" (Bunreacht Na hÉireann Constitution Of Ireland, 1937).

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