

“...THE TRUTH IS THAT THE CENTER IS FREE”: PLACE, SPACE AND ETHICO-  
POLITICAL PRACTICES IN INTERWOVEN SANTO DAIME WORLDS

Katherine Eberlie Akin

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Approved By:

Banu Gökariksel

Elizabeth Olson

Dorothy Holland

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## ABSTRACT

Katherine Eberlie Akin: "...The truth is that the center is free": Place, Space and Ethico-Political Practices in Interwoven Santo Daime Worlds  
(Under the direction of Banu Gökariksel)

This thesis elucidates how ethical practices are also political by analyzing collective projects undertaken by religious practitioners living in two Santo Daime communities. Santo Daime is a religion that originated in the Brazilian Amazon in 1930. The research for this thesis consisted of participant observation and interviews in two distinct Santo Daime communities, the Ecovila São José on Santa Catarina Island, Brazil, and the Church of the Holy Light of the Queen, located in Ashland, Oregon, USA. In each of these communities, I documented how *daimistas* (practitioners of Santo Daime) live ethically according to their religious beliefs and practices beyond their church rituals. Evaluations of the data collected resulted in two conclusions: 1) the everyday, embodied work of cultivating ethical subjectivities in religiously figured worlds is political, and 2) the political realities of such worlds are contingent on the specificities of place and space.

This work is dedicated to all of you who live and love the questions.

I am especially grateful for those of you who have walked with me in my study of how to  
live and love them, too.

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## Introduction

### Background & Overview

In traditional anthropological terms, Santo Daime would be called a syncretic religion. It originated in the Brazilian Amazon in the 1930s, and its ritual practices weave together aspects of Catholicism, Spiritualism, *Umbanda* (an Afro-Brazilian religion), and indigenous, shamanic traditions. In the 1980s, Santo Daime began to spread from the Amazon to urban centers across Brazil, and subsequently, to countries across the world. Today, an estimated 4,000-6,000 people in 21 countries practice the religion (Labate et al 2007, Dawson 2013).

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Santo Daime is that it is centered around the ritual practice of ingesting a sacramental tea made out of a vine (*banisteriopsis caapi*) and the leaf of a bushy plant (*psychotria viridis*) that are native to tropical forests across Latin America. This tea has many names, including ayahuasca, hoasca and yagé, but it is referred to as *Daime* in the context of Santo Daime, where it is ritually consecrated as a sacrament. The tea also contains the chemical compound dimethyltryptamine, or DMT. DMT is considered an illegal drug in most states, and is classified as a ‘Schedule 1’ substance in the US—along with heroin, LSD, marijuana, and ecstasy.

The fact that this sacrament/drug has been central to Santo Daime since its onset has put it at greater odds with the state than most religious groups in secular

modernity. This has been the case in Brazil, and in the United States. In part, this study considers how this existing tension between legal and Santo Daime taxonomy around the tea has impacted *daimistas* (practitioners of Santo Daime) around the world.

However, the purpose of this thesis is not to comment on the legitimacy of the practice of Santo Daime. Instead, this thesis discusses collective, daimista-led projects initiated in two Santo Daime communities: the Ecovila São José in Florianópolis, Brazil and the Church of the Holy Light of the Queen in Ashland, Oregon. My goal is to elucidate the ways that daimistas in two distinct Santo Daime communities have negotiated the ethical practice of their religion in relationship not only to the moral principles set forth by their doctrine, but also in relationship to the place-specific laws and norms that shape the possibilities of their ethical practice.

### Interests & Purpose

My research seeks to problematize the assumptions Western scholars make about what systems of valuing and organizing reality are legitimate. For many cultural groups, spiritual/religious understandings of the world and collective religious practices are central to establishing an ethical way of life. Yet, because of the secular liberal assumption that what consists of *politics* or the *political* needs to be articulated to the state or state-supported capitalism, systems of religious belief and practice are often considered apolitical.

Where religious groups have been treated as political in academic writing, it is typically because they make it their purpose to either directly challenge the state (as in the case of radical Islamic groups, for example) or explicitly support state political

parties (as in the case of the Tea Party movement in the US). However, outside of feminist scholarship on religious practice, what people do individually or collectively to cultivate their religious worlds, and themselves as ethical subjects of those worlds, is rarely understood as political. Therefore, my primary purpose in this thesis is to elucidate how the cultivation of ethical selves within the context of religiously figured worlds is political.

My secondary purpose in this thesis will be to demonstrate that the specificities of religiously figured worlds *matter*. These specificities are informed both by the everyday practices of the ethical subjects of those worlds and the dominant norms, laws and practices of the secular, liberal cultures to which they are beholden, and, in many ways, against which they define themselves. Throughout this thesis, I illustrate how the practitioners of Santo Daime with whom I have studied in the United States and Brazil are struggling (individually and collectively) to embody ways of being in the world that are not centered around the dominant capitalist-colonial values of liberal individualism and wealth accumulation on which the state is premised.

Following Michel Foucault and Saba Mahmood, I argue that the values around which people build their moral framework, and the embodied practices that they adopt to relate ethically to themselves and Others, are thoroughly political. Daimistas live in ethico-political tension with the state by cultivating a rigorous practice of ethical self-fashioning that is in disagreement with concepts that are foundational to Western liberalism, namely the bounded individual and the concept of the individual's absolute entitlement to possess and accumulate objectified material things. However, because

daimistas are embedded in the capitalist-colonial world, living their ethico-politics of love and firmness through their bodies, and practicing it in their organizations, often involves a great deal of struggle.

### Methodologies & Intentions

Along with familiarizing myself with the canon of existing scholarly and popular work on ayahuasca-based religions in Brazil, and Santo Daime specifically, the research for this project consisted of textual analyses of Santo Daime hymns and fieldwork in two Santo Daime church communities. During several fieldwork trips to Oregon between 2011-2013, I conducted participant observation in six Santo Daime works as well as nine in-depth interviews with daimistas in Santo Daime churches in Ashland and Portland. I also spent three months on Santa Catarina Island in Brazil, studying Brazilian Portuguese and living in the Santo Daime community of the Ecovila São José (June-August 2012). In the Ecovila, I conducted participant observation in seven Santo Daime works, as well as four other ceremonies in which Daime was taken as a sacrament along with other consecrated plant medicines brought by indigenous leaders from Mexico. In the Ecovila I conducted eight in-depth interviews. During my fieldwork in Brazil I also visited a Santo Daime church in Lumiar, Brazil, which is home to Baixinha, one of the most influential Santo Daime leaders for practitioners in the church located in Ashland, OR.

Several scholars have written about the difficulty of conducting qualitative research in/on Santo Daime, primarily the difficulties of navigating one's positionality when interacting with daimistas (Dawson 2009, Labate & Pacheco 2011). I believe that



these are challenges that all qualitative researchers face, particularly those who are invested in or sympathetic to the groups with whom they conduct their research (for example, activist-academics). Yet academics researching social phenomena that are broadly recognizable as legitimate political movements (such as labor movements or autonomous political movements) are able to talk about their positions as insiders and outsiders.

The political struggles of daimistas, who experience the world as populated by spiritual forces, beings and energies are often dismissed outright within academic communities of critical scholarship. Religious beliefs and practices are still largely considered great “opiate(s) of the people” (Marx 1970) by critical theorists, rather than valid systems of knowledge and practice. And it does not help the case when the religious movement is also structured around drinking a tea that is considered a hallucinogenic drug! At the outset of this thesis, I wish to comment on how unraveling these challenges through my own research process has shaped the document you are about to read. This will also help me to clearly explain my primary intention in the thesis, which is to raise questions about academic knowledge-making, not to give answers about what daimistas are doing globally.

I initiated this project on Santo Daime with the intention of pursuing a PhD in Geography—it was to be the basis for my dissertation. Aware of my interest in spiritual practice and social movements, as well as a history of working with immigrants from Latin America, a friend suggested that I investigate Santo Daime after attending a church ritual in Brazil. Due to experiences in my own childhood involving not only

spiritual encounters but also ongoing relationships with spirits, and people who practiced engaging with spiritual forces on Earth, I was not willing to dismiss such systems of belief and practice outright. Furthermore, experiences during college with psychedelic mushrooms and LSD had demonstrated to me that such altered states are not always escapist. I had respect for daimistas and curiosity about their practices, along with fears and reservations, all of which I had to confront over the course of my research and fieldwork.

I was also fortunate to have excellent advisors, feminist geographers of religion who supported my interests in investigating the politics of this obscure religious movement. As I completed my coursework, I found several themes arising in my theoretical interests, particularly around how different ontologies and practices can communicate across their differences without seeking to destroy one another, and the role of the academic, and academic knowledge-making, in the world. I read critical feminist and race theory, and also tried to conceive of how I might decolonize my worldview and my research methodologies. As I began fieldwork, I was plagued with the following question: how do I use critical theory to create a dissertation that will land me an academic job and also offer useful reflections to the daimistas who have opened up their lives, their homes and their hearts to discuss with me their religious beliefs and practices?

There are plenty aspects of the internationalization of Santo Daime that are ripe for critical analysis, many of which are of concern to daimistas themselves, and actively discussed within daimista communities. For example, the fact that in order to practice

their religion without fear of legal persecution, daimistas must conform to expectations set not by their religious leaders, but by the state, which leads to certain practices (such as the use of cannabis in their religious rituals or day-to-day life) being discouraged, and in many cases, expunged from the ritual repertoire.

There is also the problem of various claims to authenticity, and what many scholars have discussed as the ‘whitening’ of the Daime. For me, the challenge when engaging those arguments is that they seem to lead to an inevitable moral split: either Santo Daime is a practice of heinous cultural appropriation of indigenous and Afro-Brazilian technologies and systems of practice that only serves to promote Euro-centric, progress-oriented modernization, or it is a practice that is healing the violence and trauma of racial oppression on spiritual and material levels. The deeper I got into my field research, the more impossible it became for me to say only one of these characterizations of Santo Daime is true. What I found was that these possibilities (for healing and for cultural appropriation) are equally available to practitioners, and if and how they engage them, at different moments, depends on circumstances.

Had I chosen to argue that Santo Daime is a practice of cultural appropriation (as well as an opiate of the people), I might have written a dissertation that would have garnered the attention of critical scholars. But to write such a dissertation, in my mind, would follow in the extractivist, colonial model of academic research: go to places where people do strange things, extract details of their knowledges and practices, publish your findings for the rational world to judge, get a job. And if I chose to argue that daimistas, who are now mostly white, middle-class folks living in urban or suburban areas of the

world, are only healing (and never reproducing) the violences initiated with European colonization, I would be equally remiss.

Fortunately for me as a person, though it was unfortunate for my career as an academic, I realized that the academic format of writing is not the best venue for expressing the strange and complex paradoxes that compose our everyday realities. Also, I realized that most of the daimistas I met did not value critical analyses of their religion abstracted by academics. And why should they, if these academics, like myself, were not invested in their church communities any more than the world of critical scholarship was invested in their spiritual system of self-study, healing and collective practice? Through my fieldwork, I learned that daimistas have their own ways of thinking critically and communicating about the struggles of living with respect for all living things, of keeping, as the originator of Santo Daime said, the *centro livre* (keeping the center free). Publishing academic articles about those struggles, which tend to generalize their practices to audiences that are far removed from their day-to-day lives, is not their way. So I had little to offer them. I began to wonder why I was trying to argue for space for spiritual knowledge-practices to be considered as legitimate within academia at all. Soon after, I decided that I wanted to shift my dissertation to a master's thesis.

What you have before is that thesis. My primary purpose, as I described above, is to discuss how both ritualistic and everyday practices of ethical religious self-cultivation are not simply opiates, but are forms of political self cultivation and expression, as well as collective world-making. I also hope to avoid generalizing about

what is considered morally or ethically appropriate in Santo Daime, and instead, enjoying all the specificity that ethnography offers as a methodology, describe to you how daimistas are engaging in collective projects according to their religious beliefs in two very different contexts: Oregon, USA and Santa Catarina Island, Brazil. Above all, for any academics reading who aspire to be engaged researchers, responsible to their fieldwork communities as well as their scholarly ones, I hope that the description of my own journey with this project will encourage you to continue to question the purpose of each of your projects, and what ends they serve; to find the place where your voice and your talents can be best put to use as you navigate the paths that traverse between worlds.

## Chapter 1

### **What do we know about Santo Daime? Reflections on its Origins, Internationalization, and Issues of Translation Between Religious and Academic Worlds**

#### History

This chapter will present one version of the history of Santo Daime: how it originated in the northwestern Brazilian Amazon (around 1930), and later (in the 1980s) came to be practiced by people across the world. My purpose in offering a description of Santo Daime's original historical-spiritual-material context is *not* to create a complete history of the religion and its internationalization (see Goulart 1996, Dawson 2007 and 2013, Labate & Pacheco 2011, Moreira and MacRae 2011). Rather, the following background information, drawn entirely from existing research and writing about Santo Daime, is intended simply to reflect the existing understanding of Santo Daime in academia. As such, what follows will give readers useful contextual information, like the names and backgrounds of key leaders in the process of internationalization, who will figure in my subsequent chapters. It will also serve as a basis for critical reflection on the limitations of research and scholarly commentary on Santo Daime.

I will begin by describing the lives and key challenges faced by the two primary leaders of the Santo Daime in the Brazilian Amazon, Raimundo Irineu Serra and Sebastião Mota de Melo, or *Mestre Irineu* and *Padrinho Sebastião*, as they are known in Santo Daime. As the progenitors of the lineage of Santo Daime that now exists

internationally, Irineu and Mota de Melo's sociohistorical contexts, personal experiences and religious practices, as well as their specific spiritual guides, have greatly informed what Santo Daime is today. By focusing on these personalities, which have significantly guided the shape and styles of international Santo Daime churches, I will describe how Santo Daime came to be practiced by people in contexts far from the Brazilian Amazon. This background will also be useful for understanding how the rituals that are today sacred to daimistas across the world became important to the practice.

### Mestre Irineu

Like many Afro-Brazilian men from the drought-stricken northeastern region of Brazil in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Raimundo Irineu Serra traveled west to the Amazon to find employment. In 1912, at the age of twenty, the man who later became known as *Mestre* (Master) Irineu to the followers of the Santo Daime traveled to the Amazon to make a living as a *seringueiro*, or rubber tapper.

The men who immigrated from the northeast to work tapping rubber in the Amazon often ended up in situations of indentured servitude. They were in debt from the moment they arrived, owing the companies that hired them for their boat tickets down the Amazon and still in need of equipment, clothes and food staples (Schmitt 2007). The drastic change in environment was also serious issue for immigrant *seringueiros*. Unlike indigenous rubber tappers, their bodies were not accustomed to the climate, the native insects or the viruses and bacteria common to the area. Adding to these dangers, the working conditions were physically treacherous and oppressive. It was typical for the managers of rubber harvesting operations to push indigenous and

Afro-Brazilian immigrant workers to compete against each other, threatening to take their jobs or their lives if they did not produce adequately or became insubordinate.

However, the rubber companies' needs for *seringueiros* during the Brazilian rubber boom coupled with northeasterners' need for work was so great that, "from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the First World War, in 1918, the population in Amazonia grew from 40,000 to 1.4 million people mainly due to...immigration [from northeastern Brazil]" (Schmitt 2007). During roughly eight years working as a *seringueiro*, Irineu traveled through Amazonas to the State of Acre, the western most state of the northwestern region of Brazil. When the rubber boom ended, it had drastic consequences for the economy of Brazil, the Amazon region, and the workers who had migrated there. As Arneida Cemin writes, "With the fall in the price of rubber on the world market, there came a crisis in the Amazonian extractive industry, which forced hundreds of rubber tappers, sick and with no money and belongings, to leave the forests and go to the incipient urban centers of the region" (39). As the rubber industry divested and left migrant workers behind, it was a difficult time for all the people in the region.

In 1920, Irineu joined the Brazilian military. He worked for the *Força Policial* (Military Police Force) in the states of Acre and Amazonas, surveying the borders between Brazil, Peru and Bolivia (Moreira and MacRae 2011). In the centuries after Portuguese colonization, this region remained very isolated from civilization (government centers, industrial centers, etc.) in Brazil up until the 20th century. The European and African descendants who settled there prior to that time, along with many



who have made their home there since, were reliant on their relationships to the indigenous groups of the region. Families became joined across these distinct cultural groups and continued to live in the Amazon, living in small settlements that were distinct from the tribes. These people of mixed ancestry living in the Amazon became known as *caboclos* in Brazil (*mestizos* in the surrounding Spanish speaking countries).

In the minds of civilized Brazilians of Irineu's time, *caboclos* were considered poor, backward people of the forest and discriminated against much like indigenous peoples (Schmidt 2007). Versions of a kind of tea, known across the world as *ayahuasca*<sup>1</sup>, had been used for centuries amongst indigenous peoples, in healing and ritualistic spiritual contexts that people across the world today refer to as *shamanic*. Over the centuries between the beginning of colonization and the 1920s, *caboclos* had developed their own forms of ritual involving various kinds of *ayahuasca*. In the areas of Brazil and Peru, where Irineu spent most of his time, these *caboclo/mestizo* ritual practices implemented aspects of indigenous *ayahuasca* healing ceremonies with popular Catholicism and Spiritualism (*Kardecismo*), which was very popular in Brazil in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The mix of these practices came to be referred to as *vegetalismo* (Luna 1986).

After years living and working in and across officially undefined territories, Irineu and a group of people who had been practicing rituals in the tradition of *vegetalismo*

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<sup>1</sup> Ayahuasca comes from the Quechua word for "vine of the soul." It is typically made a vine and the leaves of a plant that commonly grow in the Amazon, the biological-scientific names of which are *banisteriopsis caapi* and *psychotria viridis*, though other plants are also used in different traditions. The concept of shamanism was originally popularized by anthropologists, and is now broadly used to describe indigenous, caboclos and mestizo rituals that are oriented around intense spiritual and physical healing, typically led or facilitated by an individual *shaman* who is initiated in some form of esoteric spiritual/healing practice (Luna 1986).

founded a religious center in Brasiléia, a small border town in the state of Acre. The center had two names: *O Circulo de Regeneração e Fé* (The Circle of Regeneration and Faith) and *O Centro da Rainha da Floresta* (The Queen of the Forest Center), which reflect the variety of spiritual traditions that influenced its leaders. It also indicates one of the key challenges Irineu faced in his life as a spiritual leader and healer: creating a unified community of practice around the teachings he offered (Dawson 2007).

While taking ayahuasca at this center in a ritual context, Irineu had a powerful vision, a *miração*, in which a spirit came to him in the form of a woman, who initially introduced herself as Clara. She gave him instructions to keep a strict diet of plain, boiled manioc root and water, to abstain from sex and alcohol, drink *ayahuasca*, and venture into the forest alone for a period of initiation with her. When he did, she appeared to him numerous times, and revealed herself in the form of the *Lua Branca* (the White Moon), the *Rainha da Floresta* (The Queen of the Forest, a deity in the *caboclo* tradition), and the Virgin Mary. She presented him with a song that she indicated would be the first of numerous *hinos* (hymns) carrying religious teachings, and charged him to found a new religion, which would bring important teachings for the people of the forest.

Irineu became a well-respected healer and spiritual leader, and continued to develop his new religion with guidance he received from the *Rainha da Floresta*. By 1930, Irineu and several of his companions had officially divested from the ayahuasca-based community in Brasiléia and had moved to the town of Rio Branco, the capital of Acre. The spirit of the Divine Feminine who guided Irineu instructed him to consecrate

the *ayahuasca*, which involved a specific set of rituals undertaken during the preparation of the tea, and to call it *Daime* (which literally translates as “give Thee me”, a petition to divine forces for strength, love, etc. which are frequently repeated in their hymns). Thus, Irineu’s religion came to be referred to as Santo Daime (Holy Daime) by followers. According to Moreira and MacRae, the first Santo Daime ceremony took place in 1930 in Rio Branco (2011).

Given Irineu’s time as a *seringueiro*, and in the military, it is not surprising that Santo Daime ceremonies were regimented, and, initially, even hierarchical in their structure. The Catholic-inspired Santo Daime *fardas* (uniforms) and strict ritual practices were meant to create strong boundaries and a clear channel (made of people dancing and singing in harmonious unison) through which the Queen of the Forest/ Virgin Mary could facilitate healing in and through peoples’ open hearts. As I will detail in Chapter 3, many of the ritual formalities and structures that Irineu established are still in place, while some others have been changed, relaxed, or are practiced differently by different churches. For example, even during Irineu’s lifetime, he changed the Santo Daime *fardas* (uniforms). In the beginning they designated people’s individual rank within the church. However, before he died, Irineu declared that all the men in the church should wear the same uniform, and all the women the same as well. Irineu intended this to reflect the moral principle that all those within the church are considered equal.

While in the military, Irineu made connections with community leaders and state and local authorities, including the governor of the state of Acre, Guiomar dos Santos. When Irineu and his companions came to Rio Branco, Governor Santos was

“instrumental in safeguarding Irineu Serra and his religious community from the attentions of the local police force. In 1940, the Governor donated a tract of land to Irineu and his church, which today is called Alto Santo, which is still home to the original organization under which Irineu created the first Santo Daime church, *O Centro de Iluminação Cristã Luz Universal*” (Dawson 2007, 72). It is important to note that Irineu established this first Santo Daime center or church in the capital of Acre. While Alto Santo was remote with respect to the major centers of development in Brazil, it was considerably more connected to the rest of society than Brasileira or the Amazonian border regions where Irineu had previously lived. Furthermore, the relationship between Irineu and Governor Santos is evidence of how Santo Daime has, from its incipience, been enmeshed with the state and, due to the ritual use of the tea that was considered popularly and legally circumspect, required some kind of state recognition in order to exist at all. While the demographic of Santo Daime practitioners has shifted significantly in the years since Irineu led the Alto Santo community, the challenge of legitimacy that Irineu faced persists.

From 1940 until his death in 1971, Irineu received numerous hymns from the Queen of the Forest and other spiritual entities, which became the foundational teachings of Santo Daime. He and his companions continued to develop the ritual practices of Santo Daime, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 2. Irineu was welcoming to all people who wished to drink Daime. However, the primary challenge that he faced in his lifetime was creating a union amongst the *daimistas* (practitioners of Santo Daime) that came to follow his teachings (Moreira and MacRae 2011). This

challenge became unresolvable after Irineu's death, and Santo Daime split into several lineages, one of which came to be led by a *caboclo* named Sebastião Mota de Melo, known by daimistas across the world today as *Padrinho* (Godfather) *Sebastião*.

### Padrinho Sebastião

Sebastião Mota de Melo was born in the Juruá Valley in the state of Amazonas. Until late in his life he never left the Amazon. He was a canoe maker by trade, and a powerful spiritual medium beginning in his childhood. At a young age he was initiated in the *Kardecist*/Spiritualist tradition by a man named Oswaldo (Gialluisi da Silva Sá 2010). Oswaldo trained Mota de Melo to work with spirits. Some of these spirits were powerful teachers, while others were suffering spirits that needed healing themselves.

In 1958, Mota de Melo's family moved to a tract of land in Acre called *Colônia 5000* (Colony 5000), which was eight miles from Rio Branco (Schmidt 2007). Mota de Melo had suffered from a liver disease throughout his life, which became acute around the time of the move. Hearing of the Santo Daime works that Irineu was conducting at Alto Santo, Mota de Melo decided to visit Irineu and see if the ceremonies could heal him (Polari 1999).

When Mota de Melo came to his first Santo Daime work, in 1965, he had a profound experience. After drinking the Daime and dancing and singing for a short period of time in the ritual, Mota de Melo lost consciousness and fell on the floor. While he was unconscious spirit beings came to Mota de Melo and conducted a surgery on his whole body. Mota de Melo, who could not read or write, described the process to the writer and daimista Alex Polari, recalling how the beings removed his skeleton and

intestines, breaking his carcass into pieces and hanging it up. They removed several creatures from the liver and told Mota de Melo that these were the things that had been killing him. They reassembled his body, assured him that he was healed and departed (Polari 1999).

Such spiritual surgeries are not altogether rare in the context of Kardecismo or Santo Daime, but they are considered profound forms of healing. After this initial experience with the Daime, Mota de Melo devoted himself to Irineu and the new religion. However, due to the roads and the fact that they had to walk, the journey from Colônia 5000 to Rio Branco was long and difficult for Mota de Melo and his family. After several years of making the trek for Santo Daime works, Mota de Melo asked for Irineu's blessing to hold works on his own land. Irineu agreed, and Mota de Melo started his own Santo Daime church at Colônia 5000. Eventually Mota de Melo, his family and new initiates to Santo Daime at Colônia 5000 began to make Daime for their own rituals, which they also sent to Irineu at Alto Santo to demonstrate their respect and allegiance (MacRae 1992).

After Irineu's death, Mota de Melo was one of several men who claimed that they should be the leader of Santo Daime church Irineu had established. Of course, many people had been companions to Irineu and instrumental to the founding of Alto Santo before Mota de Melo had arrived, so his claim was resented by many. Before he died, Irineu had appointed Leôncio Gomes as his successor—a decision that was upheld by Irineu's widow, Dona Peregrina (MacRae 1992). For two years, Mota de Melo and the rest of the daimistas in Alto Santo and Colônia 5000 respected Gomes' authority as

Irineu's successor. Then, in 1973, there was a work in Alto Santo that was attended by Brazilian state authorities due to those authorities' concerns about Santo Daime. At this ritual, Mota de Melo insisted that he had received explicit guidance from the astral to raise the Brazilian flag as a sign of the possibility for mutual respect between Santo Daime as an institution and the Brazilian state. Gomes and Peregrina refused. After that work, Mota de Melo officially separated from the community of Alto Santo, and 70% of the people practicing Santo Daime in Alto Santo went with him. A minority remained loyal to Peregrina and *O Centro de Iluminação Cristã Luz Universal* (Dawson 2013).

After splitting from Alto Santo, Mota de Melo created his own Santo Daime organization, *O Centro Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal Raimundo Irineu Serra* (The Raimundo Irineu Serra Eclectic Center of the Universal Flowing Light), or CEFLURIS. Until 1980, this group of daimistas was based at Colônia 5000. During this time, Mota de Melo came to be called *Padrinho* Sebastião, *padrinho* (godfather) being a term of respect used within the Catholic tradition. By 1980, development in the region had increased and led to the deforestation of sacred plants needed to make the Daime. Daimistas also faced increased pressure from state authorities at Colônia 5000 because they had begun cultivating and using cannabis in their rituals. For these reasons, CEFLURIS moved to Rio do Ouro, in the state of Amazonas. The land that they moved to was a long abandoned rubber plantation, two days' journey from Rio Branco, where they would be less likely to be bothered by state authorities (Gialluisi da Silva Sá 2010).

However, in 1983, representatives from a corporation showed up and claimed the supposedly abandoned land at Rio do Ouro. Thus, Mota de Melo and roughly 70

followers had to move again (Arruda et al 2006). The community found a place in the deeper in the forest, off a tributary of the Purus River, called Mapiá, and relocated there. They called the new location *Céu do Mapiá* (Heaven of Mapiá). In Mapiá, Padrinho Sebastião and his followers built their homes and community infrastructure collectively, by hand, using wood from the forest and materials that they brought in by canoe from Amazonian outposts. They grew food and harvested rubber to bring in money for the community. Mapiá is still the home of CEFLURIS today, though it has grown considerably. Now roughly 1000 people live in Mapiá full-time. They receive swells of visiting daimistas from all over the world, particularly during the religious festivals which take place twice a year, around the winter solstice and summer solstice (Schmidt 2007).

In the decade between CEFLURIS' establishment in Colônia 5000 and the time they settled in Céu do Mapiá, the practice of Santo Daime in the CEFLURIS lineage began to grow. The most significant growth came with visitors to the Santo Daime communities from southern, urban Brazil and the broader developed world. These visitors were middle-class people who were interested in finding or creating an alternative religious scene. Inspired by the writings of folks like the anthropologist Carlos Castaneda and the psychologist Timothy Leary, these travelers were looking for new ways of being in the world using psychoactive substances, and they were curious about how the *caboclos* of CEFLURIS were using Daime for spiritual healing. They were known in Brazil as *cabeludos* (long-haired people), *mochileiros* (back-packers) and hippies. Mota de Melo was just as curious about these young people, and the plants



that they used in their own ritual ways, like cannabis, as they were about his community (Dawson 2013).

Based on his interactions with these travelers and his own spiritual guidance from dreams and visions, Mota de Melo decided that cannabis, as a sacred plant teacher that brought its own teachings, could be consecrated as a sacrament in the CEFLURIS Santo Daime church (Dawson 2013). Much like when ayahuasca was consecrated and given the name of Daime, cannabis, when consecrated in CEFLURIS churches, came to be called *Santa Maria*. This decision to introduce *Santa Maria* to Santo Daime works did not (and does not) go uncontested. There are numerous Santo Daime churches in the international CEFLURIS lineage that do not use cannabis in their rituals.

However, introducing cannabis was a small change to the practice of Santo Daime in comparison to Mota de Melo's resolution to allow visitors to his communities to take Daime out of the Amazon. When he became leader of CEFLURIS, Mota de Melo decided that Santo Daime should no longer have to exist in hiding (Dawson 2013). This meant, first, that he would he not hide the Daime itself from Brazilian law enforcement. It also meant that Mota de Melo would also allow those people who were called to start churches outside of the Amazon to take Daime and found their own centers, communities or churches. This is how CEFLURIS became the organization through which Santo Daime churches in urban Brazil, Europe, Australia, Africa, Japan and the US were initially organized. Thus, under the leadership of Sebastião Mota de Melo, and

later his son, Alfredo, Céu do Mapiá became the international spiritual home for thousands of daimistas.

The first CEFLURIS-sponsored Santo Daime churches outside of Mapiá were started near Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Florianópolis, between 1982-1987. These initial communities were located very close to urban centers, but typically on large tracts of forested land where the daimistas could also grow the plants needed to make Daime (Dawson 2013). The premise for these centers was very much based on the model of Céu do Mapiá: people would live together, make Daime, and engage in work to support both their church and environmental preservation initiatives.

The land on which Mapiá was built is collectively owned by a church-run organization. Families live in individual homes that they build, and often have forms of employment that do not involve the church, but many people in the community are engaged in daimista-run projects and initiatives. The protection of forests and plants is central to daimistas' ethical practice in these intentional Santo Daime communities—one of their principle beliefs being a respect for plants' power and agency. Both Mapiá and the Santo Daime centers that were initiated outside the Amazon in the 1980s were very successful in securing the protection of forests through government sponsored programs when they were first initiated. Yet today, all of the centers that opened as intentional communities in Brazil the 1980s—with the exception of the Ecovila São José—are now congregations made up of individual households that happen (in many cases) to be near the church. This reflects a shift in the global landscape of Santo Daime towards a style of worship that is more congregational and less communitarian.

As I will discuss later, I found in my field research that how daimistas ethically live and practice their moral principles in their everyday lives is very much influenced by how their lives are interwoven by shared projects beyond the actual church rituals. The communal projects that daimistas I talked to in Oregon and on the Ecovila São José were very different in nature, but in both cases the daimistas involved in these communal projects beyond their ritual ceremonies shared the conviction that what they did and do together is always in service of the Daime, and in the service of God.

Today, the only center outside the Amazon that continues to operate on the model of an intentional community is the one near Florianópolis, Brazil, initially named *O Céu do Patriarca São José* (The Heaven of the Patriarch Saint Joseph). The center was established in 1987, on 100 hectares of Atlantic Forest, which, like the land in Mapiá, is collectively owned. There are 20 family homes on the land, and roughly 90 full-time residents. Recently, the *Céu do Patriarca São José* changed its name to simply *Ecovila São José*—a change that reflects leaders' desires to continue to engage in ecological projects with partners who may not share their particular faith. I lived with the founder of the Ecovila, Enio Staub, and his family for three months of fieldwork during the summer of 2012. In the third chapter of this thesis I will reflect what I learned about daimistas ethical self-and-social trans/formation in the context of the Ecovila.

Mota de Melo visited several of the churches in the south of Brazil before he died in 1990—his first excursions out of the Amazon. He continued to promote the exchange of knowledges around healing and plant medicine. He and his son Alfredo, who took over the management of CEFLURIS in the later years of Mota de Melo's life and

continues to lead the international organization from Mapiá, approved the establishment of hundreds of Santo Daime churches around the world.

CEFLURIS, then, collects dues from all of these churches and sells many of them Daime. This commodification of the sacrament and its international sale and distribution has brought scrutiny on CEFLURIS and the Mota de Melos, both from within Santo Daime and from governments who consider the Daime to be an illicit substance. I will discuss these conflicts at greater length in Ch. 4, when I write about the court case between the Church of the Holy Light of the Queen and the US state of Oregon.

Jonathan Goldman, the leader of this Oregon church, knew Mota de Melo near the end of his life. He traveled to Mapiá numerous times beginning in 1988, received both Alfredo and Sebastião's blessing to create his church, and entered into institutional and economic affiliation with CEFLURIS. A decade later, he wrote the introduction to one of the most widely circulated books that exists in English on Santo Daime and Sebastião Mota de Melo, *Forest of Visions*.

As this brief overview of the Santo Daime's origins and internationalization demonstrates, the progenitors of this religion did not make moral claims to cultural or spiritual purity as the source of its authenticity and the basis for ethical practice. Rather, the Daime itself, and Santo Daime as a religion, was created and spread in response to sets of shared needs and mandates that came from a wide range of social and spiritual authorities. Due to doubts and challenges as to the validity of the practice of taking Daime, the founders of the religion had to struggle from the beginning to create the

social, cultural and legal possibilities for Santo Daime to exist in the rapidly modernizing state of Brazil. That struggle continues in Santo Daime churches all over the world.

### So, What Do We Know About Santo Daime?

What I have presented above are the bare bones of 80 years of history, framed in a traditional academic History-telling way. That is to say, it is framed around the lives of the individual men who created and organized the possibilities for a new religion to exist in the world. It is easy for us, as people formally educated in Western history and culture, to read this kind of a narrative. It relates a lot of *important* information (where, when, who, what, why) in a logical way. It's also easiest for me as a scholar to re/write this sort of narrative, as I can draw from other sources that support the validity of this academic work.

One purpose of such a chapter is for you to walk away feeling like you learned a lot about this religion, thus establishing my credibility (and your trust in me) as a source of information on Santo Daime. I'm also affirming the credibility of the books I have drawn on to compile the above history. I am claiming my legitimacy by situating my work in a body of existing work—all those things we scholars do alone (in our offices, in front of our computers) that are also social practices invested with and reproducing power. Together, now we know something about Santo Daime. We know something about what it is, where it comes from, where it is now, how that happened, and why.

However, and hopefully without destroying my credibility, with what follows in the remainder of this thesis, I hope to trouble any answer to that question (what do we know about Santo Daime?) that I have given you in what I've presented here. I do not mean

that the above narrative has no value—my point is quite the opposite. One of my goals in exploring how Santo Daime is ethically practiced in different contexts is to question why and how the value of such a logical, explicative history of Santo Daime persists, why and by what means the importance or value of such a limited story, such a specific way of knowing about this religion, is re-enforced.

The above history reflects a narrative of Santo Daime commonly recounted. This narrative is re/told by researchers who write about Santo Daime, and also by urban and professional daimistas who, coming to the religion from contexts that are often as removed from the plant-based spiritual/healing traditions of the Amazon as academia, seek to make sense of this strange and illegal practice. In fact, this anthropological and geographic history of Santo Daime, along with much chemical and psychological-scientific research on Daime and other forms of *ayahuasca*, has been taken up in labs, classrooms, state offices and legal courts all around the world to determine the validity and the worth of such substances and practices in late-liberal societies. Yet what is the relationship between the re/valuation of the religion that these narrations make possible and the *life* of Santo Daime?

Matthew Meyer deals with this question in his paper “Light from the Forest: Cultural Heritage and Religious Drug Use in Amazonian Brazil.” Meyer describes a visit to Alto Santo made by the popular Brazilian musician-turned-Minister of Culture, Gilberto Gil. He then analyzes popular responses to the visit. Gil visited Alto Santo in 2008 and advocated that the religious use of *ayahuasca* should be recognized and defended as an important part of Brazil’s cultural heritage—an indication of Brazil’s

religious diversity. The largest news and entertainment corporation in Brazil, Globo, covered Gil's visit and Meyer recorded several of the responses that were posted online in response to the story. A couple of the key responses from viewers were:

“It's a disgrace! Soon we'll canonize a pot plant. This minister has nothing better to do, he must have drunk a hallucinogen and gone flying.”  
and

“...we want to know when they will make cocaine cultural patrimony,” wrote one Ronaldo Travecos. “Please advise, cocaine expands my mind too!!!”

As Meyer writes, the assumption that these comments reflect is that “all psychoactive drug use is recreational, immoral, and irreligious, if not actually diabolical” (Meyer 3).

Thus, state-supported and mainstream discourse around ayahuasca could be said to fall into two camps. First, there is the camp that is for the cultural and legal recognition and legitimation of ayahuasca, represented by Gilberto Gil as the Minister of Culture. Then, there is the camp that, for any number of reasons, wants to deny or eliminate the possibility of such legitimation. But, as Meyer points out in the end of his article, both of these dominant narratives (for recognition or for elimination) are based on the assumption that ayahuasca is a drug, a (more or less) dangerous substance. The Minister of Culture and those for recognition simply believe that the substance and those who use it deserve to be exceptional and exempt from the law, whereas the people who comment that the Minister must be high do not. In this sense, neither position actually encompasses, or acknowledges, the reality of the Daime as it is understood by the people who organize their lives in relationship to it. While it may be useful to daimistas to have the endorsement of the Minister of Culture (and indeed for

many such a recognition is a source of pride), Meyer ends by suggesting that there are dangers to accepting this recognition.

This thesis picks up where Meyer's paper leaves off. Drawing on my participant observation in Santo Daime church communities, I seek to define the dangers of liberal recognition for Santo Daime and daimistas, given that their beliefs and practices are, in many ways, nonliberal (they do not share the assumptions about space, time and people on which liberal societies operate). I will also describe how daimistas in these churches negotiate their relationships to liberalism. I insist that these struggles are not only moral or ethical struggles, but also political.

#### Ethico-Politics and *Subjectivation*: The Politics of Religious Practice

The false division between the religious/moral (as a set of private concerns) and the political (as public, common concerns) has shaped how scholars (not to mention politicians, lawyers, and scientists) have understood (and thus legislated, litigated for and studied) the *political subject* in liberal societies. This subject, in nation-states, has always been a bounded individual moving across a terrain. This notion of the individual is clearly linked to the subject that is/was the colonizer, who made such globalized mapping of civilized and noncivilized subjects possible. As Asad points out, it is also linked to the notion of individuals having an "essential identity, something unique and private to each, an essence separating him or her from other individuals, as well as from the visible significations they share" (70).

This notion of the essential and bounded individual as *the* political subject (the subject vested with power) has fueled hundreds of years of political philosophy that



frames 'politics' in universal terms that cater to this bounded individual. Of course, those who have written this kind of political philosophy have been highly educated and therefore extremely cultivated individuals conditioned within systems of dominant power. However, in the past 50 years, new political theorizations of politics have gained popular attention within the academy.

There now exists a well-established tradition of critical political theory within the social sciences that has challenged this notion of a universal, bounded subject of power from numerous positions, including decolonial, feminist and critical race theory. In this thesis, I draw on critical feminist political theory, and particularly on the work of Saba Mahmood, in order to frame my discussion of the politics of daimista practices.

In *Politics of Piety*, Saba Mahmood argues that lived and embodied ethical practices cannot be prescribed from the position of the scholar, they must be investigated and understood on their own terms for each collective of actors living in relationship to a defined moral code. For feminist political theorists like Mahmood, these embodied practices, all of which are conducted within a socially circumscribed moral context, are the means by which a subject creates/enacts herself, and, to a greater or lesser extent, re/creates or re/inscribes her reality, her social and material world.

Mahmood writes in response to Foucault's theorizations of ethical cultivation of the self, or *subjectivation*, in which the subject is not an individual actor that maneuvers around or interacts with the forces of power relations as they choose (as a person might make his/her way through an obstacle course). Instead, according to Foucault's theory of subjectivation, the specific dynamics and conditions of a person's subordination

within a regime of power are also the conditions by which they come to know themselves and cultivate agency—their ability to act in and through the conditions of their world (Foucault 1978, 2008).

Thus, in this line of feminist theory, a person's agency, the ways and extent to which they experience themselves as themselves, is determined by the embodied ways in which they negotiate their ethical relationships to social rules and norms. This intervention—the direction for scholars to pay attention to *how* people do this ethical work—may seem like a slight shift in attention, but it has an extraordinary impact on how a theorist understands politics.

It's not only legal rules and moral norms (or those who issue them), or even long-standing societal stratifications based on race, gender, class, age, religion, or ability, that dictate who a person is, or what they can be. It is how people practice their lives in response to these rules and norms, how they practice and perform themselves, that re/creates subjectivities and socio-political structures. Mahmood in particular, in her work with women of the Egyptian piety or mosque movement, pushes feminists to consider normative liberal assumptions within feminism, and thereby understand that political agency is not only determined by if and how a person subverts dominant norms, but also “the variety of ways in which norms are lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consummated” (Mahmood 2005, 23). I engage these theorizations of the ethico-political, and the subject whose formation and expression cannot be separated from the re/constitution of their social world, because these concepts resonate very much with how a person conducts herself and becomes ethical within Santo Daime.

Based on my research with daimistas, they are very aware of the difference between their understanding of the deeply inter-relational self or the individual (which includes spirit actors and guides as compelling figures in their figured worlds) and the liberal concept of the individual, driven by his free will (and, perhaps, juridical discipline) alone. The daimista ethics of “self and social transformation” might be ambitious, given the challenges that feminist theorizations of the ethico-political have demonstrated for any kind of large-scale social change. However, they share a similar pulsing, inter-dependent, scale-defying premise with these feminist theories: the rules and norms that we accept (or reject, or waffle over) and the ways we practice relating to and disciplining ourselves and each other based on those rules—that’s what re/constitutes reality, that’s what re/creates social and political structures and possibilities...and generates the qualities of any given space. It is particularly important to understand how ethical religious practice, as a practice of self-and-world-making, is political because much of the academic research on Santo Daime is comprised of researchers who, not unlike the Brazilian Minister of Culture, advocate for the recognition of the value of Santo Daime, as an *ayahuasca*-based religion.

As Talal Asad describes in *Genealogies of Religion*, when scholars use terms like ‘religion’ (or ‘new religion’ or ‘ayahuasca-based religion’), we are referencing a broad set of categories that was created to support the surveillance of ontologies that were not amenable to the kind of knowledge (and world) making that was considered legitimate in the Enlightenment (Asad 1993). By studying cultural phenomena like ‘new’ or ‘ayahuasca-based religions’, and describing them in ways that are intelligible to

modern forms of knowledge-making, researchers have been and continue to be instrumental to maintaining the religious/secular (false/true, illegitimate/legitimate) binary. Such research tends to also align itself with either the liberal struggle *for* or *against* the legitimation of Santo Daime. In doing so, such research makes it difficult for ethical religious practices to be understood as political, unless they are explicitly articulated to a legitimate source of authority within the liberal state—of which academia, with all its expert knowledge, is certainly one.

### Conclusion

If forced to choose, I would certainly say Santo Daime is a real and legitimate practice in the world. However, my hope in this thesis is to get beyond this binary altogether. In the chapter that follows, I will use auto-ethnography (first person descriptions taken from my field notes), as well as direct quotes from interviews with daimistas, to describe the core moral principles and ethical practices of daimistas as I learned them by participating in Santo Daime religious rituals in Oregon and Brazil. Obviously, my observations and understanding of these moral principles, as well as the rituals themselves, are totally subjective—shaped entirely by my own life experiences, cultural background and way of seeing the world, the individuals with whom I spent the most time, as well as those whom I interviewed. I do not intend my summation of the rituals and moral principles to represent any universal truths, even for the small communities where my research was based. There are many conflicting views within those communities, I am sure. What follows is simply a compilation of the aspects of

daimista ritual practice that communicated what I came to understand as the core moral principles that the daimista rituals seek to convey.

In the chapters that follow, employing a similar style, always speaking from my own experiences and quoting daimistas with whom I spoke, I will present the political challenges that members of Santo Daime churches in Oregon and the Ecovila São José face when attempting to live ethically in the world. These ethnographic descriptions of how daimistas collectively live their shared projects in everyday practice will demonstrate that the form and possibility of daimistas' ethico-political practices is very much contingent on where the church is located.

## Chapter 2

### Place, Interdependent Selves, *Firmeza*, and Space in Daimistas' Ritual Practices

*When I came to the Santo Daime community of the Ecovila São José, it was like being washed up on a beach after nearly drowning out at sea in a storm. It was like waking up in a new life.*

*In this storm, I lost everything that affirmed who I understood myself to be. Three days before I was scheduled to fly to Brazil to do fieldwork in the Ecovila São José, my partner of four years asked me not to leave. Without warning, he made my leaving for three months of research into a moment of crisis for our relationship. We had weathered depression, deaths, long distance, unemployment and two years of graduate school together. Not only did we live together, we had also been shopping for a house and had combined most of our finances. So when he told me that he had been with someone else and I needed to choose between the future we had planned together and going to research this religion in Brazil, it was a blow—an unexpected betrayal in a vulnerable moment. Although my commitment to him and my desire to be with him had informed everything I had done in the four previous years, I told him I couldn't stay. I had worked hard to gain the trust and support of my advisors and people I had yet to meet in Brazil, as well as several funding sources, to create the possibilities for this research. I needed to see it through. And with that, the relationship was over.*

*The next night, someone broke into our house and stole our computers. I hadn't backed up my hard drive in over six weeks, and most of what I had prepared for fieldwork, along with all of my work from the end of the semester, was lost. I didn't have the money to buy a new laptop. The next day, after the police left our house, a friend brought me a netbook she had used for two summers of fieldwork, and I felt again resolved to go.*

*Still, I was in a state of shock when I found myself the next day at the airport. I had never been to Brazil. I spoke very little Portuguese. I had no concept of what my life was now, no imagination of what it might be in the future, and none of the work I had prepared to give me a sense of credibility and structure as a researcher (articles, research plans, previous interviews). I had the address of a hostel, the address and phone number of the Ecovila and my language school where I would study Portuguese, and a backpack with my notebook, my friend's netbook, charger, and some toiletries. I hadn't even put an extra change of clothes in the backpack.*

*After 16 hours of travel and two layovers, our plane was re-routed due to weather and we landed in Curitiba, Brazil. But my bag didn't make it. I am sure the airport employees had never seen a woman weep with such a total sense of loss over a misplaced suitcase. I tried to tell them that it wasn't just my suitcase. It was everything. I*

*had lost everything that gave meaning to my little life in the past three days. But between the blubbing and the language barrier, I'm not sure it translated.*

*That problem of translation didn't evaporate when the storm subsided, or when I learned Portuguese. My old life, and the sense of grief and betrayal I felt when it was taken from me, had no place in this new life. It was not that no one was curious about this past life, but after I arrived in the Ecovila it was simply impossible to explain what had happened before.*

*There was no shared context for the space and time in which that other life had unfolded. My partner, with whom I had built that life and whom I had trusted deeply until a week and thousands of miles before, was reduced to an asshole if I tried to tell the story of my old life. The person who would get caught up with someone like him (i.e. me) seemed naïve and misguided. I had compassion for both of us, and I knew how the matrixes of circumstances that stretched far beyond us had shaped us. So I could not tell any story that made us into one-dimensional characters...even to myself.*

*Fortunately, the people who gathered around me when I washed up in Brazil didn't ask me to tell them any story about my life beyond the Ecovila—beyond the shared context in which we found ourselves. Instead, they met me where I was, made sure I had what I needed, and said, "Vamos trabalhar. Vamos estudar." (Let's work. Let's study.) The "let's" is important, because I found that my work was considered an opportunity for each and all of us to study. For us, this study was not just my study of Portuguese or my study of their community, but a shared study of interdependent life according to the Santo Daime.*

### The Work and the Study in terms of Santo Daime

First, I want to be explicit about some of the word play I invoke at the end of this opening passage, and in doing so begin to explain the concept of *interdependent selves* in the Santo Daime. Daimistas' religion and ritual practice, their church and what they do in it, is considered not only a place of worship, but also a place of healing and of study. In their rituals (called *trabalhos*, works) daimistas make a study of themselves-in-the-world and the-world-in-themselves. The Daime is the agent that facilitates this study, the teacher, but the ritual context of the work is the schoolhouse, the place that gives order to the mystical lessons that teacher has to offer. In this chapter, drawing on my participant observation in Santo Daime works in Brazil and the US, I will describe how daimistas' ritual practices facilitate their self and social transformation. It is important to

begin by clarifying what gathering for *work* and *study* mean in the context of the religion.

The study daimistas make in their ritual work is always attendant to interdependence and relationality. All things that daimistas come into contact with on earth, including plants, rocks, earth, air, water, other people, animals, spirits, etc., are considered to have a unique energies and purposes. Each thing is sovereign in its own right, and the Divine is embodied in each thing. In fact, it is inappropriate to call them *things*, which in English suggests an inert, separate quality. From the daimista perspective, it would be more accurate to refer to all *things* (water, rocks, plants, people, spirits) as *beings*.

The fact that the Divine is embodied in each being does not mean every being is reducible to the same. The extent to which beings are part of a universal whole is the extent to which they are distinct unto themselves. The mystery and beauty of the world lies in the complex *relationships* between all beings— interdependence. The study that a daimista makes with the Daime is a study of how to “compose yourself in your place,” in order to exist harmoniously with all beings.

The core moral principles and ethical practices of the Santo Daime work, then, are oriented towards shaping how daimistas relate to themselves and other entities in the world. Daimistas go to works, drink Daime, and sing in unison in order to practice relating to themselves, each other, and whatever beings arrive during their works with *firmeza* (firmness, responsibility) and *amor* (unconditional love). The ritual form that this practice, or study, takes, is very specific.



## The Structure of the Work

In this section, I will focus on the form and structure of the Santo Daime works and hymns that elucidate the moral principle of *firmeza* (being composed in and responsible to one's place) in Santo Daime. As I described in Chapter 1, the originator of Santo Daime, Mestre Irineu, established a strict ritual code for the religion, which included prescriptions as to how the church *salão* (literally: big room, but best translated as hall of worship) should be prepared before a work, and how people were to dress and act in Santo Daime rituals. As Arneida Cemin writes in "The rituals of Santo Daime: Systems of Symbolic Constructions," "the organization founded by Irineu takes on the form of an 'army' (the followers, who are organized into male and female 'battalions', call themselves 'soldiers of the Queen of the Forest'): 'There is in the whole context of group life [...] a standardizing 'example and order' that is the main principle" (Cemin 2010, 42). To many people living in liberal, secular societies, the kind of order practiced in Santo Daime works evokes fear of oppression—following a disciplined regimen being the opposite of liberty. However, it is by committing themselves to working in this ordered fashion that daimistas find freedom.

The place where works are held is the *salão*, the hall of worship. A Santo Daime *salão* does not need to be located in an independent building explicitly devoted to the purpose of works. In the United States, many daimistas hold works in rented spaces. The two Santo Daime churches I visited in Brazil (in Lumiar and on Santa Catarina Island) were six-sided glass-paned buildings, with glass-paned doors that enter directly

into the *salão*. The concrete floors of these churches are painted with lines that indicate where people stand to dance in six different sections: three for men and three for women. In rented spaces, the lines delineating the men's and women's sections are often marked on the floor using tape.



*The salão of the church located in the community of the Ecovila São José.*

In Santo Daime, there are three basic styles of ritual practice: the *concentração* (concentration), the *bailado* (dance), and the *cura* (healing). These works serve different purposes and are scheduled at different times during the ritual calendar. The practice of each of these works has a slightly different ritual format, as well. The *bailado* is a dancing work, in which people gather to sing entire collections of *hinos* (hymns) and dance in unison. The purpose of this work is to praise and celebrate the beauty of life,

the Divine, all divine beings, and the community. So the nature of these works is celebratory. The idea is that the movement and singing voices create a current of harmonious energy around the altar (which, as I discuss later, becomes the literal “center” that is “free” in the work). The *concentração* and the *cura* are seated works. In these works people sit and sing in chairs along the rows where they would, in a *bailado* work, dance. The purposes of these works are self-examination and healing, respectively, and while there is no dancing, the same current of energy is thought to exist through the voices and the intention of each person, which are oriented towards the cross at the center of the work.

In an interview with Aline, a daimista who has lived in the Ecovila São José and has been drinking Daime for 17 years, she described the importance of the current of energy that people make with their bodies in the ceremony as follows:

“In the first place, [taking our places in the work] reunites us. We make a current. Then, we are not left alone. Like this we establish, at least, a circle. At least, right? This closes the energy [of the current]. It’s funny, nature makes the same thing in every biological being, right? For the smallest being to be able to function, the first thing it has to establish is a little membrane—oops!—there’s God at work!”

She continued, explaining how the beings in the work come together to make deeper studies of the self and the interconnectedness of reality possible,

“With each one of us doing their small part, everything works. It is an organism, Katie! The organism of the work. There [in the work] we have a collective vehicle in which to make our cosmic journey. And with that we can go farther with the force of the medicine, which is itself a divine being that, if we allow it to manifest, takes us and connects us with the forces of the forest. Because Daime is pure leaves, vines, that grow in the forest, you understand? So it connects us directly with the land on which we live, the earth that turns in the greater universe.”

Here, Aline indicates how the ritual consumption of the tea and the structure of the ritual practice work in tandem to create the possibility of people coming together and working in a way that is both deeply personal and collective. As the female leader of the church in the Ecovila explained, this is because the healing facilitated by Daime rituals is not focused on healing any one entity or being. The practice of Santo Daime rituals is to transform how beings relate to one another. In an interview, Beth said:

“[Working with the Santo Daime] heals the relationships between people. It eases the work of bridging the distance between people in their relationships. Then, knowing the way that I can show up better with myself, I can be better with my neighbor, my friend, my sister or brother, my children.”

By coming together to drink Daime in these three ritual settings, daimistas are creating a current in which to celebrate, study and heal their relationships to themselves, each other, and all beings.

Regardless of the style of the ritual, all works begin with prayers. Then the men and women form separate lines to receive the Daime, and when everyone has been served, the work begins. Throughout the work, the leaders will either decide to continue or pause the work to have periodic services of Daime. If there are enough people who know the hymns, the works continue when the Daime is being served. If the church is small, the whole group will often take a pause to receive another service of Daime. Daime is served roughly every 2-3 hours. *Concentração* works and *curas* typically last no more than 6 hours. *Bailado* works can be up to fourteen hours, though there is often a break for an hour or so in the middle of the work.

Unless they need to communicate about logistics (either regarding the work itself, or personal/family matters, like childcare), men and women do not verbally or physically

interact over the course of the work. There is one altar in the center of the room, and there are chairs at the altar. In the dancing works, the leaders of the works are in line, dancing, and musicians occupy the chairs at the altar. There are always a couple of chairs vacant, as well, for anyone who feels the need to pray during the work to come and sit near the cross on the altar. During a *cura* or a *concentração*, the leaders of the works are seated at the altar, and any musicians who are not leading the work play from their respective seats. Since music is the means by which Santo Daime's spiritual teachings are conveyed, it is common for leaders within Santo Daime churches to also be accomplished musicians.

Leaders within the church may step out of formation depending on specific jobs that they have in the work. For example, there is always a man and a woman acting as guardians for their respective sides, observing the whole *salão* and assisting anyone who might be having a particularly difficult time. An experienced daimista might also play an instrument or becoming a *puxador/a* (literally, a 'puller', someone who starts the hymn and sings loudly and clearly enough for everyone to follow along).

In works, daimistas wear *fardas* (uniforms). Both men and women have two uniforms: white, and blue. The blue uniform for men is navy blue pants, a belt, a white, button-up dress shirt, and a navy blue tie. The women's blue uniform is much like the men's, and consists of a long, pleated navy skirt, a white button-up shirt, and a bow tie. Men's white uniform is white pants with two green stripes along the sides, a white button-up shirt, blue tie and a white suit coat. The white uniform women wear is a long, pleated white skirt, green sashes, and brightly colored ribbons that hang from the left

shoulder. In a way, these outfits resemble Catholic school uniforms, however the women's white uniform (worn during celebratory *bailado* works) also includes a crown, to honor the Queen of the Forest.



*Daimistas standing in formation at the end of a work.*

The blue uniform is usually worn for seated works, though it is also sometimes used in dancing works. Visitors to the church, or people who have not undergone the ceremony in which they become an official member, wear white or light-colored clothing.

When everyone has arrived at the work, each person is assigned their place by the head guardian within the church. One's place within a Santo Daimé work, literally, is the place they are told to stand when the work begins. The structure of people arranging themselves around the altar is to create a current of energy, a membrane, as Aline

described it, in which they can study how to better relate to themselves and all beings. Ideally, the person remains in their place in the current until the work ends. Preferably, the person does not move from that place, except to drink Daime, during the work. However, drinking Daime can make this very difficult.

“Se componha em seu lugar” (Compose yourself in your place): Firmeza in Santo

#### Daime Works

During my first works, for example, I would stand and sing along for about ten hymns (somewhere around 45 minutes). Then I would begin to feel extremely nauseous. It was not just that room would spin, but more like my whole body would stop working properly. I felt hot and cold all at once. I could not read the words on the page or focus my attention. It felt like all my energy had left my body, and would often nearly collapse. It did not matter that I wanted to stay in the line and sing, I was forced to lie down. I also had to vomit—a lot. One of the daimistas who helped me during my first, excruciating experiences in her church explained to me that my reaction was good, that it was an indication that the Daime was working on me, healing me, clearing me of *coisas ruins* (bad things).

When I asked this woman after these first works about how everyone else could remain dancing and singing, and what she thought it meant that I got so sick, she smiled. She refused to make a diagnosis or interpretation. Instead, she told me that some people never get sick with the Daime, but that many people do. It is seen as a form of cleansing or healing not just for the individual, but the whole current in the work.



“As for being in your place,” she said, “that’s a good thing to think about, but don’t worry about it. You are being introduced to the Daime, and it is clearing you out so that you can receive the lessons that are already inside of you. You are getting your *cura* (healing). Right now that is your place. No one is judging you, and you should not judge yourself. We are glad you are doing your work!”

As I continued to attend the works, I didn’t feel as sick. Eventually I could stand and dance for the entire work. But I remembered what the woman told me towards the end of my visit in the Ecovila. When I was getting ready to leave, I told a few of my friends about how my life in the US had fallen apart before I came to live with them. I was nervous about the return. My friend Lila’s response was similar to the daimista who had helped me during those first works. She said, “Katie, I know that was hard, but it was good, too. It was the beginning of a big *cura* (healing) for you. Now you will have so much more clarity about where you need to be and what you need to do.” This kind of clarity and ability to be with one’s own suffering, as well as being able to be with others through their suffering, is what daimistas refer to as *firmeza*.

The concept of *firmeza* requires a bit of translation from Portuguese to English. It literally means firmness, but conveys not so much fixity or rigidity as reliability, and, within Santo Daime, a total presence in and devotion to one’s place. In neither of the above situations were the daimistas to whom I spoke suggesting that I ignore the pain that I was in (emotionally or physically), or to just hang tight until it was over. Instead, they affirmed the pain itself as a teacher, a healer, and told me that the pain was a sensation that I should be with and attend to. My place, in the works and in life, was



painful at that moment. But the daimistas with whom I lived encouraged me to be receptive to that hardship rather than try to defend myself against it. My friend pointed me to a passage in a hymn in Padrinho Sebastião's *hinario*, partly because of what it says about love at the end. Yet I find that this hymn encompasses what daimistas conveyed to me about *firmeza*.

140. Falar Que Está Com Deus

Eu sou filho de Deus  
Sempre vivo no meu canto  
Encostado a esta verdade  
Do Divino Espírito Santo

Quem disser que tem verdade  
Se componha em seu lugar  
Espera a chamada divina  
Para ir se apresentar

Falar que está com Deus  
É muito fácil de dizer  
Mas cumprir seu mandamento  
Aí é que eu quero ver

O amor sem firmeza  
É um fogo sem calor  
É um pensamento fraco  
E é um corpo sem valor

140. To Say That You Are With God

I am a child of God  
I always live for me  
Next to this truth  
Of the Divine Holy Spirit

Whoever says they have truth  
Compose yourself in your place  
Wait for the divine call  
To present yourself

To say that you are with God  
Is very easy to say  
But to obey his command  
That is what I want to see

Love without firmness  
Is a fire without warmth  
Is a weak thought  
Is a body without worth

*Firmeza* is a thoroughly relational and place-based practice. It requires a dedication to examining the kinds of relationships a person is engaging with one's self and the beings and forces that constitute one's place, and how to create relationships that are harmonious, and, as I will discuss in greater detail below, based on unconditional love. Daimistas have a concept for the isolated individual, the self-serving self. They refer to it as the *eu inferior* (the inferior I, or self). There is also the *eu superior*

(the superior I, or self), which is like one's consciousness beyond the mind, the self that is aware of its interdependent nature.

The inferior self and the superior self are present in every person. The concept of composing one's self in one's place means situating these selves in ethical relationship with the conditions that present themselves. Again, these conditions are both due to one's individual choices and aspects of reality that come from beyond—like the *mandamentos* (mandates) mentioned in the hymn, demands that are specific to the context. Composing oneself with *firmeza* requires that a person be aware of the relationship between their *eu inferior* and their *eu superior*, and all the other beings and forces present. This begins to capture the complexity of an ethical system that is relational and focused on practice—one that does not espouse a set of rules or moral guidelines that is applicable universally, in all situations.

The first works I attended were certainly disturbing to me in their structure, and the way they invoked both Catholic and militaristic imagery that struck me as patriarchal and controlling. However, by talking to daimistas about the hymns and continuing to attend the works, I found that strict structure and freedom are not antagonistic in Santo Daime works. Boundaries and freedom in the context of Santo Daime are thoroughly co-constitutive. But this means that freedom, as understood within Santo Daime, is a specific kind of freedom. Freedom, in Santo Daime, is not the liberty to pursue an individual's desires. Rather, it is a kind of freedom that is thoroughly bound to the conditions of one's shared life context.

## The Ethics of Relating with *Firmeza*

Even the process of arriving at a Santo Daime work is framed in reflexive terms. Daimistas do not simply find the Daime, the Daime also finds them, and together they find a way to work together, or not, depending on how the relationship goes. This relationship between a person and the Daime, which is deeply connected to the relationship that the person learns to cultivate to herself and other beings (human, animal, plant, spirit) beyond herself, is at the core of Santo Daime rituals. Within Santo Daime, it is considered highly inappropriate for anyone to seek to influence that relationship.

Therefore, any form of proselytizing, including inviting others to work with the Daime, is discouraged in Santo Daime churches. Of course, daimistas can talk about their own practices if they so choose, though cultural and legal pressures often keep them from doing so publicly. Aline explained how she understands the Divine in the tea of the Daime to be working to call to people who it can benefit as follows:

“The medicine of Santo Daime puts out a call. You come to the work—because we don’t invite people, right—and what is this rule about not inviting people? It’s that I can come to a work and I can tell someone about everything that happened in the work, but those words that I use cannot possibly express what truly happened to me. And what is more I think is that if I tell you what happened to me...what do I know? About you, about me...and what would happen if in you [if you drank Daime]? So, people come because they hear the call, not the invitation.”

This explanation reflects again the study daimistas make of firmeza, and of interdependence between all things that are in relationship.

The work for anyone who comes to the ritual, then, begins with that person’s conscious decision to enter into relationship with the Daime. The terms and duration of

the relationship (whether they only drink Daime once, a few times, or attend works for the rest of their lives) is for that person and the Daime to discover together. However, during my fieldwork in the Ecovila and in the US I observed that daimistas respect others' autonomous processes of ethically cultivating their relationship to themselves and to others—whether that involves Daime or not. Daimistas that I spoke to in the US and Brazil repeatedly indicated that the Daime is not for everyone, nor did they believe it was the only way to connect to the Divine.

In short, the work/study of Santo Daime is the ongoing process of learning to be attentive to our interwoven-ness, and ethical practice is acting in ways that honor the relationships that constitute our worlds and our *interdependent selves*. In Santo Daime, the ritual work is a delineated time and space of focused ethical practice with the Daime. This ritual practice is also a space of study, in which daimistas learn how they approach the rest of their lives. As Beth, the *madrinha* (female church leader) in the Ecovila São José explained to me, “You can experience lots of beautiful and terrible things in the work, but what really matters is how you apply those teachings in your day-to-day life.” However, even the most experienced leaders of Santo Daime churches told me that they never know what is going to happen when they drink Daime. The purpose of the work is to practice together how to respond and relate, regardless of what happens. According to daimistas, the most appropriate response to anything (in the ritual work and in life) is not constricting and reacting, grasping for control, but responding with as much calmness as possible.

Work (whether in or outside the church) is not just a job to be done. It is an

opportunity for daimistas to practice *how* they go about fulfilling the responsibilities in life that they assume, as well as those that find them unexpectedly. The study is an ongoing study of how one ethically carries out the relationships in which she becomes entangled, either through her own will or due to forces beyond her control. Though there may be a specific goal associated with one's work—like finishing an irrigation system for a plant nursery, or getting a paycheck so you can support your family, or, in the context of a church work, being able to remain standing as the final prayers are said—daimistas, in their ritual work/study, submit themselves to practices that enforce their understanding that the *process* of arriving at those goals is much more valuable than obtaining the goals themselves.

#### Space: The ethical practice of keeping the center free

As I discussed in my explanation of daimistas' *work* and *study*, the moral principles I have outlined above: interdependence and firmeza, cannot simply be obtained. Taking the Daime alone, or simply coming to church, does not ensure that one is engaging in ethical practice. None of the daimistas I met said: "OK, I have been drinking Daime for \_x\_ number of years, now I have *firmeza*. It's done." Rather, daimistas' moral concepts can only be lived in ongoing, shared practices.

According to feminist geographers, these lived, ongoing practices are extremely important to how people both understand and experience places and spaces. In daimistas' insistence that my place was not just the place they assigned me in the ritual, but also the place where my body told me I needed to be (heaving on the floor), they affirmed a relational notion of place that is dependent on a number of things. Doreen

Massey, similarly, suggests that geographers consider places not as fixed containers that can be apprehended by being seen or surveyed, but entangled, contingent; places that are “particular moments”, in social-material relations, some of which are “contained within the place; [while] others stretch beyond it, tying any particular locality into wider relations and processes in which other places are implicated, too” (Massey 1994). I took Massey’s 2005 book, *For Space*, to the Ecovila São José, and read it often in the midst of attending works there. I was struck by her insistence that “Space does not exist prior to identities/entities and their relations,” and her assertion that, “For the future to be open, space must be open too” (11-12). These concepts resonated deeply with the kind of space the daimistas with whom I lived were trying to maintain in their ritual works—a space that is actually open, not fixed, closed or possessed by any one entity, but defined work of all who are present.

In 1970, Mestre Irineu issued a decree, which leaders of works typically read aloud during their ritual of concentration. It is interesting that the text of the decree itself demonstrates how the subtle art of making space is an ongoing practice in Santo Daime, one to which daimistas are always returning. Irineu begins by invoking his authority as President of the Center of Irradiance of Divine Mental Light, and proceeds to outline moral principles and ethical actions within Santo Daime. Irineu writes that those “who drink this Holy Beverage must not only try to see beautiful things, but must also seek to correct their faults, shaping in this way the perfection of their own personality to take their place in this battalion and follow this line. If they act in this way, then they could say, I am brother” (Irineu Serra 1970, translation mine). He continues in

this way for a while, as a president giving instructions to his followers regarding how to keep the order as he has created it. He writes that, “all must place themselves in formation, both the men’s and the women’s battalion, because all have the same obligation.” But this is where the decree departs from any kind of official document I have seen. In the midst of his instructions Irineu pauses—almost as though he interrupts himself in the middle of the decree. That same sentence finishes as follows: “all have the same obligation, and who has obligation... The truth is that the center is free, but who takes responsibility, must account for it, nobody lives without obligation and who has an obligation, always has a duty to fulfill” (Irineu Serra, 1970, translation mine). Those ellipses, and that pause, insert a “truth” that, in liberal thought, can only be understood as paradoxical. I consider this sentence the crystallization of the daimista ethics of freedom-in-and-through-responsibility.

In Santo Daime, then, it is *through* submitting oneself to the disciplined practice of cultivating responsible relationships in the context of one’s particular place that a person creates the possibility to experience freedom. Freedom, in this sense, is not the individual, will-driven freedom to decide what one is going to do with one’s self or body or many talents and desires. It is not individual liberty. Rather, it is the freedom from one’s individual desire or impulse to escape discomfort (whether it be a response to something horrible, or beautiful or simply boring). In practicing the latter kind of freedom, one is able to create a “center” of the self and the group that is “free”, or, through which unconditional love can exist as the basis for relating. I will return to this concept of unconditional love as that which keeps the center (of the ritual work, as in any

relationship dynamic) free. In subsequent chapters, I will discuss how daimistas in the Ecovila São José and the Church of the Holy Light of the Queen engage in individual and collective practices based on maintaining their relationships with *firmeza* and unconditional love.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the forms and practices of the daimistas religious rituals. I also described the moral concepts that the daimistas whom I met exhibited and emphasized in their ritual practices: interdependence, *firmeza* and unconditional love. In the chapters that follow, I will elaborate the different ways in which daimistas living in the intentional community of the Ecovila São José on Santa Catarina Island, Brazil, and the congregational community of the Church of the Holy Light of the Queen in Ashland, Oregon, live these moral principles in their everyday practices. Observing the differences in how these principles are ethically practiced demonstrates how the cultural and political geography of a particular place shapes how the people who live there can embody their religious beliefs.



## Chapter 3

### **Everyday Ethical Practices in the Ecovila São José, a Santo Daime Community on Santa Catarina Island, Brazil**

#### Introduction

This chapter begins with a more detailed orientation to the Ecovila, including a description of the community. Then I explain how I came to understand the collective, everyday, embodied practices that were of the greatest ethical importance to the daimistas with whom I lived there. Finally, I discuss these everyday, embodied practices in connection with the moral principles of relating with *firmeza* and unconditional love, which I introduced in the previous chapter.

#### The Ecovila São José

The Ecovila São José is the only collectively owned and operated Santo Daime intentional community that exists outside of the Amazon. It is located on Santa Catarina Island, fifteen miles north of the capital city of the state of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis. Founded on 100 hectares of land in the sub-tropical Atlantic Forest of Brazil, the Ecovila is now home to 90 people.

Santa Catarina Island, with 42 white sand beaches, is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Brazil. It was declared the NY Times tourist destination of the year in 2009 (Sherwood 2009). The state of Santa Catarina is, demographically speaking, whiter and wealthier than many Brazilian states. Its capital city, Florianópolis, is not only

the center of government, but also of technical industries. Florianópolis is also home to a federally sponsored university, the Universidade Federal da Santa Catarina (UFSC).



*A photo of Santa Catarina Island, of the Lagoa da Conceição and several surrounding neighborhoods.*

The Ecovila is located on the northern end of the island, which is less developed than the south. It takes 1-2 hours to arrive at the Ecovila by public transportation from the city of Florianópolis, and 20-30 minutes to get there in a car or on a motorbike. The land of the Ecovila is covered in sub-tropical forests, and a network of footpaths

connects the individual homes.



*One Ecovila house.*

After purchasing the land in 1987, Ecovila leaders made agreements with the state government to ensure the land would be protected. Therefore, like Mapiá and the other Santo Daime centers initially founded outside of the Amazon, the Ecovila São José is situated in a state park. According to their agreement with the government, those living in the Ecovila can only build on 1/4 of the land. The rest must remain forest. This means it is harder for the Ecovila to grow, both in terms building projects and acquiring new land, but it ensures that the plants and the forests will remain. To Ecovila leaders and residents, ensuring the life and agency of the plant teachers in the forest is of the utmost importance.



The community is not identified by signage of any kind, which made getting there the first time in a taxi a bit of a challenge. There are two dirt access roads that lead dramatically uphill from the paved road and into the community. There are a few personal driveways off the dirt roads, but ultimately both of the roads lead to small, dirt parking areas not far from the church. Monkeys and toucans flit through the trees in the Ecovila, and the sound of a car is rare.

The house where I lived, Enio and Beth's house, is situated on a slope, and aesthetically and architecturally speaking, very modern in style—straight lines, big windows that looked out over the forest, an open floor plan, wooden floors, concrete walls, and a cantilevered staircase that leads up to Enio and Beth's suite. There were altars with sacred statues and images from all over the world in each room. The kitchen has a dishwasher, gas stove, and refrigerator, and there was a washer and dryer off the basement of the house.



*At home in the Ecovila.*

The basement houses an industrial kitchen where Enio's son-in-law and Beth's daughter made granola and granola bars that they sold to friends and were beginning to market to local cafés. Not far from the laundry area, in a clearing before the forest, is

one of four geodesic domes in the community where community members cultivated numerous sacred plants, including cactuses, that didn't grow in the Atlantic Forest.



*A view of the forests surrounding the Ecovila, and one of the community's geodesic domes.*

The church and the common buildings are up the hill from Enio's house. There is a community education building and a church office. There is a community kitchen, operated mostly by Beth's daughter, Iana. It is like a cantina: a small kitchen with a giant gas stove and a window and door that connected it to a covered area with 6-8 picnic tables. During the festival times, when the community saw an influx of visitors, Iana fed roughly 100 people two hot meals per day out of this kitchen. Along with Enio and Beth's house and the church itself, the communal kitchen is one of the prime gathering



spots. I spent a lot of my days in the community running back and forth between that kitchen and Beth and Enio's house.



*In the community's kitchen.*

Further up the hill, there are the other geodesic domes, which were renovated while I was living in the Ecovila to create a hostel that they called Macacos House (The Monkeys' House). Beyond that there is the swimming hole, plant nursery and *casa do feitio*, the place where Daime is made 2-3 times per year during the ritual called *feitio* (literally: fabrication, making). Other than that, the community consists of small homes nestled in the forest, connected by well-trodden paths.

It is important to note that this community would probably not exist at all if a Brazilian federal investigation of the Santo Daime center in Mapiá had not concluded

that Santo Daime is a legitimate religious practice, and their consumption of ayahwasca, thereby, legal in the country (Labate 2005). Otherwise, it would not have been possible for Enio and his family to found the community, and take Mapiá as their model for ethical living. This will become important in the next chapter, when I discuss how daimistas living in Oregon are embodying their ethical commitment to Santo Daime through their devotion to securing a safe way for their religion to exist without interference from the federal government. Because that process was already, for the most part, completed in Brazil, the daimistas who became part of the Ecovila community could focus on the collective projects they chose to engage on their own land. However, it is also important to note that the Brazilian government's decision to protect daimistas' rights to produce and consume their sacrament is conditional, and subject to revisions. Investigations into the religion and how the government may need to limit daimistas' authority to self-regulate seem to arise every few years (Labate 2005). However, amongst daimistas living in the Ecovila, concerns about the legal status of the Daime was not a theme that galvanized collective projects, the way it has been in the US and other countries. In the Ecovila, the daimistas I met were focused on cultivating sustainable practices amongst themselves, on their collectively owned land.

Because their large, extended family was always around and because Enio and Beth hosted spiritual leaders and daimistas from all over Latin America, their home was a gathering place. It was more like the community hub/hotel than a private home. But it was an excellent place for me to observe how their community and church operated, and take part (mostly as a listener) in many philosophical conversations about the

Daime and the community that would have otherwise been difficult to me to find as a non-initiated visitor. However, as an ethnographer, I think it is important to recognize that these conversations reflected the views of a small group of daimistas living in the community. While everyone I interviewed and quote or reference here has been drinking Daime for over ten years, their interpretations of their collective projects and how those relate to their religious values do not represent those of all the people in the community.

I am sure there are many daimistas living in the Ecovila or attending the church of the Patriarca São José whose practice of Santo Daime has led them to understand their everyday lives in ways that were not represented in the conversations I observed at Enio's house, or in my interviews with leaders in the church. The same is certainly true of my conversations with the daimistas living in Oregon whom I interviewed about their participation in Santo Daime works and the legal proceedings. I do not wish to pretend that either the ecological projects of the Ecovila São José or the project to ensure the legitimate status of Santo Daime in Oregon represent the totality of either of these Santo Daime communities' collective ethical struggles. However, I do believe there is value in examining how the daimistas I interviewed undertook self-identified collective projects in each of these places, and how they understand these projects to be ethically aligned with their religious values.

### Healing in the Ecovila

*I had come to conduct fieldwork in the Ecovila São José to learn about how daimistas practiced healing. Yet even after I had settled in and was really beginning to be able to speak in Portuguese, I was having a hard time finding out about healing in the Ecovila. In my research before coming to Brazil, I had read about Daime being effective for the treatment of alcoholism and other kinds of addiction. As someone with a long family history of alcoholism, that idea was fascinating to me. But no one I asked*



*about it seemed to share my interest—or, at least, they didn't have much to say. When I asked Beth, the female leader of the community, if she knew of cases where Daime had been helpful for healing alcoholism, she told me that there was one man in the community who was definitely an alcoholic, but he had been taking Daime for years, and it didn't seem to be helping with his drinking.*

*One day, a few weeks after I had arrived, I was helping Iana in her kitchen. Iana was Beth's daughter. She had a beautiful gravelly voice and knew every Santo Daime hymn there was. She loved to sing as much as she loved to cook and to laugh, which I think was what made it possible for her to keep the community kitchen going when there were over 100 people to feed lunch and dinner. Day after day she worked in the kitchen, and she was always singing and smiling. I tried to help her by chopping vegetables and keeping things organized, and running dishes and messages between her kitchen and her mother's. I'm not sure how much help I was to Iana in terms of preparing food, but I think she found my questions entertaining. We laughed together a lot, and just in following her around I witnessed humility and joyful service that I will refer to as an example of these qualities for the rest of my life.*

*While sorting dried beans in her kitchen one afternoon, I was telling Iana about my interest in the possibilities of healing in Santo Daime. She was nodding, looking down at the sink. When I looked over at her, my train of thought came to a complete halt. We worked in silence for a little while. Then I said, "Iana, what about you? If you could write about any kind of healing that is happening through Santo Daime, what would it be?" She turned off the water and wiped her forehead. She looked over at me and then out the window at the forest that surrounded her house. She said, "Here in our community, we are trying to heal the relationship between people and nature."*

### Ethico-Political Negotiations in Healing the Nature-Culture Split

Before I left for fieldwork, I was inspired by stories of treating cancer and addiction with practices that involved Santo Daime-style rituals. However, I had not considered the differences between such studies (and medicalized uses of Daime) and the way that daimistas living in community do not think of the self as an entity that is distinct from or extricable from its environment.

As I have already discussed, Santo Daime hymns indicate that plants, animals and non-human things to be teachers infused with divine consciousness. Within the Santo Daime cosmology, these entities are beings to be respected, rather than objects without agency. In contrast, liberal systems of governance, which, through the duration

of European colonization and modernization, have become the dominant systems around which American societies are ordered (Marcos 2009, Mignolo & Escobar 2010), consider natural elements to be inert things. This dominant view has worked to justify a one-way relationship between humans and our environment that is based on the exploitation and consumption of natural resources (Escobar 2008).

It is this relationship of dominance, which is often taken for granted as natural or inevitable, that daimistas in the Ecovila São José seek to heal through their collective spiritual and ecological practices. It is not simply that the people I talked to in the Ecovila believed that they should protect nature, but that by living with nature in a respectful way, they were healing both the natural environment and themselves. As Beth, the *madrinha* of the Ecovila, explained to me in an interview:

“Our connection with nature always puts us in contact with the original nature of life, the nature of all things. Through nature, by living in this place where we live—in the forest, in community, in the Ecovila—we are in touch with the source of all health. In nature we have all beings, spirits of nature, of the wind, of the earth, of fire, that help us connect with our true being, inside of each one. Through being with nature, we can recover ourselves.”

Therefore, Santo Daime practitioners’ conception of nature and ethical ecological practices are characterized by radically different assumptions and values than those that underlie most liberal, modern environmentalist initiatives.

Daimistas in the Ecovila, like deep ecologists and feminist political ecologists, understand human ‘culture’ and material ‘nature’, to be entangled and co-constituting (Rocheleau 1996, Ingold 2000). In a radio interview broadcast by the state university, the Ecovila’s Council President, Christian Curti, explains that “Capitalist society considers nature simply raw material. [...] Our idea is to live in a place to which we have

a relationship that is, in the first place, physical, and in the second place, but no less important, spiritual” (<http://administracaopublica.org>). Here, Curti articulates how the Ecovila community seeks to foster a cooperative and co-constituting culture-nature relationship that is both spiritual and material, and which is distinct from capitalist notions of environmentalism. I will refer to the Ecovila daimistas’ practices that seek to heal the rift between human culture and material nature as their *ecological ethics*.

In interviews, Ecovila residents described their ecological ethics as a responsibility to “live in harmony with nature.” Guilherme, who, like many residents, moved with his family to the Ecovila from a city in the southeastern region of Brazil, described how, “Many people find Daime because of their love for nature, which is then enhanced by the consciousness of the importance of the plants for our rituals and for our well being.” He described his commitment to an ecological way of life by describing personal sacrifices and numerous projects that he has been a part of since moving to the Ecovila:

“We left our dog with a friend in Brasilia to avoid disturbing the wild animals here. We planted 50 thousand palm trees, which are indigenous fruit plants endangered by deforestation and aggressive harvesting. [...] The forest here, and everywhere, needs to be loved, respected and taken care of, because, as the hymns say, it gives us everything that we need!”

It is a rule in the Ecovila that no family or individual is allowed to keep domestic pets. As Guilherme describes, this is primarily so that native species are not disturbed, but it is also because they recognize that domestic animals not kept for food purposes are mostly a source of trouble, especially when families live at a close distance to one

another. Guilherme also mentions one of the Ecovila's largest collective sustainable projects, the reforestation of fruit-bearing palm trees on their land.

Over the past twenty years, the cooperative daimista community has grown and developed its infrastructure, connecting with non-religious environmentalist groups around the island and coordinating with the state government. Along with their initial collaborations with the state to ensure that the land on which they live will always remain forested, they have applied for and received several grants from the government. In 2010, the Ecovila worked with the Minister of Justice in Florianópolis to organize a \$45,000 reforestation project on their land, through which they planted 50,000 indigenous acai palm tree seedlings.



*Photos from the community's presentation of their reforestation project.*

As part of this reforestation project, the Ecovila created a nursery in which to cultivate the palm seedlings, a rainwater-based irrigation system, and a plan for sustainable harvest of the palm's acai fruit, which will eventually be a source of income for the community. They also received funds to attempt to begin growing food on their land using an agro-forestry model. These projects are considered ongoing efforts towards a "permaculture lifestyle," as one of the Ecovila's PowerPoint presentations

described it. That concept, *permaculture*, sounds promising to anyone from a state or environmentalist organization that hears about the project. But all of Ecovila's ecological efforts are oriented, above all else, towards maintaining an ethico-political *daimista* lifestyle. Such a lifestyle has always entailed cultivating an ethical way of being in and relating to the rest of the world that involves practices with plants (including but not limited to the Daime) that environmentalist funding agencies, the state, and expert academic accounts of the religion struggle to understand beyond the dichotomy of strange-and-exceptional or strange-and-reprehensible.

State-given money, and the recognition of Santo Daime as a permissible (if not valuable) Brazilian cultural practice, is, thus, appreciated by residents of the Ecovila. In the period when the community was established, such a favorable legal interpretation of their practices was necessary for the community to exist without interference. However, the leaders in the Ecovila, having been arrested in their travels around the world for their religious practice, are very aware of the differences between their notions of what is right and wrong, and those of any state. There was a shared sense amongst leaders of the Ecovila that support from, or involvement with, state projects was strategic. It served an important purpose, but ultimately the state is a gatekeeper that limits the possibilities for daimistas to live out their ethico-political practices, including healing the human-nature binary.

#### Everyday Ethical Relationships in the Ecovila

In the preceding chapter, I elucidated how daimistas' ritual practices affirm interdependence and relationality between all beings. I also described how they

cultivate themselves through their rituals to respond to the infinitely different forces and beings they might encounter with *firmeza*. Daimista ethics, then, both in their ritual works and beyond, emphasize studying one's particular place in order to relate to other beings with *firmeza* and unconditional love.

As Iana described to me, one of the central ways that daimistas in the Ecovila live ethically in accordance with the moral teachings of Santo Daime is by working to heal the relationships that weave themselves together with their families and the beings that populate the physical world that supports their existence. In my interview with Iana, she also explained:

Mestre's hymn reminds us, we should 'do good and do no evil' and also 'orange tree laden with delicious oranges is like each person.' These hymns clearly speak to the respectful relationship for all living beings. It is to be found within the proper relationship of unconditional love. This is what it means to put into daily practice the teachings in which we believe. The focus should be on daily life, when faced with difficult and challenging issues."

As the collective projects I described above reflect, daimistas in the Ecovila have a shared commitment to relate responsibly to all non-human as well as human beings in their environment. However, I also observed them making concerted efforts to relate to one another, and to themselves, with *firmeza* and unconditional love in their day-to-day lives.

When Iana talked about *unconditional love*, she did not mean that she and her brothers and sisters in the Ecovila community sought to interact *only* with positive affection and adoration. As she says in the quote above, the point of unconditional love is that it can withstand conflicts and challenges. Based on what I learned through my observations and interviews in the Ecovila, unconditional love is a practice of allowing

respect, compassion and humility (qualities of the *eu superior*) to guide one's approach to their relationships, rather than letting judgment, fear or personal convictions (the *eu inferior*) get in the way.

The moral principle that I witnessed daimistas' in the Ecovila most consistently put into practice in order to align with the possibility of unconditional love was *perdão*, forgiveness. It may seem like it needs no explanation, but I think there is an assumption in secular, liberal societies, that there are behaviors that are justifiably unforgivable. But the Santo Daime hymns that elaborate the principle of forgiveness are clear that it is the highest form of justice. The following hymn was received for (dedicated to) Enio and his family, the leaders of the Ecovila, by Alfredo Mota de Melo, the current leader of CEFLURIS. It speaks to the importance of forgiveness in the ethical practice of Santo Daime:

25. Espada do Perdão

Estou aqui, eu vivo aqui  
Que o Meu Pai me mandou  
Estou representando ele  
E o Nosso Mestre Ensinador

Vivo aqui, vou por ai  
Com ordem Superior  
Sempre cantando louvando  
O mestre que nos ensinou

Vos ensino com Amor  
Vamos buscar na miração  
O conforto Nosso Pai  
A firmeza Nossa Mãe

Alinhados com as forças  
Somos sábio batalhão  
Na batalha quem mais corta

25. Sword of Forgiveness

I am here, I live here  
Because My Father sent me  
I am representing him  
And Our Master the Teacher

I live here, I go there  
With the Higher Order  
Always singing, praising  
What the master has taught us

I teach you with Love  
Let's seek in the miração  
The comfort of Our Father  
The firmness of Our Mother

Aligned with the forces  
We are a wise battalion  
In the battle the thing that cuts most

This hymn offers a very different concept of the kind of “army” that daimistas form, in service of the *Rainha da Floresta*. It is not an army that seeks to convert the rest of the world with their one, true doctrine, but a battalion armed with forgiveness.

In the Ecovila, the daimistas with whom I spoke conveyed an enormous amount of respect the difficulty of practicing forgiveness (in the service of aligning with unconditional love). Yet as I got to know the families who lived there together, I watched them practice forgiving each other, and themselves, with regard to their mistakes and shortcomings—including ones that seemed unforgivable, like families divorcing, and the horrible things that befall us as people that are incomprehensible, like death.

One advantage of living in the Ecovila for an extended period of time was that I got to know some of the families very well. By contrast, in my relatively short fieldwork trips to Oregon I did not develop such deep relationships with the daimistas who lived there and attended the Church of the Holy Light of the Queen. What impressed me about the families I came to know in the Ecovila was their devotion to working through their struggles. There were several families that attended the church in which the parents had been married and divorced, but parents, children and, in some cases, new partners, lived in the community and attended the church together. When I asked one woman who was in the process of divorcing from her husband, how this was possible, she explained:

Yesterday I was thinking about this—yesterday in the work—I thought that just as I am separating from my husband as a wife, we still continue being a family, you know? ...Because my relationship, although it is with my ex-husband, is a new relationship that is just beginning. I need to establish it as such. But I don't have



to hide that sometimes it is difficult, that sometimes I want to run away. Because I see it like this: the medicine [the Daime] helps us to confront what we really are carrying inside ourselves, in our hearts, in our minds.

Another woman, who had been living for many years beside her ex-husband and his new wife, in order for their adolescent daughter to have the support of both of them and the community where she had grown up, said this:

This spiritual path... is not an easy path. My own relationship [with my husband] has had a difficult history, right? But during that time [of the separation] by taking medicine [Daime] it was easier, but I think that was because it made me more conscious. I had this...understanding of why I was passing through that, because I had something to learn from that. I was cleaning out my self with that experience. I think that understanding is the difference.

For this woman, living in the community and having the support of the Daime, as well as the support of other daimistas, made it possible for her and her ex-husband to continue to forgive each other, and to continue working together to raise their daughter.

In another interview, a woman spoke to me about how practicing Santo Daime was a way of coming to terms with mortality. It was a way of forgiving death. As she said, a way of “practicing to die, because everything in this world dies.” She explained that working with the Daime had helped her understand that, in practice. In her own words:

Because I have been through experiences, you know, where I passed through death. I had my second son who died. [...] It was 11 years ago. He was just two. And in addition to that, I also saw that sometimes when a person is very sick, and they come for a healing work... I could see that the person will heal themselves, but the healing is the death of that sick body, you understand? That body dying there is that person healing themselves. That’s the great healing. Only this is really scary, right?

These examples illustrate the great challenges of people’s everyday lives in the Ecovila—the kinds of great difficulties people face everywhere. What was amazing

about the way these women spoke to me was how they did not rationalize the painful experiences. They spoke of them as real, and difficult, scary and painful. But being present with this pain, and with each other's pain, with unconditional love and with forgiveness, that was how they practiced healing themselves and each other in their day-to-day lives.

Therefore, I found that the ethical practice of Santo Daime seeks to transform interpersonal and *social* ways of being in the world. This does require that people individually practice these new ways of relating. As one community elder said to me: "Change depends on each one, my daughter. Just as you take the drink [Daime], if you don't want to change, [...] then there is no way. There the drink can give you a vision, but it's not going to give you the transformation. That is up to each of us." However, in the same interview, this grandmother made it very clear that the possibility of collective change also depends on people working together, as they are trying to do in the Ecovila community and in the Santo Daime rituals. This is what I mean when I insist that Santo Daime has an ethics of *self and social transformation*. The interdependent self that is the subject of Santo Daime and the social reality through which that self operates cannot be separated.

### Conclusion

As I discussed in the theoretical interlude preceding this chapter, ethical practice is political. It is political because the moral principles and ethical practices by which people abide and structure their lives also determine how their reality will be ordered. Such ordering structures shape where and how power operates within a given social-

material system. The effects of power and disputes over how power manifests *are* politics. Therefore, daimistas practice a *politics of self and social transformation*, as I suggest in the title of my thesis. I have sought to illustrate daimistas' ethico-politics of self and social transformation here by describing what I learned about daimistas' ethical practices in my fieldwork in the Ecovila São José.

## Chapter 4

### **The Church of the Holy Light of the Queen vs. the State of Oregon: The Ethico-Politics of a Spiritual Battle in US Federal Court**

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I will elucidate how daimistas in Oregon undertook a court case against the federal government as a kind of collective, ethical project, similar to (and also inherently different from) Ecovila residents' project of, as Iana described it, "healing the relationship between human beings and nature." Yet before diving into a description of the Church of the Holy Light of the Queen or the case, I want to reiterate how their project to pursue legitimation is political, in terms of the two theorizations that I found most helpful for the purposes of my research.

In traditional conceptualizations of *politics*, a court case against the state would be considered *more* political than whether or how a group of people chooses to live in relationship to the spiritual-material beings they revere in the earth's natural features. Because politics is often understood to be that which explicitly involves branches or offices of state or federal authority (the police, the courts, elections, legislation, etc.), it may be tempting for someone reading this study to think that this final chapter of the thesis is where I really get down to a discussion of politics. However, that is not how I view the relationship between the Ecovila residents' commitment to living out their religiously founded ecological ethics and the Oregon daimistas' commitment to securing

legal recognition of their right to practice Santo Daime in the US. Rather, the way I see it, in both cases daimistas are struggling, politically, to live ethically according to their religion.

As Mahmood argues, embodied practices, all of which are conducted within a socially circumscribed moral context, are the means by which a subject creates/enacts herself, and, to a greater or lesser extent, re/creates or re/inscribes her reality. In the case of daimistas, as well as people who are devoted to other religious practices, like the women with whom Mahmood conducted her research, their moral context is based on the teachings they receive through their religious practices. The actions one takes, the choices she makes, the ways she dresses, the way she regards other things/beings, and how she treats them—all of these things are political. These practices and choices are political not because they challenge the state or dominant secular norms outright (though in the case of Santo Daime in both the US and Brazil, they do). Rather, they are political because inhabiting, reaching for, consummating, and living (not only resisting or subverting) cultural norms and values are necessary for world-making. Following Mahmood, I argue that the creation and maintenance of multiple and diverse worlds of practice is always political.

In this chapter, I will discuss the world of the Church of the Holy Light of the Queen (CHLQ), and the projects that have given unity and meaning to that daimista world through people's everyday and collective practices beyond their church rituals. CHLQ ritual practices, aside from being held in a different kind of *salão* (a yurt in someone's backyard rather than a permanent structure on collectively owned land), are

very similar to those of the Ecovila residents. They keep the same ritual calendar, they use Daime that comes from Brazilian forests, which is made in the same ritual fashion as that of the Ecovila, daimistas in Oregon wear *fardas* (uniforms) that are either made in Brazil, or made to look just like those of Brazilian daimistas, and they sing hymns in Portuguese. Despite all these similarities, I will argue that these two church communities are actually different *figured worlds*.

In *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, Dorothy Holland draws on the dialogic theories Pierre Bourdieu, Mikhail Bakhtin and Lev Vygotsky, to explain the interwoven nature of self and social, ethical and political, and elucidates how they play out contextually through what she describes as processes of identity-making that takes place in and across *figured worlds*. According to Holland, identities are never fixed, though they have strong tendencies that are re-enforced through practices and negotiated according to the structures of the figured world in which a person's identity takes shape. A *figured world* "is a landscape of objectified (materially and perceptibly expressed) meanings, joint activities, and structures of privilege and influence—all partly contingent upon and partly independent of other figured worlds, the interconnections among figured worlds, and larger societal and trans-societal forces" (Holland et al, 60). The concept is useful for discussing how subjects can inhabit multiple figured worlds—even hold multiple identities—and these worlds may exist in tension with each other that cause the subject to do things that appear strange to people who do not share her position in and across/through these multiple worlds. The concept of agency in these

figured worlds is very much like Mahmood's: self-cultivation is socio-political, contingent, and re/created in everyday practices.

Beyond their religious rituals, the daimistas whom I met in the CHLQ were very much bound to each other and their world through their practices of healing, and through the shared effort they had engaged for roughly ten years to secure federal recognition of Santo Daime as a legitimate religion. In this chapter, I will describe the daimista community based around the CHLQ in Oregon. Then I will discuss how the process of achieving legal recognition became a collective ethical project for daimistas there, in their ongoing work of seeking to create the possibility for the kind of healing that they find most meaningful and transformative, based on their social and cultural context. As I have said previously, none of the following descriptions or analysis is meant to be a complete representation of the CHLQ community. It is simply what I observed in my fieldwork and interviews with members who were involved in the court case.

### The Church of the Holy Light of the Queen

The Church of the Holy Light of the Queen is a Santo Daime church that is located outside the small city of Ashland, in southwest Oregon, 15 miles north of the California border. Ashland is in the foothills of the Siskiyou and Cascade mountain ranges, and the hills in that area are still heavily forested. There are numerous creeks and springs in the area surrounding the city. Ashland is known as the home of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and it is considered a very liberal hub in a conservative, rural area of the state.

Jonathan Goldman had long been an acupuncturist in the Northeast when he was introduced to the practice of Santo Daime in 1988 by a Brazilian psycho-therapist and friend named José Rosa (Goldman 1999). He and his family moved to Ashland in 1990, where he opened an acupuncture practice, and he and his wife started the Church of the Holy Light of the Queen in 1993 (Goldman 2009).



*The Church of the Holy Light of the Queen yurts outside of Ashland, OR. Images from Church of Daime documentary (Cohoon & Jackson 2009).*

When I visited the CHLQ for the first time, in January of 2012, the church was meeting in two adjacent yurts in the Goldman family's backyard, which is outside of Ashland on hilly, forested land. The CHLQ is made up of roughly 40 people who regularly attend works, who come from various parts of Oregon. Only the Goldman family actually lives on the land where the church is housed, and most people drive there for works and then drive home, or to houses of daimistas in the Ashland area. The church, like the Ecovila, has an orientation protocol for newcomers, which includes asking questions about background with substances and psychological issues, as well as prescribed medications, and church leaders seek to make newcomers and people



from out of town welcome. They find guests to the works, including curious researchers like myself, places to stay in the Ashland area at little to no cost.

After their ritual works, Oregon daimistas (like daimistas in the Ecovila) spend time cleaning the *salão*, relaxing and eating together before they go to their respective homes. However, the majority of the daimistas who attend church together in Oregon do not live in close proximity, own land together, or work together in ways that are integral to their day-to-day lives. Thus, their church is more congregational than communal, unlike the Ecovila and the community in Mapiá, in Brazil. This distinction, as well as the nature and expression of secularism in each country, and the form of the process of federal legitimation daimistas had to pursue in each place, all figure importantly in the different collective projects and ethical ways of life daimistas have chosen to pursue outside of their religious rituals. Each of these factors play an important role in shaping what is possible in each of these daimista figured worlds.



*Image of the salão of the CHLQ, inside the yurt. Image from the Church of Daime documentary (Cohoon & Jackson 2009).*

## Secularisms and Santo Daime

Santo Daime is still generally thought of as a strange religious practice in Brazil, and therefore it is considered even stranger in the United States, where the Daime cannot be claimed as a cultural heritage and the majority of daimistas do not speak Portuguese in their day-to-day lives. As I discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, when the religion appears in the mainstream media, it is often discussed in derogatory terms, as a *seita* (cult) of people taking drugs. This reflects one way in which the mass media in Brazil spreads fear-based secularist values. As William Connolly explains in *Why I am not a Secularist*, secularism in the Western context is the organization of public and private space around a Kantian-inspired system of values based around Kant's "rational religion" (30). This rational religion is a significant departure from previous dogmatic practices enforced by societies' ruling classes, because it is based on morality rather than theology. However, it also "places singular conceptions of reason [...] above question. [...] It sets up (Kantian) philosophy as the highest potential authority in [...] guiding people toward eventual enlightenment. [Therefore, it also...] delegitimizes [...] non-Kantian, nontheistic perspectives in public life" (30). Of course, such a rational religion, by necessity, delegitimizes theistic perspectives on public life, and it has been extremely influential in the establishment of Western democratic societies, like the US and Brazil, and establishing and maintaining constructs of public, secular space (Asad 1993, Calhoun 2011). This kind of secularism is the dogma of representative, democratic governments, and the ruling classes of these societies (including the dominant media), also take this rational religion as their moral foundation.

By assuming the culturally, linguistically and cosmologically strange practices of Santo Daime as their moral foundation, daimistas in the United States set themselves apart from the standards set by that rational religion. As Jonathan described in a public interview, when he was opening the church, his teacher, José Rosa, advised him to: “Do it as close to the way they do it in Brazil as you can.” Jonathan explained some of the difficulties of following that advice as follows:

If you told me that I would spend a good portion of my life wearing a navy blue tie and navy blue slacks, wearing a white dress shirt, I would have said ‘Mr. Psychic, keep your day job’ [...]

and women wearing crowns and green ribbons and...they are very, very beautiful, and they are very strange for this culture. They are strange for Brazil! [...]

But we decided we were going to do it that way because what do we know?

And, it’s really good for Americans to know nothing. Because Americans are thieves.

We are thieves. We have built a country, a culture, an economy on being thieves [...]

Americans go to a country, we take their resources, we take their culture, we adapt it.

Americans go to some place for a week and decide they know everything about it, write a book about it, get famous off the misery of others. That’s what Americans do, as a culture.

There are positive sides. We’re innovators and we’re brave and we create new things. [...]

And it was really good for Americans to come and speak like two year olds and be clueless. It is really good for us, from my point of view.”

Obviously, for Jonathan, part of the individual and collective transformation that is so ripe and necessary for daimistas steeped in the US dominant culture involves cultivating humility. From my own experience of drinking Daime, that opportunity to be humbled

and awe-struck by the physiological impact of taking the tea is very real. Yet the differences between the broader cultural context of the United States and Brazil make this “very strange” religious practice even stranger. The fact that the processes of purchasing land in this country, along with cultural norms around the value of individual property ownership make it very difficult to have functional cooperative communities. Also, the fact that the kind of secularism that pervades in our country is especially judgmental of elaborate ritual practices also mean that Americans who seek to live ethically in alignment with Santo Daime have, in some ways, a more difficult work of translation to undertake, if they seek to make sense of their religious rituals and their ethical world. It is important to bear in mind that issues of translation (between worlds) are always political issues (Butler 2009).

#### Legitimizing the Daime in the eyes of the law: struggles in the US and Brazil

Before describing how the process of seeking legitimation became a collective, ethico-political project for members of the CHLQ, it is important to explain how the process of legitimation differed for daimistas in Brazil. As I mentioned, the daimistas in the Ecovila were not terribly concerned about the legal status of their ritual practices. This is in part because the federal government in Brazil recognized daimistas’ religious use of ayahuasca as legitimate back in 1987. What was most interesting (and distinct) about the process by which daimistas achieved this legitimation in Brazil, as opposed to the process in the US, was that the majority of the financial and bureaucratic burden fell on the Brazilian government, rather than Santo Daime communities.

In 1985, the *Conselho Federal de Entorpecentes* (Federal Drug Council, from here on referenced as CONFEN) initiated an investigation of religious groups in Brazil, like Santo Daime, who use ayahuasca as a part of their religious rituals. As I indicated in Chapter 1, throughout the history of Santo Daime, leaders of the religion were arrested and scrutinized for their religious practices. In the 1980s, after receiving petitions from members of such groups to remove the plant *Banisteriopsis caapi* (used for making ayahuasca) from the list of prohibited substances, the Brazilian government put together a team of “anthropologists, historians, sociologists, philosophers, theologians, doctors, and psychiatrists, among others,” to determine the legitimacy of such religions (Labate 2005).

For two years, these experts traveled to various Santo Daime church communities across Brazil. They spent a significant amount of time in Mapiá with Padrinho Sebastião, in the community on which the Ecovila is modeled. In 1987, they published a report that concluded:

Followers of the sects appear to be calm and happy people. Many of them attribute family reunification, regained interest in their jobs, finding themselves and God, etc., to the religion and the tea . . . The ritual use of the tea does not appear to be disruptive or to have adverse effects . . . On the contrary, it appears to orient them towards seeking social contentment in an orderly and productive manner. (Silva Sá, 1987, translated in Haber 2011, 306).

The investigation concluded that the ritual use of ayahuasca should no longer be criminal, though recreational or experimental use of DMT or ayahuasca was still considered illegal (Labate 2005).

The decision made by CONFEN’s investigative panel was based on a moral standard set by a Kantian notion of rational, moral public good. The last sentence of the

decision, which states that the Daime seems to “orient [daimistas] towards seeking social contentment in an orderly and productive manner” is a statement of positive valuation that falls within the secular, rational paradigm. However, in the course of the investigations, daimistas’ everyday lives were relatively undisturbed by CONFEN. This government-appointed and funded committee entered into the daimistas’ communities to observe their practices and decide how threatening they were. Of course, daimistas knew they were being evaluated, and that undoubtedly caused them discomfort, but they were not required to travel or present themselves ‘publically,’ or testify in a courtroom.

In Oregon, on the other hand, the burden of proving their legitimacy was placed on the daimistas themselves. It began on May 19, 1999, when Jonathan Goldman arrived at his home to find a team of five men, outfitted in bulletproof vests and armed with assault rifles had entered his house and began questioning his adolescent children, while he and his wife were at a wake for a member of their church who had just passed away. The government had tracked a shipment of Daime from Brazil, through customs in LA, to his residence, and federal agents were there to arrest him for trafficking and possession of an illicit substance. As Goldman describes it, when he arrived home that night:

They took me out of the car, put me in handcuffs. We came in, we sat in our living room...all of us together, and they ransacked our house. Looking for drug paraphernalia...what they look for: guns, pornography, drugs, [...]none of which of course they found. What they found was 27 altars with crystals and pictures of saints. And Daime. So, already they didn’t know quite what to do (Goldman 2009).

At this moment of Jonathan's description of that evening, and in the officers' confusion about what they certainly thought was a routine bust of a drug trafficker, we can catch a glimpse of the distinct worlds that the police and the Goldman family inhabit in relationship to this classified substance/sacrament. As a result of the encounter between these worlds, and the conflict over how to understand the Daime, the CHLQ decided to sue the federal government for violating their rights to practice their religion, and they had to take their case to court in order to ensure that no one in their community would face additional legal persecution.

Jonathan's arrest, and the government's seizure of the CHLQ's Daime, became the first step in what turned out to be a process that stretched a decade, and cost the Oregon churches involved hundreds of thousands of dollars (Church of Daime video). For the members of the CHLQ in particular, this process of securing state and federal legitimization of their religious practice became a collective project and a religiously founded ethical practice beyond the church rituals themselves, which shaped and strengthened their congregational community. It became what they understood collectively as a spiritual battle.

#### The CHLQ vs. the State of Oregon: A spiritual battle

In my two visits to Oregon, I conducted in-depth interviews with eight daimistas who were directly involved in the court case that the CHLQ undertook to ensure what they commonly referred to as "the liberation of the Holy Daime." I also read through the case notes on file in the courthouse in Medford, OR, and interviewed the Oregon attorney who advised them and carried their case through to fruition, Roy Haber.

Through my interviews and research, I found that for the members of the CHLQ involved in this project of state legitimation, the process constituted an ethical, religious practice.

The process of undertaking the case had several phases, each of which was experienced by different people within the CHLQ as divinely guided and inspired. Their practices of working together in the *salão* with spiritual beings, learning from visions that they received under the force of the Daime, as well as meditation and self-examination, all showed up in their experiences of the legal process. For example, as I have described, the hymns carry the ever-unfolding teachings of the Santo Daime doctrine. In the same interview where he describes his arrest, Jonathan continues to describe his experience of being taken to jail:

At the end of the night they took me to jail, where I spent 12 hours in a cell with 6 other men. And when I got to jail I went through the whole routine of them examining me. I took off all my clothes and they looked in all my orifices for whatever I might be secreting there (I have no idea what they were looking for). And they put me in these pink prison clothes. Pink prison clothes. And as I am walking out of the intake place into the cell... I hear...a hymn.

The hymn says:  
I entered into a battle  
I saw my people discouraged  
But we have to win with the power of the Lord God  
Virgin Mother, with the power that you give me,  
Give me strength,  
Give me light,  
Don't let me fall down (2009).

After Jonathan heard this hymn, which comes from the *hinario* of Mestre Irineu, in the jail cell, he says he thought, "OK, here's the battle. I am ready. This is the mission." And, after he was released from jail, he began working tirelessly on how to address the



charges that had been brought against him and also continue to hold Santo Daime works for his congregation.

At this time, Jonathan began holding meetings with the Santo Daime church leaders across the country to discuss plans for moving forward with the case. Goldman describes this phase of the preparations, explaining how:

Internal and external challenges delayed the case for many years...Internal challenges in the Daime, the Daime community was not ready [...] like all movements [...] there are always things to be sorted out and people come and go and people's ideas and confusions about power trips and egos...everything, what humans do, there was all that kind of sorting out that we had to do to mature, so that in some kind of unified way we could approach the government. (2009)

As a woman who acted for many years as the CHLQ secretary, Chante Dao, explained to me, these meetings were very difficult. Many groups of daimistas around the country, including some in Jonathan's church in Oregon, were against getting involved with the government or pursuing federal legitimation at all. This struggle and upheaval in the community is evidenced by the fact that most of the daimistas on the CHLQ board and people who were involved in the case in 2009, who I interviewed in 2012-2013, were people who came to the CHLQ when the works were being held off the record, while the preparations for the legal process were being made, not folks who were involved with the CHLQ prior to Jonathan's arrest. When I realized this, I was keenly aware that I was only able to meet and interview a sliver of the people whose lives were or are involved in Santo Daime in Oregon. I imagine that had I been able to speak to the daimistas who chose to leave their church community due to this conflict, they would have presented to me a very different account of the court case. I cannot pretend that this short thesis

captures the many and divergent views of any of these communities' ethico-political projects.

However, each of the daimistas I did interview articulated separately that they felt clearly called to take part in the case, similarly to the way they felt called to drink Daime. One woman who was a plaintiff in the case, Jacquie, described to me in an interview about the time when she felt very called to participate in the case procedure while singing during a work:

I was really afraid because I really don't feel like I speak very well. [...] And so, I don't remember what we were singing, but this being came to me and said: 'I will help you with your words. I am the being of justice and compassion, and I will help you with your words.'

So, I really think it was Sebastião.

And that was early on, so after I got that message I thought, 'OK, so whatever happens, if I have to testify, I have some help.'

The process of taking up this call of participating in the case was, in this sense, very much a process of respecting the interdependent self. The beings that accompany each of these people, their particular histories and ancestries, their ability to withstand federal, legal scrutiny (which was partially dependent on their positionality in the world—their race, age, stability, class, and the work they did that proved them to be 'valuable' citizens in the eyes of the state) and their relationships to Jonathan and other members of their church.

Another plaintiff, Mary, emphasized that it was Jonathan's teachings that helped her to stay calm and have faith in the process, which was dictated by the state. In our interview, she discussed how Santo Daime and the federal government are operating in

two totally different paradigms, and so it was very strange to be put in a position to defend the religion, which is about healing, forgiveness and unconditional love, to the government, which is about control and defending their territory from what is foreign and potentially dangerous. She described how the federal attorneys would “ask meaningless questions and try to wear you down, frustrate you. Then, when you are a little off, they try to go in with other questions to trip you up.” She added, “It’s a game.” I asked her how she maintained her composure, to which she responded, “I just remembered they are doing their job. We are doing our job. The work we do is all about compassion, love and forgiveness. You try to understand that it is not personal.” In this case, Mary was very clearly describing how she applied the religious values that she was studying in the school of Santo Daime in their collective project of seeking legitimization. She also indicated that the ‘battle,’ for justice, though spiritually informed, was also a game, a struggle between worlds for the territory of legitimacy. Her words illuminate the difficulty of conducting that struggle on the state’s terms—the stress it put on the bodies and minds and the community of daimistas to have to jump through the government’s hoops on the government’s terms.

Yet the CHLQ members whom I interviewed consistently reiterated that the courthouse, the judge, the lawyer, and all the people and processes surrounding the federal court case were, as Jacquie put it, “divinely orchestrated.” Indications of the divine working through these federal entities came in myriad forms, including hymns, visions and dreams, which often occurred in unexpected places outside of ritual works (like the jail). However, none of these accounts was so visually illustrative of the

overlapping territory of the state and the religious as the account given to me by Chante Dao.

Chante is a registered nurse, published author, and for several years served as the administrator of the CHLQ. In an interview we conducted in Ashland in 2012, Chante explained to me she was born with “a different kind of vision”. Her sight, as she said, had always “diverted to the non-physical world first”. She described that when she was young, this caused her great difficulties in school, in learning how to socialize with other kids, and even in understanding what was real and what was not real. However, as she entered adulthood she began to understand this sight as one of the many gifts of being very sensitive to the astral world while incarnated in a human body on earth. For Chante, as many daimistas who understand their self not as bounded but as interdependent, the body is a space that is porous and stretched across multiple planes, not simply the bounded home of the self. The practice of living that kind of embodiment means that often these people experience the world very differently from people who walk around as if their body is property, their practices driven strictly by their independent will. She described to me the scene inside the courthouse as follows:

I saw the lawyers of the government sitting kind of in front of me. And then our lawyers were sitting to the right.

And then the door opens, and Judge Panner comes in. And what I saw was this very tall, probably 20-foot-tall, arch angelic presence of justice—very strong, very beautiful.

And I knew, in that second: we’re going to win the case. [...]

Then there was a point when I saw these, these, um...I don’t know who they were, but they were these little kind of mischievous little fairy beings.

And they jumped up on the desks of the government lawyers. And they were jumping around and causing chaos.

And the government, they couldn't find any papers!

They would quote something, and Judge Panner said: 'Well that never came before me. Why are you quoting that? Where is that?'

And they would go, 'Oh, well, we have it somewhere.' And they couldn't find it.

And these little beings were just making chaos.

And how it played out in the physical is they couldn't find their paperwork, they were not organized. [...]

It was so beautiful.

As the history of her spiritual sight indicates, Chante's awareness of interdependent selves extends far beyond her relationship with the Daime or the CHLQ. Still, her perspective on the way these worlds that are seemingly opposed and disparate are overlapping and contingent is profound. It had not occurred to me before I undertook this study that there could be angels in the district federal courthouse in Medford, Oregon. Like the commitment of Ecovila practitioners to their ecological ethics, her vision of the courtroom demonstrates that even when the power difference between two worlds seems vast, the world that seems marginal (i.e. composed of fewer people, departing from the reality of the dominant world, or the reality accepted by the majority) does not disappear. It continues to exist, and even thrive, as long as there are those to witness it, to study it, to firm themselves in responsibility to it.

It was interesting to find in the research process that, like Chante Dao, most of the daimistas who were involved in the case observed that the government lawyers were disorganized and poorly prepared to argue for the illegitimacy of the CHLQ's ritual

practices. Most of the CHLQ plaintiffs said that the prospect of being scrutinized by the federal government for their religious practices was intimidating, but that they were surprised at how ill-prepared the government attorneys seemed. Jacquie commented that it seemed, “The government didn’t really feel like this was much of a case, so they didn’t send their big guns in, so no, I never felt threatened at all [during the actual trial].”

The CHLQ attorney, Roy Haber, agreed that the federal attorneys had little ground to stand on with this case to begin with, and he made a particularly poor showing in court. In a book chapter he authored about the case, he wrote:

The government hired very prominent scientists, including psychiatrists, pharmacologists and drug control experts. This group included experts being paid over \$400 per hour and one was from Harvard. The expert reports submitted by these scientists for the government were truly some of the worst expert reports I have encountered. They were disrespectful toward the Santo Daime and they speculated about possible ill health effects rather than offering reliable science that the tea, when taken in the context of the religious services, caused any harm to anyone. (Haber 2011)

In the web of inter-dependent beings that came together in this collective process, Roy Haber was a crucial figure. In every interview I conducted with people involved in the court case, without fail, they mentioned Roy’s brilliance in his legal strategy. Jonathan Goldman considers him the lawyer that the Virgin Mary herself chose to work through to see this legal/spiritual battle to its conclusion (Goldman 2009).

In my interview with Roy in Eugene, in 2013, which was the last interview I conducted on my last trip to Oregon, I was struck by something he said to me. He opened by describing a scene from the preparatory meetings leading up to the case:

In a conversation that I was having in Ashland with Padrinho Alfredo where we were all talking about legal strategy, he made an interesting comment, which was: ‘This whole legal thing that you all are doing is really nothing more than an opportunity to elevate your spiritual lives.’

This comment put a fine point on a pattern I had noticed in all of these interviews with daimistas who had been a part of the case. While the case was about achieving an end—the legal freedom to practice their religion without fear of persecution—that end was never really something these daimistas feared would not happen. They had faith, and good reason, to believe that their case would succeed in court. Yet the process of preparing for the case, as described by Goldman and others, was, in itself, understood as a religious healing process. As I mentioned in previous chapters, based on what I observed in the Ecovila and what I learned from participating in and observing the Santo Daime works, the work and study in which daimistas engage in their rituals as well as in their day-to-day lives is not simply a means to an end. Everything they do, individually and collectively, they seek to meet as an opportunity for practicing showing up in their lives with *firmeza* and unconditional love.

Notably, it was ten years to the day that Jonathan Goldman was arrested (May 19, 1999-May 20, 2009) that he and eight other people from his church carried the first Daime legally through customs in a US airport. Jonathan and a CHLQ board member each described to me in separate interviews how amazing it was on that day to see federal agents meet them at the gate in the airport and say, “Hi, what can we do to help? Our job is to make this process go as smoothly as possible for you.”

In this moment, when the first legally recognized Daime arrived in the US, we can see that this process of seeking federal legal protection is not only an end to the CHLQ’s collective project for legitimation, it is a beginning. It is the beginning of daimistas in Oregon navigating how to live in responsible relationship not only to their

religious organization, CEFLURIS, and their doctrine, but also to the rules and bureaucracy of the Drug Enforcement Administration, which continues to work with them to bring Daime into the US.

While the figured worlds of the state and the Santo Daime were never actually separate, the collective, ethico-political project that daimistas in Oregon have undertaken to liberate the Daime has brought these worlds into more alignment. While many people, including critical scholars and daimistas, may view this set of choices as apolitical, driven or coerced by individuals and institutions exerting their power from the top down, I argue that they are thoroughly political. As the CHLQ members' descriptions of the everyday processes of supporting each other and working together to complete the case demonstrate, the embodied practices that we engage, and the ways we choose to ethically live out our responsibilities to and with others in our collective projects, are always political. How we live these ethical practices constitutes the conditions and possibilities of our contingent worlds.

### Conclusion

For the people with whom I met in Oregon, who supported the CHLQ's case against the government, the collective project to take this case on was ethically and politically driven by their understanding that it was, above all, an opportunity to strengthen their religiously figured world. In an embodied, everyday way, Oregon daimistas experienced a palpable difference in their ability to feel healthy and at peace, and to sustain their religious community, when they no longer had to worry about their legal status. However, in the process of undertaking that project of state legitimation,



many daimistas who had been committed to the church left the community. Therefore, my ethnography of this community's collective project is carved from significant silences. I only captured the voices of those who completed the process together. I only spoke to those who could look back and say that the loss and the strife that the government put them through was, ultimately, worth their collective sacrifices because they could finally experience practicing their religion openly. I imagine that those who left the church community as a result of the lawsuit project did not experience the church leaders' commitment to winning state legitimation as freedom—they probably experienced it as a significant loss in their everyday, embodied lives, at least for some period of time.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I wrote that in my unfolding of lived daimista projects, I would describe some of the dangers of liberal recognition for daimistas who seek to live by a nonliberal moral standard. In Chapter Three, I described how I encountered the tension between the figured worlds of the Ecovila São José and the Brazilian state in my conversations with people. For example, Ecovila residents debated about the trade-offs of applying for more government funding or trying to work with other independently organized ecological organizations on Santa Catarina Island, or attempt more ecotourism to fund their communal projects. The people of the Ecovila were also highly critical of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development that was held in Rio in the summer of 2012 (Rio + 20), and did not participate in the way they had participated in the original conference, held 20 years before. The residents of the

Ecovila were very aware of the difference between their ecological ethics and those of the dominant society.

Yet the majority of the residents of the Ecovila had not been directly engaged in any kinds of struggle for the federal legitimation of their religion. Also, their exceptional status (in terms of the use of their sacrament) was granted to daimistas in Brazil after the government sponsored a long-term investigation of their religion, which did not call daimistas into courts or require that they pay legal fees. While Enio and Beth had faced legal scrutiny when they traveled to other countries, most of the Ecovila daimistas had never been in the position of having to choose whether or not to defend their practices as a result of being directly confronted by the government.

In Oregon, on the other hand, the federal court case that the church won in 2009 seemed to be the most compelling collective project this community has undertaken to date. Still, the community seemed to be recovering from their legal/spiritual battle. The When I interviewed these daimistas, I got the sense that they were eager to create ease in their new relationship with the DEA, and to move on and focus on other collective healing projects. This desire, along with challenges to maintain unity amongst people in their church, might have kept them from sharing frustrating or difficult aspects of having won state recognition with me in our interviews. But challenges were evident.

During my field research, for example, the DEA was holding a shipment of the CHLQ's sacrament due to an administrative confusion. It is in issues such as this where the differences in collective power of the two Santo Daime worlds I researched becomes glaring. If daimistas who attend church as a congregation in the US must depend on

importing their sacrament, and therefore want to be assured that doing so will not get them arrested, it is easy to understand why seeking legitimation from the federal government seems like a necessary political project. But it is also clear that this need arises from the state's insistence on disciplining nonliberal systems of practice. Both because the federal legitimation process in Brazil was taken on as a government research project, and because it was completed nearly thirty years ago, the members of the cooperative Ecovila were working on collective world-making projects aligned with daimista ethical practices that went beyond the struggle of translating or proving their value to the state.

Therefore, where a Santo Daime community of practice is located, the cultural and religious/secular expectations of behavior, the style and form that state surveillance takes, and how daimistas choose to respond (individually and collectively) to disciplining federal forces, all play a role in how an individual daimista can ethically embody his/her religion in his/her everyday practices. All of these factors, and more, shape the kinds of shared ethico-political projects daimistas have been able to create beyond their church rituals.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have sought to compose a series of stories from my travels and research with practitioners of Santo Daime that illuminates aspects of geography that I think are too often ignored: the importance of collective, everyday, embodied practices in creating places and spaces, and the reality that places and spaces (as well as subjectivities) are always contingent and shifting. By describing two Santo Daime communities, and the ethico-political projects that daimistas living in each have recently undertaken, I hope I have demonstrated the importance of ethical practices in the creation of worlds that are built on religious systems of belief and practice. It was my intention to also show that worlds that are connected by their faith practices are not all one and the same. In other words, any reductive account of what “Santo Daime” is, or what “daimistas” do or practice or believe, is an oversimplification of rich and distinct worlds of practice. Following Holland, I argue that each community of practice is its own politically figured world, shaped by innumerable forces and, yes beings, that are specific to that place. While the daimistas in the Ecovila São José and in Ashland, Oregon, practice very similar religious rituals, even on the same days of the year, and in the same language, wearing the same kinds of clothes, singing the same hymns, their collective worlds are shaped not only by their physical locations and broader cultures, but by the kinds of ethical practices that they engage in together in their everyday lives.

In the Ecovila São José, daimista residents were engaged in practices of “healing the relationship between human beings and nature.” By working on projects that support both their community and the non-human world that they understand to be deeply interwoven into their existence, they cultivate what I refer to as a specifically daimista *ecological ethics*. This ecological ethics is based on the teachings of Santo Daime, which Ecovila residents emphasized to me as practicing *firmeza* (literally, firmness, but best translated in this case as responsibility) and unconditional love for all beings, as they work to heal their relationship to the natural world.

In Chapter Three, I describe how the daimistas whom I worked and studied with in the Ecovila demonstrate these values in their practices of sustaining their relationships within the community, supporting each other and learning from their plant medicine teachers together. This, along with their commitment to keep the community and their houses small, so that the forest can flourish around them, is their primary practice of ecological living. I also described how they selectively accept and engage in relationship with state funding organizations to pursue projects that are more easily recognized as *environmentalism*, like their state-funded project to plant 50,000 acai palm trees. This community effort is not only reforestation of indigenous trees, but will hopefully provide a form of sustainable income when the plants mature and begin to bear fruit. Based on the interviews I conducted while living in the Ecovila for three months, I concluded that interactions and relationships with federal and other non-religious entities are seen as necessary, and, at times even valuable, by the daimistas in the Ecovila. However, Ecovila residents’ main focus, in terms of their everyday ethico-

political projects, is directed to the maintenance and strengthening of their relationships to the land and their plant teachers, to each other, and to the spiritual forces that bind their community.

Chapter Four focused on the ethico-political collective project undertaken by daimistas in the CHLQ over the course of 1999-2009—the project of gaining federal legitimacy to import their sacrament and practice their religion. This project was initiated when federal law enforcement agents who had tracked a shipment of Daime arrested the leader of the CHLQ at his home. In 2009, a federal judge in an Oregon district court ruled that Santo Daime is a legitimate religion, and (in Oregon) daimistas’ practice of it should be not only permitted but also protected by the government. As the interviews I conducted with daimistas who participated in the case demonstrate, the members of the church who were involved in this project understood it as a spiritual battle for their religious freedom. However, unlike the daimistas who live in the Ecovila, Oregon daimistas are now locked into a relationship with the federal government in which they must report exactly how much sacrament they receive from Brazil and exactly how much they use. Now, part of Oregon daimistas’ ethical practices (and religious freedom) involves carrying out their responsibility to the government with *firmeza* and unconditional love.

As I wrote in Chapter One, in this thesis I did not aim to give a report of Santo Daime that would explain what daimistas are doing as a unified group of religious practitioners around the world. My purpose, instead, was to raise questions about how performing the strict ritual practice in different places and different communities resulted

in distinct figured worlds. I was particularly interested in whether and how daimistas articulated their collective projects in terms that were meant to be directly understandable or translatable to the federal government and mainstream society.

In the Ecovila, people had collectively owned the church land for nearly 30 years. They had direct access to the plants with which they make their sacrament, and everyone with whom I spoke indicated that they felt engaged in creating projects that embodied relational healing. In Oregon, the community pulled together to defend their church leader and their church against federal persecution directly through a lawsuit that would allow them to import their sacrament without interference. While there are many people who attend the church who practice and offer various forms of healing, and they want to offer this healing to as many people as possible, they do not plan to own land collectively, live cooperatively, or attempt to grow the plants with which the Daime is made. They are still primarily focused on maintaining and strengthening their bureaucratic relationship with the federal government, so that, someday, more daimistas in the US might be able to have the ability to legally import their sacrament.

Therefore, I found that the form and shape of the ethico-political practices and projects daimistas cultivated beyond their religious rituals was greatly shaped by the kinds of threats and opportunities they believed to lie with directly engaging other figured worlds, like the federal government (or not). The form of such projects was also significantly shaped by the infrastructure of daimistas' existing communities. As I hope I have demonstrated, I believe that all of these projects and everyday practices, not simply the direct struggles and confrontations between the dominant forces of the

government and the daimista churches, are political. The choices each person makes in the service of creating their figured world—and all the forces that influence each of those choices—are political. Thus, the everyday and embodied practices of living in whatever form one considers *ethical*, is always already political. These practices give form to our worlds.

These pages are my attempt to add to the work of feminist geographers and anthropologists who have devoted and continue to devote their time and energy to creating space in academic writing for the slippery, poetic, paradoxical aspects of the realities that we are encouraged, in the tradition of academia, to nail to the page, to fix on a map. I would like to stand with those who write for the transformation of this tradition, who write against the time-honored practices of surveillance and claims of expertise. This is its own kind of world making, also thoroughly political, and it depends on people's commitment to the practices of creating different ways of engaging with data, of working with the people who shared their stories to make sure we, the scholars, are not lifted up on the backs and shoulders of Others. I see it as work of planting ourselves in the world of practice.



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