

Ayahuasca, Ritual and Religion in Brazil

Edited by
Beatriz Caiuby Labate
and
Edward MacRae



**AYAHUASCA, RITUAL AND
RELIGION IN BRAZIL**

Page Intentionally Left Blank

*Ayahuasca, Ritual and
Religion in Brazil*

Edited by
Beatriz Caiuby Labate and Edward MacRae

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2010 by Equinox, an imprint of Acumen

Published 2014 by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© Beatriz Caiuby Labate, Edward MacRae and contributors 2010

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notices

Practitioners and researchers must always rely on their own experience and knowledge in evaluating and using any information, methods, compounds, or experiments described herein. In using such information or methods they should be mindful of their own safety and the safety of others, including parties for whom they have a professional responsibility.

To the fullest extent of the law, neither the Publisher nor the authors, contributors, or editors, assume any liability for any injury and/or damage to persons or property as a matter of products liability, negligence or otherwise, or from any use or operation of any methods, products, instructions, or ideas contained in the material herein.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN-13 978 1 84553 679 4 (paperback)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ayahuasca, ritual and religion in Brazil / Edited by Beatriz Caiuby Labate and Edward MacRae.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-84553-679-4 (pbk.)

1. Indians of South America--Brazil--Religion. 2. Indians of South America--Brazil--Rites and ceremonies. 3. Indians of South America--Brazil--Drug use. 4. Ayahuasca ceremony--Brazil. 5. Hallucinogenic drugs and religious experience--Brazil. 6. Brazil--Social life and customs. 7. Brazil--Religious life and customs. I. Labate, Beatriz Caiuby. II. Macrae, Edward John Baptista das Neves. F2519.3.R3A93 2010 299.8--dc22

2009035243

The publication of this book has been supported by the German Research Council (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft – DFG) and the Collaborative Research Center ‘Ritual Dynamics – Socio-Cultural Processes from a Historical and Culturally Comparative Perspective’ (Sonderforschungsbereich ‘Ritualdynamik – Soziokulturelle und historische Prozesse im Kulturvergleich’).

Typeset by ISB Typesetting, Sheffield, UK

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>About the contributors</i>	ix
Forward	xv
<i>Andrew Dawson</i>	
Brazilian Ayahuasca religions in perspective	1
<i>Beatriz Labate, Edward MacRae and Sandra Goulart</i>	
1. The use of ayahuasca among rubber tappers of the Alto Juruá	21
<i>Mariana C. Pantoja and Osmildo da Silva Conceição</i>	
2. The rituals of Santo Daime: systems of symbolic constructions	39
<i>Arneide Cemin</i>	
3. Santo Daime in the context of the new religious consciousness	65
<i>Luiz Eduardo Soares</i>	
4. The Barquinha: symbolic space of a cosmology in the making	73
<i>Wladimir Sena Araújo</i>	
5. Healing in the Barquinha religion	83
<i>Christian Frenopoulo</i>	
6. Religious matrices of the União do Vegetal	107
<i>Sandra Goulart</i>	
7. In the light of Hoasca: an approach to the religious experience of participants of the União do Vegetal	135
<i>Sérgio Brissac</i>	

CONTENTS

8. Ayahuasca: the consciousness of expansion <i>Domingos Bernardo Gialluisi da Silva Sá</i>	161
9. The development of Brazilian public policies on the religious use of Ayahuasca <i>Edward MacRae</i>	191
10. The treatment and handling of substance dependence with ayahuasca: reflections on current and future research <i>Beatriz Caiuby Labate, Rafael Guimarães dos Santos, Brian Anderson, Marcelo Mercante and Paulo César Ribeiro Barbosa</i>	205
<i>Index</i>	229

Acknowledgements

Bringing out this collection of articles was quite a difficult process and was only possible because we counted on the help of many friends and supporters. It would be impossible to mention all and inevitably our acknowledgements will leave out names that should have been remembered for which we apologise.

First of all we would like to thank Christian Frenopoulo and Matthew Meyer for their great help in translating and revising many of the articles that make up this collection, as well as for their comments on the Introduction. They were present and accompanied all the different stages of compiling and editing, always willing to collaborate in any way they could. Their voluntary work during these seven years were a generous donation and, above all, we thank them for their great patience in putting up with us and our anxiety.

Special thanks must also be extended to all the authors who trusted us in the adventure of getting Brazilian texts published in English and were willing to provide for the translation of their work.

Robin Wright gave us the much needed initial encouragement and support to carry out this project, translated several articles and wrote the article 'The Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions', which was published as part of the journal *Fieldwork in Religion* Volume 2.2 (2006).

Sandra Goulart helped by collaborating in the writing of the Introduction and for many years has been exchanging ideas with us, offering many precious opinions and insights. But above all we thank her for her constant friendship and companionship.

We also thank Isabel de Rose and Renato Sztutman for their important comments on the Introduction.

Andrew Dawson's help was crucial in putting us in contact with Equinox, and in offering many friendly suggestions. We also thank him for writing the foreword to this book.

Editora Mercado de Letras, Editora da Universidade Federal da Bahia and the journal *Discursos Sediciosos, Crime, Direito e Sociedade*, graciously waived their translation rights over some of the articles in this collection.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Flavio Lopes, Evelyn Ruman, Débora Carvalho Pereira, Department of Memory and Documentation of the Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal, Bento Viana, Mariana Pantoja and João Guedes Filho allowed us to publish pictures of theirs.

Vagner Gonçalves da Silva, Débora Carvalho Pereira, and José Murilo Jr., generously collaborated in researching Internet publishing options.

Sérgio Vidal has been a permanent companion and gave us much help in innumerable tasks as well as having shared with us intellectual and activist exchanges in the last years. José Carlos Bouso, Rick Doblin, Jeremy Narby, Tom Roberts, Michael Winkelman, Jimmy Weiskopf, Manuel Velásquez, Alberto Groisman, Jag Davies and, especially, Joseph Hobbes and Mark Hoffmann offered us important suggestions on possible editorial options for this collection.

We thank our colleagues at the Institute of Medical Psychology, Heidelberg University, especially Rolf Verres, Henrik Jungaberle and Jan Weinhold for their comments and exchanges on the field of drug research.

Our colleagues of the Interdisciplinary Group for Psychoactive Studies (*Núcleo de Estudos Interdisciplinares sobre Psicoativos – NEIP*, www.neip.info) and especially Henrique Carneiro, Maurício Fiore, Rafael Guimarães dos Santos, Denizar Missawa Camurça, Brian Anderson and Stelio Marras have been constantly exchanging ideas with us and making important suggestions.

We also thank the collaborators of Interdisciplinary Group for the Study of Psychoactive Substances (Grupo de Estudos sobre Psicoativos – GIESP, <http://www.giesp.ffch.ufba.br>) and the site <http://bialabate.net>.

We thank Marc Blainey for his help in revising the proofs of this book.

Last, but not least, we wish to thank the journal *Fieldwork in Religion* and its editors Ron Geaves and Andrew Dawson for their interest and trust in offering us the possibility of producing the special edition *The Light From the Forest: The Ritual Use of Ayahuasca in Brazil* (Volume 2.3, 2006 – issued belatedly in 2008), part of which originated this book.

About the contributors

Translated by Matthew Meyer and Christian Frenopoulo

Brian Anderson was born in Manila, Philippines; he is a citizen of the USA. He obtained his BA in Biochemistry with a minor in Latin American and Latino Studies from the University of Pennsylvania in 2007. Currently, he is an MD Candidate at the Stanford University School of Medicine. His anthropologic fieldwork experience includes working with the undocumented Mexican immigrant population in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and with the União do Vegetal in Bahia, Brazil. Brian intends to specialize in psychiatry and to conduct research on mood disorders, substance abuse and the therapeutic uses of psychedelic substances.

Wladimir Sena Araújo was born in Cuiabá (Mato Grosso) in 1967 and moved, at the age of five, to Rio Branco, Acre state, where he currently lives. In 1991 he graduated from the history program at the Federal University of Acre (UFAC). He subsequently majored in dramatic arts at the Paraná College of the Arts (1993). In 1997 he earned a master's degree in social anthropology at UNICAMP. He is currently a professor at UNINORTE in Rio Branco. He also works as an anthropologist for the Acre State Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMA). He is the author of *Navegando Sobre as Ondas do Daime: história, cosmologia e ritual da Barquinha* (1999: Editora da Unicamp) and co-editor, with Beatriz Caiuby Labate, of *O Uso Ritual da Ayahuasca* (2002: Mercado de Letras).

Paulo Cesar Ribeiro Barbosa was born in São Paulo in 1968, studied Social Sciences at the Faculty of Philosophy and Human Sciences of the University of São Paulo and obtained a Masters in Medical Sciences at the State University of Campinas in 2001. He currently works as an Assistant Professor at the State University of Santa Cruz, where he carries out studies of the interface between anthropology and psychiatry and the use of psychoactive substances. He obtained his PhD in Medical Sciences at the State University of Campinas, with a longitudinal study which evaluated the mental health of users of ayahuasca.

Sérgio Brissac was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1967. At 18 he entered the Society of Jesus and was ordained as a priest of this Catholic order in 1996. He earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy and theology from the Jesuit Center for Higher Studies in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais state, and was licensed in philosophy by PUC/SP. In 1997 he began his anthropology training at the National Museum, UFRJ, where he obtained a master's degree in social anthropology with a thesis on the União do Vegetal: 'The North Star Illuminating across the South: An ethnography of the União do Vegetal in an urban context', under the guidance of Professor Otávio Velho; and in 2008 he obtained his PhD's degree in social anthropology on the religious experience of Mazatec Indians: '*Table of flowers, mass of flowers: the mazatecs and Catholicism in contemporary Mexico*', under the guidance of professor Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima. He published a chapter of his master thesis in the edited volume *O Uso Ritual da Ayahuasca* (Labate and Araújo 2002). In 2006 he left Society of Jesus and renounced being a priest. In 2004 he entered the Brazilian Federal Prosecution Office (Ministério Público Federal), where he works as an expert analyst in anthropology to defend the rights of indigenous peoples in Ceará state, where he currently resides.

Arneide Bandeira Cemin was born in Guajará-Mirim, Rondônia (near the Brazil-Bolivia border). A graduate of the history program at the Federal University of Rondônia (UNIR), she earned a master's degree in sociology from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) with her thesis 'Colonization and Nature: An analysis of the social relations of man with nature in the agricultural colonization of Rondônia'. She took her doctorate in social anthropology at the University of São Paulo (USP) with a dissertation called 'Order, Shamanism, and the Gift: The power of Santo Daime'. She is currently a professor in the Department of Sociology and Philosophy at UNIR, and a researcher for the Center for Studies of the Social Imaginary (CEIUNIR), which develops theories and methods for the study of the social imaginary and sponsors research on Amazonian culture and social conflict.

Osmildo Silva da Conceição, sixth of ten children of Milton Gomes da Conceição and Mariana Feitosa do Nascimento, both descendents of indigenous ethnicities of the Pano group. Osmildo was born in 1962 in the place known as the *colocação Vista Alegre* on the upper Tejo river, an affluent of the Juruá river in the far west of Acre state, an historically important rubber producing region. Osmildo grew up on the Tejo river, where he learned the rubber-tapper's trade from his father. In the 1980s he produced rubber with his father and cousins on the *colocação Degredo* on Riozinho creek, a tributary of the Tejo. In these youthful years, as was common for young men of his age, he went to parties, played in soccer tournaments and enjoyed other pastimes. Later, with the involvement of his father in the struggle against the *patrões* and the creation of a rubber-tappers' cooperative, he worked as a pilot on the boats of the National Rubber-tappers' Council and assisted the efforts of the cooperative. In 1989 he married his cousin Rocilda, with whom he has six children. In the 1990s he participated in a pilot program for the production of *couro vegetal* ('vegetal leather'). He was initiated in the science of Ayahuasca in 1989 at the hands of indigenous shamans (Ashaninka and Kaxinawá), later having contact with the Doctrine of Santo Daime. Osmildo affirms his Kontanawa indigenous heritage with pride, and is currently leading a tribal appeal for demarcation of its own Indigenous Lands.

Mariana Ciavatta Pantoja Franco is a native of Ribeirão Preto (São Paulo) and was raised in Rio de Janeiro, where she graduated from the social sciences program at UFRJ. She entered the master's program in sociology at the same institution, and in 1992 defended a thesis on processes of social identity construction among landless groups in southern Brazil. Her fieldwork, anthropological in nature, was conducted at a settlement in Paraná while Mariana participated in consulting and technical fact-finding about associational forms promoted by Landless Workers' Movement (MST) as a member of the Ecumenical Center for Documentation and Information (CEDI). In 1991, also through CEDI, she participated in a census of rubber-tapper populations in the Alto Juruá Extractivist Reserve in Acre state, where she had her first contact with the Amazon. After leaving CEDI, in 1993 she moved to Acre to participate in a broad research project jointly sponsored by USP and UNICAMP and financed by the MacArthur Foundation, spending two years in the Alto Juruá Extractivist Reserve engaged in political consulting and academic research. In 1996 she entered the PhD program in social sciences at UNICAMP and in 2001 defended her dissertation, which won an award from the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation and was published, in 2004, as *Os Milton: Cem anos de história nos seringais* (Recife: Editora Massangana; second edition Rio Branco, EDUFAC, 2008). The book tells the story of a century in the life of a family of rubber-tappers, from the initial occupation of the rubber camps and the persecution of indigenous peoples through the rubber crisis, the end of the *patrão* system and the ascension of the rubber-tappers' social movement for the creation of the Extractivist Reserve. She published a series of articles on her experiences in the Alto Juruá, worked as a consultant in development projects in Acre and beyond and was a fellow at the CNPq, pursuing a project on community resource management among extractivist populations. She lectures at the Federal University of Acre.

Christian Frenopoulo is currently an Anthropology PhD candidate at the University of Pittsburgh, USA. He has a master's degree in anthropology from the University of Regina, Canada. His research was concerned with the use of spirit-possession in the Barquinha religion of Acre, Brazil. He has written and presented texts on different aspects of the Barquinha religion, and also a book review of Labate and Araújo (2002), published in the *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*. Before this, he had a post-graduate certificate from the Universidad de la República, Uruguay, on Drugs and Intervention Strategies. He obtained two undergraduate degrees: anthropology, from the Universidad de la República, and philosophy, from the Catholic University of Uruguay. He has also worked for the International Baccalaureate in varying contexts.

Sandra Lucia Goulart – PhD in social science from UNICAMP, her dissertation was titled 'Contrasts and Continuities in an Amazonian Tradition: The ayahuasca religions', and comprises a comparative study of the three principal Brazilian religions that use the psychoactive drink long known by the Quechua name ayahuasca and by other, more recent denominations, such as Daime and Vegetal. She holds a master's degree in social anthropology from USP, where she defended a thesis on "The Cultural Roots of Santo Daime". She contributed a chapter to, and helped organize, the edited volume *O Uso Ritual da Ayahuasca* (Labate and Araújo 2002). A specialist in ayahuasca studies, in recent years she has widened her focus, as exemplified in the book she edited with Beatriz C. Labate, *O Uso Ritual das Plantas*

de Poder (Mercado de Letras: 2005). The book brings together work on the consumption of sundry psychoactive substances in various cultural contexts, such as tobacco, coca leaf, the jurema of Brazil's Northeastern Indians, and *Cannabis sativa*. She also co-edited (with Labate, Fiore, MacRae and Carneiro) the book *Drogas e Cultura: Novas Perspectivas* (Edufba, 2008). Goulart has also done research on the use and traffic of illicit drugs, most recently on crack consumption in São Paulo, and was sponsored by the United Nations' Latin American Institute for Crime Prevention and the Treatment of Delinquents (ILANUD) (see Mingardi and Goulart, *Revista do ILANUD*, no. 15, 2001). The research was part of a wider UNESCO study aimed at comparing contexts of illicit drug use and traffic in four countries, including Brazil. Currently she is assistant professor at Cásper Líbero College.

Beatriz Caiuby Labate was born in São Paulo, in 1971. She earned a bachelor's degree in social science from the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP) in 1996. In 2000 she obtained a Master's degree in social anthropology from the same university, receiving the Prize for Best Master's Thesis from the National Association for Graduate Studies in Social Science (ANPOCS). Her current doctoral research in social anthropology at UNICAMP focuses on the internationalization of Peruvian ayahuasca 'vegetalismo'. She is co-editor of the books *O uso ritual da ayahuasca* (Mercado de Letras 2002, 2004 2^o ed.), *O uso ritual das plantas de poder* (Mercado de Letras, 2005), *Drogas e cultura: novas perspectivas* (Edufba 2008) and co-editor of the special edition *Light from the forest: The ritual use of ayahuasca in Brazil* (*Journal Fieldwork in Religion* 2.3, 2006 – published in 2008), author of the book *A reinvenção do uso da ayahuasca nos centros urbanos* (Mercado de Letras, 2004), co-author of the books *Religiões ayahuasqueiras: um balanço bibliográfico* (Mercado de Letras, 2008) translated into English as *Ayahuasca religions: A comprehensive bibliography and critical essays* (MAPS, 2009) and *Música Brasileira de Ayahuasca* (Mercado de Letras, 2009). She is a researcher with the Nucleus for Interdisciplinary Studies of Psychoactives (NEIP) and editor of its site (<http://www.neip.info>). Currently she is Member of Research Staff at the Institute of Medical Psychology, Heidelberg University and a Member of the Collaborative Research Center (SFB 619) 'Ritual Dynamics – Socio-Cultural Processes from a Historical and Culturally Comparative Perspective' (<http://www.ritualdynamik.de>).

Edward MacRae was born in São Paulo in 1946, son of a Scotsman and a Brazilian mother. He was educated in Great Britain, where he earned a degree in Social Psychology from the University of Sussex and received his master's degree in Sociology of Latin America at the University of Essex. Returning to Brazil he studied Anthropology at the State University of Campinas-UNICAMP and at the University of São Paulo-USP, where he earned a doctorate in Social Anthropology. Since then he has researched drug issues, working first in the São Paulo State Institute of Social Medicine and Criminology (IMESC) and in the Drug Dependence Education and Treatment Program (PROAD/EPM), and later as a member of the São Paulo State Drug Council. He currently resides in Salvador (Bahia state), where he lectures in Anthropology at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA). He is also an associate researcher at the Center for Drug Abuse Studies and Therapy (CETAD/UFBA) and leader of the Interdisciplinary Group for the Study of Psychoactive Substances (GIESP). His main teaching and research interests at the moment deal with themes related to the social anthropology of drug use in general with a special emphasis on the ritual use of ayahuasca in the Santo Daime religion.

Between 2003 and 2006 he represented the Brazilian Ministry of Culture on the National Drug Policy Council (CONAD) and acted for a time as vice coordinator of that Council's 'Technical-scientific Advisory Chamber'. He was also a member of the Multi-disciplinary Work Group (GMT) set up by CONAD to regulate the religious use of ayahuasca in Brazil. Presently he occupies the seat reserved at CONAD for an anthropologist. Dr MacRae has written books about sexuality, social movements, the socially integrated use of psychoactive substances, and the reduction of harm associated with drug use.

Marcelo Simão Mercante was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1970. He has an undergraduate degree in Biology, by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (1994), Masters degree in Social Anthropology by the Federal University of Santa Catarina (2000), and PhD in Human Sciences/Consciousness and Spirituality by the Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center (2006). He is a member of the Interdisciplinary Group for Psychoactive Studies (Núcleo de Estudos Interdisciplinares sobre Psicoativos – NEIP). Marcelo has been working with Anthropology of Religion, with Medical Anthropology, and Anthropology of Consciousness. He is currently linked to the Post-Doctoral program on Anthropology of the University of São Paulo (USP), where he is investigating the use of Ayahuasca for treating drug addiction and alcoholism. He is the author of *Healing: Spontaneous Mental Imagery and Healing Process of the Barquinha, a Brazilian Ayahuasca Religious System*. Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing House, 2010.

Domingos Bernardo Gialluisi da Silva Sá was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1941. He earned a law degree in 1966 from the National Law School of the University of Brazil, (currently the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro – UFRJ). His civil law practice is located in Rio de Janeiro. He is a member of the Brazilian Institute of Lawyers (IAB). In 1986, he was the president of committee of the federal narcotics board, formerly known as CONFEN (*Conselho Federal de Entorpecentes*), which proposed the withdrawal of ayahuasca and its plant ingredients from the Health Ministry's schedule of prohibited substances, thus permitting its ritual and religious use in Brazil. In 1992, CONFEN unanimously reconfirmed the maintenance of ayahuasca's exemption from the schedule, following his recommendation. He currently belongs to the national anti-drug board, CONAD (*Conselho Nacional de Política sobre Drogas*), and also works for its technical-scientific advisory committee. The CONAD approved a further recommendation that he authored in 2004, which led to CONAD's Resolution No. 5 on November 24, 2004. This resolution consolidates CONFEN's and CONAD's prior legitimation of ayahuasca use and implements measures to investigate and explore the therapeutic use of ayahuasca and become acquainted with its universe of users. He offered an inaugural conference on the Ethical Principles of Ayahuasca Use during the Ayahuasca Seminar, organized by the CONAD from March 8–9, 2006, in Rio Branco, state of Acre. He served on CONFEN from 1985–87, 1990–93, and 1996. He has also served as president of Rio de Janeiro's state narcotics board, CONEN-RJ (*Conselho Estadual de Entorpecentes do Rio de Janeiro*), and was deputy secretary of Justice for the state of Rio de Janeiro from 1987–90. He has represented Brazil in international conferences on drugs and has authored several articles on psychoactives, citizenship and legality.

Rafael Guimarães dos Santos was born in 1980 in Brasília. In his undergraduate senior thesis in Biology (UniCEUB, Brasília) he analysed the biological and behavioral aspects of

ayahuasca in rats. He has a Masters in Psychology (Behavioral Processes) (UnB, Brasília), where he conducted research with Santo Daime members on the possible relationships between the ritual use of ayahuasca and hopelessness, anxiety and panic states. He has a Diplome in Specialized Superior Studies in Pharmacology (UAB, Barcelona), a Masters in Initiation of Research in Pharmacology (UAB) and is currently a PhD candidate in Pharmacology (UAB), investigating the human pharmacology of repeated doses of ayahuasca, under the direction of Dr Jordi Riba. Rafael has experience in the fields of General Biology, Ethnobotany, Pharmacology, Ethnopharmacology, Psychopharmacology and Neuropsychopharmacology, with an emphasis in the investigation of hallucinogenic compounds. He works mainly on the following topics: psychoactive substances, hallucinogens, psychopharmacology.

Luiz Eduardo Soares, born in 1954, holds a master's degree in social anthropology, a PhD in political science, and has done post-doctoral work in political philosophy. He is a Professor at the Department of Social Sciences of the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) and has been Professor at IUPERJ (Graduate Institute for the Social Research of Rio de Janeiro) and UNICAMP (University of Campinas). He has been a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University, Columbia University, the University of Virginia, the University of Pittsburgh, and the Vera Institute of Justice in New York. He has written 17 books and co-authored another 30. His most recent book is *Espírito Santo*, written with Carlos Eduardo Lemos and Rodney Miranda (Objetiva: 2009). Professor Soares has been Undersecretary of Public Security of the State of Rio de Janeiro (1999–2000); Coordinator of Public Security, Justice, and Citizenship of the State of Rio de Janeiro (1999–2000); and National Secretary of Public Security (2003).

Forward

Andrew Dawson

At the end of April 2008, the Brazilian musical legend, Gilberto Gil, visited the community of Alto Santo situated in the Amazonian state of Acre. Alto Santo is the spiritual headquarters of the originating branch of the religion of Santo Daime. Along with Barquinha and the União do Vegetal (literally, Union of the Vegetable), Santo Daime is one of Brazil's official ayahuasca religions. Gilberto Gil's visit, however, was not a private pilgrimage, for he was here in his official capacity as Brazilian Minister of Culture. Whilst visiting the Governor of Acre, Binho Marques, Gil made time in his otherwise hectic schedule to attend a ceremony at Alto Santo where he received a petition presented by representatives of Brazil's three ayahuasca religions. The petition comprised a formal request that ayahuasca be recognized by the Brazilian State as an integral part of its cultural heritage. Upon receiving the application, the Minister of Culture replied that 'I hope that we can soon celebrate the registration of ayahuasca as a cultural legacy of the Brazilian nation.'

The visit of Gilberto Gil to Alto Santo stands at the end of a long road and is clear indication of how far the struggle has come to have the ritual consumption of ayahuasca recognized as a legal right. From the early days of religious persecution and police prosecution, the religious use of ayahuasca has survived and ultimately been endorsed by the latest of a long series of State enquiries. Today, the argument in favour of the ritual consumption of ayahuasca is increasingly winning over a once sceptical, if not suspicious, Brazilian public. Spreading beyond the Amazonian states to the big cities of Brazil in the latter part of the twentieth century, the denominations of the Vegetable Union and Santo Daime are increasingly assuming an international identity with communities now established throughout Europe, the Americas and Australasia.

The spread of ayahuasca religiosity beyond its traditional homeland, however, has not been free from the same trials and tribulations which first met its move beyond the geographical confines of Amazonia in late twentieth-century Brazil. Across Europe, for example, the founding of Santo Daime communities has been met with official suspicion

which in a large number of cases has resulted in judicial prosecutions being undertaken on the charge of narcotics consumption or trafficking. Although in a growing number of European countries legal proceedings have not resulted in the wholesale criminalization of Santo Daime members and their religious practices, at best (and excluding Holland) the legal status of the ritual consumption of ayahuasca remains something of a juridical grey area. For now, at least, clandestinity continues to be the order of the day for *ayahuasqueiros* across Europe. In the United States the struggle to establish the legal right to consume ayahuasca in ritual practices has been led by the União do Vegetal. Commencing with a police raid and the confiscation of the sacred beverage being used by a local UDV community, the fight to establish the legal right to the religious use of ayahuasca eventually led to the United States' Supreme Court. Although subject to appeal and further clarification, the 2006 findings of the court upheld the UDV's right to ritually consume ayahuasca on the grounds of the freedom of religious practice (in this instance, weighed against the duties of the State in respect of policing narcotics). The Santo Daime church has also enjoyed a recent success in the State Court of Oregon. As evidenced, however, by the use of bureaucratic delaying tactics in response to the UDV's victory in the Supreme Court and the possibility of the State of Oregon appealing to a Higher Court in the Santo Daime case, the battle is not yet fully won.

In its own way, each of the chapters collected here contributes to the ongoing journey of ayahuasca religiosity toward full and equal recognition as a legitimate mode of religious expression. Some of what follows has already been published in English as a special edition of the Equinox journal *Fieldwork in Religion* (Volume 2.3, 2006), *The Light from the Forest: The Ritual Use of Ayahuasca in Brazil*. With the continuing international spread of ayahuasca religion and the resulting attention generated by its growing presence in contexts previously unaccustomed to its varied institutional and ritual manifestations, it was decided that a broader audience should be sought than that normally reached by an academic journal such as *Fieldwork in Religion*. Hence, the book that is before you now. Here, however, two of the journal articles have been removed, the order of the pieces published by *Fieldwork in Religion* changed and the contents augmented by the addition of an introductory overview. Furthermore, three previously untranslated pieces – by Domingos Bernardo de Sá, Luis Eduardo Soares and Edward MacRae – have been included and a new article by Bia Labate, Rafael Santos, Brian Anderson, Marcelo Mercante and Paulo Barbosa added.

Whether treating Barquinha, Santo Daime or the Vegetable Union, what follows represents a further step in the direction of enhancing public understanding, both academic and lay, of what the ayahuasca religions of Brazil stand for and how they celebrate their beliefs in word and deed. As a fellow traveller on this road to understanding, I am, and have been for some time, deeply appreciative of the guidance offered by the individual and joint works of the editors of this book. Although writing and researching a variety of issues at play in contemporary Brazilian society, Bia Labate and Edward MacRae has each earned an academic reputation as insightful commentators upon one or more aspects relating to the emergence, spread and consolidation of ayahuasca religion in Brazil. Through edited collections, monographs, chapters, and articles, Bia Labate and Edward MacRae have established reputations as scholars worthy to be listened to. What follows serves to reinforce this reputation. I congratulate Equinox for bringing their work to the attention of the English speaking world and commend this book to you.

Brazilian ayahuasca religions in perspective

Beatriz Caiuby Labate, Edward MacRae and Sandra Lucia Goulart

Translated by Christian Frenopoulo, revised by Matthew Meyer

The central theme of this selection of articles is a phenomenon that involves the emergence of religious groups in the Brazilian Amazon that build their systems of ritual, myth and principles around the use of a psychoactive brew known by several different names, one of which is the Quechua term 'ayahuasca'.¹ These religions – Santo Daime (in its Alto Santo and CEFLURIS branches), Barquinha and the União do Vegetal – are generically labelled as 'Brazilian ayahuasca religions' in anthropological writings.

Although the field of studies of these religious movements has seen much development in recent decades, there are still very few publications in English, especially in the area of anthropology.² This collection seeks to address this absence and offer visibility to the research conducted in Brazil, most of which has been carried out by Brazilian researchers. The current collection has attempted to select a representative sample of the main types of approaches that have been used. It also offers a view of the historical development of this field of research in Brazil, especially from the perspective of the human sciences, particularly anthropology. We have included articles previously published only in Portuguese, in compilations that one of us has also organized (Labate and Araújo 2004; Labate *et al.* 2008). This is the case of the articles by Mariana Pantoja Franco and Osmildo Silva da

1. Luis Eduardo Luna explains the etymology of this name as: *Aya* – *person, soul, dead spirit*; *Wasca* – *rope, vine, liana*. According to Luna (1986: 73–74), this name is one of the most used for the brew as well as for one of the plants that compose it: the vine *Banisteriopsis caapi*. Ayahuasca can be literally translated into English as 'rope of the spirits' or 'rope of the dead' and even 'vine/liana of the spirits/dead'. In all the ayahuasca religions discussed in this collection, the vine *Banisteriopsis caapi* is combined with the leaves of the bush called *Psychotria viridis*, which contain the active principle DMT (*N-dimethyltryptamine*). The vine and leaves are boiled together, following certain ritual prescriptions. The final result is a plant preparation that is considered sacred and consumed in religious ceremonies. The brew has different names in each of these religions and in their several sub-groups.

2. For a bibliographic survey on this field of studies see Labate, Rose and Santos (2009).

Conceição, Arneide Bandeira Cemin, Edward MacRae, and Wladimir Sena Araújo. Some of the other articles were previously published in Portuguese in other books and Brazilian journals, such as the articles by Luiz Eduardo Soares and Domingos Bernardo Gialluisi da Silva Sá. The compilation also contains original contributions written by researchers dedicated to these topics, such as the texts by Christian Frenopoulo, Sérgio Brissac, Sandra Lucia Goulart, and Labate *et al.*

We hope that this selection will make explicit what the study of the ayahuasca religions has to say on classical and contemporary issues in anthropology. The compilation presents a broad and varied set of ethnographic approaches employed in the initial mapping out of this phenomenon, thus establishing its historical and cultural origins. This book should provide a basis for the development of future work on these religions both in their original contexts and in their expansion throughout Brazil and the world. Their expansion and diversification throughout Brazil and the world may be related to modern projects of religious transit, the construction of national identities by the reappropriation of Indian and popular elements in transnational circuits, migrations and religious diasporas, cultural hybridism, and so on.

Although there is a tradition of ayahuasca consumption by shamans, rubber tappers, and mestizo healers in several countries of South America, such as Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela and Ecuador, the formalization of churches that use the brew only occurs in Brazil. As in the cases of Bwiti in Gabon (who use iboga, *Tabernanthe iboga*) and the Native American Church in the USA and in Canada (who use peyote, *Lophophora williamsii*), these religions re-elaborate the use of psychoactive preparations, inserting them into local belief systems through a reading influenced by Christianity. In the Brazilian case, there is a manifest combination of the Amazonian ayahuasca folk healer (*curandeirismo*) heritage with popular Catholicism and with the African-Brazilian tradition, Kardecist spiritism, and European esoterism (especially via the Esoteric Circle for the Communion of Thought [*Círculo Esotérico da Comunhão do Pensamento*] and Rosacrucianism. We turn to a brief history of the groups.

The first Brazilian ayahuasca religion was the one known as Daime or Santo Daime, created in the 1920s and 1930s by Raimundo Irineu Serra – or Mestre Irineu, as he is known by followers – in Rio Branco, the capital of Acre state, in the north of Brazil.³ Of African descent, Mestre Irineu was born in the state of Maranhão (in Northeastern Brazil) and arrived in Acre (in Western Amazonia) during the second decade of the twentieth century to work as a rubber tapper (*seringueiro*), that is, in the extraction of latex rubber. During this period, Mestre Irineu came into contact with the brew, probably used by indigenous, mixed-race (*mestizo*, *caboclo*) and riverine (*ribeirinhos*) populations since time immemorial, and which would become fundamental in the religion he founded in the frontier zone between Brazil and Bolivia. In the 1930s, he moved to Rio Branco and began to organize his new religion. Here, ayahuasca came to be called Daime. The name Daime, which has also come to identify the religion, is derived from the invocations made by the users of the brew during its consumption and ensuing religious ceremonies. ‘Daime’ is derived from the verb ‘to give’ (*dar*), and remits to the notion of

3. For a history of the Santo Daime, see: MacRae (1992), Goulart (1996), Groisman (1999), Cemin (2001) and Labate and Araújo (2004), among others.

grace received (health, healing, knowledge, revelation, peace, love, etc.) from a divinity or spiritual entity. Mestre Irineu developed his religion in a place known as *Alto Santo* [Holy Rise]. This name refers to the fact that the spot where he installed his church in 1945, in a peripheral rural area of Rio Branco, was at the top of a hill. The name has also come to designate his group of followers. Mestre Irineu registered his religious group in the government registry just three months before his death in July, 1971, after which it came to be officially called Universal Light Christian Enlightenment Center [*Centro de Iluminação Cristã Luz Universal*] or CICLU.

In 1945, another ayahuasca religion emerged in Rio Branco, created by Daniel Pereira de Mattos, who also came to be known as Mestre or Frei Daniel⁴ Just like Mestre Irineu, Mestre Daniel was of Afro-Brazilian heritage. He also arrived in Acre early in the twentieth century; probably some years before Mestre Irineu. They were friends and Mestre Irineu initiated him into the use of Daime, and he joined Mestre Irineu's religion in the 1930s. However, with time, his experiences with Daime led him to the revelation that he had his own 'religious mission', which would only be fully accomplished with the creation of a new religion. It is said that, initially, Mestre Daniel was known in the region as a *rezador* (prayer specialist).⁵ He would help travellers, hunters, or rubber tappers who passed through the area in the forest where he built his house and a little chapel in which he began to develop his spiritual activities. Some of these people became his first followers. With time, Mestre Daniel blended his activities as a *rezador* with the consumption of Daime. The rites gradually became more complex. One of the most striking characteristics of the religious system created by Mestre Daniel is its ostensible closeness to practices and beliefs from Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Umbanda.

Initially, Mestre Daniel's religion was known in Rio Branco as the *Capelinha de São Francisco* (Little Chapel of St Francis), because of his devotion to this Catholic saint. Later, the groups who identify and are affiliated with the religious tradition founded by Mestre Daniel became known – mostly by people who did not participate in the religion – as *Barquinha* (Little Boat). There are several explanations for this name. One of these harks back to Mestre Daniel's period as a sailor, before he came into contact with Daime and took residence in Acre. In fact, as Araújo and Frenopoulo both explain in this collection, images and meanings linked with the sea and with sailors are abundant in Mestre Daniel's religion.

The União do Vegetal – or UDV, as it is also known – emerged in 1961. The official name of this religious group – also registered with the government shortly before its founder passed away – is Union of the Vegetal Beneficent Spiritist Center (*Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal*) or CEBUDV. Chronologically, this is the third ayahuasca religion in Brasil.⁶ It was founded by José Gabriel da Costa, also known as Mestre. Mestre Gabriel was born in the countryside in the state of Bahia and arrived in Amazonia in 1943, where he worked in various rubber camps (*seringais*) for several years. While both the

4. For a history of the Barquinha, see: Araújo (1999), Goulart (2004), Frenopoulo (2005) and Mercante (2006), among others.

5. 'Rezadores' were, and continue to be in some places, important persons in the Brazilian rural milieu, agents of popular Catholicism in areas where the reach of the Catholic Church and its official representatives was rather limited. These people have been the bearers and executors of a whole body of knowledge of prayers, cult of the saints, ceremonies, festivities, etc. linked with the Catholic tradition.

6. For a history of the UDV, see: Andrade (1995), Brissac (1999) and Goulart (2004), among others.

Santo Daime of Mestre Irineu and the Barquinha of Mestre Daniel emerged in Rio Branco, the UDV was shaped in Porto Velho, Rondônia (a neighbor state of Acre). It seems as if Mestre Gabriel never met the founders of the other two ayahuasca religions and while they called the brew by the same name (Daime), in the UDV it was called Vegetal or Hoasca.

These three religious groups and the mythical, doctrinal and ritual constituents installed by each of their creators – Mestre Irineu, Mestre Daniel and Mestre Gabriel – are to this day the main sources for the formation of other groups of ayahuasca users in Brazil, even those who do not immediately define themselves as religious (Labate 2004). Some of the first researchers of this religious phenomenon (Monteiro da Silva 1983; La Rocque Couto 1989) adopted the Santo Daime term *linha* (line or thread) to designate the Santo Daime, União do Vegetal and Barquinha groups, understanding that the distinction between ‘lines’ occurs in their mythical narratives, ritual forms and the collection of entities that populate each of their pantheons. In a comparative analysis of these three religions, Goulart (2004) attempts to detect their contrasts, continuities and fragmentation processes. She argues that the distinctions between Santo Daime, Barquinha and UDV express particular developments of a single set of beliefs and practices, that is, a tradition that is common to these different religions (Goulart 2004).

In all three religions, the passing away of the founders stimulated a process of ruptures and formation of new groups. A succession dispute began after the death of Mestre Irineu in 1971 and led to the emergence of segmentations in the group he originally created in Rio Branco. The largest of these, in numerical terms, and the most expressive, regarding the intensification of internal differences in this religious tradition, is the *Centro Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal Raimundo Irineu Serra* [Raimundo Irineu Serra Eclectic Center of the Universal Flowing Light] or CEFLURIS, which was created by Sebastião Mota de Melo – known as Padrinho Sebastião – in 1974, also in Rio Branco. CEFLURIS has been one of the groups most responsible for the expansion of this religious phenomenon, both in Brazil and abroad.

Mestre Gabriel, founder of the UDV, passed away in 1971, the same year as Mestre Irineu. From that moment his religion also suffered a series of fragmentations and the creation of new groups. It is not easy to classify all these groups. We wish to explicitly avoid the term ‘dissidence’. Besides being derogatory for some, the idea of ‘original purity’ cannot be sustained from an anthropological standpoint, since all groups are under constant processes of transformation and cultural re-creation.

Toward the end of the 1970s these religions began to expand, triggered by the creation of groups linked to the União do Vegetal and CEFLURIS in the large metropolises of southeastern Brazil. In fact, among the ayahuasca religions, the UDV and CEFLURIS are the largest groups in terms of membership⁷ and the most expansive. The Barquinha, whose founder died in 1958, is represented by different groups (called ‘centers’), which are autonomous and have idiosyncratic particularities. All have modest membership numbers, and most remain confined to the Acre region – as also occurs with Alto Santo.

As Goulart (2004) and Labate (2004) have observed, the expansion of these religions seems to be driven by their intense secession processes. In this way, segmentations led to expansion, expansion to diversification and, again, segmentation. This circular movement

7. The UDV counts some 15,000 members and CEFLURIS has about 4000 (Labate, Rose and Santos 2009).

of fabrication and constant multiplication of ritual practices and symbolic systems marks this religious universe. The current volume seeks in part to deal with this diversity, offering a panorama of the Brazilian ayahuasca domain.

The expansion of these groups was accompanied by an intensification of the debate over the juridical and social legitimacy of the consumption of ayahuasca, in the complex and polemical intersection between state and religion. In 1985, the Brazilian *Divisão de Medicamentos* [Medications Division] (DIMED), a former agency of the Ministry of Health, included the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine in the list of products prohibited for use in the Brazilian territory. Shortly thereafter, the *Conselho Federal de Entorpecentes* [Federal Narcotics Board] (CONFEN) assembled a multidisciplinary team to investigate the ritual use of ayahuasca in the Santo Daime and the União do Vegetal. Domingos Bernardo de Sá (see this volume) was head of the team comprised by professionals from several fields. The investigation lasted for two years and, in 1987, ayahuasca was removed from the DIMED's list of prohibited products and was authorized for ritual use, partly because DIMED had prohibited the vine without consulting the opinion of CONFEN as procedure required.⁸ Ayahuasca's legality was questioned again in 1988 and 1992, but CONFEN consistently confirmed its decision to allow the use of ayahuasca in ritual contexts, incorporating however a new recommendation that it be withheld from people with psychiatric problems, pregnant women, and minors.

A digression is in order here: one of the most polemical issues in the history of the legalization of ayahuasca use in Brazil and one which involves a genuine clash between the several ayahuasca groups in the country concerns the ritual consumption of another psychoactive plant, *Cannabis sativa*, by CEFLURIS – the most eclectic and experimentalist Santo Daime group – which refers to this plant as *Santa Maria* [Saint Mary or Holy Mary]. The practice was influenced by the arrival of backpackers and other young people in Acre in the mid-1970s. Although the other ayahuasca-using groups frequently argued that the use of Santa Maria by CEFLURIS would jeopardize the whole legalization process of ayahuasca in Brazil, this did not happen. This topic which unfortunately had to be left out of this volume, except for a brief mention in the article by Labate *et al.*; poses interesting theoretical and political questions, which still remain to be studied.⁹

On November 4, 2004, a resolution from the National Drug Policy Council (*Conselho Nacional de Políticas sobre Drogas*) – CONAD [the successor agency to CONFEN] recognized definitively the right to the free exercise of the religious use of ayahuasca, thus

8. For a history of the process of legalization of the use of ayahuasca in Brazil see MacRae (1992), Goulart (2004) and Labate (2005), among others.

9. We suggest that the reader see MacRae (2008) for further information. He compares the use of Daime with that of Santa Maria, especially in reference to the efforts to ritualize the consumption of these substances. The author argues that the favourable social learning and cultural conditions regarding the use of Daime – which as we said has been legally permitted since the mid-1980s – have allowed for the development of effective internal social controls by the group. The use of *Cannabis*, on the other hand, remains legally prohibited. According to the author, this encumbers the institutionalization of local norms and rituals regarding its use, eroding the culture's capacity to exercise control and hampering its ability to prevent eventual undesirable effects of use of the substance. This empirical example is used in support of the broader argument that the development of social and cultural control mechanisms by local communities is a more efficient process than is the imposition of coercive legal controls by external institutions.

reinforcing the social legitimacy of these groups. This resolution removed the prior restrictions on the use of ayahuasca by pregnant women and minors. It also instituted a multidisciplinary working group (*Grupo Multidisciplinar de Trabalho, GMT*) charged with conducting a nationwide registry of all ayahuasca using groups, attending to its religious use, and experimentally investigating the therapeutic use of ayahuasca. The working group was constituted in 2005, with six representatives from the ayahuasca-using groups and six researchers from various fields. Domingos Bernardo de Sá and Edward MacRae once again were included in the team.

The working group (GMT) released its report, presenting a 'deontology' for the use of the brew – that is, a charter of ethical orientations to regulate consumption and prevent inappropriate usage (see also MacRae in this volume). The final report condemns the commercialization of the brew, recommends that the groups avoid promoting ayahuasca tourism, encouraged ecological self-sustainability of the groups through the plantation and management of the plant specimens that compose the brew, and criticizes the promotion of ayahuasca as a panacea or as a form of therapy, explicitly rejecting *curandeirismo* (folk healing or quackery).

Hence, whereas it was questioned in the past, the legitimacy of the use of ayahuasca in religious contexts currently appears to be reasonably well accepted in Brazil, despite continuing to face some resistance at the level of the state as well as in some of the more conservative sectors of society, such as certain religious or political groups. Generally speaking, the regulation of the use of ayahuasca in Brazil, though not wholly impervious to the restrictive influences of scientific medicine, is exceptional in the history of global drug legislation in that it has combined biomedical knowledge with the discourse of social scientists and the voice of representatives of the ayahuasca religions. This helps in the development and strengthening of mechanisms of cultural regulation within the user groups of this particular psychoactive substance, a process that is usually hindered by repressive drug policy.

The article by Mariana Pantoja and Osmildo Silva da Conceição opens this collection. Though not directly focused on the ayahuasca religions, it provides important details and reflections on the wider context of their emergence. The authors – an anthropologist and an Amazonian rubber tapper – offer a historical report on the use of ayahuasca among laborers engaged in the extraction of rubber from the tree *Hevea brasiliensis* in the valley of the Upper Juruá river, an affluent of the Amazon located in western Acre. Although the relationship of the Santo Daime, Barquinha and UDV with rubber tapper culture has been emphasized since the first studies of these religious traditions (Monteiro da Silva 1983 and Goulart 1996), up to now the literature has barely explored the consumption of the brew among rubber tappers themselves. Examining salient events and individuals who, from the end of the nineteenth century to the present, forged the history of the occupation of the Upper Juruá, this article, with its flowing style, broadens our understanding of the historical processes which constituted the cultural, political and economic basis of the emergence of the ayahuasca religions. The uses of ayahuasca in the Upper Juruá described by Franco and Conceição embrace practices that combine diverse strands of Christianity – from popular Catholicism to more recent Evangelical Protestant groups – with the Indian and riverine (*caboclo*) traditions of Amazonia. The rubber tappers' perspectives express

not only a religious ethos, but also their political struggles, pointing to the fine intersection between politics and religion.

Moving away from the earlier uses of ayahuasca, the next article, by Arneide Bandeira Cemin, analyses the main rituals of the Daime or Santo Daime. Cemin's reflections largely stem from her fieldwork with a group located in the city of Porto Velho, state of Rondônia, known as CECLU (*Centro Eclético de Correntes da Luz Universal*) [Currents of the Universal Light Eclectic Center], closely associated to the more orthodox group commonly known as 'Alto Santo'.¹⁰ In her ethnography of the rituals, the author investigates the central notions of the 'Daime system', such as the category of 'spiritual works', and the way in which doctrinal principles are assimilated by followers during ritual experiences. Cemin supports much of her analysis on Marcel Mauss' classical concept of 'corporal techniques', combining analytical and native categories in a productive way.

The article by Luis Eduardo Soares moves on to unravel issues raised by the expansion of these religions into the large metropolises of Brazil, a process that began in the early 1980s. Soares reflects on the presence of the CEFLURIS branch of the Santo Daime in the city of Rio de Janeiro, attempting to place Santo Daime in the context of what he labels the 'new religious consciousness'. This term embraces an array of attitudes and cultural and religious interests characterized by a taste for experimentation and constant nomadism based on the principle of individual freedom, as opposed to unconditional and exclusive faith. In this sense, the dissemination of Santo Daime beyond Amazonia is seen to be part of a wider and deeper movement that is related to the development of modern values. Although he considers the adhesion of members of the Brazilian urban middle class to Santo Daime in particular, and to an alternative, shifting mysticism in general, pointing to a persistence of modern values (and to the modern emphasis on subjectivity), the author also argues that the case of Santo Daime expresses a cultural critique of modernity. The attraction felt by members of the urban middle-class to a religion born in the remote Amazonian rainforest – the fringes of archaic Brazil – are seen to be a strong indication of this critique. According to Soares' argument, Santo Daime proposes a reinvention of Brazilian national identity in which Amazonia and the underdeveloped riverine peoples (*caboclos*) are valued as profound and essential. Although short and written in the journalistic genre, this article has been of great importance in influencing and stimulating a number of Brazilian researchers.

There are two articles in this collection dedicated to the religion that has come to be known as Barquinha. The first, by Wladimir Sena Araújo – author of a pioneering study of this religion (Araújo 1999) – provides a rich ethnography of the ritual spaces of one of the principal Barquinha groups, the *Centro Espírita e Culto de Oração 'Casa de Jesus – Fonte de Luz'* ['House of Jesus, Source of Light' Spiritist Center and Cult of Prayer]. Araújo elucidates key meanings in Barquinha cosmology by analyzing these different spaces. The author identifies an intense spatial mobility in this religious universe in a process whereby ritual performances dynamically activate cosmological elements. Thus Araujo considers the Barquinha cosmology to be mobile and open, a 'cosmology-in-the-making'

10. It is important to remember that the manner of classifying these groups varies considerably and there is no consensus regarding this. In other words, although some groups may define themselves as 'Alto Santo', others may not recognize them in the same way.

that is composed or dissolved through the constant movement of elements through the ritual spaces and performances. According to the author, this also makes the cosmology change continuously and with great speed.

The second article on the Barquinha is by Christian Frenopoulo. The author studies another Barquinha group, also located in Rio Branco, focusing on healing practices understood by followers as ‘charity works’ (*obras de caridade*). These activities are directed toward members of the local community who come to the center in search of treatment for diverse ills and who are attended by spirit-mediums, without necessarily consuming Daime. Frenopoulo provides a dense ethnographic description of the different kinds of ritual practised here, the corresponding trance forms elicited, such as ‘incorporation’ (*incorporação*) and ‘irradiation’ (*irradiação*), without leaving out a study of the participants themselves. In so doing, he outlines the intricate symbolic network that draws on elements from the Christian, Indian and Afro-Brazilian universes, including the *Encantaria* from Maranhão. The author places his analytical emphasis on the social interactions that occur between patients and healer spirits incorporated into spirit-mediums during healing encounters. These encounters are seen as patterned performances which, it is argued, are conveyed through idioms that thematically signal cultural alterity. The article concludes by suggesting that the healing services echo symbolic motifs associated with the historical experience of immigration into Acre and the unstable and changing life circumstances shared by the local community.

This collection also carries two articles on the União do Vegetal. Sandra Goulart’s article is a wide-ranging analysis of the UDV’s formative process and provides important details about its history and its founder. By examining narratives of early followers and the concepts, rituals, and mythology of the UDV, Goulart’s article reveals important relations between the UDV and other religious and cultural traditions, such as the universe of beliefs and practices of indigenous and mestizo peoples of Amazonia, Afro-Brazilian religions, Alan Kardec’s spiritism, and masonry, as well as the Judeo-Christian biblical tradition, in addition to Brazilian popular Catholicism. In this hefty contribution on this least-studied of the Brazilian ayahuasca religions, the reader is transported to a rich universe where there is an interaction of personages and elements stemming from the different belief systems, such as the notion of reincarnation alongside Christian prayers and *benditos* [a type of prayer – trans.], or simultaneous references to the Hebrew king Solomon and Jesus. The text allows for a reflection on not only the syncretic nature of Brazilian popular religiosity, but also, through the specific case of the UDV, on the possibility of articulating popular religious traditions with erudite ones.

The other article on the UDV, by Sérgio Brissac, analyses the religious experience of urban followers of this religion, specifically those of a UDV ‘nucleus’ located in the industrialized southeastern region of Brazil. Brissac describes these followers’ experience, considering aspects that range from the moment of their conversion to the process of adoption of doctrinal elements in their daily lives. Through the narratives and interpretations of followers, the author reveals the meanings and native exegesis of doctrinal values and concepts of the UDV religion, such as the notion of *mestre* (master or teacher), *memória* (memory), *merecimento* (merit), *evolução espiritual* (spiritual evolution), *peia* (punishment), and *luz* (light), among others. Brissac’s article is also an ethnography of the altered state of perception and embodiment induced by the ingestion of ayahuasca, called

burracheira in the UDV. By analyzing the meanings attributed to them, the author offers provocative analytical suggestions, such as the notion of *'englobamento na força da burracheira'* (encompassment in the force of the *burracheira*), which is also useful for thinking about the other ayahuasca religions, as well as shedding light on the pertinence of concepts frequently used in the general field of studies of Brazilian religiosity, such as 'syncretism'.

The next article is by the lawyer Domingos Bernardo Gialluisi da Silva Sá. Since the beginning, this author has played a fundamental role in the process that has led to the present legal regulation of the use of ayahuasca in Brazil. Sá recounts some episodes that led to the first initiatives of the Brazilian government to regulate the use of ayahuasca, revealing the main ideas, arguments and people involved in the debate from the mid-1980s until the end of that decade. As mentioned before, this was the period in which the ayahuasca religions began to spread to other regions of the country, becoming more widely known in the broader society and emerging as an issue that demanded the state's attention. Notions such as 'structured use' or 'ritual use' of psychoactives and concepts such as 'entheogen' appear in the documents discussed by the author, and are shown to become more consolidated with the advancement of state regulation. Thus Sá's article, originally published over a decade ago, is of inestimable historical value. The article describes the process of institutionalization of the use of ayahuasca in Brazil, which thenceforth became a model for such debates in other countries.

Next, MacRae, who has also played an important role in the processes of state regulation of the use of ayahuasca in Brazil, draws an analogy between the manner in which the Afro-Brazilian religions (such as Umbanda) and the ayahuasca religions have been classified and regulated for purposes of political control during the last century and the beginning of the present one. Albeit in different ways, both religious practices have been or continue to be seen with suspicion both by the ruling groups and by the bulk of the traditionally Christian and/or white population in Brazil. Reservations have often been expressed in medical terms, referring to alleged threats to mental health either posed by possession trances or by the psychoactive nature of ayahuasca. A number of similarities between both processes are highlighted, including the role played by anthropologists sympathetic to these religions. MacRae maintains that both processes were marked by an attempt to exercise 'scientific control' where 'science' was equated almost exclusively to biomedicine. However, he argues that at present anthropological perspectives have been receiving more attention and have been more successful in ensuring the official adoption of a broader approach which emphasizes the equal importance of the socio-cultural aspects alongside the medical considerations on the issue. The author concludes by analysing the 2006 report by the official multidisciplinary working team set up by the National Office for Policies on Drugs (SENAD) which was commissioned to regulate the now officially recognized right to religious use of ayahuasca in Brazil.

Finally, the collection closes with a last article by Beatriz Caiuby Labate, Rafael Guimarães dos Santos, Brian Anderson, Marcelo Mercante and Paulo Barbosa. In recognition of the complex nature of the effects of ayahuasca use, this text attempts an interdisciplinary dialogue, incorporating notions derived from anthropology, cultural psychology, medicine and pharmacology. It was included here with the intent of relating the ayahuasca religions to a broader body of knowledge about other ayahuasca-using contexts, as well as to the larger debates on the therapeutic uses of psychedelic substances and