

UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

CHARITY AND SPIRITS IN THE AMAZONIAN NAVY:
THE BARQUINHA MISSION OF THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the implementation of the mission of moral transformation in the Barquinha religion of the Brazilian Amazon. The Barquinha religion has a defined mission of alleviating the suffering of the innocent, and of educating and evangelizing the unenlightened. This mission is implemented in a variety of ways, including the sacramental use of the Western Amazonian entheogen Ayahuasca (called “Santo Daime” in this context) and spirit-possession. The thesis is the result of four months of participant-observation fieldwork in the setting.

The Barquinha churches are located in Rio Branco, the capital of Acre, in the south-western Brazilian Amazon. The region was urbanized largely due to migrations induced by the rubber industry around the turn of the twentieth century. The immigrants were poor people from the drought-stricken Northeastern states of Brazil, many of them descended from slaves. These are the people who founded, shaped and consolidated the Barquinha religion, simultaneous to the decline of the rubber industry.

The thesis contemplates the understanding that the Barquinha qualifies as a ‘religion of the self,’ in the sense that the focus of evangelical transformation and salvation is the individual. This process includes the promotion of a penitential lifestyle and a generalized development of a healer vocation among committed adherents, which is typically expressed in the voluntary development of mediumship for hosting healer-spirits.

Three important categories of spirits are presented: Brazilian black slaves, who offer healing, counter-sorcery performances and individualized counseling; Catholic bishops and missionaries who offer sacraments, such as baptisms; and prominent

deceased members of the religion that also play a part as missionaries, offering teachings and instructions.

The Barquinha religion is the least studied of the major Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions. While the others are somewhat self-contained in regards to the scope of their span of social influence, the Barquinha has a developed mission of social outreach.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 “Do good no matter to whom”.....	1
1.2 Synopsis of the thesis.....	3
1.3 Ethics.....	7
1.4 Methodology.....	15
1.5 Methods.....	18
1.6 Literary conventions used in this thesis.....	20
2. THE BARQUINHA COMMUNITY.....	24
2.1 The foundation of the Barquinha.....	24
2.2 The Barquinha community in the present.....	25
2.3 The <i>Pretos Velhos</i>	31
3. SPATIAL ORGANIZATION.....	34
3.1 Spatial layout.....	34
3.2 Spatial segregation of spirits.....	38
3.3 Circumscription: structure and boundaries.....	45
4. POSSESSION AS A MEDIATORY SOCIAL PRACTICE.....	50
4.1 Introduction.....	50
4.2 Phenomenology of states of consciousness/embodiment.....	52

4.3	“Irradiation” from spirits: vision and possession.....	59
4.4	Possession is for an audience.....	66
4.5	Modernity and anti-modern agencies.....	68
5.	CONVERTED PAGANS.....	73
5.1	The Charity Works.....	73
5.2	Kardecist healing.....	77
5.3	<i>Preto Velho</i> healing as anti-sorcery.....	78
5.4	Umbanda in the Barquinha.....	84
6.	BISHOPS AND FRIARS.....	91
6.1	Consecration of <i>Bishops</i>	91
6.2	Catholic sacraments.....	93
6.3	Three sermons.....	93
6.4	Holy Teachings.....	96
6.5	The Prince of Crystal Rivers.....	98
6.6	Inscribing the community’s micro-history into the cosmology.....	100
7.	MORAL CAREER AND VOCATION FOR CHARITY.....	106
7.1	Voluntary adhesion of spirits to the mission.....	106
7.2	Tandem conversion of spirit and medium.....	109
7.3	Barquinha spirit-possession is an act of charity.....	116
7.4	Commitment to the healer vocation and “mastery of spirits”.....	123
8.	RELIGION OF THE SELF.....	125
8.1	The sanctuary.....	125
8.2	“Forest vs. city” and “pagan vs. Christian”.....	129

8.3 Self-transformation through penance.....	131
8.4 Penance as a life-project.....	133
8.5 Celebration.....	136
9. CONCLUSION.....	141
REFERENCES CITED.....	144
APPENDIX: ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL.....	151

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1	Plan of idealized spatial layout of four major liturgical spaces.....	37
Figure 7.1	Basic stages of the conversion of an <i>exú</i> (unenlightened entity).....	111
Figure 7.2	Basic stages in the preparation of mediums.....	115

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 “Do good, no matter to whom”¹

“In truth, I don’t like it,” was the immediate response that the leader of the church gave me. What a discouragement! I had spent the whole month diligently attending all rituals and behaving unobtrusively. I was sure that I had established my position as an innocuous sympathizer. A month had gone by before I finally mustered the courage to approach the leader and personally solicit authorization for my master’s thesis fieldwork. The response was a flat, unambiguous declaration of aversion.

I was not sure what to do, so I stood still. And then s/he loosened up and laughed. “So, what is it for? What will you do?” I hadn’t rehearsed an answer. “It’s for my studies. I have to do a project.” It seemed to me that the best option was to insist on my harmlessness, so I quickly blurted, “I won’t take pictures or recordings.” S/he instantly smiled widely. Suddenly, commitment to my word seemed the most crucial thing. “So, now I can’t take any pictures,” I sullenly realized.

“How long will it take? A day?” ‘At the most’ seemed to be implied in the question. I had to confess to several months. I said that I wanted to understand what charity was. And so s/he began to give examples: a doctor who attends a sick person that can’t pay, giving clothes to someone who needs them, giving food to someone that’s hungry. Slightly pointing to the church, s/he continued: teaching a person to pray and to light a candle, attending spiritual problems...

Finally, s/he told me that the next day there would be Spirit-Guides. I should go and ask them and tell them that I had solicited her/his permission and see what they had to say.

¹ “*Fazer o bem, sem olhar a quem*” – a common saying in the Barquinha.

I went back disappointed and yet stunned. S/he hadn't said 'yes,' but then s/he hadn't said 'no.' All I could do was wait for the next day to see a spirit. Unexpectedly, my future pended on the opinion of a spirit. I had anticipated receiving more intrusive interrogation. Instead, I'd been given a response pertinent to my research topic, since my proclaimed matter of interest was treated as a question, not a statement.

In this brief sketch presented above, I describe a particular interaction in order to set out the actor-positions that, with hindsight, I now realize determined the result.

The leader of the church is dedicated to charity as a lifestyle. Her/his personal mission and moral commitment is to provide charity to all who knock on her/his door, and do what is within her/his ability to help the person.

Although I knew this before seeking authorization, I had overlooked that I would be treated in these terms. I had naively thought that research was somehow a different form of social engagement and not included within the scope of charity. Like the Ethics Board of my university, I had ethnocentrically thought of it in Weberian bureaucratic terms. I did not expect my request for fieldwork to be treated as a petition for charity.

The leader's response to my request makes the point. Charity is an orientation to the world, not a predetermined list of acts. Of course s/he did not intensely interrogate me about my research! S/he wanted to help me and was supportive. Even on the spot, s/he straightforwardly gave me a detailed response to my proclaimed theme of study. S/he did not deny authorization, regardless of the fact that s/he was not happy about the prospect of my fieldwork. Instead, s/he deferred the decision to a spirit. In coherence with the ethics of the mission, s/he placed the matter in hands of a mediator. In this church, mediators are most often spirits.

The spirits are the voice of specific moral positions and are generally specialized in the kind of mediation that they offer. I was sent to see an elderly black slave, one unimpressed by university titles and claims to intellectual supremacy. The slave said several things to me, one of which was a warning about the dangers of intellectual pride.

1.2 Synopsis of thesis

This thesis will explore some of the most salient mechanisms by which the mission of moral transformation and redemption is implemented in the Barquinha religious context. Predominant attention will be given to the use of spirit-possession for achieving this, though other mechanisms will be considered.

Members pervasively speak of the Barquinha as a ‘mission’ (even more than as a ‘religion’ or ‘church’) indicating that it is designed to be interventionist, i.e. to promote a transformation. The president of the church in which I conducted fieldwork once declared, “This is a House of *Doctrine*.” S/he said this in the context of a speech in which s/he was emphasizing that the church is a place of learning, where mistakes and wrong appreciations are benignly tolerated and people in higher positions have an obligation to be patient and morally exemplary. Fundamentally, the kind of religious and spiritual learning that is promoted is ethical behavior and positive emotions. The Barquinha is not a literary religion. Instead, quality ethical interaction and ‘frame of mind’ is its focus of evangelization.

Ayahuasca, called “Santo Daime” in this context, is the central sacrament of the religion (‘Ayahuasca’ is its name in Quechua, and the generic term that I will use for the brew in a context-free sense). It is a decoction made from the stalks of the *Banisteriopsis*

caapi vine and the leaves of the *Psychotria viridis* bush, which are both native to the region (Western Amazonia). The brew has been used for centuries, if not longer, by indigenous groups and is central to the shamanism of a number of them (Metzner 1999).

This entheogen is reported to allow the shaman to travel into the spirit-regions and interact with its inhabitants. It can also be used as a diagnostic tool, for example to identify noxious spiritual substances that are causing illness in a patient. It is also well-known for its intrinsically purging effects (typically in the form of vomiting or sudden diarrhea) that purge the user of physiological intoxications (such as undigested meat) and also moral transgressions or unhealthy emotions (Carneiro 1964:9; de Rios 1970a:1420; de Rios 1970b:296; de Rios 1971:585; Gow 1991:152, 181, 238; Langdon 1986:103; Luna 1984:142; Naranjo 1979:132, 139; Walton 1970:187). “Santo Daime” is a Christian sacrament in the Barquinha.

The use of “Santo Daime” only directly reaches a restricted number of participants. Parallel to this, a major form of implementation of the mission is through spirit-possession. There are several categories of spirits, and these are historically derived from different pantheons, though the Barquinha pantheon itself is inclusive and unitary.

The healing service is mostly in the hands of spirits from the Umbanda pantheon, such as the *Pretos Velhos* (spirits of deceased elderly Black slaves) but also *Caboclos* (uncolonized Indians) and *Erês* (infants). Umbanda is an AfroBrazilian religion that began in the 1930s in the coastal metropoli of Brazil, such as in Rio de Janeiro (see Brown 1994:1ff; and other references further below).

Spirits known as *Encantos* or *Encantados* (‘Enchanted beings’) are also fundamental. They are mostly linked to Amazonian and maritime coastal topographies

(including what some would consider ‘mythical’ topography), and include mermaids, dolphins, alligators, snakes, and other beings. In many cases they derive from the cosmologies of mixed-race riverine Amazonian populations (e.g. see Luna 1986:73ff; and other references further below). There is also the likelihood that some were already part of the pantheon of the founders who came from Maranhão and other Northeastern states (e.g. see Ferreti 2000; and other references further below). In Heaven, the *Encantos* of the Barquinha sometimes have the identity of priests, bishops, friars and nuns. As such, they are collectively called *Missionaries* (*Missionários*) and have sacramental functions in the Barquinha.

Apart from the use of “Santo Daime” to promote individual moral cleansing and reconstitution of the moral self among regular participants, the mission also has an outreach program whose beneficiaries are the wider number of people who approach the church seeking healing and other forms of charity. This is extended to the dead as well as the living, since the souls of those who died in sin or did not receive the “light of baptism” wander aimlessly in the after-life. The mission is oriented to alleviating the suffering of the innocent, and promoting the moral conversion of the unenlightened.

The thesis is structured into chapters that begin by laying out methodological and ethical issues in the following sections of the introduction. The second chapter contextualizes the Barquinha community, providing a brief summary of the foundation of the mission and some impressionistic descriptions about the community at the time of fieldwork. This includes an early presentation of the *Preto Velho* spirits (deceased black Brazilian slaves), who are fundamental and permanent social actors in the present community of the church in which I conducted fieldwork.

The third chapter describes the spatial layout of Barquinha temple grounds, presenting four liturgical spaces and some basic matters about the liturgical structure. This is important for contextualizing spirit activity. In the Barquinha, there is a coherence between specialization and spatialization of the contributions provided by spirits, and how they lay spatially *vis-à-vis* each other is guided by cosmological and ethical principles.

The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters present in some detail the spirit categories and their specialized contributions. The fourth chapter is a theoretical discussion concerning phenomenology of states of consciousness and of embodiment, in an attempt to sketch a social theory of possession and visionary experience. In short, I claim that in the Barquinha context there is continuity between states of consciousness and embodiment, and the fundamental difference in the cultural classification of these states is their social function. Spirit-possession, in particular, is social action. Through spirits, church participants administer different moral agencies: therapeutic, pastoral, sacramental, etc.

The fifth chapter details the implementation of therapeutic agency, which primarily lies in the hands of the *Preto Velho* spirits. This chapter includes brief comparisons with other therapeutic spiritist traditions prevalent in Brazil, such as Kardecism and mainstream Umbanda. The sixth chapter presents the *Missionaries*, who include the spirits of Catholic priests (Episcopal) and also deceased prominent founders of the Barquinha, who also have their specialized involvement in the mission.

The seventh chapter returns the focus to the human participants of the Barquinha mission. In the Barquinha, spirit-possession is neither an illness nor an idiom of affliction. On the contrary, it is an act of charity, linked to the generation of a healer

vocation that I found to be characteristic in the church in which I worked. The cumulative and progressive “mastery of spirits” is concurrent to the increasing prestige and vocation of human adherents towards the mission. The mastery of spirits is concomitant to the mastery of self that is the proclaimed primary focus of evangelical attention in speeches and sermons direct towards human participants.

The final chapter (chapter eight) delves into the mastery of self that I think typifies the Barquinha and is a condition for the successful provision of charity. In Western psychological terms, the “mastery of spirits” may be thought of as a metaphor for the “mastery of self,” an interpretation coherent with Western imperialism and hegemonic tendencies (see Slaney 1989:213). However, recognition of native understandings requires the subaltern appreciation that the self is authentically conceding territory to brute and uneducated invasive alters as an act of charity, in order to patiently subdue them to conform to the self’s ethics and transform their potentially disruptive agencies into positive contributions.

1.3 Ethics

“They have a different god,” Pedro explained to the young man. He was referring to anthropologists. This was my first night in the Casa Santa, just after a ritual. I had announced myself to church authorities before arriving on the site, and Pedro had been appointed to welcome me and be my host. He sat with me after the ritual, calmly smoking his pipe, and began to talk to me about the healing of the *Pretos Velhos*, the antiquity of the president of that church, and other aspects. A young man had joined us and wanted to know what anthropology was. Pedro showed a wariness concerning anthropologists.

Taking from his cue, I understand that his point was that anthropologists are only loyal to themselves and tend to assume that they have inherent rights to perform extractive research, callously treating people as objects of scrutiny and then publishing whatever suits their own sakes.

With Pedro's comments, it immediately became obvious to me on that first evening in the field that I would have to make an extra special effort to be different and embody a different kind of research ethics. As time went by, I began to hear stories from informants about other ethnographers, of world-wide reputation in some cases, who had also passed by that "humble little house" (as Barquinha adherents often refer to their own church). Because Barquinha ethics requires me to refrain from gossip and denounce my peers, I will avoid commentary on this.

While this put an unexpected strain on my own research, I have become convinced that it is all the better for me in long-term. My major discovery in the field was that the problem in anthropology about having sympathy for the natives is not epistemological, as some of my professors had led me to believe as an undergraduate, but ethical. What is at stake, for me, is the confrontation of two ethics. On the one hand, my obligation to academia is to be as transparent as possible about my research, conclusions and analysis. On the other hand, Barquinha people are very reserved about themselves and what they do, and loyalty is a fundamental ethical determinant.

Barquinha folk are generally sensitive to outsiders who do not distinguish the profane from the sacred. While a tourist may think nothing of taking pictures of religious ceremonies or architecture, this is uncomfortable in the Barquinha context. They are even wary among themselves about this. For example, while I was there, Rita -a prime

informant who has twelve years of dedicated Barquinha adhesion- wanted to take some pictures of a craft that she had made for the church, to keep as a memento. She humbly approached the president of the church to seek permission to take the pictures. She did not assume a given right to take the pictures. If this is the case for insiders, then it is all the more so for newcomers like me or other ethnographers.

These are innocent and good-willed people who received me openly and warmly. They allowed me to perform research, and helped me in many ways. Rita invited me to stay in her house at no cost, despite overcrowding and tight economical circumstances. Pressed for time to hand in this thesis, leaders of the church kindly read drafts in a matter of days (which obliged them to find someone capable of translating it), much faster than my professors did in some cases. According to Barquinha ethics, it would be wrong for me to cause these people distress and discomfort. The Barquinha is oriented to alleviating the suffering of the innocent; I should not be one to cause it.

I draw attention to special ethical commitments involved in fieldwork-based ethnography. Fieldwork-based anthropology is relationship-based anthropology. With this kind of research, I am accountable to the people that I am writing about.

This is the case, for example, regarding the right of representation. I personally introduced myself to the presidents of all the Barquinhas mentioned in this thesis and they are aware of my research. I am not writing about them without their knowing about it. In the case of the Casa Santa, they are even aware of what I am writing. As a consequence, for example, I have bound myself to refrain from including elements or details that they are sensitive about. For example, I have excluded details of the speeches given by the spirits.

In part, this ethical commitment is linked to the quality of relationship invested in the fieldworker. Having lived among them, if briefly, the people whose religion I am writing about are my friends and/or people whom I respect for their moral example. They did not receive me as ‘the anthropologist,’ or some other formal identity. They received me informally, as a friend, as one of them, as someone with genuine intentions and interest in participating in their practices. They received me as any other new-comer, that is, one who is coming to the church seeking relief from suffering and from unfair and cruel relationships. Away from the field, my relationship with them does not change. They do not suddenly become “data” that I can manipulate at will for my own career purposes. Because of this, I have chosen to suppress information when I have felt that contemporary academic genre expectations compromise these human relationships. I do not write for an anthropological audience alone. I also write so that the Barquinha members feel themselves honorably represented. My choice is to observe the same kinds of ethical commitments that my informants sustain with me.

It is my hope that years from now, what I have written here will remain a matter of ease and relief for all parties involved. I have been pressed by the circumstances into striking a salomonic balance concerning the requirements of my thesis committee members (who have been divergent in their requests), what I anticipate is the generalized sensitivity of Barquinha officials, and my own personal project of what characterizes ethical ethnography. Some concessions have been made and some reservations I have chosen to seal.

My ethical obligations to Barquinha officials are not only during fieldwork. After the field, I am preoccupied with sustaining the quality of the relationship that was

established with them, and this includes publication ethics. As such, for the time being, I have refrained from including numerous accounts and anecdotes that would illustrate aspects of social interaction, opinions, reactions, etc. but which I suspect informants would not be comfortable with me revealing publicly – even though many of these are likely unremarkable for an anthropological audience. Because I have a long-term projection of research in this field-site, it is also precautionary to take things progressively. This is a religion in which long-term dedication is a primary form of distinguishing ethics and loyalty.

In the few months that I was there, the reactions towards me did improve with time. For instance, on one of the last days that I was there, people were spontaneously requesting me to take photos of them during a birthday party. Thus I learned that it had been judicious and wise to have left my camera and eagerness aside for the first couple of months. Similarly, while a number of members of the Casa Santa express distaste for ethnographers recording rituals and music, and one colleague confided to me how people would stop talking as soon as he pulled out the tape-recorder, towards the end of my fieldwork, my good friend Pedro was explicitly asking me to tape-record and interview him (all the time that I knew he steadfastly refused to be tape-recorded by a colleague).

Also, as I was leaving, I was congratulated by the porter of the church, by an old *Preto Velho* spirit, and by other people, for the respect that I shown for them. I know for a fact that other ethnographers have not received this kind of praise. If any ethnographic research is to continue in the Barquinha, adherence to their ethical canons is a *sine qua non*.

The provisional constraint of reserving some information about the context means that sometimes I express my analytical conclusions with scanty anecdotal ethnographic support. This approach is very much established in the extant literature on the Barquinha and on the Santo Daime (e.g. Araújo 1999; Paskoali 2002; Sena Araújo 1999; and others). I should remark that a colleague of mine who did present more detailed information in a paper that he wrote about the Barquinha was afterwards required by a church authority to remove it from public circulation, which he dutifully did (not without difficulty). I would rather avoid this situation beforehand. In my own case, this same authority made it clear to me that he expected me to comply with “terms of responsibility.”

In consequence, in a context such as the Barquinha, where ethics is a fundamental mediator of relationships, my ethical stances could not be disengaged from the methods chosen for conducting fieldwork research. For example, I did not take any photographs or recordings of the rituals, sessions, or location. This is something that I found many informants to be sensitive about. The widespread concern appears to be regarding the destination and use of such materials. For example, there is a common consensus that recordings of the music may be commercially exploited.

There is also a generalized apprehension concerning representation. I heard several people tell me about reporters who had been very friendly with them, but then produced press articles that they found inappropriate and misrepresented the practices and people. While writing this thesis I have been *acutely* aware of this widespread concern of informants. This has resulted in an ethnography that analyzes only specific

events that compose the religious life of Barquinha adherents and excludes much about the domestic lives of adherents.

I also abstained from attempting to obtain information that might require engaging in practices deemed intrusive, such as listening in on the conversations between the healer-spirits and clients or even approaching clients or spirits outside of the healing encounter. This means that, with my limited amount of fieldwork, at this stage I am only able to provide vague references about the way the dialogue patterns occur during healing encounters. These stem from unintentional overhearing, what some people spontaneously narrated to me, and my own conversations with healer-spirits.

Thus, although I would have used photography and recordings, the better option was to completely renounce the technique. Also, I did not seek to obtain access to restricted areas or to show myself eager to find out about matters that informants find intimate or sensitive. Instead, I participated in rituals and daily life as any other newcomer should, for example sitting in place throughout rituals. In consequence, I learned the same kind of things with the same speed and degree of detail that any other newcomer would.

I adhered to their moral standards.

I also did not draw attention to my role as a researcher in other ways, even though I had announced myself as such to church authorities before arriving on site. For example, I did not take notes in public. In addition, I very quickly realized that most informants shy away from formal interviews. Although they are very welcoming and open, for the most part, it is only possible to talk to them informally –that is, reproducing the same context and procedures that they use for conversations among themselves.

To ease the ethical problems of representation, I have chosen to use pseudonyms throughout the text (including the names of the Barquinha churches, and of some entities) and to refer to the presidents by their office, rather than by name (which includes avoiding indicating gender). I also presented to the Casa Santa (through one of the highest ranking members) two advanced drafts of the thesis for censorship and/or approval of its contents. Alleviated, I report here that they found the thesis acceptable. I also did the same with a paper written for a conference, before I presented it at the conference. They also found it acceptable. As much as possible, I am not making publication an independent enterprise disengaged from my ethical responsibilities to the people who I am writing about.

My research was authorized by the president of the Casa Santa. In the other Barquinha churches that I visited, I also revealed myself as a researcher to the presidents. In addition, the reader should note that the project was approved by my university's Research Ethics Board (see Appendix for letter of approval).

None of my informants or the president of the Casa Santa ever expressed any interest in receiving some sort of benefit or compensation from my research. When I solicited permission for research, the president was clear to express that s/he was not favorable to such an endeavor, but allowed me access regardless. That is, s/he was charitable towards me, facilitating the conditions for the fieldwork that I wanted to do and to use the materials for my own purposes. The Casa Santa will not derive any direct or obvious benefit from my research. Instead, I remain indebted to the president of the Casa Santa for allowing me to pursue my career choice.

1.4 Methodology

In this section I present a major methodological decision that currently informs my writing. The fundamental issue concerns a decision to follow the way informants talk. In particular, informants very seriously acknowledge that agency is not confined to living and embodied humans.

This account will remain devoid of an interlocutor. In section 4.3 below, I present a hypothesis concerning the relationship between the visionary experience of Ayahuasca and spirit-possession that departs from that of colleagues who also study churches of the greater Santo Daime matrix. Although I acknowledge the legitimacy of their alternative or nuanced positions concerning the matter, for the sake of brevity I present only my own position. A similar stance is taken here concerning methodological issues. Although some readers may find my positions objectionable, I chose to make them clear for the sake of transparency, not in order to dispute or discredit other views.

For example, the sacrament of the Barquinha, which is the brew called Santo Daime, has inherent divine, pedagogical and curative agency. Without hesitation, I reflect the way that informants speak of the brew and experience it, also recognizing this agency. Indeed, as the reader will discover in section 4.2 where I narrate an experience of cleansing that I received, I affirm the same sensation. The recognition of the agency of the brew is widespread across the many Ayahuasca traditions (e.g. see Luna & Amaringo 1999). Even people who are not affiliated with the traditions, but have drunk the brew over a relatively extended period of time as part of personal quests, coincide with this affirmation. For example, Shanon acknowledges discovering –not without surprise– his own experience that “the teacher was the brew” (Shanon 2002:8).

Similarly, in my writing I more often speak of the spirits just as informants themselves do. I take for granted the possibility that they may exist exactly as informants conceive of them, and that I am the unfortunate one who was brought up in a milieu deprived of this sensibility and naïve to this aspect of reality. On the other hand, I occasionally essay the technique of offering analysis from a more skeptical view that treats these persons as compartments of the individual psyche. From the phenomenological perspective, it is unfounded to consider these two positions as in ontological disparity.

The third example concerns the nature of institutions as emergent from individual human interaction, and existing as entities-to-themselves. This includes that they have a definite sense of directionality of action and intervention in reality. This is notoriously the case for the Barquinha religion, spoken and conceived of by informants as a “Mission.” My writing often reflects this way that informants conceive of the Barquinha.

The Mission is essential. Social actors strive to implement it and to carry out its prerogatives and commandments. People are instruments and are required to submit to its coercive mandates. Individual authorship of action, revelation, prophecy, etc. is often negated in the Barquinha social context. People are commonly “channels” for spiritual forces that work through them. The Mission is not a person and is not spoken of in this way. Rather, it is like an organizing power. I think of it like a DC electrical current where people are the electrical appliances. Hypothetically imagine the current flowing in the alternate direction and appliances working in reverse. In the Barquinha, evil is literally spoken of as being “malignant currents.” I conceive of the positive current of the Mission

changing and ordering the flow and positioning of things, like passing a magnet over iron shavings orders their directionality to point all in one direction.

A second methodological clarification, unrelated to the issue of where informants locate agency, is my narrow focus of comparative interests at this stage. While the Barquinha is situated within the complex religious panorama of urban post-Rubber Era Amazonia, and Brazil in general, a major religious interlocutor of the Barquinha that I have kept in mind throughout fieldwork is the Santo Daime, which is Barquinha's sibling religion.

At the same time that members of the Casa Santa are attentive to the Catholic Church, mainstream Umbanda, Kardecism, and other elements of their broader religious environment, they are always sensitively aware of what is happening in the Santo Daime, especially within Rio Branco. However, while the interest of members of the Casa Santa to other religions is mostly doctrinal or instrumental, their attention to the Santo Daime includes social elements. They are dynamically watchful of events in the Santo Daime, such as marriages, birthday celebrations, declarations given by outstanding leaders, and even the hymns of the Santo Daime.

I think that they perceive of the Santo Daime as their most immediate religious interlocutor. Rita, one of my prime informants, would draw my attention to comparisons between the two, for example, how the same entities are mentioned in the hymns of both, etc. Similarly, certain practices display a sense of continuity between the two churches. For example, Santo Daime folk sometimes participated in rituals in the Casa Santa dressed in the Santo Daime uniform. Also, during a Santo Daime ritual held in the Casa Santa once, each church supplied Daime. The Casa Santa's was served for the first half

and the Santo Daime's during the second half. People also actively participate in each other's rituals. For example, I participated in a Santo Daime ritual in Alto Santo (a Santo Daime vicinity) in which Barquinha musicians played together with their hosts. Similarly, there is a young Santo Daime musician who very frequently plays in the Casa Santa. I did not perceive such degrees of continuity between members of the Casa Santa and other religions.

Thus, elucidating the specificity of each church, aside from liturgical matters, has been on my mind since fieldwork. I do sense that there is a difference, for example, in the way they move their bodies, their preferences in clothing, and even how much time they spend in the temples when not in ritual. The quick response given to me by informants is that the Barquinha is more devotional, oriented towards charity and incorporates much spirit-possession. Finally, I have come to coincide with these replies and have concluded that the two churches each fulfill a different mission. While the Santo Daime inaugurates a 'new humanity,' the Barquinha has the mission of rescuing the suffering. This conclusion will be further justified as the thesis unfolds.

1.5 Methods

In this section I will briefly describe some salient activities and circumstances concerning my behavior as a researcher. These determined my use of time during the day and also my accommodation experience, which was decidedly influential in my comprehension of the domestic component of informants' lives.

As much as possible I sustained a scholarly attitude in the field when I was not with informants. For example, I spent a good deal of time in public libraries writing up

fieldnotes, but also reviewing the literature on topics such as Umbanda or Brazilian history. I also examined the archives of local newspapers for articles on the Santo Daime and Barquinha. Furthermore, I viewed the several films on the Santo Daime and the sole film on the Barquinha that are kept in the municipal film library.

Although practically all of my fieldwork was conducted in the Casa Santa, for comparative purposes I also participated in rituals elsewhere. I visited both the Casa de Oração and the Missão da Santa Luz (pseudonyms) a few times for different rituals, as well as two incipient Barquinha churches. I also participated in a few rituals of the Santo Daime, in different churches.

There are matters of difference in each of the three prominent Barquinha churches. In such cases, I have tried to be careful to make a reference to the specific church from which my analysis is drawn or which it can be applied. General references to ‘the Barquinha’ intend to be applicable to (most committed members of) all churches that I have visited.

I recognize the help and friendliness of many informants, whether in the Casa Santa or in the other churches that I visited (either Barquinha or Santo Daime). In particular, Rita and Pedro provided most of the comments that have been incorporated into this text, even though I had access to other sources. The reason for this is because I spent most of my time with them. I have been friends with Pedro since I first arrived in the Casa Santa, and I lived in Rita’s house for the better part of my fieldwork.

I lived in two households during fieldwork (interspersed with three brief stays in cheap hotels). This proved pivotal, as it situated me more intimately in the social community and provided other people and myself with a defined subject position. Of

particular importance was the long stay in Rita's house, which opened up to me the possibility of immediate relationships with her friends and family. Intimacy is an important factor in social relationships in the Barquinha moral community, and being a part of Rita's household mitigated my position as an outsider. As a part of Rita's household, I also gained insight into less obvious things, such as the preferred locations for buying religious supplies, and of course a notion of the living conditions of members. Living in households also provided a constant informal flow of information, most often by initiative of my hosts, their guests or other family members who were intent on explaining to me a diversity of aspects about their religion or biographies.

I conducted three formal interviews and learned that this technique should be used sparingly. At times, I also spontaneously and informally asked people questions about certain aspects. Nevertheless, I am an unobtrusive fieldworker. I listen a lot more than I speak.

Contact with my friends did not cease after I left Rio Branco. For example, I engaged in several phone conversations with Rita while writing up this thesis. These included presenting her with some queries that occurred to me during the months spent thinking through the ethnographic materials.

1.6 Literary conventions used in this thesis

As much as possible, I have used English translations for offices, names of rituals and other aspects of the Barquinha *corpus*. In a few cases, non-English words are more appropriate, such as referring to the West African Yoruba deities as "*orixás*." With the exception of souls and the spirits of missionaries, all other categories of spirits are

referred to through the Portuguese term since a translation seems awkward. Thus, the spirits of elderly Black slaves are referred to as *Pretos Velhos*, rather than “Elderly Blacks.” The spirits of Amerindians are called *Caboclos*, and there is really no English translation for this word. The literature in English on Afro-brazilian and riverine mixed-race Amazonian religiosity also conserves the Portuguese for these spirit-entities (e.g. Brown 1994; Brown & Bick 1987; Giobellina & Gonzales 1989; Hale 1997; Harris 2000; Slater 1994; Voeks 2000).

It is also pertinent to clarify that I have distinguished through a capitalization the term ‘*Caboclo*,’ which refers to a category of spirit (that of Brazilian Indians), from the social class of Amazonian mixed-race riverine peasants called ‘*caboclos*’ in the anthropological literature (e.g. Harris 2000).

All spirits are gendered. When gender is irrelevant, Portuguese uses the masculine. I have kept to this convention (including in translations). For example, unenlightened spirits are known as *exús* when they are male, but as *pomba-giras* when they are female. Collectively they are called *exús* which, although masculine plural, encompasses both genders. Thus, the reader should assume that references to the spirits in the masculine imply gender-neutrality.

Another term that may need clarification is the collective reference to unbaptized entities as “pagans.” This is the exact term used in colloquial speech and in ritual formulae to refer to these beings. The term is not derogatory. It descriptively refers to their unbaptized state, which is something that the Barquinha has the mission of modifying. Whether or not spirits are baptized is fundamental to their classification and kind of participation in the mission.

The sacrament of the Barquinha, known as Ayahuasca in Quechua, is properly called “*Santo Daime*.” However, the ethnographic literature has come to use this designation for the name of the religion founded by Mestre Irineu (e.g. Mercante 2004; Monteiro 1983; Paskoali 2002). I will adhere to that usage. When I write “Santo Daime” I am referring to Mestre Irineu’s church. In order to distinguish references to the sacrament, I will use the native colloquial designation: “Daime.” References to the “greater Santo Daime matrix” imply all those churches whose sacrament is called “Daime.” They are the Barquinha, the Santo Daime church, and other smaller churches (not specifically mentioned in this thesis). They all trace back to Mestre Irineu.

In a similar way, I have used the term ‘spiritism’ liberally throughout the text, just as it is used in the Barquinha. The term refers to the practice of engaging in transactions with the spirits, especially through possession. It is a non-denominational term, and descriptively refers to the practices, not to any particular doctrine or tradition. To distinguish it from Kardecist spiritism, which in Brazil and in the literature is often simply called ‘Spiritism’ (e.g. Lewgoy 1998), I will always refer to the latter as ‘Kardecism’ (a terminological distinction that the literature on Umbanda has also often made, e.g. Brown 1994).

Finally, a very important term in the lexicon of churches that use Daime is the concept of *Doctrine (Doutrina)*, and derived verb and adjective. The term is encompassing and includes more than just intellectual or theological knowledge. Especially, to be *doctrinated (doutrinado)* is to have naturalized the ethical behavior, predispositions and existential orientations expected of adherents. The use of term seems to me to be loosely similar to Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977). It also

implies a submission to such precepts and their sources. The stress is on the active voluntary receptivity of the adherent who conscientiously modifies conduct, thoughts, affects, etc. It seems inappropriate to say in English that one is “indoctrinating oneself,” but this occurs in the lexicon of the Daimé churches. The verb ‘*doutrinar*’ can be used reflexively (i.e. ‘*se-doutrinar*’). In consequence, I am reluctant to use a translation such as “indoctrination,” and prefer here the neologism *doctrination*.

2. THE BARQUINHA COMMUNITY

2.1 The foundation of the Barquinha

A brief introductory summary of the history of the Barquinha is in order for the purpose of quickly situating the reader in regards to the location and social composition of the church.

The founder of the Barquinha was Daniel Pereira de Mattos. He was the son of slaves, born in Vargem Grande in the state of Maranhão in the north coast of Brazil, in 1888, the year of the abolition of slavery in Brazil (Oliveira 2002:65). He migrated to Acre, in Western Amazonia, in the early twentieth century, first arriving with the Navy (Oliveira 2002:66).

At the time, Acre was in the midst of the Rubber Era that promoted massive immigration movements from the Northeastern states of Brazil into the region (Souza 2002). One man who came as part of these migrations was Raimundo Irineu Serra, who for many years worked as a rubber-tapper in Acre. In the early 1930s, Raimundo Irineu Serra began to organize rituals, healing and exorcisms based on the use of “Santo Daime” (as it was being called) in a rural area just outside of Rio Branco, the capital of Acre. Eventually, this was consolidated in the Santo Daime religion, now a world-wide phenomenon, and the founder came to be called Mestre Irineu (‘*mestre*’ means ‘teacher’ or also ‘master’). Daniel Pereira de Mattos had been a friend of Mestre Irineu since youth, and he joined the church in the early 1940s (Neto 2003). At some point, he received an angelic vision that instructed him in his own personal mission. Mestre Irineu supported him, and he constructed a simple chapel and a hut with palm leaves and mud in a forest area outside of Rio Branco.

Intensely devoted to St. Francis of Assisi, Daniel Pereira de Mattos led a Franciscan life of poverty and simplicity. He used “Santo Daime” in healing and for worship services. People spontaneously began to approach him. After he passed away, the mission was consolidated by his disciples (including, for example, the introduction of naval uniforms) and the name “Barquinha” (meaning “Little Boat”) was coined. Although in life he was referred to as Mestre Daniel by followers, after passing away it was recognized that he had received celestial recognition as a friar, and he has since been known as Frei Daniel. After passing away, some disciples successively opened up churches of their own. One of these, the Casa Santa, was my main fieldwork site.

2.2 The Barquinha community in the present

I now want to provide a short impressionistic description of the Barquinha community and social relationships in the present. The urbanization of the neighborhood, the relationships between churches and other matters distinguish the current situation from that of the Santo Daime churches and also from the original chapel as it was during the times of Frei Daniel.

The land was almost uninhabited when Frei Daniel built his simple chapel. With the years, people gradually began to take up residence nearby (Sena Araújo 1999:58).

The Catholic priest Padre Pacífico chronicled in 1970,

The little church built with mud, consecrated to St. Francis, was the place of encounter of a Community. There, the Mission was formed. [...] The Mission was a pilgrimage center and its founder a true prophet, as rustic as the people living nearby and as simple as the forest (Pe. Manoel Pacífico da Costa *in* Oliveira 2002:81, my translation).

A newspaper article from 1969 states that the membership of the sole Barquinha church of the time was 32 uniformed members, with about 50 other sympathizers who engaged in regular attendance (Nichols 1969:7). Sena Araújo quotes that the amount of people that regularly attended the church of his fieldwork in 1996 was about 250 (Sena Araújo 1999:60). Currently, there are probably several hundred for all Barquinha churches.

In 1945, Frei Daniel built his chapel in a rural area (Oliveira 2002:63). Now, the area is intensely urbanized and has become a central neighborhood of Rio Branco. As far as I am aware, members of the three churches often live in the proximity of their particular church. There are many interspersed non-Barquinha households and these now outnumber Barquinha families. However, the Barquinha was an early settlement and its normalcy is well-established. Members of the Casa Santa unselfconsciously walk through the streets dressed in the uniform when going to or coming from church.

One result of joining the Barquinha is fixity to a specific geographical location. Each Barquinha is a fixed place of convergence and confluence to which people become increasingly attached. It is physically impossible for the committed member to spend the majority of evenings in another location or among people not from one's church because the Barquinha ritual calendar is very intense. Members go to church frequently. On average, I would say that there are rituals in the Casa Santa between 250 and 300 days in a year. The other Barquinhas have a less intense calendar. However, the Barquinha is, by a long shot, the Brazilian Ayahuasca Religion with the most number and frequency of rituals, and in this sense almost certainly also outranks any other Ayahuasca tradition, including indigenous or mestizo.

The Barquinha does not seem to me to be envisioned as a religion that intends to spread. Instead, it operates as a place of repose and healing to which the suffering and ailing spontaneously come. Religious commitments are very demanding, and it takes much discipline and dedication to fulfill them, as well as long-term residency (e.g. for the several weeks of a penitential period). It has been customary for presidents to spend years without leaving their houses (Figueiredo et al 1996:51; Oliveira 2002:94; Sena Araújo 1999:53).

During the day, members of the Casa Santa are often engaged making preparations for forthcoming rituals. There is also a good deal of socializing that occurs for a few hours after rituals. In general, they socialize with each other more than with non-members.

Endogamy is very common in the Casa Santa. The religion has generated all-Barquinha families.

A fundamental factor that generates close quasi-kin ties is godparenthood. This institution lies at the basis of church authority. Basically, every church leader is treated as a godparent to their followers. They are called ‘Godfather’ (*Padrinho*) or ‘Godmother’ (*Madrinha*). Elderly members are sometimes also called this way by cliques of followers.

Godparenthood determines treatment among parties. Children are taught to be deferential with their godparents. For example, I saw Rita persistently remind her son to solicit his godfather’s blessing whenever he was near. It is the basis of informal ranking among non-kin.

In the Casa Santa, adults ask the godparent (e.g. the leader of the church) for a blessing by saying “*bênção*” (or the Acrean form, “*bença*”) and slightly extending the

hand with the palm facing up. The godparent will respond, “May God bless you” (“*Deus te abençõe*”), also slightly extending the hand but with palm facing down. The hands do not actually touch each other. The blessing is a one-way ranking system that ratifies the religious tie, bonds of mutual loyalty and quasi-kin intimacy.

It is very interesting that the blessing forms the basis of the treatment that people have with spirits of the Umbanda pantheon. When people pass near a spirit of an elderly Black slave (*Preto Velho*) or a Brazilian Amerindian (*Caboclo*) they will very frequently request the spirit’s blessing, with the same exchange of actions and words as with a godparent.

The social community of a church is wider than the specific members, though. Other members of the family, such as cousins, siblings or parents, are inducted in varying degrees into the social life of the church. In the case of the Casa Santa, this extended social community includes young girls who live with some members to help them with chores. Typically, the people in the extended community attend Parties in the church’s Dance Hall and other festive events.

All three Barquinha churches in the neighborhood have demonstrable historical connections and members maintain ongoing social ties with each other. For example, I once participated in a ritual commemorating a deceased president of the Casa de Oraçã, to which the presidents and entourages of the other two churches had been invited.

Even so, religiously they have become independent. Leaders of one church are not bound by the actions or revelations received by leaders of other churches. The naval uniforms denote the full charismatic autonomy of each church. With the uniform, the bond to a specific community is worn on the body.

As in the Santo Daime and the União do Vegetal, committed members of the Barquinhas wear a uniform during rituals. It is possible to think of the uniform as habilitating the bearer for the Ayahuasca experience from a specific subject position, that of military officers in battle –which is how people themselves speak of it. This is much like Amazonian shamans' clothing or body painting, typically of jaguars, snakes or other predators (Arévalo 1986:159; Gebhart-Sayer 1986:193; Keifenheim 2002:103; Viveiros de Castro 1998:482). Nevertheless, the uniforms also determine social commitments and loyalty (see Comaroff 1985:167).

Uniforms oblige a person to sustain loyalty to a particular Barquinha church. In both the Santo Daime and the União do Vegetal, there is a single design of the uniform that is used in all churches. People join the whole institution, not a specific centre. The Barquinha is different from this because there is no centralized authority and churches have full autonomy. Each church has a different uniform. A person who belongs to one church does not wear her/his uniform in another.

That the significance of the uniform is different for the Barquinha than for the Santo Daime is illustrated when groups from either religion participate in rituals of the other. I once went to a ritual in a Santo Daime church to which the president of the Casa Santa and entourage had been invited. For this, the Barquinha folk dressed in white. White clothing is what they use when they participate in rituals other than in their own church. In contrast to this, the Casa Santa received visitors from the Santo Daime several times during my fieldwork. The visitors sometimes arrived dressed in the Santo Daime uniform and participated thus in the rituals. It would seem, therefore, that for the

Barquinha folk, the use of the uniform is restricted to their particular church. For the Santo Daime folk, however, their use of the uniform is likely linked to the use of Daime.

The Barquinha uniform binds a person's loyalty in at least three ways. On the one hand, the adherent is bound to the leader of that church. People seek leaders' advice on all sorts of affairs. For instance, they mediate domestic problems among couples. The authority of a Barquinha commander is extensive to a number of community affairs and to the lives of individuals, far beyond strictly ritual or doctrinal elements. For example, Rita would not visit another Barquinha church on a special date that I was intending to go to, unless she had the explicit authorization of the president of the Casa Santa. Secondly, a uniformed member is bound to the other members of the church. They generate ties of solidarity, baby-sit for each other, support each other emotionally, etc. Thirdly, uniformed members are geographically bound to the specific church that they belong to. Unlike other religions, such as Catholicism, where one can circumstantially relocate and begin to attend another parish, this is not possible in the Barquinha.

The Barquinhas also have an intertwined history with the Santo Daime churches. For example, when I was in the field, a full-blown Santo Daime dancing ritual (requiring the use of the 'official' or 'white' uniform) was performed in the Dance Hall of the Casa Santa, organized by venerable elderly contemporaries of Mestre Irineu. It was attended by a multitude of people from the several Santo Daime churches of Rio Branco (with the exception of one) and also people from other Barquinha churches. Over the decades, leaders and adherents have attended each other's rituals.

2.3 The *Pretos Velhos*

In the Casa Santa they celebrate the day of the abolition of slavery in Brazil. First there is a seated ritual in the Church dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima and afterwards festive dancing to vigorous drumming in the Dance Hall. I was present on this occasion, and many spirits of the Brazilian Black slaves (*Pretos Velhos*) descended into mediums, and were treated in a very hospitable manner. In the Dance Hall, from large communal pots all participants were served “*Preto Velho* food,” which is a mash of beans and beef, coarse manioc flour and squares of unrefined sugar served on banana leaves. Everything has to be eaten with the hands. I was told that this is the same coarse food and plates that were given to the slaves.

This same festivity is celebrated in mainstream Umbanda temples. Hale describes the *Pretos Velhos* in the temple of Pai Joaquim de Angola crying from the sight of the abundance of food, and the painful memory of the abundance of Africa that they had been brutally ripped away from (Hale 1997:397-398). While I did not see the same reaction in the Casa Santa, I will note that I spontaneously felt it myself. Seeing the slaves contentedly accept the banana leaves with coarse food made my heart sink as I gravely realized the gratitude that they must have felt every evening that they were given this food after a hard day’s work and beatings. How grateful they must have been, for a food that I found tasteless and dull.

Perhaps more embarrassing for me, though, was being offered food and bitter black coffee by the slaves themselves. One evening, I participated in this festivity held in an incipient Barquinha church with a few days’ difference from the Casa Santa. I arrived a little late, when the food had already been distributed, but was treated very hospitably

by the slaves nonetheless. One old *Preta Velha* diligently got up, hobbled over to the table and kindly served me a plate of food as soon as I arrived. Another old *Preto Velho* stretched out his arm and offered me his own cup (that is, coconut shell) of bitter coffee to drink from. Bearing in mind their histories, the fraternal gesture of sharing what little crude food that they had is a sobering experience. This is in addition to the fact that I know the costs of the feast had been met entirely by the owner of the house, a woman who lives in a rudimentary wooden house and has an exceedingly tight economic situation.

This yearly re-enactment of the *senzalas* (slave quarters) is one of the several ways in which the Barquinha provides its members with a reconciliation of their own obscured history and genealogies. The grandparents, great-grandparents, or another generation back, of the majority of the members of the Casa Santa were certainly slaves.

The historical erasure of the slave period in Brazil is literal. The official documents concerning slave traffic were purposefully burned after abolition, and reconstruction of the period has been a complicated task for historians (Bastide 1971:50).

A deceased president of a Barquinha reported that in a conversation with Frei Daniel, the founder referred to himself as ‘Preto Velho’ (Araújo, Manuel 1992:31). It seems that Frei Daniel was very pastoral and comforting. An elderly lady, from the times of Frei Daniel, told me that he would talk and counsel people, easily spending one-and-a-half hours with them.

To illustrate the stereotype of the humble, gentle and servile *Preto Velho*, which by the end of the twentieth century had been canonized into pantheons all around Brazil, I will quote what Bastide identifies as the popular conceptualization of the Brazilian slave.

There is a whole folklore about the black slave of Brazil that is known under the name of “cycle of Father John.” This cycle is extremely ambiguous because it was formed with the collaboration of the white and the black, being oriented, thus, to two opposing directions. On the side of the whites is the apology of the “good” black as opposed to the “bad” black, to the black of the *quilombos* [maroon societies], to the murdering black, to the rebellious black, the good black who sometimes sings away his sadness to the scraping sound of the *urucongo* but who submitted to his luck, who is devoted to his masters, who without doubt considers himself like a poor relative, but still a relative, of the lordly household. From the side of the blacks, it’s an apology of the resourceful black, who gets to court the white lady, sleep in his master’s hammock, and take up a position of command in the household making himself look as if his “soul is white,” but who conserves in a secret corner of his heart the best of his African civilization, the knowledge of medicinal plants, magic rites, and the African name of the Catholic saints, that is, their true name (Bastide 1971:101, my translation).

Obviously, the actual individual *Pretos Velhos* that descend into temples around Brazil don’t always conform exactly to Bastide’s description. In the Casa Santa, in particular, they are taught to conform to local ethics, which strips them of resentment, racism, or other such attributes.

The *Pretos Velhos* are a fundamental category of spirits in the Casa Santa, as most of the healing and counseling rests with them. While I will mention other relevant categories of spirits as the thesis unfolds, I want to introduce the *Pretos Velhos* early on because it seems to me that they represent a moral ideal of responsible social behavior for Barquinha adherents. Bringing to mind that the *Pretos Velhos* are permanent presences in the Casa Santa as active participants and mediators of social relationships among members completes the sketch of the Barquinha community outlined in this chapter.

3. SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

3.1 Spatial layout

Each of the different rituals of the Barquinha is carried out in a specific liturgical space. The various spaces were created successively to accommodate the liturgies as they were introduced or reorganized. That different spaces were created, rather than using a single one for all kinds of rituals (as is the case of the Santo Daime church), denotes discrimination of spiritual activities.

I think that, ultimately, the anthropological importance of the organization of spaces within the church grounds lies in that they are a symbol of the organization of the cosmological cartography. I have concluded that each Barquinha church is a microcosm and its spatial and liturgical organization is a mirror of the greater spiritual universe. The active manipulation of the microcosmic spaces is a deliberate attempt to reorganize the spiritual world at large according to certain values and understandings.

I believe that Barquinha folk understand their actions on the microscopic scale to have vast repercussions in the larger universe. For example, when souls in postmortem suffering are evangelized, although a medium receives only one soul at a time, each soul always declares that it is accompanied by, and is standing in for, many thousands more, as Rita explained to me (see Sena Araújo 1999:218).

That spaces are microcosmic is evidenced, for example, in Frei Daniel's original tomb, which is a scaled-down replica of a Barquinha church (with its characteristic façade with three steeples). Similarly, in one of the Barquinha churches, the Daime is served from within a small model of a Barquinha church. In another Barquinha church, a small model of the church is used as a deposit box for donations (Paskoali 2002:106).

These replicas suggest that the Barquinha temples are perceived as sources and repositories of charity, the Daime and the particular mission of Frei Daniel.

I will now describe four basic spaces that are relevant to the thesis. (They are not the only liturgical spaces).

When Frei Daniel was alive there was only one construction, the “little chapel,” where most rituals were carried out (Sena Araújo 1999:132). Just before he passed away, the chapel had begun to be re-built with bricks and solid material (Sena Araújo 1999:51). Looking at photographs in the Casa de Memória (a small private museum of the Barquinha built on the land of the original chapel), I saw that it included a façade with symbols and inscriptions inspired from the esoteric group that Frei Daniel belonged to, the *Círculo Esotérico da Comunhão do Pensamento* (these symbols were later also embroidered onto the uniforms). All Barquinha churches now have a central temple for worship that is historically derived from the original chapel. This construction is referred to as the ‘Church.’

The second relevant liturgical space that I want to mention is the Dance Hall, created in 1959 by the successor of Frei Daniel (Sena Araújo 1999:105). The purpose of this space and of the dancing is multiple. The Dance Hall is a place for relief and unwinding, especially after the intense commitments involved in a Pilgrimage ritual period (Sena Araújo 1999:222). This is also the most permissive space for possession episodes to occur. In essence, anybody is allowed to receive entities here (though these should conform to appropriate behavior). Sena Araújo explains that dancing rituals provide an opportunity for participants to develop and initiate themselves in mediumship (Sena Araújo 1999:223).

The next major architectural innovation, some decades later, was the creation of the Charity Works Room in one of the churches in order to systematize the healing service, especially because of the large amount of clients that were being attended (Sena Araújo 1999:132-133). The creation of this room increased the amount of healer-spirits, and also provided them with individual shrines and cabinets in which to store adjuncts to healing, such as candles, perfumed water, etc. Each cabinet/shrine has some chairs or stools. It seems that previously healer-spirits attended clients standing up (see Nichols 1969:8). I speculate that the inclusion of stools and the increase in the amount of healer-spirits allowed for the service to move towards extended counseling and dialogue between the client and healer-spirit. Above all, the creation of this room made the charity and healing service an integral part of the mission, institutionalizing it architectonically.

The fourth important liturgical space to mention is the tall Cross erected just in front of the main entrance to the Church. There is no permanent seating or other sorts of comforts around the Cross. This is not really a place where long rituals are conducted, but rather only short and special rites. For example, the “*Doctrination of Souls*” rite held on the Day of the Dead is conducted at the foot of this cross (Sena Araújo 1999:212). The Cross is also used for other *ad hoc* rites, especially those that spur from an initiative of the adherent or an instruction given by a healer-spirit. This is typically the case of devotional commitments.

Figure 3.1 below is an idealized sketch of how the four liturgical spaces are located *vis-à-vis* each other. For example, while the Charity Works Room should be built behind the main Church hall, the Cross is placed in front.

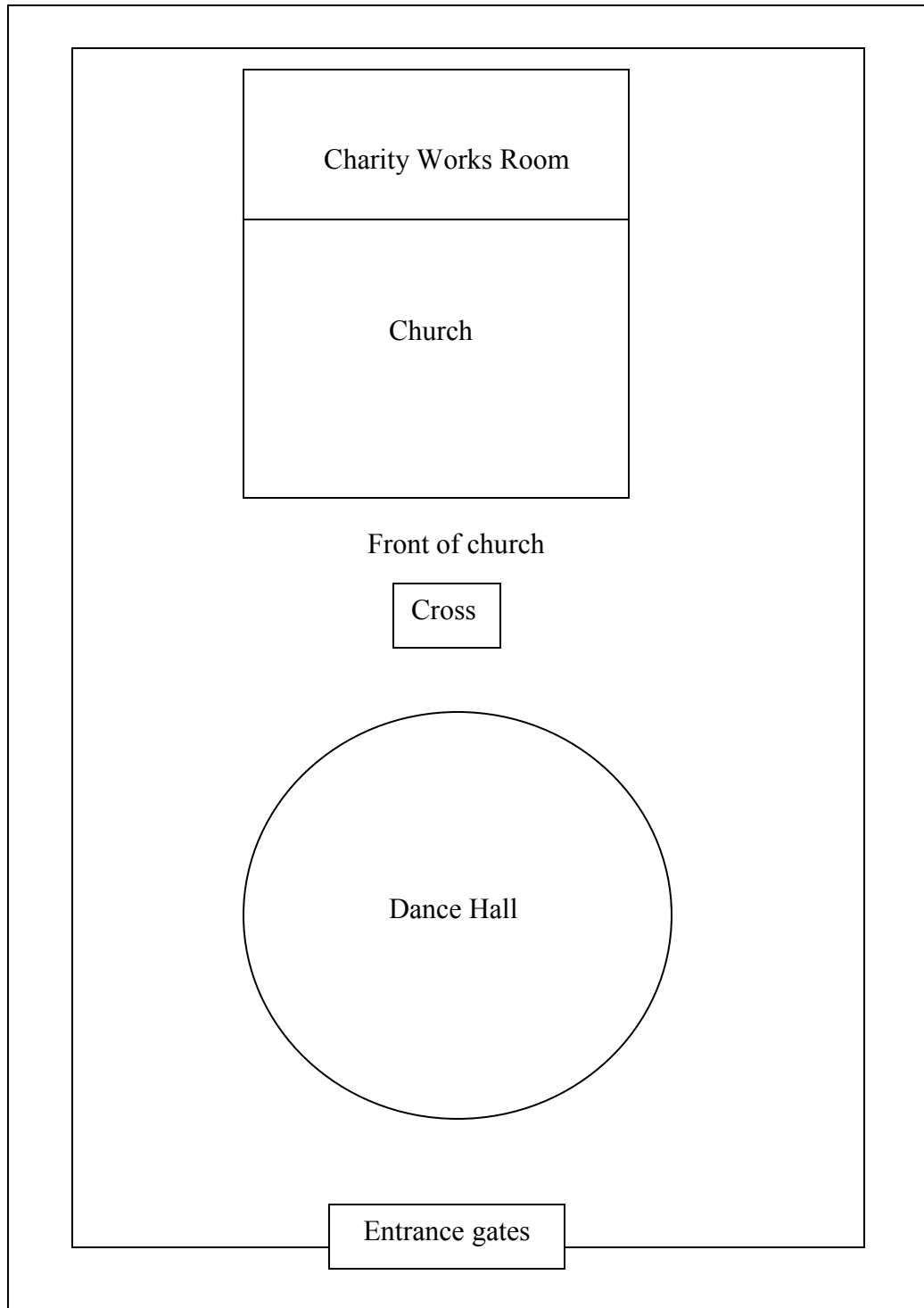


Figure 3.1 Plan of idealized spatial layout of four major liturgical spaces

Of all the churches that I visited, none fully conforms to this idealized layout. Mostly, I assume that the churches have compromised because of physical constraints, such as small or awkward plots of lands, or a street or stream running along one side. Still, I believe that the layout provided below represents a probable scenario of how these spaces would be located if land were not restricted and the church constructions were built in a single effort on a vacant lot. (I must note, though, that the absence of a Charity Works Room in the Casa de Oração church is purposeful).

The perimeter surrounding the whole temple complex represents a fence. In regards to the entrance gates, I am also sure that they would ideally align with the Cross and Church, but I know of only one case where this is so. In the Casa Santa the entrance gate is on one side, but several informants told me that they intend to relocate the entrance gate to be aligned with the Church entrance, some day. Currently, there is a sharp rift in the intended place, which means that steep steps will have to be built. This will make access to the church very uncomfortable. The cost of this adjustment is also probably still not entirely justified, considering the church's limited resources.

3.2 Spatial segregation of spirits

The previous section outlined how different liturgical activities are carried out in each space. In the Barquinha, the discrimination of activities roughly coincides with a distinction of the type of spirit entrusted with that intervention. Thus, the segregation of spaces, liturgies and activities is also a segregation of spirits and a gross confinement of them to certain locations within the church grounds. The major distinction among spirits, in regards to the contribution they provide, concerns whether they are intrinsically

Catholic or converted pagans. The liturgical spaces are a statement about their relative contribution to the mission and implicit rank according to a Catholic/converted scale.

Generally speaking, the Church is characterized by informants as being the “Catholic” space, as Pedro himself said to me the first day of my arrival while he toured me around the grounds. The iconography of this room is pervasively Catholic. In the Casa Santa, for example, pictures of the Stations of the Cross (the *Via Crucis*) are hung along the side walls, exactly as tends to be the case in Catholic churches. There are also many paintings of Catholic saints. In the front of the room is a shrine, called *Altar*, which has two or three levels. The *Altar* is packed with statues and paintings of the Saints, Angels and other elements such as candles. The levels of the *Altar* generally appear to mirror the cosmological ranking of entities, with statues of Jesus and Mary occupying the highest levels. The Saints mostly occupy the lower shelf. There was time in the Casa Santa (e.g. during pre-fieldwork visits) when pagan icons (such as statues of mermaids) were placed on the bare floor, but when I went back for fieldwork I noticed that all pagan referents had been removed from this room.

This is where Christian sacramental rites are imparted, such as baptisms and confessions. This is also the space in which the higher-ranking spirits descend, such as those of Catholic bishops. High-ranking deceased Barquinha members also descend here. Normally, participants are not allowed or supposed to receive spirits spontaneously here. The spirits that descend in this space are (or should be) the ones that have a defined liturgical function.

The varieties of rituals conducted in this space largely follow a single structure. The liturgy basically consists of ritualized declarations co-constructed between the

leader(s) of the ceremony and the congregation. For example, during Barquinha hymns (more properly called ‘psalms’ in this context), the cantor sings the stanzas and the congregation intersperses with choruses. Alternatively, and perhaps more frequently, the cantor only sings three-quarters of the stanzas, and the congregation finishes them with the final line or two. All participants sing in unison the same melody. Each ‘psalm’ is then interspersed by a prayer (or in the Casa de Oração, by one particular short hymn), which is recited in a similar manner. That is, the cantor recites the initial words or the first half of the prayer, and the congregation finishes it off.

In consequence, rituals in the Church solicit the congregation to remain attentive to the initiatory pronouncements of the leader(s) and to respond in perfect unison. Additionally, no other activities occur simultaneously. Thus, when a spirit descends or if a short rite is held during a longer ritual (e.g. a baptism), the ongoing litany of ‘psalms’ and prayers is momentarily suspended, and the congregation remains waiting in silence until its resumption.

The dancing rituals, always held in the Dance Hall, are very different. There are no prescribed dance steps or any particular ordering of the dance movements, except for the general clockwise flow. People can come in or out of the dance floor at liberty, and they socialize liberally on the sides throughout. The songs are sung in their totality by the cantor(s). There is a variety of different and individual actions occurring simultaneously throughout. During the dancing ritual there is much liberal confraternization, and I would say that this is possibly one of its most important purposes and functions. People come to the parties to enjoy themselves. It is not a solemn worship service, but intended for unwinding and relaxation (Sena Araújo 1999:222).

Here, individuals have license to receive spirits. In this space all participants can develop and express their mediumship. Spiritism is liberated, but provides no special function or contribution. The kinds of spirits that tend to descend in this area are the converts. They do not usually perform or provide any special contribution here. On the contrary, the dancing is provided for their pleasure and relaxation (Sena Araújo 1999:222).

The Charity Works Room is especially designed for healing activities. The healing service of the Barquinha became a responsibility of the spirits already in the days of Frei Daniel, and has continued since. Healer-spirits are recruited particularly from the lower ranks of the cosmology. They are typically pagans who converted to Christianity post-mortem through the Barquinha. In the Casa Santa they are mostly *Pretos Velhos*.

The instrumental and focalized nature of the healing activities of the Charity Works Room contrasts with those in the Church and those of the Dance Hall. While the Church requires a synchronized unison among all participants and the Dance Hall is the most individualistic arena of actions, the Charity Works Room presents an intermediate situation. There, small intimate cliques composed of a healer-spirit, assistant and client engage in a process of generating consensus concerning the diagnosis, prognosis and treatment for dealing with the client's condition.

Although it depends on the church and occasion, on average I'd say that there are between seven and twelve cliques simultaneously buzzing within the room. So, although the general purpose and repertoire of procedures are similar from clique to clique, the room is chaotically noisy due to the crisscrossing of conversations, singing, praying, loud respiratory noises coming from the healers (whooshing, blowing, whistling, etc.),

snapping fingers and the characteristic flicking of the Swords (*Espadas*), which are white cloths used in healing. In the Casa Santa, the air gradually thickens with tobacco smoke, incense and the smell of burning wax. There is a constant flow of people in and out.

Before the creation of the Charity Works Room, such healing was done in the Church. The purging of these noisy sensorial healing practices from the main hall responded to an explicit intention to reserve the main hall for a certain kind of ceremony, that of worship. Concerning the rites for undoing black magic, the president who implemented the first Charity Works Room explained to Sena Araújo:

The front of the church is not used for these kinds of rites because the church is exclusively for singing praise and worship to God and to the Perpetually Virgin Mary and for the whole brotherhood; it's a place of prayer; it's in the principal places of prayer, that is, the front of the church, where all brethren who come are received (Sena Araújo 1999:181, my translation).

Thus, the healing performances provided by the converted spirits were removed from the central hall and sent to a room that is characteristically behind it. They were removed from the chapel, which thenceforth took on a very Catholic appeal.

This kind of displacement of the instrumental healing practices of the converted pagans to marginal areas began several decades ago with the creation of the Charity Works Room. The reorganization of the Cleansing ritual in the Casa Santa incidentally illustrates the same process.

Pedro explained to me that in the past, the Cleansing ritual was held in the old dance hall, at that time called "*terreiro*" (which is an Umbanda term for such a space). It consisted of some *Pretos Velhos* lined up in a row in the center of the room, performing healing gestures successively over each participant. Participants that were waiting and

those that had already been cleansed, sat surrounding the spirits singing Umbanda songs while some played the African drums.

When I participated in this ritual in 2004, it was no longer being held in the Dance Hall. Instead, the spirits were in the Charity Works Room, and participants that were waiting or who had already been cleansed sat in the Church singing the Umbanda songs (the only time I heard them sung in this space), but with no playing of the African drums.

Consequently, the spatial displacement of the Cleansing ritual inverted the relative positioning of the actors. The spirits who occupied the central and axial position in the *terreiro* now attend from the Charity Works Room. Similarly, the participants who once waited on the periphery now sit in the main hall.

I am not suggesting that this was the purpose of the change in the ritual. Pedro explained to me that it had been removed from the *terreiro* because it was “too noisy.” That is, the spatial displacement intended to disengage the two sets of simultaneous activities. But the relegation of the actions of the spirits to the Charity Works Room suggests to me that the main church hall is no longer an appropriate place for them to do cleansing.

“It’s not a *terreiro* anymore, now it’s a Dance Hall,” one of the musicians from the Casa Santa corrected himself one evening. He was referring to a major change that occurred in this space in the midst of my fieldwork. This change involved not just a modification of its name, but a significant readjustment in the use of the area.

Until June of 2004, the Dance Hall of the Casa Santa was colloquially called “*terreiro*.” The floor was made of dirt. The space was very open, with no walls or entrances, just a roof. During dancing rituals, spirits would often fill the floor with

therapeutic drawings (*pontos riscados*) with many candles lit on top. The axial center of the room was a stone, called Stone of Xangô (*Pedra de Xangô*). (Xangô is the Yoruba *orixá* of thunder and justice). On the sides of the room, spirits would sit on stools and engage in spontaneous consultations with participants. They could smoke their pipes. Dancing was counter-clockwise.

The room was modified during May. The floor was replaced with a smooth white polished concrete floor, with a blue Star of David embedded in the middle. Knee-high walls were built as a perimeter, leaving some openings that became the entrances. The Stone of Xangô was removed, and in its place a candle was now lit in the center. New rules were imposed. Spirits could no longer draw on the ground, light candles and attend consultations. They could not smoke inside this room. The decorations were changed, and were now white banners with Christian motifs and motivational inscriptions. Dancing was thenceforth clockwise. The space became known as the “Dance Hall” (“*Salão de Baile*”).

Spirits can still provide their services during dancing rituals, but not within the Dance Hall. They now sit on the sides, outside of the perimeter. The quantity of such consultations has been drastically reduced. During the last part of fieldwork, perhaps less than five or six *Pretos Velhos* would be in attendance during the dancing, whereas previously it was about a couple times that amount.

In the Casa Santa, several devotional Catholic liturgies have been introduced over the past few years (with minor modifications to suit their performance in the Barquinha), such as the One Thousand Hail Mary’s that are prayed over two days towards the end of a Pilgrimage period and the weekly praying of the full long Rosary. Simultaneously,

there have been linguistic replacements that eliminate references to mainstream Umbanda, such as the discontinuation of the name '*terreiro*' for what is now called the 'Dance Hall.' All pagan iconography was eliminated from the main temple nave between 2003 and 2004, and in 2004 I witnessed these being purged from the Dance Hall (with the exception of placing candles at the foot of the African drums, which continues). Generally speaking, it appears that while spiritism remains central to the practices, it is gradually being re-presented in a way that distinguishes it from mainstream Umbanda, and conforms more to the aesthetics of European Catholicism.

In consequence, the spatial segregation of liturgical spaces coincides with a difference in the rituals and also segregates the spirits. The high-ranking Barquinha and Episcopal spirits descend practically only in the Church. In contrast, converted pagans occupy progressively marginal spaces and rituals, and provide more instrumental contributions or none at all. Those that are committed to healing have their own space for action, the Charity Works Room. Meanwhile ordinary folk, who are only circumstantial mediums, uncoordinatedly receive spirits during dancing rituals, generating no particular impact. Interestingly, the playing of the African drums parallels the segregation of spirits. The playing of the drums is restricted to the Dance Hall and, circumstantially, the Charity Works Room.

3.3 Circumscription: structure and boundaries

An important organizational metaphor present in Barquinha rituals and also in the physical organization of liturgical spaces is circumscription. Basically, spirit activity is shut-off from the external world and occurs within definite boundaries. Liturgically, this

has the function of protecting participants. The president of the Casa Santa once said during a ritual, “We are protected inside here.” The boundaries organize spirit activity such that evil or disturbing spirits or thoughts are kept outside by fierce spiritual guardians, so that within the boundaries only peace and harmony reign. In this section I will describe the basic structure of rituals and spaces to illustrate this point. (I suspect that this partially explains why Barquinha authorities are reluctant to host ethnographers, because publications might dangerously expose the Barquinha ‘mysteries’).

The language of circumscription used to describe sections of a ritual reveals that spirituality is an experience of immersion. For example, rituals are said to be “opened” (“*abertos*”) and later “enclosed” (“*encerrados*”). Immersion is how people talk of the experience of the Daime. One is said to be “within the Daime” (“*no Daime*”).

Barquinha rituals conform to a structure that was revealed to me by Rita towards the end of my fieldwork. With hindsight, I have been able to see how a simplified form of this structure was used for all rituals that involved the descent of spirits. For example, I recognized the skeleton of this structure in a healing rite carried out in the forest that I once witnessed, and also in some healing in Rita’s house on the birthday of one of her sons. It seems reasonable to assume that the structure is therefore geared to channeling the descent of spirits in an acceptable manner.

I will simplify Rita’s exposition and describe only a few salient aspects of this structure. The “opening” of a standard ritual in the Church requires singing a small number of predetermined “psalms.” In the case of small *ad hoc* rituals (e.g. elsewhere than the Church), only one of these was sung, the one that announces protection. After the opening “psalms,” some predetermined speeches announce that the ritual is open, and

that participants should have no fear for they are protected by the Holy Armies of Jesus (e.g. see Araújo 1999:49; cf. a vision of a celestial army dressed in golden uniforms that heals the sick patient when seen, described in Taussig 1987:323, 327).

Spirits only begin to descend after the ritual has been “opened” and supernatural protection has been secured.

Depending on the occasion, the congregation usually continues singing until spirits have retired from the mediums and the session can be “enclosed.” Closing ‘psalms’ are also predetermined. Closing speeches, that mirror the opening ones, are recited. These speeches include “offering” the prayers and devotions to a higher celestial authority. The speeches are simplified for smaller rituals, but the basics are maintained.

The symmetry of the ritual structure, including the language of circumscription, encloses spirit activity. Boundaries offer protection, generating an inside and an outside. Inside, participants engage in harmonious and peaceful relationships, while disruptive enemies are denied access.

Boundaries also surround physical spaces used in liturgies. For example, the church grounds of the Barquinhas have a fence surrounding the land. In the cases that a physical boundary does not exist, people will place candles at strategic spots, generating a virtual perimeter. For example, one morning that a *feito* (preparation of Daime) was just beginning, Pedro went around lighting candles in the corners of the open shed and then explained to me this act. At another time, in a healing ritual held in the forest, candles were also placed in positions that deliberately generated a perimeter in the clearing.

Generally speaking, the rule is that traffic is not allowed in or out of the session, once it has begun. In all Barquinhas that I visited, gates are kept closed during rituals.

The president of the Casa Santa once explained that people should not come in and out during rituals because when they go outside, they become loaded with a burden that is then brought back into the session.

The importance of gateways is illustratively revealed in the case of a very incipient Barquinha church that I once visited. A recent and makeshift construction, the main liturgical space was just a palm-leaf roof sustained by columns, with no walls. The area for dancing was just an open clearing. The church grounds did not have a fence closing them off from the adjacent land. One could easily walk in from any side. However, a free-standing gate had been propped up aligned with the Cross and palm-roofed section, and this gate was kept closed during the ritual. It seems that people were expected to make the point of only coming in and out through this free-standing gate.

Doorways and gates have porters. One of the long-standing porters of the Casa Santa, Seu Mário, spontaneously explained to me the spiritual significance of his post. The porter bars the entry of inferior disturbing spirits, thus guaranteeing peace during the session. He further pointed out that this is why people should only come in and out of the main entrances with porters. By passing through those places, the individual is relieved of any negative presences that might be accompanying her/him.

The flow of spirits is described in the Barquinha using metaphors of vertical mobility. Thus, spirits “descend” and “ascend.” Curtains separate the *Altar* from the rest of the temple where the participants are sitting. The opening of the vertical flow of spirits is enacted with the opening of the curtains in the initial part of the ceremony. In regards to this, Araújo states that “it is as if a door was opened to the spirit world” (1999:49). In ceremonies that require the use of the uniform, the curtains are slowly opened during the

first hymn, and remain open until the last hymn when they are closed again. The opening of the curtains reveals to participants the celestial hierarchy, represented in statues and icons on the *Altar*, and dissolves the barrier between the two.

It seems to me that the opening of the curtains is a representation of how the two worlds commingle during the ritual, all the while that the horizontal boundary is upheld. When the curtains are open, no longer separating the *Altar* from the congregation, the gates that separate the church from the outside world are shut. The generation of physical boundaries that deter horizontal traffic is seemingly linked to the opening of the vertical flow of spirits. One flow of traffic precludes the other.

In conclusion, spirit activity in the Barquinha is bounded within structures of circumscription that intend to keep out enemies and protect the participants. The opening of the vertical flow of spirit activity is simultaneous to the horizontal shutting out. Participation in this secure microcosm is wielded into an immersion experience.

4. POSSESSION AS A MEDIATORY SOCIAL PRACTICE

4.1 Introduction

Spirit-possession in the Barquinha is fundamental to the service of charity and healing. In the times of Frei Daniel, he already authorized mediums to do this, and it has become central to the service that the church offers to other people. Spirit-possession mediates the church's relationship to the neighborhood and other non-Barquinha social actors.

It is also through spirit-possession that a church such as the Casa Santa, where I spent most of my time, regulates the relationships among its own members. The spirits of the healing service mediate conflictive or other internal issues in the Casa Santa. The service is organized and oriented to outsiders, but members of the church are permanently consulting with the entities, seeking advice and counsel.

In his life, Frei Daniel centralized the authority to give moral advice or admonitions, and other leadership functions. But he passed away many years ago. Nowadays, one of his closest disciples and friends, the president of the Casa Santa, receives his spirit frequently. Through this medium, he continues to occupy his office and fulfill his position of supra-organic moral authority.

The spirits also mediate other exceptional circumstances in which direct human intervention is not appropriate (see Gose 1996; Lambek 1981). For example, during a ritual one evening, a spirit spontaneously descended into a medium and then walked up to the Commander of the session and whispered something into her/his ear. The Commander assented, and a microphone was given to the medium. In a deep and other-worldly voice, the spirit announced to all that its medium needed to give a speech to the congregation. We waited and the spirit departed from the medium, who then addressed

the congregation to tell an important story concerning an incident that had happened some years before.

Here is a case where the spirit has to mediate the permission for a human participant to give a speech. This is possibly because spontaneously giving a speech goes against the rules of the rituals. The only other times that I witnessed people giving a speech were either the Commander or distinguished guests from other churches or religions on special occasions.

In all, spirit-possession in the Barquinha has a fundamental task of morally mediating social relationships. The spirits uphold the moral order and social cohesion. After the Daime, they are the fundamental instruments through which the evangelical mission of the church is implemented.

The fundamental difference with the Daime, though, is their larger extent of impact and outreach. The experience of the Daime is always very individual and Daime is only drunk by regular participants. With the Daime, moral transformation is through introspection. In contrast, the spirits have a larger reach. For example, they give sermons to the congregation in a single act and they individually attend clients and other outsiders. Spirit-possession specifically appears to be harnessed as a social mediatory technique. During spirit-possession episodes, some kind of audience or other party is always assumed. The spirit transmits enlightened knowledge and moral advice to the audience.

As repositories of moral authority, there are several categories of spirits in the Barquinha, and each represents a specific kind of moral position. Their scope and kind of intervention is given by this position. The practice of spirit-possession in the Barquinha is very directly linked to its moral contribution. Four major types of contribution are

provided: healing, counseling, sermons and sacraments. Each is typically provided by a different type of spirit and in different liturgies. Healing and counseling are mostly provided by converted pagans. Sacraments are exclusively offered by priests (such as *Bishops*). Sermons can be offered by any of the higher-ranking spirits. This chapter will theoretically consider the social nature of spirit-possession, and the following two chapters will provide ethnographic descriptions and discussions of its implementation in the Casa Santa.

4.2 Phenomenology of states of consciousness/embodiment

I want to address a fundamental anthropological problem concerning the relationship between spirit-possession and the visionary experience of the Daime (called “*miração*”). I propose that they are not unconnected phenomena in the Barquinha. Rather, spirit-possession is the ‘acted out’ counterpart of the visionary experience. Because the visionary experience is private and subjective, spirit-possession intersubjectively mediates a communication of the host’s state of consciousness to an audience through a visibly-enacted altered state of embodiment (in fact, theatricalized according to accepted parameters). My explanation might be useful for understanding the combination of spirit-possession and shamanism in other Amazonian contexts.

The literature on the visionary experience of Ayahuasca often attempts to understand the phenomenon through Western psychologies. For example, Metzner prefers the term “hallucinogen” to describe Ayahuasca, understood as “inducing journeys in the mind” (Metzner 1999:15). For de Rios, mestizo Ayahuasca shamanic healing in the Peruvian Amazon is a ‘folk psychotherapy.’ While such therapy includes many

adjunctive enacted performances, such as blowing tobacco, etc., she additionally explains that “it is the job of the experienced *ayahuasquero* to identify visions that appear before his patients, either in pictorial or symbolic form” (de Rios 1970a:1420).

These understandings resonate with Lévi-Strauss’ comparison between the shamanic cure and psychoanalysis and their recreation of a myth that the patient has to live or relive (Narby & Huxley 2001:108-111). There is a semiotic conceptualization of the visions. These are appreciated for their cognitive value as representations. Contemporary understandings of the sign allow for the understanding that interpretation is an action (e.g. Davis & Womack 2002; Mitchell 1983; Lucy 1997; Wright 1984), which means that the recipient of the visions is therefore never a passive spectator. Thus, a semiotic conceptualization of the visions means that the participant is operationally interacting with the visions.

This is important to bear in mind, since the visions of Ayahuasca most often solicit a response from the participant, commonly during the actual visionary experience and not just afterwards. For example, the participant may be required to repent of a certain attitude. During a pre-fieldwork visit, one man would persistently be flung to his knees in fervent supplication, begging divine mercy. After the rituals, he would explain that Daimé “taught [him] to be a person.”

Csordas seeks to rescue a phenomenological perspective of spontaneous revelatory imagery that is received by Catholic Charismatics, to complement the semiotic approach. For the phenomenological approach, imagery determines a certain being in the world, as it is experienced as a mode of consciousness and has the characteristic of immediacy. Embodied, such imagery is involved in a ‘somatic mode of attention’ that

collapses the mind/body dualism (or representation/empirical referent fallacy) (Csordas 1994:74ff).

The latter is a very suggestive approach since it allows for contemplating the visionary experience of Ayahuasca as embodied, something that users persistently testify. ‘Somatic imagery’ is concurrent to eidetic visual imagery during the experience, called ‘*miração*’ in the Daime lexicon. In other Ayahuasca traditions, the somatic element is sometimes vividly expressed in the global designation used for the experience. Among the Piro of the Peruvian Amazon, the equivalent term is *gimru*, which Gow translates as ‘drunkenness’ and which alludes to a sensory-motor alteration, with visual imagery being secondary (Gow 2001:140-141). Gow glosses the terms *borracheira* (‘drunkenness’) and *mareación* (‘dizziness’) used in the Spanish of this region as equivalents (Gow 2001:140). In the União do Vegetal, the equivalent term is *burracheira*, a word described in rituals as meaning “strange force.” With such an understanding, the eidetic visions are not central to the description of the experience.

Lewis noted that in shamanism, the ecstatic ‘shamanic flight’ involving a departure of the soul from the body often occurs simultaneous to spirit-possession, even among the Tungus and peoples of the Arctic (Lewis 1971:51). Eliade was aware of the frequent concurrent presence of spirit-possession in shamanism, but considered it secondary to the phenomenon (Lewis 1971:49). Lewis perceptively realized that the distinction of the two elements rested on a formal and theoretical difference (incorporation vs. excorporation, and the body as a passive receptacle) (Lewis 1971:55-56). Lewis notes that in either case, the characteristic of shamanism is, rather, a control or “mastery of spirits” (inclusive of one’s own, one’s spirit-helpers, etc.) (Lewis 1971:56).

Lewis' position becomes relevant in view of Csordas' approach to embodied imagery. 'Soul flight,' eidetic visions and incorporation of spirits (in differing degrees) are culturally distinct modes of embodied consciousness.

Miração is an enhanced mode of attention. In this case, intentionality is directed towards spirituality, normally imperceptible or less perceptible to the desensitized average person. In each episode, the specific mode of embodied consciousness involved in the *miração* combines eidetic, somatic, emotional and other components in a particular way.

A focus on the *miração* as a specific embodied mode of spiritual attention requires recognizing that the participant is interpellated by the sensations, just as was indicated above for the semiotic approach to visions as narratives. The participant must interact in some way with these sensations and alterations, interpretively and deliberately.

For example, less than half-way through my fieldwork, I was plagued by a succession of very uncomfortable sessions in which I had bloody and terrifying visions involving the slaughter of animals and in which I was placed in their perspectival position feeling their fright, subsequently followed by intense vomiting of undigested chunks of meat (cf. Gow 1991:152). While I was vomiting, I could feel an overpowering supernatural presence commanding me to renounce all meat products for the duration of fieldwork. For a few days, I toyed with avoiding mammals and tried eating fish instead, but still the vomiting continued. In less than a week I submitted and spent the rest of fieldwork leading a strictly vegetarian diet.

This example illustrates a cohered connection between visions, vomiting, sensation of divine agency and required moral change that were all inherent to the

miração that I was subjected to. While the detached analyst may wish to conceive of each independently, for me they were all very really part of the same vital moral instruction that I was receiving. The *miração* clearly made evident to my apperception my ‘embodied mode of spirituality’ of the time, purged me of the noxious meat products and demanded of me a fundamental change of diet.

Csordas identifies spontaneity and autonomy as a criterion for the experience of the sacred in revelatory imagery among Catholic Charismatics (Csordas 1994:94). He goes on to suggest that the intimate presence of a radical Other, which is understood by Catholic Charismatics to be Jesus, is the “alterity of the self” (Csordas 1994:157-158). Elsewhere, Csordas explains that the alterity of the self “is the possibility of experiencing oneself as other or alien to oneself, but it is also the possibility for recognizing the existence of other people with whom one can have a relationship” (Csordas 1996:104).

To a large extent, an encounter with the self during the Ayahuasca experience is recognized in Daime settings. For example, the president of the Casa Santa once complained about people walking in and out of the ritual unnecessarily, and asked out loud “What are you afraid of? Yourselves?” Clearly, there is no obvious danger in the ritual setting itself and no good reason to leave one’s seat when the force of the Daime descends. It would seem that the visionary experience is conceptualized in a way that is similar to the Western notion of introspective self-examination of the psyche, but the native understandings locate agency external to the viewing subject.

The Daime morally interpellates the participant. In the Ayahuasca traditions, the brew is a divine being and the source of this interpellation. It is the Daime who cleanses and purges the participant, it is the Daime who shows and teaches. Sometimes, people

speak in different terms. They may say that spirit-entities come to them and show them things, in which case the visionary experience is more like a context for interaction with spirit-entities. Yet, in all cases, the consensus is that the viewing witness (the apperception) is distinct from the contents and teachings of the visions.

Csordas indicates that the Jesus that Catholic Charismatics enter an intimate relationship with is “the ideal object or other with which one can have a mature, intimate relationship” (Csordas 1996:104). In the case of the Daime, the sense of empirical reality of a morally perfect alter that is inherent in the brew is so imposing that an encounter with it can generate physical purging such as vomiting of moral transgressions, physiological healing, and other effects. The anticipation of this encounter may also explain the dread that some people feel before drinking Daime and the fear that keeps many more from even trying.

Csordas equates the moral alter (i.e. Jesus) with the other side of the coin of social relationships. The sense of otherness of the self is both the recognition of one’s contingency as a subject and one’s possibility of recognizing subjectivity in other people. The lurking sense of a moral alter cautions the self not to take for granted its subjectivity. One’s subjectivity should not dominantly be the sole grounding for the existence of the world and society (as Descartes attempted). One must also assume that other people (and animals, etc., in the case of Amerindian perspectivism) may also have a human-like subjectivity. The plurality of subjects is the basis for moral social relationships.

Spontaneous and autonomous revelatory imagery recalls the sacred, because they recall the contingency of the self and the possibility of communication and sociability with alters. The transpersonal phenomena and perspectival shifts that are prevalent in the

Ayahuasca experience (see Shanon 2002) might be understood as shifts in situated consciousness. When this occurs, the ‘alterity of the self’ is not simply a recognition of the contingency of subjectivity, but an actual empathetic leap.

Some analysts consider certain forms of spirit-possession to be ‘dissociative’ (e.g. Bourignon 2004:558-559). I understand this phenomenon to involve a radical leap in situated consciousness and certainly not a pathological flight of the ‘proper’ consciousness of a person, given that I consider that consciousness is contextual. The contingency of consciousness, as well as profound compassion and empathy, are the existential foundations of spirit-possession. Through spirit-possession, people essay a variety of consciousnesses that are relevant to their particular social scenario.

Spirit-possession may be conveniently thought of as a particular ‘embodied mode of spirituality.’ Detailed ethnographic study is still required to uncover how Barquinha participants come to understand and learn when the complexes of visions, embodiment alterations, etc. are due to spirit-possession. However, for the rest of this section, it suffices to consider the proposition that from an embodiment perspective there is continuum between the visionary experiences of the Daime (the *miração*) and enacted embodied alterity (i.e. spirit-possession).

For example, I have heard informants explain how they drink a larger dose of Daime when they want to induce possession. When I asked Pedro about what one feels and sees during possession, he responded “it depends on how much Daime you’ve drunk.” He continued explaining how the medium sees what the entity is seeing. Also consider Pedro’s comments that one evening the Daime was so strong that ‘even he’ had to call upon his *Preto Velho* to dance. As expressed by Budden,

The nature of a vision or a moment of incorporating a spirit is obviously much more than an interpretive approach can account for, for these are dimensions that involves the construction of a *felt* reality that is rooted not just in cultural textuality but in processes of the mind/body from which embodied experience itself infuses cultural form (Budden 2003:47, original emphasis).

Some researchers of the Daime churches have attempted to consider the relationship between spirit-possession and the visionary experience (*miração*). My analysis is emergent, on the one hand, because my ground footing is that whilst these two modes of embodied consciousness are culturally classified as distinct, phenomenologically they appear to be merged experiences. Also, I think that they should be considered relative to the total ritual complex, and not isolated as if they were self-sustaining phenomena. Rather than explain in detail how my position departs from other analyses, I prefer to simply present my own case in the following section. Alternative or nuanced other positions can be found in Guimarães (1992), Labate (2002), Monteiro (2002), etc.

4.3 “Irradiation” from spirits: vision and possession

This section has two purposes. One of these is to introduce the idea that spirit-possession in the Barquinha is a fundamental mode of instrumentation and mediation of charity. That is, Barquinha spirit-possession is structured to deliver a service for a beneficiary. The other complementary purpose is to offer an analysis of the relationship between spirit-possession and the Daime visionary experience (*miração*) that contemplates the particular mission of the Barquinha.

Spirit-possession was not introduced in the Barquinha simply to accommodate a lower-class population that already practiced it. As far as I have been able to uncover,

most mediums of the Barquinha develop mediumship after they joined the church, and were not mediums or participants in spirit-possession religions before. Developing mediumship seems to be related to the advancement of the adherent's individual moral career and vocation for charity and healing. In the Barquinha, spirit-possession is a morally loaded practice and not a neutral event. This should be borne in mind in an analysis of the phenomenon or its relationship to the visionary experience (*miração*).

Perhaps the most common term used when a direct reference is being made to a spirit-possession episode in the Casa Santa is "incorporation" ("*incorporação*"). This term is very common in Umbanda and has widespread use in Brazil. My observations in the Casa Santa suggest that the term "incorporation" is appropriate among people with a degree of friendship. It is a suitable term to use in informal colloquial circumstances. However, the term "incorporation" is not used in ritual speech. Instead, the correct term used in rituals is "irradiation."

Other authors provide a theoretical difference between "incorporation" and "irradiation," explaining or insinuating that "irradiation" is a degree of "incorporation" (e.g. Sena Araújo 1999:230). The basic idea appears to be that during "incorporation" the medium has ceded more control of the body over to the spirit. However, this theoretical difference does not neatly match my ethnographic observations in the Casa Santa. For example, the healer-spirits are called during the Charity Works ritual with a speech that summons them to "irradiate their apparatus." ('Apparatus' refers to the medium). On the other hand, outside of the ritual, members of the church will refer to this same event using the word "incorporate."

The word “irradiation” is fundamental to the esoteric school *Círculo Esotérico da Comunhão do Pensamento* that both Mestre Irineu and Frei Daniel belonged to. For example, for many years Mestre Irineu’s church was officially called the Center for Mental Irradiation Divine Light (Okamoto 2004:55).

In Mestre Irineu’s church, spirit-possession episodes were not authorized (and do not occur in the churches of Alto Santo to this day). As I have experienced myself, rituals in the Santo Daime churches of Alto Santo are rather stark. For example, during the fortnightly rituals called “Concentration,” after a brief reading, the liturgy consists of remaining seated in absolute silence and stillness in a meditative mode during about one hour or a little more. After this, twelve hymns are sung and the session is adjourned.

The method of contact with the spiritual dimension was, and is, solely through “mental irradiation” (Okamoto 2004:74). It would seem that in the church of Mestre Irineu, the understanding is that the higher spiritual beings communicate telepathically with participants of the session, individually providing them with teachings, knowledge, admonitions and the sort. “Mental irradiation” is articulated with the visionary experience of the Daime (*miração*) (see Monteiro 2002:375). The body is not involved in the experience. Rather, the revelatory experience is solely psychic and mental. Cemin explains that the stillness and the restrictions on autonomous body movements during Santo Daime rituals are intentional in order to allow “shamanic flight” and transit into the Astral regions (Cemin 2002:277). The spirit is the active agent, emitting irradiations, and the human is the passive receptor apparatus through which these irradiations are transduced into intelligible form, i.e. thoughts, visions, insights, etc. These are conflated with the revelatory experience of the Daime (see Sena Araújo 1999:188).

In the Barquinha, spirits are commonly attributed the origin of certain thoughts, dreams, intuitions, etc. The varieties of consciousness experiences are frequently communications that come from the spirits. For example, Rita once told me of a warning she had received from Dom Zebulom (a pseudonym). When I asked her how she knew that it was Dom Zebulom (expecting her to say that she'd seen him in a vision), she said that she just knew that it was him. It was an intuition. She understood what Kant might consider an *a priori* moral imperative to originate externally from an entity of the Barquinha.

A similar situation has been reported for the Jivaroan Achuar of the Ecuadorian Amazon. Taylor states that for these people, subjectivity “is a matter of refraction: it takes its source in the sense one has of others’ perceptions of self” (Taylor 1996:206). For example, the *wakan* soul is a reflection, “the appearance of someone in a dream as well as the dreamer’s consciousness” (Taylor 1996:206) and the *arutam* soul “is a reification of projected selfhood” (Taylor 1996:208).

The analyst may wish to consider that in the Barquinha, the multiplicity of selves experienced by members are intersubjective realities that belong to a common pool of spirits from which people can understand themselves, their behavior and that serve as moral guides for social behavior. The pantheon of spirits is a deontological set of moral prototypes that casuistically come alive during possession episodes, allowing people to work through the morality of specific daily affairs and concerns.

“In truth, we are all mediums,” Cristina once said to me. All participants in a Barquinha ritual are mediums. For example, consider the name of the Wednesday ritual called “Preparation of Mediums” (Sena Araújo 1999:187). The name of the ritual not

only refers to those who act out possession, but to all participants who drink Daime. All participants are subject to receiving “irradiations” of some sort. The president of the church documented by Sena Araújo explained to him:

we have 36 types of mediumship and each brother might have two, three types of mediumship; he might be a clairvoyant medium, he might be an intuitive medium, he might be a medium that receives entities... (Sena Araújo 1999:189-190, my translation).

‘Receiving entities’ is only one type of mediumship. A participant who remains seated in place, receiving intuitions or visionary revelations is equally a medium.

Frei Daniel authorized spirit-possession episodes in his lifetime and eventually these became an identifying characteristic of the Barquinha. The interesting thing is that although the term “irradiation” initially seems to have designated a form of communication with spirit-entities that excluded body involvement, it eventually came to encompass the latter.

I had a conversation with Rita one night in which I asked her, “Why don’t people incorporate in the Santo Daime rituals?” She responded, “As for me, surely I would incorporate.” She said that same spiritual entities come to Santo Daime rituals as to the Barquinha, but Santo Daime participants don’t realize that their experiences of changes in embodiment are caused by the proximity of a spirit. Instead, “they think that it’s the Daime.” If I understood her rightly, this means that the proprioceptive modifications that participants feel in Santo Daime rituals are interpreted by them as an effect of the Daime. That is, as the somatic counterpart to the visual and other sensory experiences concurrent to the Daime experience. However, Barquinha folk know that these changes are due to a spirit that is irradiating the participant’s body and presumably could be fully acted out.

For example, a sensation of temperature change is commonly reported by users of Ayahuasca (see Giove 2002:27). Júlia once told me about intense cold, cold in the marrow of her bones, which sometimes comes to her. This cold is caused by the proximity of a dead soul. For example, just before the first time she received her *Preta Velha*, she was overtaken by the oppressing ‘force’ of the Daime (one of the reported components of the *miração* experience) in an unusually strong way, and was feeling intense cold. She was in the Dance Hall of the Casa Santa, and right at that moment she was summoned by a *Preta Velha* to go to the Charity Works Room. She felt unable to move, but because the *Preta Velha* insisted, someone assisted her in walking over there. Almost as soon as she was sat in front of the *Preta Velha*, her own *Preta Velha* fully irradiated her for the first time and made herself manifest.

It seems to me, therefore, that possession is a form of acting out “irradiations.” The experience of the Daime almost always includes somatic and embodiment transformations. People in the Barquinha recognize these as irradiations of spirits on the body and not just concurrent ‘side-effects’ or some other explanation that is typical of users who exclusively place attention on the visual element of the experience.

When I asked people to explain to me the corporeal sensations inherent to the possession experiences, I was frustrated by their general inability to describe the event. This included the lack of a standardized language concerning the experience, and the wide variability of it when they did offer some kind of description. Generally they first side-tracked a direct response, telling me that it’s different for everyone or that I had to experience it myself because it’s hard to explain. I tried to prompt them with some suggestions and then always received an assortment of replies. For example, two

informants adduced extreme pain in the joints, one of them adding that his hands involuntarily begin to twist and gnarl, but another said that it generated a sensation of lightness and cleansing in the body. Rita said that her *Preta Velha* makes her feel as if she suddenly has a big gluteus, but pain is not associated to her experience. While some informants claimed that their body becomes intensely energized, others did not give this description.

Of course, each *Preto Velho* would have died with a different medical condition, which can partially explain the differences in the sensations. But, as an anthropologist, I was particularly interested in the absence of a shared and elaborated language to describe the possession experience. It would seem as if the experience itself is not something that people talk about –which in fact, they recognize as widely variable. Rather, the intellectualized explanation of possession is standardized and there is no attempt to explore the other person’s embodied experience. It appears to be sufficient for the medium to make the claim and act out the possession. It would seem that they are not interested in the medium’s actual experience. What people do talk about is the actions, words and messages given by the spirits.

I suggest that the purpose of acting out the irradiations is so that they become available to an audience and not just privately to the medium. In the Barquinha, spirit-possession is a public form of communication and interaction between spirits and an audience. In the Santo Daime all participants drink Daime. Thus, all have direct access to “mental irradiations” from the higher spiritual entities, and all can receive direct healing and cleansing through the Daime. But the Barquinha provides a healing and moral counseling service to outsiders who don’t drink Daime. Therefore, possession is the

medium for transferring the irradiations of spirits to the general public. General sermons also seek to transfer the irradiations of a specific higher entity to the whole congregation. This is done using the body and voice of a specific medium.

As a conclusion to this section, I propose that in the Barquinha, “irradiation” is a term that is inclusive of spirit-possession and of the visionary state of the Daime (*miração*) when this involves communication with spirit-entities. Secondly, that “incorporation” is an irradiation by a particular spirit that is enacted and rendered publicly visible. “Mental irradiations” (such as those received during the *miração*) are private and the sole beneficiary is the participant who has drunk Daime. The Barquinha includes spirit-possession as a form of acting out irradiations by spirits because this practice makes the irradiations public, since the beneficiary is often someone who is not the medium.

4.4 Possession is for an audience

As a generalization, possession episodes in the Barquinha entail an audience. It’s true that I often saw mediums receive spirits when there was no audience (e.g. a *Preto Velho* just sitting on a stool in the Charity Works Room smoking a pipe), so I am not implying that the audience is a *sine qua non* of all episodes. Rather, that I suspect that the purpose of possession seems to be other-oriented, in the sense of being directed towards charity. I think that possession in the Barquinha is an eminently social practice.

The several spirit-categories engage in stereotyped behaviors and manners of speech that are very characteristic, and allow the audience to distinguish very easily the kind of spirit that has descended, even if the clothing or other identifying paraphernalia

are not used. The standardized nature of these behavioral and speech patterns invites textual analysis. At this stage in my rapport with informants, I am reluctant to provide too many details and descriptions concerning the behavior or speeches given by spirits, which precludes me from the option of presenting such an analysis here.

Nonetheless, I will remark that, like the rhetorical genre of ‘prophecy’ that Csordas identifies in Catholic Charismatic meetings (Csordas 1997:205), spirit-possession in the Barquinha mediates social expectations and immediate experiential access to the spirit-world. The socially structured nature of possession behavior, and the structured responses, makes Barquinha spirit-possession a form of social action.

The dialogical nature of possession is revealed in several ways. For example, the arrival of a spirit immediately sets off a flurry of responses, such as people quickly scuttling to fetch certain characterizing paraphernalia that the spirit wears, or bears or uses. The audience or spirit’s assistant recognizes that possession is occurring.

That Barquinha possession is inherently oriented to an audience is especially revealed through the exchange of linguistic formulae between spirit and audience that are pronounced upon the spirit’s arrival and its departure. The spirit is the first to speak, pronouncing some predetermined hails. The audience responds with predetermined responses. After this, in the Casa Santa, the spirit addresses the audience with a predetermined greeting which is responded to with a fixed reply. The fixed formulae solicit the audience’s recognition of the arrival of the spirit.

A few times that I was in the Charity Works Room on an ordinary day with no ritual in progress, some mediums received their *Pretos Velhos*. As an informal event, some did not have helpers with them. The interesting thing is that the spirits still

pronounced the standard litany of greetings upon arrival. This generated a situation whereby other spirits and helpers who were nearby and minding their own business generously gave the responses.

The departure of a spirit mirrors its arrival. Formulae similar to the arrival are repeated and loud whooshing sounds indicate the parting of the spirit. The final act of the retreat of the spirit though, rests with the audience. After the spirit has left, the audience prays a specific prayer. The audience is liturgically required to confirm the departure of the spirit.

4.5 Modernity and anti-modern agencies

The two major sources of pantheons of spirits in the Barquinha are Umbanda and *Encantaria*. It is possible that each is valued for a specific kind of agency that is harnessed in possession episodes (see Boddy 1994). Notoriously, as mentioned throughout this essay, spirits are specialized in the kind of contribution that they offer, to the point that in some cases they have exclusive fields of authority. For example, only *Missionaries* provide sacraments, such as baptism of infants. This is not performed by any other spirit or by any human participant, not even the Commander of the church. It seems to me that each category of spirit is considered to be inherently ideal for providing a certain contribution.

Umbanda is an urban nationalistic Brazilian religion that originated in the Vargas Era (1930-1945) (see Brown 1994:145-150). Umbanda entities are understood by scholars to involve an active manipulation of social types experienced by its practitioners. Practitioners attempt to control their reality through the manipulation of the agency of

these social types. The agency of the types is given by their relative position in society (see Giobellina & Gonzales 1989:43-44). For example, *exús* were described to me by Rita as being “like those young rascal boys that live on the streets,” and *pomba-giras* as being “like those young girl prostitutes on the street corners.” These low-ranking entities of base morality, with no loyalty but to themselves, are considered to be speedy to perform any errand for a quick and simple payment. They are visualized through stereotypes of specific Brazilian social class positions that practitioners understand and relate to.

Some Umbanda entities represent colonial class positions. Through them, people with non-dominant histories can manipulate and redeem their obscured histories (see Hale 1997:394). In Umbanda, black and Amerindian ancestors of Brazilians are revived as powerful healers, sorcerers, or sources of other valuable services.

The knowledge of Umbanda entities also contests modernity. For example, the *Pretos Velhos* are knowledgeable about medicinal plant preparations that can be obtained and prepared very cheaply and easily. In the Casa Santa, I have seen that the healers prepare the remedy themselves, so the only cost that the client incurs into is for obtaining the ingredients that, in many cases, can be found in people’s yards. Even so, the Casa Santa has a garden of medicinal plants and flowers growing just outside the Charity Works Room, where I have constantly seen healers’ assistants (*cambonis*) picking leaves and flowers. The client is not charged for these ingredients.

I was once in a conversation with a *Preta Velha* and a young lad. The *Preta Velha* was giving us nutritional advice, generally recommending a return to the healthy foods that people ate in the past (though not in her days, she clarified, when they were forced to

eat “whatever they gave us,” and proceeded to name a litany of unappetizing anatomical parts of the steer). The *Pretos Velhos* are also ingenious for offering simple technological solutions, as simple as using a tough piece of wood for pounding the vine used to make Daime in the circumstantial absence of the proper mallets that are supposed to be used, as I once saw.

Poor people can relate very easily to the knowledge of the *Pretos Velhos*, who are the mouthpieces of the kind of knowledge that their own parents or grandparents had access to. This is knowledge that eases their survival and allows them some degree of autonomy from the bonds of industrialization and the market economy.

Encantaria combines Amerindian cosmologies primarily with European elements. The *caboclo* version differs from typical Amerindian perceptions. For example, the social life in the villages of the *Encantos* is not like that of *caboclo* hamlets. For Indians, the ‘people’ in other realms live in villages with malocas, festive dancing, playing of instruments, etc., leading a life that generally mirrors their own (e.g. Århem 1996:190; Viveiros de Castro 1998:470). But the *Encantos* of the *caboclos* live in wealthy cities and castles made of crystal and precious gems, with streets paved with shiny minerals (e.g. Slater 1994:203-206). The latter description matches those given to me by Barquinha informants. In the *Encantaria* of the *caboclos*, there has been a switch from the Amerindian assumption that life elsewhere is a reflection of the subject’s, to the *caboclo*’s understanding that outside her/his hamlet lie luxurious and wealthy towns and cities.

Additionally, Amerindians often affirm that the inhabitants of these other villages usually appear as or take the shapes of predatory or game animals when they go to the

realms of the Amerindians (Århem 1996:190). In contrast, the *Encantos* of the *caboclos* are less obviously a part of the economic or survival repertoire. The *Encantos* of the Barquinha can be the dangerous animals of the forest and waters, like sharks, alligators, and snakes, but they are removed from the economic-survival cycle of the *caboclo*. In the Barquinha, the *Encantos* include fantastic beings from European Romantic imagery and fairy-tales (such as mermaids, dragons and fairies). Perhaps this indicates alienation, incomprehensibility and possibly a fear of the physical environment.

Caboclo culture is the aftermath of the breakdown of the efforts of large capital to exploit the extractive resources of Amazonia. These exploits relied on massive labor migrations of non-Amazonians who were placed in a pyramidal structure in which their local economies were directly connected to ports and international demand. Rubber-tappers did not derive their primary livelihood from hunting, fishing or horticulture. They had a very restricted relationship to the forest environment, almost exclusively based on bleeding the trees and resources, and a competition for the land often achieved through the extermination and genocide of its original inhabitants (see Nugent 1993).

Though I do not especially endorse the following, it is also possible that the population of the Amazonian topography with European counter-Enlightenment beings is also a reflex of colonial discourse, the subaltern's side of what Taussig calls "the colonial mirror" in which colonists impute their own barbarities to the savages they wish to colonize (Taussig 2002:184). In this case, the population of the topography with Romantic motifs by the poor *caboclos* may be related to a form of millenarianist projection that takes the Europeans' own counter-Enlightenment icons of fairy-tales and pastes them within the *caboclos'* own immediacy to buffer the direct experience of large-

capital exploitation (as Taussig 1987:169 suggests for folk-healing; see also Fulford 2002).

The dangerous *Encantos* are pacified through baptism and moral conversion in the Barquinha. Coherent with Amazonian cosmologies, they often have alternative identities in each realm. Several of the Barquinha *Encantos* are *Missionaries* in the Sky realm. In the lower realms, Barquinha *Encantos* usually have noble and royal ranks. The *Encantos* seem to represent bureaucratic and politically powerful (including Episcopal-ranking) foreigners.

5. CONVERTED PAGANS

5.1 The Charity Works

I will now provide a brief ethnographic description of a major ritual of the Barquinha, that of the healing provided by spirits to clients, in order to introduce a more detailed presentation of the public mission of spirits. Following chapters will consider other rituals, presented in turn. (I will describe the proceedings in the Casa Santa, as they differ slightly from those of other churches).

I will start by describing the Charity Works (*Obras de Caridade*), carried out every Saturday evening, because it is undoubtedly the flagship of the mission. During this ritual, rows of seats in a vestibule outside the healing room are filled with outsiders (called ‘clients’) who come to see a healer-spirit.

Clients arrive about seven in the evening and approach a member of the church in the Dance Hall who has a notebook and hands out numbers to see the healers. Healers are vaguely specialized in expertise. The receptionist assigns the client to a healer according to the ailment or concern. Alternatively, the client might already have a preference or recommendation for a certain healer, or already be in long-term treatment. Clients then stay just outside the Charity Works Room waiting to be called in due time. Clients sometimes bring company, though they are attended alone by the healer-spirit.

Meanwhile, the regular participants of the church hold a ritual of worship that occurs simultaneously and that authorizes the healing activities. About half-past seven, a bell clangs, and people line up to receive Daime. (Clients drink Daime only if they want to). After this, they take up seats in the main hall for the ritual. Men sit to one side, and

women on the other. The ritual has a predetermined structure, and basically consists of singing a number of hymns (properly called ‘psalms’), intercalated with praying.

After the opening hymns and ritual speeches, the Commander of the ritual begins to summon the healer-spirits. They are called out loud by name, and told to “irradiate their apparatus” and “fulfill their commitment in the Charity Works.” The term “apparatus” refers to the medium’s body and “irradiate” is how possession is spoken of in rituals. One by one, loud whooshing sounds fill the room, as mediums receive their healer-spirit and stand up. Each time a spirit arrives, there is a brief exchange of liturgical greetings, and then the next spirit is summoned. Spirits remain standing, sometimes slightly swaying, waiting for all healers to descend and be sent together to the Charity Works Room.

Almost all healers in the Charity Works of the Casa Santa are recruited from the category of *Pretos Velhos*, a category of spirits that originated in Umbanda. They are the spirits of deceased elderly Brazilian black slaves. They have been converted and baptized in the Barquinha, and now provide charity in order to purge the sins they committed in life. Some of them were sorcerers (*feiticeiros*), but now work to undo black magic. In some cases they learned how to perform healing after death. Some of the *Pretos Velhos* are the same ones that descend in Umbanda temples around Brazil, but when they began to descend in the Barquinha, they were baptized, had their names changed, were *doctrinated* and made to conform to the mission’s expectations. For example, Pedro told me of a *Preta Velha* who initially refused to attend white clients due to her memory of the slave period. With time, though, she overcame this. Pedro also told me of a *Preto*

Velho who initially liked to attend clients while burning black and red candles to his side. In Umbanda lore, such colors are used for sorcery.

Other spirits can eventually be healers, such as *Caboclos*, who are the spirits of ‘uncivilized’ (that is, unacculturated) and proud Brazilian Indians. Some of the ones that I have seen in Barquinha churches do not speak Portuguese, some have a tendency to stomp around, and some emit what seem to me to be war-cries while standing in the middle or on the sides of the Dance Hall. They are also a category of spirits from Umbanda. Generally speaking, in the Casa Santa, spirits other than *Preto Velhos* are usually summoned for healing only circumstantially, usually in addition to a *Preto Velho*.

A second call for Daime is usually made just after the spirits have gone off to provide Charity Works. After the healer-spirits go to the Charity Works Room, the ritual in the main hall continues. Other participants occupy the empty seats of the mediums that just left, and the singing and praying is resumed. This goes on for several hours. Because the healing takes a long time in the Casa Santa, as they attend many clients and healers spend a long time with each, the two activities finish independently. The ritual in the Church usually finishes just after midnight. The healing usually takes a little longer.

The amount of healer-spirits in attendance varies each week. Roughly, they seem to be between seven and twelve. Inside the Charity Works Room, each healer has a small cabinet that is also a shrine. The top of the cabinet has statues of Catholic entities (and sometimes *Erês*, infant spirits). Icons and images from pagan traditions are allowed in this room, but on the floor. For example, statues of *Preto Velhos*, statues of the Yoruba *orixás*, stones, and other sacred objects are placed on the floor to the side of the cabinet. Inside the cabinet, the healer stores elements used in the healing, such as candles, chalk

for the therapeutic drawings (called *pontos riscados*) made for the benefit of the client on the floor, rosary beads, pipes and tobacco, and the Sword (*Espada*).

The Sword is a piece of white cloth used in healing, especially in the cleansing gestures collectively called “*passes*” (‘passing over’). The healer rubs the cloth down parts of the body of the client, to scrape away negative energies, and then flicks it away to release these energies. Otherwise, it is pressed around parts of the body, and then flicked away. In addition, the healer makes use of air-currents, such as blowing tobacco, blowing strongly into the ears and crown of the client, and constantly making the whooshing exhalations that characterize spirits in the Casa Santa.

The healer has an assistant, called “*camboni*” (the Umbanda term for this office). The assistant is the one who calls the client in to see the healer. Assistants also translate the words of the spirit to the client if there is a problem with understanding. The assistant also writes for the *Pretos Velhos*. For example, the client might be given a prescription of an herbal tea, or an “herbal bath.”

Clients rarely stay beyond their consultation. By the end of the evening, usually only the regular participants are still in the church. After the ritual, there is a while, perhaps an hour or so, of socializing among regular participants.

The purpose of this description of the Charity Works has been to set the stage for understanding how the different spirit-actors are involved in the mission. The rest of the chapter, and the following one, will discuss how the implementation of spirit-possession in the Barquinha is a practice specifically tailored to the community that it serves.

5.2 Kardecist healing

There are possibly some reasons why the healers of the Casa Santa are mostly converted deceased slaves treated as consanguineal kin, instead of, say, the spirit-physicians of Kardecism. The latter are typically deceased physicians of the nineteenth century (sometimes Brazilian, sometimes European -especially German). One popular physician is Dr. Fritz. Krippner & Villoldo (1976:125) describe a séance of a Kardecist medium who received the spirit of Dr. Fritz to perform ‘spiritual surgery’ and other forms of healing. These spirit-physicians represent a stereotype of positivist science. For example, Krippner & Villoldo (1976:137) give another description of a Kardecist séance in which the spirit of a deceased nineteenth century Kardecist leader recommends “the need to relate Spiritism to the findings of science.” Kardecist healing is not anti-modern in the way that Umbanda and *Encantaria* are.

To the best of my knowledge, the physician-spirits of Kardecism do not undo sorcery or proselytize conversion to Catholicism, which are both identifying characteristics of Barquinha healing. Kardecist healing appears to be generally ‘secular’ and rational, sometimes being couched in rhetorical terms of adjusting “biomagnetic organizing fields” or involving apparently straightforward surgical removals of physical objects from the physiological body of the patient (Krippner & Villoldo 1976:125-127). In such cases, Kardecist healing is not a moral affair.

It seems that some Kardecist séances seek to indoctrinate the truths of Kardecism into undeveloped spirits that are causing mischief or harm, so that they may release the victim and ascend to higher levels of evolution (Krippner & Villoldo 1976:138-140). This therapy appears to be parallel to Barquinha exorcism. However, one difference is

that it seems that for Kardecism, the undeveloped spirit has voluntarily attached itself to the victim (apparently because the vibrations of the victim are already low and there is a form of magnetic attraction, a friend once explained). In Barquinha exorcism, the rite interrogates the spirit if it was sent to the victim. Barquinha exorcism allows for the possibility of illness to be caused from social friction and for the patient to be an innocent victim immersed in a hostile environment.

5.3 *Preto Velho* healing as anti-sorcery

The Barquinha is distinguished from the other Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions because its mission includes offering charity and healing to people who are unaffiliated to the church. There are cases of organized social work using Ayahuasca, such as the *Unidade de Resgate: Flor das Águas* for street-dwellers in São Paulo. This group has links with the Cefluris line of the Santo Daime, though it acts independently (Labate 2004:403-410). The *Associação Beneficente Luz de Salomão* also works with street-dwellers in São Paulo. The leader of this group had been a *mestre* of the União do Vegetal church (Labate 2004:410-419). Both these groups conduct ceremonies using Ayahuasca and draw inspiration from the *corpus* of the major Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions, but they are not really ecclesiastical organizations themselves. Although the leaders derive from the Santo Daime or the União do Vegetal, they have independence from these and cannot really be said to have formed a church of their own.

The fact that these leaders and their assistants have distanced themselves from the central organization of the Santo Daime and the União do Vegetal in order to engage in systematic charity work *qua* (neo-)Ayahuasqueiros evidences that these churches have

not institutionalized charity for non-participants in the way that the Barquinha has. In the Santo Daime and União do Vegetal, the regeneration of the individual is primarily achieved through participation in the central rituals that involve the use of Ayahuasca.

However, the Barquinha stands apart, because it has institutionalized two different forms of social improvement: on the one hand, charity for non-participants, and on the other hand, involvement in rituals using Daime, both of these within a single ecclesiastical complex. In fact, they are united in such a way that they are co-dependent on each other. For example, the Wednesday rituals, oriented to regular participants, solely involve worship, praying, sermons and the use of Daime, in order to prepare members for the Saturday rituals that are oriented to offering charity to outsiders who are not required or even expected to drink Daime (Sena Araújo 1999:189). To the best of my knowledge, the Barquinha is the only Brazilian Ayahuasca Religion that has effectively institutionalized this combination.

Among other things, the mission of social outreach of the Barquinha eases people's insertion in their own individual living conditions. This is partially achieved through the healing and counseling service. The service contemplates promoting social harmony and cohesion among non-members leading their own lives, and not just those who actively participate in the religion.

The healing usually goes by the designation "Charity Works" and there is a specific ritual held every Saturday with this name (although healers can arrange with clients to see them on other occasions too). Mediums receive healer-spirits at a specific moment in the liturgy and then begin to attend clients individually. This is the day that outsiders are expected and when it is most obvious that the church provides a service for

the community. During Pilgrimages (penitential periods), “Charity Works” are offered daily in the Casa Santa.

Some of the respected *Pretos Velhos* have followed a moral career in the Barquinha whence from pagan sorcerers they have become baptized healers (see Hale 1997:407-408). They actively work against their unconverted peers, countering the sorcery they know so much about. The knowledge and expertise of the *Pretos Velhos* for dealing with the invisible realm is redeemed in this way, morally transformed into a contribution. They not only renounce and reverse the deeds that they performed in life, but also work to bring more *Pretos Velhos* to the mission. I was told of cases in which certain *Pretos Velhos* had brought other deceased family members to join the mission.

Thus, unlike in mainstream Umbanda, where *Pretos Velhos* are somehow respected and sought for counseling and *passes* by virtue of their spirit-category alone, apparently regardless of their moral behavior or attitudes (e.g. see Hale 1997), in the Barquinha they are made to conform to the accepted ethics before they are allowed to take up positions as healers.

For example, early in my fieldwork, several times I saw a young lad receive his *Preto Velho*. His body would twist and contort. He would constantly moan and groan. The lad was new to the Barquinha, so he was only allowed to receive his *Preto Velho*, but the spirit could not offer counseling or healing. On the contrary, assistants would bring coffee, crosses, candles and other implements to console this spirit that was obviously in suffering. The spirit was tenderly waited upon by the assistants. I found this unusual, since the *Pretos Velhos* of the Charity Works do not behave like this. Obviously, this

Preto Velho was the one needing comfort and healing. I asked a woman about it, and she said that this *Preto Velho* had not yet been baptized.

Her clarification may explain why this *Preto Velho* also drew my attention because he never said the established linguistic formulae that such spirits always pronounce on arrival and when departing. Simply, the spirit would arrive unannounced and the lad would begin groaning and contorting. The linguistic formulae are an established set of hails to Jesus and Mary that, like the Muslim *shahadah*, publicly proclaim the converted spirit's religious allegiance.

In the Barquinha, *Pretos Velhos* fulfill the pastoral function of the church. Because healing is a private affair between the spirit, client and assistant, I was not privy to hearing what the words of the healers were, or the concerns raised by the clients for consultation. I did not approach outsiders, since it seemed to me that this would be very inappropriate and intrusive, not just for the client, but also for church authorities. By chance, some church participants told me about some consultations concerning themselves, and by incidental physical proximity I sometimes heard snippets of other people's consultations.

Generally speaking, the *Pretos Velhos* pay attention to transforming a person's undesirable emotions, and provide advice that promotes social unity, forgiveness and patience. But they seem to cover a wide range of matters, and so I am sure that the particularities of each consultation can vary widely. (The transformation of undesirable emotions is also a pervasive motif in Umbanda songs, such as those sung in the dancing rituals).

Overall, I would say that when they counsel, they basically promote in the client the same moral conversion that as a stereotype they themselves represent. Their prestige lies in their own example. The scale of their contribution is limited to the specific circumstantial needs of the client in a very intimate setting. The relationship with these healers is family-like. *Pretos Velhos* are treated like wise and elderly beloved kin (they are called “grandfather,” “aunt,” etc.) and people solicit their blessing as if they were godparents. The prestige and social role of the *Pretos Velhos* in the Casa Santa provides the participants with a possibility of redeeming and reconstructing their own submerged histories and genealogies in a satisfactory way.

With the creation of the Charity Works Room, instrumental healing practices were removed from the central hall. The converted pagans who deal in witchcraft, sorcery, exorcisms and other areas had their activities taken to a room in the back. Jokingly, these practices are called “*macumba*” by people in the Casa Santa, in a direct reversal of the common connotations implied in the word.

There is no hard and fast definition of “*macumba*,” rather it has changed over the decades (cf. Brown 1994:25-27). Generally speaking, it now implies contractual dealings with unenlightened spirits recruited to perform deeds for the client. The common assumption is that these are immoral, or that the spirits are immoral (amoral, perhaps) and will perform any kind of work if the payment is right. Such inferior entities are provided with offerings called “dispatches” (*despachos*) that send them on to fulfill the errand. Commonly, a “*macumba*” is done to mediate or influence human relationships. In the case of sorcery or black magic, the “*macumba*” may involve attempting to inflict harm

on someone, or for example, to break up a couple so as to replace one of the lovers (an example given to me by Rita) (see Giobellina & Gonzales 1989:23, 231).

Clearly, this is not what is intended with the word “*macumba*” in the Casa Santa. On the contrary, healer-spirits are ostensibly dedicated to undoing these kinds of interventions. Barquinha healing should be seen as operating directly counter to black Umbanda, more correctly called Quimbanda (Sena Araújo 1999:178-185).

Quimbanda (black Umbanda) is anti-social. It severs the ties of good neighborliness, respect for an individual’s independent will, etc. For example, I once witnessed in the Casa Santa the interrogation of an *exú* during an exorcism. The *exú* was asked if he was sent by someone to attach himself to the victim and to identify if he had performed any sorcery on the victim.

There are structural oppositions that make the healing performances of the Casa Santa directly opposed to evil “*macumba*,” and perhaps this is related to its popular appeal as a center for healing. For example, contrary to evil “*macumba*,” Barquinha spirits demand no payment for their service. Also, while *exús* and *pomba-giras* often attach themselves to a victim, Barquinha healer-spirits are persistently engaged in exorcising them. While *exús* and *pomba-giras* might be nonchalant about causing accidents, misfortune or breaking up marriages, and are unconcerned about the client’s motives, Barquinha healer-spirits actively attempt to inspire evangelical attitudes in clients and unenlightened entities.

The therapeutic drawings chalked on the ground by the healer-spirits (called *pontos riscados*) appear to have been re-created in the Casa Santa. In mainstream Umbanda, the drawings identify the spirit (its phalanx, qualities, etc.) (see Hale 1997:412

n. 16), but in the Casa Santa they seem to represent the healed client (the symbols represent aspects of the client to be fortified). The transformation of the *pontos riscados* in the Casa Santa is a further example of how the healing performances are visibly counter to those of Quimbanda.

It becomes obvious that the use of the expression “*macumba*” to refer to their practices is a joking term in the Casa Santa that denotes intimacy between the speakers. Returning home early one morning, after a long and tiring night in the church, Rita said to me, “Ah... the life of a *macumbeiro* (sorcerer) is hard!”

In conclusion, the healing service of the converted pagans (in addition to physiological healing, emotional comfort, etc.) intends to promote social insertion of the client and to counter antisocial sorcery. It draws on the same mainstream techniques that neighbors recognize as sorcery, directly confronting its terms of efficacy. The Barquinha response to sorcery, sorcerers and their spirit-allies is a manifest movement towards the moral conversion and transformation of these into healing and healers.

5.4 Umbanda in the Barquinha

The first entities that descended into the Barquinha were *Encantos*, specifically *Missionaries*. These men all came from the same monastery in the Sky realm. This monastery and the *Missionaries* that live there are already mentioned in one of Frei Daniel’s ‘psalms.’ Thus, the origin of Barquinha spiritism is with this restricted class of entities. (In a hushed voice, one informant also told me once that one of Frei Daniel’s disciples also received the suffering souls of the dead for *doctrination*). This was when Frei Daniel was still alive. Other categories of spirits only began to descend later.

According to Pedro, the first *Preto Velho* came to the mission around 1960. By this time, the presidency of the chapel had been entrusted to one of Frei Daniel's disciples.

According to common agreement, Frei Daniel had acquaintance with the African religiosity of Maranhão. Some versions attribute him contact with what is commonly referred to under the umbrella designation of Tambor de Mina (e.g. see Luna 1995?:7 n.1). However, in light of Labate & Pacheco (2004), it seems likely that he was acquainted with what they call *Encantaria maranhense*, which combines Tambor de Mina elements with mestizo and indigenous knowledge and practices, and is especially oriented towards healing (see also Ferreti 2000).

Adherents of *Encantaria maranhense* call their religiosity, “*the Doctrine*” (‘*a Doutrina*’). Generically, the spirits are all called ‘*Encantos*.’ In their hymns, the arrival of spirits into mediums (i.e. the possession event) is often metaphorically expressed as the “rocking of the sea,” or the riding of the “waves of the sea,” and similar maritime imagery (Labate & Pacheco 2004).

More probable connections can be outlined. For example, the spirit Caboclo Urubatã descends in the Catimbó tradition of Northeastern *Encantaria* and is explained to be good at combating sorcery (Andrade 1983:111). He has come to the Barquinha, and after *doctrination* is now called King Urubatã (Sena Araújo 1999:167-168). Also, early Barquinha ‘psalms’ mention the Fairy Laurinda from the Sea-shore, who may be the same Mestra Laurinda do Mar of the Catimbó tradition, who in one Catimbó song is announced as “arriving on her ship” (Andrade 1983:87). In Catimbó, she is said to be the ‘protector of ships’ and also for voyages (Andrade 1983:106). Sea imagery is important in Catimbó. For example, they recall the mermaids and other aquatic entities, and also

kingdoms that lie underneath certain rivers and in the sea (Andrade 1983). I could include more parallels, but these suffice to make the point.

The varieties of African religiosity of Maranhão are much older than Umbanda. It was the former that the immigrant populations brought with them to Amazonia during the Rubber Era. Largely due to the writings of Furuya, the African-based cults of Amazonia generated through the Rubber Era migrations, have been distinguished from those of other parts of Brazil, and have been catalogued into a class of their own as “Afro-amazonian cults” (Monteiro 2002:370-373).

For example, Nunes Pereira (a folklorist of the African religiosity of Brazil) offers a brief description of the temple of Mãe Chica Macaxeira, who was originally from Maranhão, founded in 1917 (Monteiro 2002:371) in Porto Velho (state of Rondônia). He visited the temple possibly in the early 1970s. Adherents called their practice “the *doctrine of ayahuasca*” (*doutrina da ayahuasca*). In her temple, the Vodun cult was mixed with Catholicism, and they also used Ayahuasca (Nunes Pereira 1979:142-143, 223-224).²

Furuya notes a process of “umbandization” of these Afro-amazonian temples, starting around the 1950s and 1960s, due to the expansion of Umbanda from the southern metropoli (Monteiro 2002:372). Not too long after this, these temples begin to draw from the Amazonian cosmologies, and begin to include in the pantheon entities that he calls “caboclos of the tariff-free zone” (referring to the port city of Manaus), in a process of “amazonification of umbanda” (Monteiro 2002:373). My own uncovering of the history

² Incidentally, Nunes Pereira also visited the Barquinha chapel, at the time under the presidency of the first successor of Frei Daniel, and provides a brief description (Nunes Pereira 1979:135-141). This is probably the earliest record of the Barquinha written by an ethnographer. Perhaps it is significant that he includes it in his book that describes the Vodun cults of Maranhão and the diaspora into Amazonia.

of spiritism in the Barquinha shows parallels with Furuya's diachronic analysis for Afro-amazonian temples. Mercante is comfortable to characterize the Barquinha, and particularly the Casa Santa, as "Afro-amazonian" (Mercante n.d.).

Currently, Umbanda is prevalent in the Casa Santa. Umbanda terminology is used extensively, such as calling a spirit's assistant '*camboni*,' or calling the singer of Umbanda songs '*ogã*,' or the colloquial denomination of '*Congá*' for the Charity Works Room. People are also sensitive to the color-coding for the *orixás*, and other organizational elements of Umbanda. The younger generations (such as both Júlia and Rita) read Umbanda books that explain the proper way of making offerings to the *orixás*, how to cook "*orixá* food," the myths of the *orixás*, explanations of the spirit phalanxes and hierarchies, etc. In the Casa Santa, in addition to their own revealed Barquinha songs, they also sing mainstream Umbanda songs in the dancing rituals (sometimes introducing slight modifications).

In the early decades when the Barquinha was consolidating, Umbanda was a very new religion in the southern metropoli that only grew in importance as a national religion subsequently. From what I have been able to reconstruct as the history of the Barquinha, the increasing presence of Umbanda lore in the Barquinha context occurred parallel to this national process of Umbanda's expansion. It is noteworthy that Umbanda is much more prevalent in the Casa Santa than in the other two Barquinhas. The president of the Casa Santa is a highly regarded medium, most of the adherents are quite young, and it is the most recent of the Barquinhas. Historically, the links with the African religiosity of Maranhão seem to have faded and Umbanda is the central resource that the younger generations are appealing to. I know of a case of one woman who had a history in

Candomblé before joining the Barquinha, and apparently some new elements have been introduced through her, such as the yearly celebration for the *orixá* Nanã that is only held in the Casa Santa. But the incidence of Umbanda elements is more predominant.

It seems to me that the development of Umbanda in the Casa Santa is because it offers a systematized way of organizing and implementing spiritism that is appealing to Barquinha adherents. I speculate that Umbanda has pragmatically served to codify the rites of healing and liturgical offices, has provided a vocabulary, has structured the categories of spirits and also substantiated other organizational efforts. Thus, I think that the prevalence of Umbanda in the Casa Santa is mostly because it has conveniently facilitated the implementation of the charity mission of the Barquinha. I think that Umbanda mostly has an organizational structuring role in the Barquinha, rather than a strictly theological one.

However, Umbanda is not incorporated straightforwardly, but filtered through Barquinha requirements. This renders Barquinha Umbanda different to mainstream Umbanda in several ways, such as the ongoing moral conversion of *exús* which is not performed in mainstream Umbanda.

Mainstream Umbanda and other Afro-brazilian religions in general, are not religions of morality and ethics. Like the classical Greek deities, the *orixás* represent personality archetypes and their individual mythologies include all sorts of behavior that would be found immoral by Christian standards. Umbanda cosmology understands that there is a sort of balanced harmony between the different kinds of entities and their inherent behavioral tendencies. Thus, *exús* and *pomba-giras* are commonly invoked in mainstream Umbanda temples, at their due hour, in the same night that other entities are

also summoned (e.g. Krippner & Villoldo 1976:115). Mainstream Umbanda temples also often have a special shrine for these entities in a corner or some place else (e.g. outside), and offerings and homage is paid to them, just as to the other spirits who also have their shrines.

The closest equivalent in mainstream Umbanda cosmology to an ethical division of the cosmos is the understanding that some entities work for the “Left” and others for the “Right.” However, this classification shows that it is not a hierarchical or authentically moral distinction. Instead, it seems to be understood as agential. The different sorts of entities can do different things that the others cannot.

Barquinha practice, though, ethicizes this distinction. Entities of the “Left” are not allowed to descend and work in Barquinha rituals, unless they baptize and convert. A shrine to them is not permitted. Júlia told me that the president of the Casa Santa recommends that one should not summon or work with one’s *exús* and *pomba-giras*, which Júlia insisted in clarifying that we all have. Rita confided to me of an occasion where she had gone out one evening with a medium of the Casa Santa, and to have some naughty fun, he convinced her to each call upon their *pomba-gira*. She was doubtful concerning the correctness of doing this and advised him against it. This shows that she has internalized the ethical qualification that is given to *exús* and *pomba-giras* in the Barquinha. Nonetheless, the young man called his *pomba-gira* and this immediately made hers spontaneously manifest (apparently the two *pomba-giras* are consanguineal sisters). Rita strongly repented of this the next time she drank Daime, and felt scolded for this breach.

The ongoing conversion and baptism of *exús* and *pomba-giras* separates Barquinha Umbanda from elsewhere. Similarly, the baptism and name changing of recognized *Pretos Velhos* and *Caboclos* also sets apart Barquinha Umbanda. For example, the slave Anastácia is a *Preta Velha* that descends frequently in many Umbanda temples around Brazil (e.g. see Hale 1997:404). Her figure is standardized (she is muzzled), and statues or paintings of her can be bought around Brazil in the stores that sell supplies for Umbanda rites. She descends in the Barquinha, but has been baptized. Now a Christian, Anastácia's name has changed to "Anastácia da Luz" ('Anastácia of the Light') (Sena Araújo 1999:166, 168).

Hale worked in an Umbanda temple in which the figures of the *Pretos Velhos* work through suggestive sexual themes. The legends that he heard concerning Anastácia indicate her beauty, the master's wife's jealousy, and her rape or threat of rape. She was muzzled for refusing to kiss the lips of her tormentors (Hale 1997:404). I heard nothing of the sort in the Barquinha. There is no sexual element in the story that I know. Instead, the biography that I am familiar with explains that Anastácia was an African princess who refused to submit to slavery, and was muzzled for permanently speaking out against slavery.

Another difference with mainstream Umbanda that Rita explained to me in an interview is the absence of animal blood sacrifices. While these can be fairly common in Umbanda elsewhere, Rita explained that they don't do it in the Barquinha because they don't kill innocent beings. Here, again Rita shows that Umbanda practices are ethicized in the Barquinha context and transformed to conform to an ethics that is not intrinsic to Umbanda.

6. BISHOPS AND FRIARS

6.1 Consecration of *Bishops*

I was looking forward to the evening of the “enclosing” of the Pilgrimage of Our Lady of Glory, in August, which promised to be a joyous event. The weeks of penance would be over, and I anxiously anticipated the culmination of the event that I knew involved festive dancing in the Dance Hall. It was the only Pilgrimage that I had been able to fulfill completely, and I had closely delved into its significance and how it is lived by committed members, as I was staying in Rita’s house at the time.

Before the dancing, the Pilgrimage rites had to be finalized. Early in the evening, there was a long procession through the streets carrying a statue of the honored saint (in this case, Mary). The pilgrims each carried a candle while singing hymns. After going around a couple of blocks, the procession eventually returned to the church, continued inside the grounds and into the temple. Inside the temple, the daily Pilgrimage ritual was carried out for the last time, after which a couple of other hymns were sung. And then, abruptly, the ordered and predictable ritual took a sudden turn.

The cantor began to sing a song during which explosive exhalations, whistling and loud whooshing began to be heard successively from different parts of the room. Some people began to stand up, while those around them dragged and moved away their chairs to give them space. I had become used to the spontaneous arrival of spirits in the midst of solemn rituals, so at first I did not realize what was happening. But the amount of them all at once made me realize that something special was occurring.

As the spirits arrived and each one’s whooshing added to the choir of exhalations, helpers began scuttling to bring them Episcopal apparel and place crucifixes or other

paraphernalia in their outstretched arms. I realized that, one by one, the song was naming the *Missionaries* of the Barquinha and that each new arrival of a spirit was on cue with the pronouncement of a name. Evidently, a full procession (*cortejo*) of *Missionaries* was arriving.

Not surprisingly, the people in the courtyard began to cluster up outside the windows of the temple to witness this honored moment. The porters that guard the temple doors stood up, and the flow of traffic in and out of the main temple doors ceased. Chairs were moved away and a pathway was opened up among the aisles for the *Missionaries* to walk through the people. The hymn finished and the ritual came to a standstill as all attention was placed on the *Bishops*.

The leading *Bishop* began to hum a tune. They then began to move around the room with their crucifixes ostentatiously held up high, turning around and bearing them to the seated participants. It took a while before they left their mediums and the ritual continued according to the predetermined structure.

This moment is known as the “Consecration of the Bishops” (*Consagração dos Bispos*) and occurs quite frequently in the Casa Santa, though not normally with such exaltation and with so many *Bishops* all at once. Often, at other times, the *Bishops* also give a brief speech. Characteristically, the speech is encouraging. For example, the *Bishop* may explain the importance of the date and why it is a date for celebration. Also, they tend to manifest satisfaction with the performance of one or another member, or more generally with the mission as a whole. They also tend to make remarks that remind the audience that the *Missionaries* all look after the church, and are coordinated with one another.

6.2 Catholic sacraments

In addition to consecration, the *Missionaries* also have another important function in the Barquinha that cannot be performed by any other spirit or by a human, regardless of rank. The *Missionaries* have the sole prerogative of imparting Catholic sacraments, such as baptism of infants.

This is probably a significant fact. The Catholic sacraments are not usurped in the Barquinha, because authentic deceased Catholic priests are performing the rites. For example, over the fieldwork period, different informants drew my attention to the baptism rite singling out one or another aspect that made it noteworthy. Evidently, the quality of their baptism is a matter of importance to them. Perhaps one of the most telling revelations was given to me spontaneously by Pedro who explained to me that they use the exact canonical rite of the Roman Catholic Church and that their baptism performed thus was approved by the Roman Catholic bishop of Rio Branco some years ago.

Relevant to this thesis is the ongoing baptism of pagan spirits that the Barquinha conducts regularly, also performed by a *Missionary*. This is an important part of the mission, not only for the charity that is performed for the pagan spirit by baptizing it, but also because it is from these ranks that the healer-spirits are recruited. This rite will be considered in a subsequent chapter when I discuss the conversion of spirits and their transformation into healers.

6.3 Three sermons

The worship services in the Casa Santa are ideal occasion for giving messages to the community as a whole, since this is when they are assembled. For example, some days

before the Casa Santa received a delegation of people from the Santo Daime churches of Rio Branco for an historical Santo Daime ritual that was held in the Dance Hall of the Casa Santa, the ritual was suspended just before its finalization for a brief meeting in which volunteers were recruited for the variety of tasks required to host the delegations. After agreement was reached, the “enclosing” hymns were sung and the session was adjourned.

Importantly for this thesis, it is during these rituals that high-ranking spirits give speeches to the community of regular participants. These could be informative announcements, but more frequently, they were moral exhortations.

During the ritual held in the Casa Santa on the first day of the Pilgrimage of St. Francis, in September, held to “open” the period, some speeches were given in the second half of the ritual. This was after the two fundamental components of a daily Pilgrimage ritual had been fulfilled: a small walking procession through the church grounds and a rite composed of prescribed hymns and prayers in the temple.

Without any previous announcement or any kind of special behavior or sounds, without standing up, without helpers scuttling to procure spirit’s apparel, and without pronouncing special linguistic formulae, the Commander of the session began to talk in a grave thick masculine voice. Finishing the speech, the voice asked a certain ‘brother’ to come and offer a word.

Immediately, a young man seated up front at the table began whooshing loudly. He stood up, and with the scraping voice of an old man began to pronounce a short litany of hails and greetings. Each one was responded to by the audience in unison, with a different response for each hail. No helpers brought the man any apparel. He proceeded

to give a speech. To finish, he then pronounced some predetermined finalizing comments that also solicited fixed responses from the audience, whooshed, and then sat down.

The ritual continued with more singing and praying, and then the Commander gave a speech. S/he announced the opening of the penitential period, and that fulfillment required coming to church daily (or at least praying some prescribed prayers in the house), to be wary of ‘desires of the flesh’ that had to be renounced (s/he gave the examples of drinking alcohol, over-eating and talking too much). While engaging in devotional prayer commitments is allowed, s/he warned that people should be judicious not to take on too many. S/he also made some comments about behavior during rituals, and without naming anyone, mentioned that participants should be concentrated on themselves and not looking around at others or giggling. Almost right after this speech, the ritual was finalized in the usual way.

During this ritual, three different sermons were given by three different moral authorities of the Casa Santa. The first of these, recognizable only by the grave masculine voice and the therefore notorious absence of any other marker, is the spirit of Frei Daniel, the founder of the Barquinha. The second speech was given by a *Preto Velho*. This spirit behaved in a way that is typical of his category, for example, pronouncing predetermined linguistic formulae that the audience responds to, by standing up, and by the voice. The third speech was given by the Commander, not by a spirit. No kind of formulae or markers frame this speech, except perhaps that I have noticed that when given, it is always the last speech just before ending a ritual. The contents of the Commander’s speech distinguish it from those given by spirits, as it refers to mundane and concrete issues that concern only the immediate group of committed members. In contrast, the

speeches given by spirits are always formulated in abstract deontological terms and could be applied to all sorts of situations.

6.4 Holy Teachings

In regards to sermons provided by spirits, these are sometimes known as the Holy Teachings (*Santas Instruções*). They are scheduled for the Wednesday rituals (though they can be given at other times as well). The whole event takes place only in the main hall and there is a sense that the primary beneficiaries of the ritual are the regular adherents. The Teachings are pronounced by spirits that have exemplary moral standing.

During the ritual, a prestigious and high-ranking spirit (sometimes a high-ranking *Preto Velho* with a long-term practice in the healing service) is summoned by the Commander to descend and offer “a word.” This “word” is usually a long sermon and always reinforces the accepted ethics. Sermons often appear to have some direct relationship to events occurring in the community. Frequently, they are pronounced by spirits who are informed about and interested in the community’s moral progression. For example, while I was there, the attendance to daily rituals during the Pilgrimage in August had been rather thin. On the Wednesday that fell right in the middle of the Pilgrimage, a *Preto Velho* spent a good while reminding people to carefully consider where they were placing their priorities.

The Casa Santa is particularly privileged to receive the frequent descent of the founder Frei Daniel. This spirit has to be placed in a special category alone. He retains maximum authority in the mission. Though the medium may exhale loud whooshing, Frei Daniel does not announce himself upon arrival, for example by repeating the linguistic

formulae. He simply begins speaking in his deep voice. Unlike all other spirits, he is not garbed in any identifying paraphernalia. He does not move about or directly interact with anyone. I only heard him speak when the medium was seated in the Commander's chair. Speaking only from this position possibly indicates his continuity as commander of the mission.

That the president of the Casa Santa should be the medium that Frei Daniel speaks through is not surprising. The president was a close friend of Frei Daniel. S/he has an uninterrupted career as the most respected medium in the mission, and since the times of Frei Daniel has been receiving some of the most important *Missionaries*.

Rita and other informants often link the contents of Frei Daniel's speeches to community affairs. Although the speeches themselves are generally abstract and reinforce accepted ethics, after the ritual there is often talk among participants linking the speech to specific events of the near past. For example, once, his speech insisted that the president has to be informed of everything that is going on in the community and that people must speak to the president with respect and good manners. Later, Rita told me that that same day there had been a grave incident between two inner members caused by a momentary slip and which generated an uncomfortable circumstance for the parties involved, and in which the president felt personally implicated. Faulty communication between the two members and their omission of relaying the incident through a third-party mediator (in this case, the president), as is customary in the Casa Santa, had generated an unfortunate outcome. Note that the speech of Frei Daniel did not single out the incident or the parties involved, but instead drew attention to the standard ways of resolving conflict that should have been adhered to.

Frei Daniel was often annoyed by the amount of gossip -one reason why I am intensely reluctant to narrate incidents in this thesis that informants might construe as such. He often said that he kept a close eye on daily events. He also frequently reinforced the authority of the president and highlighted her/him as a moral example.

Under more exceptional circumstances, the president gave a speech her/himself. These were issues directly related to behavior in the church, such as during rituals or calling attention to the responsibility of mediums to respond for the behavior of their spirits. While no names are given and nobody in particular is singled out, the inappropriate actions are made explicit and the alternative appropriate action that should replace it is explained. Thus, the president's speeches, although also about moral affairs, are, for example, about liturgical matters and ritual behavior. They are not about community affairs, in the wide sense of the term.

In conclusion, spirit-possession is also used to mediate general announcements to the community as a whole. Often these appear to be about internal affairs that cause division or ruptures in social harmony or the cohesion of the mission, or at least this is how they are interpreted by participants. These pronouncements are relayed through the highest of moral authorities, sometimes the Catholic bishops, or above all, the founder himself.

6.5 The Prince of Crystal Rivers

In order to give some background concerning the cosmological realms of the Barquinha, I will briefly narrate the biography of the Prince of Crystal Rivers (a pseudonym), who is a high-ranking *Encanto* and also a *Missionary* (under a different name). I have omitted

certain details from the story, since I only wish to present a basic outline of the cosmology, the inhabitants of the realms and the notion of “becoming enchanted.”

I heard the story from different human informants, and there are minor and insignificant variations in the stories, so I will narrate the story as told to me by Pedro and registered on a cassette during a formal interview. Pedro heard the story directly from the Prince, who narrated it to an audience in 1999.

The Prince was a poor Portuguese man who was deeply in love with a rich woman. Though she also loved him, her family opposed the union and eventually decided to take her far away to another land. The man was profoundly disturbed by this, as he loved her intensely. One day, he went to the sea-shore at sunset and embarked in a little row-boat, intent on finding her again. He rowed and rowed into the sea. Suddenly, a violent storm broke out, the enraged waves began to rock the boat dangerously, and he frantically began to row back to the shore. Unfortunately, a large wave came and covered the boat. He fell into the sea. As he was sinking, drowning and in agony, he saw a great swordfish coming towards him. He hopped onto the swordfish and rode it, while the swordfish safely took him to the depths of the sea. As they were reaching the bottom of the sea, they approached a castle, crystalline and bluish, with mermaids swimming around it. He had been taken to the kingdom of the Queen of the Sea. There, he received a ‘preparation’ and was allowed the grace of returning to Earth in order to provide charity. He was taken up to another kingdom [in the Earth realm, I infer], where he was made into a prince, the Prince of Crystal Rivers. There he met again with his beloved, who meanwhile had died of heart-break and had been “enchanted” into a princess. They were married, but cannot have children. Instead, the people that they perform charity for

are to be considered their spiritual children. After this he was taken up to a monastery [in the Sky realm, I assume from other references that I have heard about these monasteries] that has a great library containing religious scriptures.

According to Pedro, it is in these monasteries that the *Missionaries* are ‘prepared.’ As a *Missionary*, the Prince of Crystal Rivers is a *Bishop* and has another name. Pedro went on to tell me that there are also monasteries for women to become *Missionaries*. He named several of the *Pretas Velhas* of the Casa Santa who are all from a particular nunnery.

6.6 Inscribing the community’s micro-history into the cosmology

The permanence within the mission of prominent deceased Barquinha members, and their continued concern and service, implies an ongoing inclusion of them. The deceased of the Barquinha are not simply sent away, forgotten, erased or generalized into ‘ancestors,’ but actively continue to participate in rituals and daily life. The analyst may consider that in this way, their exemplary lives, personal teachings or counsel, their friendship and other qualities are being kept alive by their contemporaries. This is achieved through their popular recognition as *Missionaries* in Heaven. The micro-history of the community is being inscribed into the cosmology.

For the sake of clarity I will provide three examples of such *Missionaries*. Three deceased original Barquinha members who are now recognized as friars are Frei Daniel, Frei José Joaquim and Frei Manuel. Frei Daniel is the founder of the Barquinha. Frei José Joaquim was a good friend of his, and an early companion. Currently, Frei José Joaquim herds suffering souls in the after-life to bring them to the Barquinha for evangelization.

Frei Manuel was a long-standing president of a Barquinha church, only recently deceased a few years ago.

There are three cosmological realms in the Barquinha: Sky or Heaven, Earth or Forest, and Sea (the aquatic realm.) These are ranked hierarchically. Heaven is the highest and is the realm of eternal life and salvation (Sena Araújo 1999:92).

Heaven is described in hymns and is seen by people in visions (see Sena Araújo 1999). Heaven has monasteries and convents inhabited by friars, nuns, priests and bishops. Collectively, these inhabitants are called *Missionaries* (*Missionários*). Typically, *Missionaries* are *Encantos* who led secular lives in the lower realms. The novelty is that when they go to Heaven, they acquire a religious or priestly identity.

The *Missionaries* are prepared (to become missionaries) in the heavenly monasteries and convents where they have great libraries. (The Blue Castle, in Heaven, has a secular name, but also contains religious books). With this description of the great libraries in Heaven, it would seem that writing is linked to Christianity and eschatology, something that has been observed for other societies (e.g the Gapuners in New Guinea, see Kulick 2002:168-175; the Piro of the Peruvian Amazon, see Gow 2001).

An appealing hypothesis is postulated by Gow, which very neatly fits the Barquinha cosmology. Gow describes the conflation of the Amazonian Sky realm with the Catholic Heaven for mestizo shamanry (Gow 1994:107). While the missionaries came to be viewed as experts in the dealings with the Sky realm and eschatological salvation (entry to the Sky), Ayahuasca shamanry came to focus on the lower realms and to deal with the healing of illness, especially illness caused by demons and projected on to the victim through sorcery due to social strife (Gow 2001:248-249).

A similar situation occurs in the Barquinha. The *Missionaries* who descend from the Sky are responsible for bringing evangelical messages and sacraments of salvation and conversion to the faithful. The lower-ranking entities that live in the lower realms (such as the *Pretos Velhos*) engage in exorcising and converting malevolent demons, countering the effects of sorcery and disharmonic social relationships.

The social division of the inhabitants of the realms also mirrors the social organization of colonial society. While the *Missionaries* occupy the higher ranks and realms, slaves (*Pretos Velhos*) and Indians (*Caboclos*) inhabit the lower realms.

However, the Barquinha cosmology is not a caste division. For example, I had several conversations with a *Preto Velho* who, in his life, had escaped into the forest. He took refuge with a group of Indians and eventually became their chief. I also know the medium who receives the son of this *Preto Velho*, who is classed as a *Caboclo* (Indian).

Similarly, *Missionaries* are not just Europeans or other Whites. Pedro told me one day about a declaration that had been made a little while before I arrived in the field in May. A dedicated healer, a *Preta Velha*, had been given admission to one of the convents in Heaven and become a nun. She is now a *Missionary*. Other *Pretas Velhas* of the Casa Santa are also in this convent.

In the Barquinha, understanding, devout, charitable and morally exemplary blacks, northeasterners, and other poor people can be admitted into the celestial hierarchy and become missionaries. This is understood as an accomplishment, the result of a life of exemplary dedication and “preparation.” For example, the successor of Frei Daniel said about him,

On Earth, we called him Mestre Daniel, but after he disincarnated, he received the reward from God and was transformed into a friar. In the *miração*, one can see: he

is a friar. For his good services, he was consecrated. And today he is Frei Daniel Pereira de Matos (Geraldo 1992:29, my translation).

This process of popular recognition of heavenly status for charismatic religious individuals is very common in Brazil, notoriously in the Northeast, and has persistently been uncomfortable for the more Romanistic officials of the Catholic Church. For example, the Aves de Jesus is a messianic religious movement in Juazeiro, in the Northeast of Brazil, that venerates the now deceased popular priest Padre Cícero (Campos 2000). Padre Cícero is also mentioned in hymns of the Santo Daime, and thus, is part of the Daime pantheon. His devotion is widespread, and statues of Padre Cícero can be bought in stores that sell supplies for Umbanda practitioners. Juazeiro has been a place of pilgrimage since the miracles operated through Padre Cícero in his lifetime, the authenticity of which the Catholic Church denied. He was suspended from the priestly office, after which he became involved in local politics, which made him even more popular among the poor (Walker 2005).

Another priest from the Northeast who has popular recognition as a saint is Frei Damião, a Franciscan Capuchin. Many miracles are attributed to him, until now none recognized by the Catholic Church (luso.com.br 2005). He was also extremely popular among poor people. Frei Damião is also recognized in the Daime pantheon. He is mentioned in hymns of the Santo Daime, and also of the Barquinha in which he is referred to as the “Holy Missionary Frei Damião.” Just like Padre Cícero, statues and photographs of Frei Damião can be bought in stores that sell Umbanda supplies.

Kardecism has the same practice. For example, the spirit of Dr. Bezerra de Menezes descends into many mediums in Brazil, and this includes some rituals of the

Santo Daime (the Cefluris line of which has a strong Kardecist influence). He is also mentioned in hymns of the Santo Daime. Dr. Bezerra de Menezes was a Brazilian physician of the nineteenth century (1831-1900). He was acclaimed as the “doctor of the poor” for his commitment to charity. He was a leading figure of the Spiritist movement, serving twice as the president of the Brazilian Spiritist Federation (Carvalho Monteiro 2004). Not surprisingly, busts of Dr. Bezerra de Menezes can also be bought in the stores that sell supplies for Umbanda.

In the various local versions of *Encantaria* in the Northeast of Brazil, the same situation occurs. Some of the *Encantos* are historical Brazilian figures who descend into mediums during sessions. For example, Mestre Carlos was a powerful shaman who is invoked regularly in the tradition of Catimbó to take possession of the healer-shamans. His father, Inácio de Oliveira is also invoked in sessions. Other deceased shamans, such as Antônio de Lima, are also invoked as ‘mestres’ to possess the healer-shamans (Andrade 1983; Bastide 2001:154-155).

The Northeastern immigrants to Western Amazonia persisted in their devotion to people they recognize as saints, regardless of official Catholic opinion. For example, the tomb of the popularly recognized “St John of the Guarani” in a rubber settlement in Acre is site of regular pilgrimage. John (*João*) was a poor rubber-tapper, who had originally come from the Northeast. He died of exhaustion, being forced to work by his boss while feverish and sick with malaria. Several miracles have been attributed to him (Ferreira Lima 1985; Pereira & Moreira 1991).

In conclusion, like the Catholic process of canonization of exemplary individuals, the Barquinha also places exemplary founders in Heaven. Across Brazil, popularly

acclaimed figures are often kept present in daily affairs through spirit-possession, and the Barquinha is no exception. Consecrated as *Missionaries*, their own exemplary members continue to assist the Barquinha mission with sustained intervention and concern.

7. MORAL CAREER AND VOCATION FOR CHARITY

7.1 Voluntary adhesion of spirits to the mission

This chapter will detail some of the ritual procedures through which spirits are recruited into the mission, converted and then transformed into healers. The chapter also considers how this process of recruitment and *doctrination* of spirits is simultaneously tied up in the moral development of the adherents who host them. I will start by describing the recruitment of pagan spirits and repentant suffering souls who voluntarily chose to join the Barquinha mission.

A few days before the end of a Pilgrimage ritual period, as I was sitting in place during one of the short and predictable daily rituals, events took a sudden turn. In synchrony, several regular participants suddenly went stiff in their seats with their eyes closed. At this moment, there was a shuffling of activity, as helpers holding a candle and a notebook began to approach them. The helpers gently made a sign-of-the-cross on the forehead of the participant and began a whispered conversation, writing replies in the notebook.

As this was happening, the Commander began to blow out the characteristic loud whooshing sounds that mark the arrival of a spirit, and then stood up. Helpers donned the entity in Episcopal apparel, after which he made his way towards the *Altar*. Meanwhile, the other stiff people had been assisted to front of the room and knelt at the base of the *Altar*.

Other helpers (with candles in their hands) came to stand near the *Altar* and began an incessant recitation of basic Catholic prayers. As this was going on the priestly spirit, a *Missionary*, began to talk sternly to the keeling people in a grave voice and to perform

the sign-of-the-cross over each one's head. I do not know the content of the speech because the other praying was going on at the same time, but I captured phrases such as "You will recognize that there is a God."

The rite is called "*Doctrination* of souls." The beneficiaries are the baptized dead who died unrepentant and now wander in darkness and suffering in the after-life. In this rite, the souls are given a chance to receive the light and comfort of the *Doctrine*. They occupy the bodies of the participants in order to receive this evangelization, given in the sermon of the *Missionary*. The rite intends to convince the souls to accept Christian doctrine (Sena Araújo 1999:213). After this, they are sent to Heaven to continue their "preparation."

Rita explained to me later, that these souls literally assemble around the church during the Pilgrimage period. They are herded by a *Missionary* called Frei José Joaquim (see Sena Araújo 1999:213-214). He was an important member of the original Barquinha church. Now, he has the mission of gathering lost and wandering souls and bringing them to the church for their salvation.

An almost identical rite is the "Baptism of pagans," which I saw two days later. This time, the Commander spoke out loud to the spirits, inviting them to occupy the bodies of the participants. Immediately, some participants went stiff and the rest of the rite continued in much the same way as the previous one. In this rite, however, the entities are pagans who never received baptism, such as Indians.

A different *Missionary* performs the baptisms. He is Dom Zebulom (a pseudonym) who was a priest that lived in France several centuries ago, Pedro told me (see Sena Araújo 1999:217-218). Dom Zebulom is a *Bishop* (the title "Dom" indicates

his Episcopal rank). He has always participated in the Barquinha as a spirit since the times of Frei Daniel (i.e. he is not a deceased member).

Rita told me that the preaching in the “Baptism of pagans” rite indicates to the spirit that from now on it will work only for Good. The entities that are baptized are from a variety of categories, and it is from these ranks that the healer-spirits are recruited. Baptism removes them from ambiguous loyalties.

The president of the Casa Santa once told me that these post-mortem baptisms are an act of charity. Baptism is a rite of incorporation into the Christian community. Rita told me that baptism names are written in the Holy Books in Heaven. She said that baptism guarantees a protection for the child, because it has been admitted into the Holy Temple. Rita told me that the candle held by the godparent during infant baptism can then be used later on when the child falls ill. Invoking the “mystery of baptism” during a prayer will help heal the child. (It is interesting to compare this understanding with the rite for declaring the death of a Roman Catholic pope, in which the pope’s chamberlain must call him three times by his baptismal name to see if he responds, not by his papal one).

A similar understanding is held in the *Encantaria* of Maranhão. An old lady told Venina (an informant of Ferretti, a scholar of the folklore of Maranhão) of a child that was healed because the healer covered it with the cloth used for its baptism. This impeded an aquatic entity from taking the child away. If this hadn’t been accomplished, “today [the child] would be Enchanted” (Ferretti 2000:56).

In summary, the Barquinha has two very important rites for incorporating spirit entities into the mission, assisting their desire for conversion and moral transformation.

The suffering souls that died in sin are *doctrinated* by a *Missionary* and immediately sent to Heaven. Similarly, unbaptized pagan entities also receive the charity of baptism and are also then sent to Heaven. These baptisms and deliverances of suffering souls are carefully registered in books. When the time is right, and if they are deserving, the former pagans return to the church as healers. Rita once told me of an entity (a *Caboclo*) that had come to her, was baptized and then sent to a “hospital” (her words) in Heaven to become a Christian. She told me that eventually the entity will come back to her and they will start to work together.

7.2 Tandem conversion of spirit and medium

The previous section outlined the voluntary incorporation and rescue of souls and pagans. Now I want to describe the way that unenlightened entities caught possessing a victim are also sent to Heaven for conversion after being exorcised. This case illustrates more clearly the nexus between the moral conversion of an entity and the moral career of the participant as a medium. (Again, I will refer to events as they occur in the Casa Santa.)

The basic stages in the conversion of unenlightened spirits (*exús*) are recited during the exorcism rite. I also heard informants explain it many times. There are three basic stages. First it is removed from its location of darkness and suffering through the exorcism. The exorcism rite then sends it to Heaven, to a special enclosure which is a place of repose. It remains there for conversion. After this, eventually, it may return to the church to provide charity.

The exorcism of an *exú* begins when the client seeks the healers during Charity Works. When possession by an *exú* is diagnosed, the entity is removed from the client

and transferred to a trained medium for interrogation. (In some cases that I witnessed, Barquinha mediums seemed to receive such entities voluntarily. In such cases there was no transfer, since the entities had already descended into prepared mediums).

After the entity has confessed its name and purpose for attachment to the client, among other details, the exorcism rite orders it to go to a special enclosure in Heaven. There, amid praise, singing and worship, it is subjected to Holy Teachings (*Santos Ensinamentos*) for its conversion. This enclosure is conceived of as a place of rest for the unenlightened entity. Unenlightened entities are not punished, they are encouraged to convert.

At an appropriate time, the converted entity may have the chance to return to the same Barquinha church where it was exorcised from and provide charity (the exorcism rite considers it a “merit” to be allowed to come back). Generally speaking, when a converted entity comes back, it does not become a healer straight away. For a while, the medium receives the entity in low-impact situations, such as during dancing. Only with time can it join the team of healer-spirits.

Figure 7.1 outlines the basic stages of the *exú*'s conversion. My sketch is inspired on Balzer's diagram of this process (Balzer 2003:131).

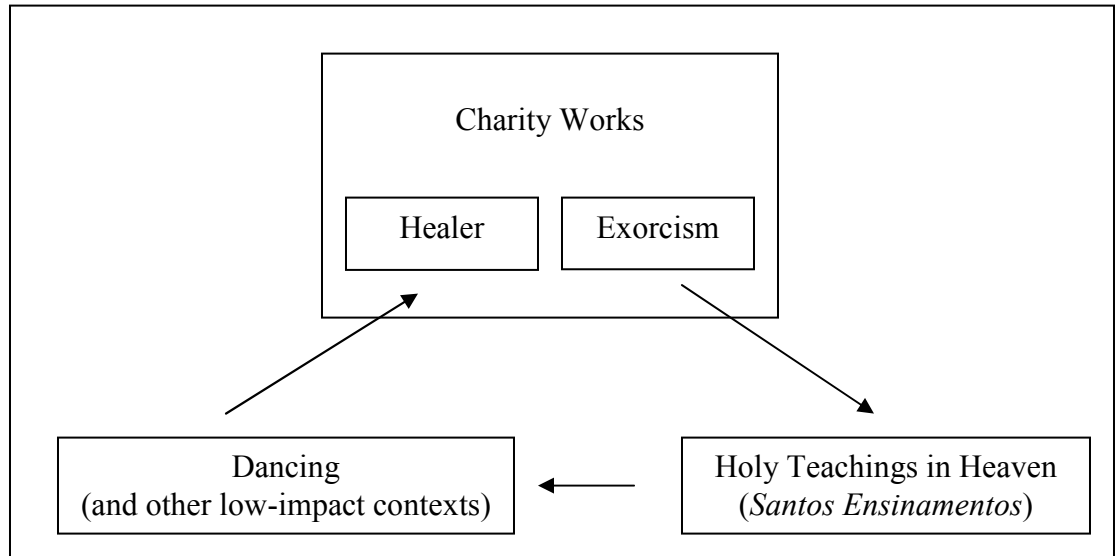


Figure 7.1 Basic stages of the conversion of an *exú* (unenlightened entity)

The conversion of an *exú* can be compared to the preparation of a medium. There is a scheduled ritual every Wednesday called Preparation of Mediums, or otherwise called Holy Teachings (*Santas Instruções*). But, in fact, mediumship is developed through a variety of settings in which the medium and the entity gradually harmonize with each other.

The process can be distilled to three moments. One of these is the Wednesday ritual called “Preparation of Mediums.” The ritual occurs weekly and usually only attracts regular participants. During this service, participants are exposed to sermons given by spirits, collectively called Holy Teachings (*Santas Instruções*), and also relevant revelations from the Daime. Mostly, as detailed in previous chapters, the Teachings are of moral nature and aim to promote the medium’s moral improvement. During the ritual, there is praise, singing and worship.

It is not difficult to realize that this is a fundamentally parallel situation that exorcised *exús* are exposed to in Heaven.

The process of developing a relationship with a particular spirit is the second stage. When a medium begins to establish a relationship with an entity, possession events are somewhat haphazard. It takes a lot of effort and patience before the entity can be summoned at will by the medium. The first arrival of the entity is frequently unexpected. In some cases, the new medium is not able to control the experience and may engage in aberrant behavior. I was told by Rita that she had to be taken to a special room and for several hours was surrounded by people trying to calm her down. She told me that during this period she “saw it all” and began to name the litany of spirits that she had seen.

If the medium decides to follow up on the vocation, then a slow process of learning develops. For example, although her mediumship was inaugurated years earlier through the episode narrated above, Rita is only now beginning to accept mediumship and to engage in a relationship with the several entities that accompany her. This process includes unraveling the identity of the entity. The entity will reveal its name and details about its biography. The relationship with the entity also includes beginning to satisfy its requirements as a healer. For example, the entity explains the kind of objects that it needs.

Asserting and defining the entity's personality, identity, etc., is in tandem to the process in which the medium gradually gains control over the embodiment transformations inherent to possession. The ideal situation for developing mediumship is contexts such as the dancing rituals when possession is liberated, has little impact, and there are experienced people and spirits who can intervene if necessary.

Eventually, the medium becomes able to summon the spirit at will. By this time, the spirit is behaving in the acceptable way and conforming to expectations.

The third stage is when the entity (and medium) may be allowed to participate in Charity Works. (The medium continues to participate in the Wednesday rituals for the Preparation of Mediums).

Perhaps it is obvious to remark that the stages in the conversion of an entity such as an *exú* are also training for the medium. The dancing and other low-impact contexts are just as initiatory for the medium as for the converted entity that is returning to the church. During these stages, the process of transformation of the spirit and the preparation of the medium are consubstantial. Even so, both spirit and medium each

continue their learning in their own realm. By the time the entity is a recognized healer in the Charity Works, the medium is also recognized as developed.

Figure 7.2 schematizes the process of preparation of mediums. In order to illustrate the eventual connection and parallelism with the conversion of *exús*, I have drawn the diagram similar to figure 7.1 (page 110). (To an extent, this process is also diagrammatically represented in Balzer 2003:133).

In conclusion, representations of the processes of conversion, *doctrination* and incorporation of spirit-entities into the Barquinha generally mirror the process of human adherents. In some cases, these processes are consubstantial to each other, because the conversion of the spirit-entity often occurs through a medium with whom a long-term relationship is established. The gradual domestication of the medium's spirit-possession episodes are simultaneously the adjustment of the spirit-entity to appropriate behavior and social expectations within the church. The development of mediumship has become implicated in the moral career of adherents of the Casa Santa, as they host increasing numbers of converted spirits and accordingly fortify their own ties to the church.

For the sake of clarity, a certain number of adherents of the Casa Santa have not developed mediumship, and I have heard people express a lack of interest in following this path. I also know of people who initially developed mediumship, but then left this aside and only receive their entity on very rare occasions. However, by and large, the development of mediumship is highly tolerated and expected in the Casa Santa.

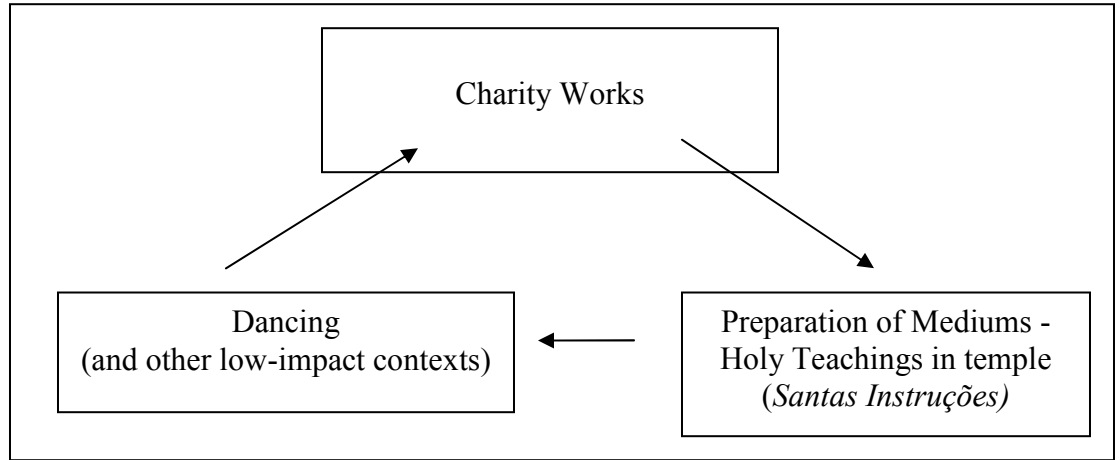


Figure 7.2 Basic stages in the preparation of mediums

7.3 Barquinha spirit-possession is an act of charity

The development of mediumship is integral to the moral career of many adherents of the Casa Santa. To the best of my knowledge, most of the mediums of this church were not receiving spirits before joining the Barquinha. It seems that possession episodes most often begin to occur in the adherent only some time after regular participation and induction into the social group of the church. Mediumship is voluntary and results from the extended participation in the micro-context of the church. It is not pathologized in any way. Possession is spoken of as a choice that is conjoined to a degree of spiritual evolution in which the medium has chosen to host spirits who will provide therapy or some kind of benefit for third-parties and/or to charitably host spirits requiring evangelization or baptism.

Three salient characteristics distinguish possession in the Barquinha. One of these is that they constantly insist that the medium always retains consciousness. A second characteristic is that possession is voluntary. While an unexpected possession can occur, establishing a long-term relationship with the spirit is optional. I was told by different people that the medium can refuse the possession episode. The medium can also refuse the entity, which then has to find a different host. A third interesting characteristic is that entities can be passed from one medium to another. For example, the Prince of Crystal Rivers initially descended into the Commander of the Casa Santa, but was afterwards passed onto another medium who has received the Prince ever since. Some entities have been inherited. For example, the Prince of Emerald Rivers first descended into one of Frei Daniel's original mediums, now deceased. The grandson of this medium now receives the Prince of Emerald Rivers.

The case of the Barquinha is different to those possession cults in which a sudden and unexpected possession episode in the lay person is the trigger for initiating her/him into the cult. In such cults, domesticating possession is a therapeutic strategy. It also appears to be common in these cases for such possession episodes to occur to people subjected to contexts of deprivation or frustration (e.g. the *zar* cult in Sudan, Boddy 1989:133ff; also the Somali possession by *sar*, Lewis 1971:75ff; the possession of married women by *bori* in West Africa, Lewis 1971:82-83; the possession of “subordinate women” in rural Ceylon, Lewis 1971:84; among the Songhay, Stoller 1989:107).

There appears to be a world-wide preponderance of women in the latter kinds of cults (Bourgignon 2004:557), and the triad formed by the medium, her husband and spirit (typically male) is a prime focus of the anthropologists’ attention (e.g. Boddy 1989; Lewis 1971:76-77). Not surprisingly the idioms of possession often recall sexual relationships (e.g. Boddy 1989:134). In some contexts, metaphors of sexuality may be replaced or implied by the “expressive language of the stables” (Lewis 1971:58). Idioms of marriage are also common (Bourgignon 2004:564; Lewis 1971:59-63).

This is very different from the situation of the Barquinha. Among mediums of the Casa Santa, there is no preponderance of any gender. In addition, generally speaking, the gender of the spirit tends to coincide with that of the medium (though mediums do also receive spirits of the other gender). The idioms of spirit-possession do not recall sexual relationships, but instead labor and consanguineal kinship between different generations.

For example, the medium is said to “work with” (*trabalha com*) a certain spirit. Also, when mediums speak of their own spirit, they often omit the name and simply refer

to the entity by a kinship term. For example, I was with Rita one evening, coming back from a ritual, and a certain member of the church desired to smoke some tobacco. She approached Rita and asked if she could borrow a pipe. Rita responded that she couldn't comply because the only pipe she had "belongs to Grandma," (meaning her *Preta Velha*) (the objects that belong to the spirits cannot be used by anyone else).

Language that denotes a consanguineal intergenerational kinship relationship is used in Candomblé, and by extension also in Umbanda, between adherents and their *orixás* (translated into Portuguese as 'saints'). The devotees are spoken of as being the "son" or "daughter of the saint" (*filho/filha de santo*). This language is retained in the Barquinha. Informants openly told me which *orixá* they were the 'son' or 'daughter' of. For example, Rita is a "daughter of Iemanjá" (the supreme feminine deity of the Sea), which she insisted is the reason why she doesn't like fish and seafood.

An equestrian language is also used in Candomblé and Umbanda, in which the medium can be called '*cavalo*,' which means 'horse.' This is possibly derived from West Africa. Yoruba cults use this terminology, and in contemporary Nigeria the ills of modernity (such as money or beauty) are said to 'mount' people and make them act immorally (Lorand Matory 1994:505). But I never heard this kind of expression used in the Barquinha.

The relationship between the medium and spirit is not sexualized in the Barquinha, and I am sure that mediums would find the question bizarre if I were to pose it. For example, in the Barquinha, virgins habitually become possessed just as any other member and there is nothing outstanding about this. This is in contrast, for example, with

the possession of virgins in the *zar* cult of Sudan that is problematic and leads to them being discretely married off as soon as possible (Boddy 1989:167).

Barquinha folk sometimes like to distinguish themselves from the practices of mainstream Umbanda, and I recall a conversation with some mediums once where this included an expression of profound distaste for the degeneracy of receiving spirits (such as *exús* or *pomba-giras*) who –the narrator hushed to admit– in some places reportedly have sex in the temple. Although this is not a case where the relationship between medium and spirit is sexualized, but rather that the spirit is being allowed to indulge in such carnal pleasures, the point is that spiritism in the Barquinha is a de-sexualized phenomenon.

In the Casa Santa, the development of mediumship is voluntary and occurs after there has been some degree of induction into the religion and an acceptance of the normalcy of its practices. I was placed into this track myself. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I started to receive insinuations from some people, including Rita, for example that I should start thinking about buying a pipe for my *Preto Velho* in preparation for my next visit to the Barquinha. I also witnessed a young teenager actively seeking to become a medium and submitting himself to extenuating concentrations in the hope that his *Preto Velho* would come to him.

I think that people's voluntary development of mediumship in the Casa Santa is related to an individual course of increasing vocation for charity and healing. This is coupled with an increasing commitment to the church, since mediums eventually become obliged to attend the Charity Works rituals and other occasions where they become liturgically necessary because of the particular spirit that they “work with.” For example,

I saw some worn sailor's hats, called 'helmets' (*capacetes*), on display in the Casa de Memória museum that used to belong to mediums that attended in the Charity Works. The hats had the name of the entity embroidered onto them. This denotes an inalienable link between medium and entity. The uniform is worn by the medium, not by the spirit.

Habitually, mediums accumulate spirits over the years. The process of converting and *doctrinating* these spirits also seems to run parallel to processes of increasing *doctrination* of the medium, since they establish a life-long relationship of mutual commitment. The spirit is subdued through rites and practices that are performed on the medium.

The tandem progressive moralization of both the medium and spirit is important because the "the entity works with the knowledge of the apparatus," as Júlia once said to me. For example, a *Preto Velho* once told me a fable involving modern machinery. Afterwards, he spontaneously explained that he knew this story and about the machinery because he was retrieving the information from the memory of the medium, to which he has access.

I once asked Júlia, how was it possible that the some of the entities that descend in the Barquinha (where they drink Daime, and promote certain values and behavior), simultaneously descend in mainstream Umbanda temples elsewhere (where they behave differently)? She explained that the entity is "*doctrinated* into the head" of the medium. She meant that, while a certain specific entity may be the same one that descends into different mediums around Brazil, the actual manifestation of the entity is somehow tainted or refracted through the specificities of the spiritual level of the medium. This

understanding makes it imperative for mediums to perfect their own moral selves, so that the irradiation will be transmitted with as much purity as possible.

Barquinha adherents are adamant and persistent to point out that possession in their context is consensual and that they retain consciousness. This puts a moral strain on the possession episode, because mediums are required (and I heard the president say this out loud during a ritual once) to control the actions, behavior and interventions of their spirits. Similarly, when a spirit appears to be behaving inappropriately, the general muttering is that the medium's personality is seeping through. It is not sufficient for the medium to claim possession by a high spiritual entity, because the medium's own low spiritual vibrations will distort the transmission of the irradiation. The medium her/himself must attempt to attain the highest possible level of moral purity as well.

I think that the sense of this life-long relationship between spirit and medium is radically different to those cults where possession is an idiom of affliction (e.g. Boddy 1989:142-143; Lewis 1971:88), because the terms of the possession are not about satisfying the demands of spirits, and possession is not an illness (e.g. Boddy 1989:145). In the Barquinha, the life-long relationship between medium and spirit should not be thought of as an "accommodation" in which the spirit is tamed, rather than exorcised, "at the cost of recurrent ceremonies in its honour" (Lewis 1971:88) that require the medium to join a cult.

Often framed as a form of marriage (e.g. Boddy 1989:159), this approach to the life-long relationship between medium and spirit may also insinuate something about the way people in these societies conceive of marriage among men and women (see Lewis

1971:63 for mutual obligations generated by the formal marriage rites that unite mediums and spirits in Haitian Vodun).

It is logical that appeasement is the objective of cults for which possession is an illness. The *zar* spirits of Sudan are described as “capricious, hedonistic, and self-indulgent” and exemplify what villagers “ought not to be” (Boddy 1989:165). In contrast, the spirits that descend in the Barquinha represent positive ideal moral types, and are welcome presences that provide desirable contributions. The night before the celebration of the date of the emancipation from slavery, the president of the Casa Santa announced the imminent arrival of the *Pretos Velhos*, whom s/he referred to as “our brethren and friends” (*nossos irmãos amigos*).

In contexts where possession is an illness, the dominant metaphors are of power and submission. But in the Barquinha, possession is a voluntary act of charity. It is the suffering of the spirit that is diminished with possession. It is not the medium who is undergoing affliction. This calls for a suggestive understanding of how the relationship among the ethnicities involved in the practice is conceived. In the Barquinha, the body of the medium is a territory that is voluntarily opened for occupation. This is the inverse of those situations in which the ethnicities that are theatricalized during possession episodes are invading potencies that, if unrestrained, bring affliction to the local population, who then needs to wield ways of harnessing the invasion, such as through accommodation (e.g. Boddy 1994:419; Behrend & Luig 1999; Masquelier 2001; Stoller 1995).

Thus, the development of mediumship in the Barquinha does not have the effect of easing or enhancing a medium’s personal life, otherwise fraught with strife. On the contrary, it implies a responsible commitment to assist in the Works of Charity and other

occasions in which the spirit may need to be summoned. (Incidentally, this binds the medium geographically to the specific church).³ In the Barquinha, possession is not a cultural indicator of predicament, but instead of a vocation for facilitation.

The idioms used to express the relationship with the spirit refer to labor and consanguineal kinship with elderly generations, indicating this vocation for using possession to offer charity. The relationship with the spirit is not sexualized, nor does it imply some form of truce between potentially hostile partners. Instead, the relationship is chaste and talked of as a form of donation. The standard reply that I received to the question about why they allow themselves to be possessed was, “because it’s charity.” The spirits that are allowed to descend in Barquinha rituals are de-sexualized. For example, they are Catholic priests, elderly black men and women beyond the reproductive stage (see Hale 1997:400), or deceased Barquinha members who have become friars in Heaven. While *exús* and *pomba-giras* are recognized as intensely sexual (recall that the *pomba-giras* are described as prostitutes), they are not allowed to manifest, and are promptly exorcised if they make a sudden appearance.

7.4 Commitment to the healer vocation and “mastery of spirits”

Higher-ranking members of the Casa Santa have moral authority basically as a result of their long-term commitment and seniority. Interestingly, this is disseminated in their progressive accumulation of more and higher spirits.

Roughly, the distribution of mediumship in the Casa Santa parallels the division of expertise of the spirits. Generally speaking, the higher-ranking spirits (such as the

³ Interestingly, it was only on very rare occasions that I saw mediums receive their spirit during rituals in another Barquinha church. I noticed that, ordinarily, people seem only to receive their spirits in their own particular church.

Bishops) are received by the church's higher-ranking mediums. Meanwhile, mid-ranking mediums typically receive entities like the *Pretos Velhos* that mostly only assist in the healing, and very rarely give a sermon. Circumstantial mediums receive an assortment of entities from the lower ranks, usually only during the dancing sessions, generating no real impact on other people.

The career of medium also seems to include a progressive accumulation of spirits. The higher-ranking mediums not only receive higher spirits, they also often receive more. Their mediumship usually encompasses several categories of spirits. The apex of this cumulative pyramidal structure is the president of the Casa Santa who receives spirits from all categories, including the deceased Barquinha members.

Complementing this analysis of the healer vocation as a vocation for mediumship and spiritual charity, it is interesting to note that those who are employed in the Casa Santa mostly seem to occupy positions in the service sector. This includes government jobs, such as the post office and library. A few work in banks. Several, both male and female, work as nurses. (Others are studying to become nurses). Some work for the government or in NGO-types of employments, for example related to forestry or indigenous peoples. Notoriously absent in the Casa Santa are entrepreneurs, small-business owners and rich people.

8. RELIGION OF THE SELF

8.1 The sanctuary

In this chapter I want to consider the processes of conversion of the human adherent, drawing attention to the existential changes involved in the penitential life-project of the Barquinha member. While several things could be said about this, the main intention here is to tie this matter to my interpretation of the Barquinha as a ‘religion of the self’ (Csordas 1997:52).

The Barquinhas are urban churches with a mission of social assistance to non-members. But the focus of evangelization is not a large-scale modification of society, but of the suffering individual. I would say that Barquinha conversion seeks to reconstitute and recompose the self, altering its existential engagement with the world (e.g. becoming generous) and orientation towards it. The pastoral function of the church is to provide relief for the suffering, and a repose and reorientation that will fortify them to achieve reinsertion.

Overall, I am persuaded that the Barquinha would classify as a ‘religion of the self,’ where the transformation of the individual is the prime locus of attention. In such cases, a social or political change is an after-effect of the change in individuals. This is opposed to ‘religions of peoples,’ where the ultimate subject of salvation is a nation or ethnic collectivity. Csordas gives the example of the Melanesian cargo cults and other movements for this (Csordas 1997:52-53). The Santo Daime may be an example of the latter. Classically forming independent rural or semi-rural communities, adherents recognize themselves as the ‘people of Juramidam’ (e.g. Fróes 1986). While Juramidam

is also invoked in hymns of the Barquinha (since the two religions have the same pantheon), I have not heard them refer to themselves as a ‘people.’

It seems to me that the Casa Santa achieves a re-orientation of the individual in her/his world and a differential form of engagement with it. Csordas has identified a parallel situation in Catholic Charismatic conversion, which he explains in their case involves a reconstitution of the ‘sacred self’ that comes to inhabit a deeply taken for granted particular cultural world characterized by certain psychocultural themes in terms of which the self becomes oriented (Csordas 1997:63-67).

I once consulted with a *Caboclo* in the Casa de Oração, one evening that I was feeling sad. He implored me to “never say that you are not feeling well, or the Enemy will laugh scorning you.” The *Caboclo* taught me that no matter how sad or unhappy I may feel, if I give in to this feeling, it will only lead to my own downfall and the triumph of Satan. Instead, “always say that you are well,” the *Caboclo* instructed me. In addition, through his words and prayers, he treated me like an innocent victim of someone’s envy and negative feelings, and fervently prayed to Jesus to liberate me from these evil energies that were pulling me down and that were being caused by someone’s malice.

The primary service of the Barquinha is to offer healing. In this context, it seems to me that healing is the reconstitution of the self, rather than of society. This includes an assertion that the suffering person is an innocent victim requiring protection, and that her/his environment is potentially hostile.

I have always been impressed by the moral fortitude and stability of the elderly members of the Santo Daime and Barquinha churches (notoriously displayed during the rituals). I am sure that these religions intend to generate solidity in adherents, a value

expressed by the term “*firmeza*,” (perhaps translatable as ‘strength’ or ‘firmness’) that is very common in the Daime lexicon.

The focus on morally reconstituting the individual is reasonable in a milieu in which ‘society’ does not fit the classical structural-functionalist’s model of a self-reproducing discrete unit. If anything, Rio Branco and the urban towns of Acre are characterized by their rapid transformations over the past century. Their inhabitants are migrants who have been permanently adjusting and readjusting to changes. Society and history are unstable in Acre.

Studying similar situations in Africa, Fernandez notes how these types of movements are endocentric, that is, rather than aiming to change the larger economic, technological or political-judicial order, they primarily intend to generate changes in the individual and in the community’s religious cosmos (Fernandez 1969:6). The crucial locus of evangelization is the individual and moral change is the fundamental objective. In addition, much expenditure is placed in sustaining intra-community harmony and social order (see Overing & Passes 2000:7). This is true for both the Barquinha and Santo Daime.

The Barquinha is not especially positioned politically against the reigning economic paradigm, for example in way that adherents of Liberation Theology might be. In the Casa Santa, people seem to want to enhance their lifestyle with urban bourgeois comforts. When I went in 2003, only a handful of people had cell-phones. When I went back in 2004, even some of the unemployed or sub-employed had one. Rita is proud of herself, because in only a few years she has been able to move from a wooden house to one made of bricks. Having a washing machine for the clothes and, recently, a DVD

player are becoming increasingly common. A refrigerator and a television are now seen as basics. Both Rita and her husband study, something taken for granted as positive.

The Barquinhas are utterly urban and the achievement of a quiet rural or forest lifestyle, as in the Santo Daime for example, is not especially projected as a social ideal. Unlike the physically isolated and economically semi-autonomous communities that are typical of the Santo Daime, the Barquinhas are fully urban and do not engage in communal economic enterprises. They are not seeking to re-create society but instead seem to be trying to generate an accessible safe haven within it. In contrast to the Santo Daime, the promotion of isolated Barquinha communities is not on the agenda.

This is reasonable because the Barquinhas exist in relationship to their clientele, which is urban. The manifest purpose of the Barquinhas is to serve non-Barquinha people who require assistance and charity. The mission of the Barquinha is mediatory and pastoral, and explicitly designed to ease life in the social milieu in which clients are already immersed. It does not seek to attract them away from it, but to assist their insertion. The counter-sorcery episodes and counseling offered by the *Pretos Velhos* would seem to promote this, judging from the cases that I know of recommendations given by the *Pretos Velhos* concerning strains in relationships among couples or among co-workers.

Thus, the Casa Santa is a sanctuary not because it is an alternative society but a place of repose. Regular participants often spend the day there and children are always playing. For me, the Casa Santa is like the convalescent hospital that *exús* are sent to in Heaven. It is a place where people going through hardship from their particular social and economic niche find relief, moral counsel and encouragement. Simultaneously, regular

participants often just spend a good part of the day there for no obvious purpose except resting and socializing with their peers.

8.2 'Forest vs. city' and 'pagan vs. Christian'

In the Santo Daime, especially the Cefluris line that derives from the leadership of Padrinho Sebastião, there is (or was) a symbolic opposition between “forest” and “city,” which is viewed in moral terms. In the more extreme versions, the “city” is a Babylonian hub of crime, violence, drugs, vices, etc. In contrast, the “forest” is an abode of peace, ecological balance and harmony.

Very literally, Padrinho Sebastião re-located his “people” further and further into the rainforest and away from Rio Branco several times, in search of what they called the “promised land” (Cunha 1986:72), successively establishing Santo Daime villages from scratch (see Cunha 1986:72ff; Fróes 1986:131ff; Mac Rae 1992:130ff). In the film *São João na Terra* (St. John on Earth), he says to the film-makers that his mission is to “assemble the people of God, the people of Christ” (Bayer 1989).

Padrinho Sebastião had a very literal understanding of his mission to inaugurate the “New Jerusalem” (with this designation (Fróes 1986:132)), understood in earthly terms of an autonomous agrarian-based community of co-residence. For a few decades, money was not used within the communities, land was owned communally, there was a communal kitchen for laborers, and manual labor was a moral obligation of all adults.

The produce was shared among the families. Fróes sees in Padrinho Sebastião's leadership a messianic movement (Fróes 1986:131-133).⁴

This symbolic opposition is not present in the Barquinha. For a start, they tend to perceive of the forest as spiritually risky, as I found out the day I participated in some dramatic and intensive healing that is performed in the forest. As typical in Barquinha rites, they strategically placed candles surrounding the clearing where the rite was taking place and blocking the entrance pathway. Just before arriving at the clearing, as we carried the stools, drums and elements to the chosen spot, one man asked me if I had ever participated in such a ritual, which although the liturgy is just like those performed elsewhere (as I found out a while later), carries a special apprehension because it is performed "in the village of the *Caboclos*" as the man told me.

The Barquinha churches are urban, and members are fully inserted into urban jobs, urban recreations, etc.⁵

I venture to say that a salient symbolic opposition in the Barquinha, instead, refers to "pagan" (meaning unbaptized) in contrast to "Christian." Literal co-residence and, notoriously, shared economic production and distribution, do not exist in the Barquinha. Instead, there is a strong focus of attention on spirit-possession, developing mediumship, and cumulatively *doctrinating* spirits.

If spirit *doctrination*, or shall we say "mastery of spirits," is understood in Western psychological terms, then it can be said that the Barquinha is more actively engaged in perfecting people's internal worlds and personified impulses, than in

⁴ Incidentally, this symbolic opposition between "forest" and "city" puts a strain on the fieldworker, who, coming from the "city" is inherently incapable and unskilled. In these communities, I have perceived that the simplicity of the *caboclo* lifestyle is a matter of pride.

⁵ Unlike in the Santo Daime communities, in the Barquinhas I did not feel embarrassed about being a student at a university and not having a job that requires manual labor.

generating a new earthly society. This is coherent with a ‘religion of the self’ (Csordas 1997:52). The native understanding of spirit-possession also supports this conclusion, since the perfection of the medium (and the perfection of the individual autonomous spirits) is the focus of evangelical attention. This is in contrast to the Santo Daime, where it seems that subjugation to the external collective is very important, justifying a perception of it as a ‘religion of peoples.’

8.3 Self-transformation through penance

The president of the Casa Santa teaches that one should not harbor ambition for what one doesn’t have, but on the contrary, cultivate an attitude of gratitude for what one has. S/he also frequently insists that one should not look at other people’s defects, but instead very intently at one’s own. The focus of attention is upon the condition of the subject. The object of evangelization and moral conversion is oneself. The ever-present ethos of penance that I found in the Casa Santa exemplifies this insistence on the soteriological transformation of the individual.

While several of the basic Barquinha rituals have parallels with the Santo Daime, there is one salient and distinctive ritual complex of the Barquinha that does not exist in the Santo Daime: the penitential periods called “Pilgrimages.” These are not minor events. Adding up the days involved in penitential periods, members of the Casa Santa spend about one-third of the year in penance. The Barquinha yearly calendar is organized in function of these periods, as the interceding weeks are called “recesses.”

Just before the opening of the Pilgrimages that occurred when I was in the field, the president of the Casa Santa gave a small speech with some basic instructions. These

included reminding the congregation of forthcoming penitential requirements. Special insistence was given to watch out for temptations of the flesh. The president explained fasting and other penances as “sacrifices” and “offerings.” Rita told me that the penances had been established since the times of Frei Daniel. Sena Araújo reports that Frei Daniel also engaged in a voluntary penance of three months just before passing away, which he appears to have anticipated though he did not make it explicit to the brethren (Sena Araújo 1999:50).

Penance provides purification for the individual adherent. Luna reports of the *vegetalismo* mestizo shamanism,

The necessity of the diet –which also includes sexual segregation— to learn from the plants was stressed by every *vegetalista* I met. The body has to be purified to communicate with the spirit realm. Only in this way will the neophytes acquire their spiritual helpers (Luna & Amaringo 1999:13).

Also called “Pencances” (*“Penitências”*), during Pilgrimages adherents become relieved of “the burdens of sin” (Sena Araújo 1999:201-202). As an alternative to the suggestion that the performance of devotions and deprivations involve generating a kind of “pact” between humans and divinities in the Barquinha (Sena Araújo 1999:202), I propose that such performances have the function of relieving burdens. Rather than influence the divinities, I think that sacrifice and deprivations in the Barquinha intend to generate a change in the practitioner. I think that the deprivations and commitments of the Pilgrimage contribute to the reconfiguration of the moral self.

8.4 Penance as a life-project

As a lifestyle, penance implies a holistic conversion of the individual. The body and time of the penitent is completely involved in the process. The most committed members of all (such as the president of the Casa Santa) do not really change their lifestyle between Pilgrimage penitential periods and “recesses.” They engage in penance as a life-project.

Penance as a moral life-project is exemplified in the permanently ongoing devotional commitments fulfilled by the more zealous members of the Casa Santa. Called *commitments* (*compromissos*), people voluntarily set upon themselves the obligation to pray certain prescribed prayers over a fixed amount of days. *Commitments* are most usually performed at the foot of the Cross. Usually, people pray a *commitment* seeking the fulfillment of an intention that is some form of benefit for some particular beneficiary.

A salient matter to consider is that they are ongoing. That is, very soon after a *commitment* is fulfilled, the adherent will automatically engage in a new one. Some people take on several at the same time. They are not occasional events. As permanent ongoing time-consuming activities, there is more to *commitments* than simply soliciting favors from the celestial powers. They are a moral life-project.

Rita encouraged me to begin praying *commitments* about half-way through my fieldwork. Her explanation was that “our weapons are our devotions.” She was making reference to the intrusions that disrupt the participant’s inner peace and meditation during sessions with Daime. In the Barquinha, suffering during a Daime session is sometimes explained as the result of a vulnerability to disruptive intruding spiritual energies. Devotions fortify psychic and somatic boundaries.

It is reasonable to assume that the person who develops mental concentration through permanent repetitive praying is more likely to sustain this concentration during a session with Daime, than the person who has less control over her/his thoughts and emotions. The same applies to the body. The person who performs devotions also habituates the body to stillness and learns to counter fidgeting, twitching and yielding to sudden bodily urges.

Note that intrusive thoughts, emotions and sudden bodily urges can be the result of the irradiation of a spirit. Therefore, if the participant yields to them, the irradiation will take control and the participant will act it out. If the spirit is disruptive, then the participant will engage in improper behavior during the session.

Thus, the constant engagement in devotional and penitential requirements in the Casa Santa is a discipline for the body and mind, especially by sublimating cravings and urges.

The sheer amount of ritual obligations that oblige the committed participant to be praying and drinking Daime for the greater part of the year, also means that they are not just *doctrinating* the bodies and their dispositions, thus generating an *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977), but also their use of time. Very literally, they permanently choose to spend their time performing rituals or engaged in affairs that have some relationship to forthcoming rituals (e.g. preparing decorations, organizing shifts for cleaning or cooking, etc.). Csordas notes a similar situation for Catholic Charismatics who reorganize their time (setting schedules for daily praying, engaging in frequent group activities, etc.) and also their experience of its duration (Csordas 1997:72).

The seniority of people such as the president of the Casa Santa is given by faultless dedication to the mission and to charity for decades. As I have slowly uncovered the history of the Barquinha, a recurrent theme that grants respectability is long-term dedication. On the occasions that a spirit commends a certain member during a session, it is usually invoking a long-term history of moral fulfillment.

I once overheard a young man speaking very directly to another about how he had hurt the president's feelings, in a manner and tone that I did not see at any other time on any other occasion in all my fieldwork. Defending the president, and accusing his interlocutor of callousness, the young man recalled the president's biography and proven total and uncompromised commitment to charity. It would seem that keeping commitments and the courage demonstrated by participating daily in the rituals generates a strong case for proving a person's moral fiber.

Júlia once told me of a vision that she once had. She saw the church as ship in the middle of a strong storm. The boat rocked violently to and fro. The desperate sailors (i.e. her brethren) were falling over to one side and then rolling over to the other side. Some were hanging desperately from the railings. Some were falling overboard into the sea. But in the middle of it all, the Commander had a firm, rigid, and steadfast grip on the helm. S/he was unmovable.

Thus, while the Daime provides internal moral learning and cleansing, and the spirits voice moral authority, the practice of penances and devotional commitments is the realization of conversion and transformation, in body and time –but at the level of individual commitment.

8.5 Celebration

The dancing rituals of the Barquinha stand out in complete distinction from those of the Santo Daime. Dancing in the Santo Daime is regimental, synchronized and in unison. Like a marching army, in their dashing uniforms, all participants perform exactly the same step at exactly the same moment. The congregation moves as a single body and individuality is expunged. Especially in churches with hundreds of participants, I have often been impressed by the sensation of an emergent body.

In contrast, in Barquinha dancing, variety and individuality are highly enhanced. This seems coherent with the suggestion that their locus of conversion is the individual, who should be able to live harmoniously in an environment characterized by diversity and change. Participants are comfortably at ease and dance in their own way. Each mingles comfortably with alterity (the outsiders who come to the Parties, the variety of spirits, etc.). Barquinha churches do not congregate hundreds of participants. Participants appear to be known to each other one way or the other, furthering the sensation of a focus on the individual. In the Casa Santa, people also take off the uniform for dancing.

If the Barquinha is a 'religion of the self' (Csordas 1997:52), perhaps it is not surprising that individuality is not a problem. In contrast, submission to the collective is more noticeable in the Santo Daime church and communities. I heard members of the Casa Santa comment several times on how disciplined and perfect the people from Alto Santo (a Santo Daime vicinity) were, referring to their ordered and regimental performance during rituals. This recognition also implies that they are aware that their own behavior in Barquinha rituals is not homogeneous.

A Barquinha festive dancing celebration, called “Party” (*Festa*), can occur often, such as on the evening of a patron saint (e.g. to finalize a Pilgrimage) or on other occasions. This is the time when rules are the most relaxed, the atmosphere is the loosest and people feel at ease. Parties congregate the widest variety of participants, including extended family, people from other Barquinha and Santo Daime churches, and others.

I participated in a few birthday parties for children of uniformed members of the Casa Santa (held in homes and in the Dance Hall), and I realized that the atmosphere of these events is similar to that of Parties in the Casa Santa. The decorations are similar (theme-colored balloons, ribbons, etc.). The kind of food that is served is the same. The same diversity of people is present (i.e. the extended community, beyond the reduced group of uniformed members). Children freely run and play around, and adults talk in groups. Of course, children’s birthday parties are profane events, and so, clothing is colorful and not white, and there is no ongoing ritual. But, note that a similar correlation between children’s birthday parties and the dancing of the Santo Daime church does not occur, according to my experience.

Spirits are free to descend during Parties in the Dance Hall and this is when there is the largest turnout of them. In the Casa Santa, the evening is honored with the distinguished presence of royalty from a variety of Enchanted realms. Other wondrous creatures, like fairies and mermaids, also come. The ancestors, such as the elderly Black slaves, are reverently welcomed. Perhaps the liveliest of presences are the infant spirits, called *Erês*.

Erês do not usually descend at other moments. They may be summoned during healing, but the occasions when they are most seen are Parties. *Erês* are very playful and

energetic. They run about, play children's games in the middle of the room, interrupt the somber conversations of the adults, and generally draw a lot of attention to themselves with their laughing, giggling, and excited falsetto voices. They run in and out between the rings of dancers. They will suddenly take people who are not possessed into the middle to dance and jump about with them, as once happened to me. *Erês* disregard the general ordering of the ritual. (Note that this only happens in the Casa Santa. In the other two Barquinhas, entities that descend during the dancing are very discrete as the medium displays only the barest of signs of possession, and entities do not interact with anyone).

I think that there might be an important evangelical significance to the presence of *Erês* in Parties, since *Erês* are received by adults. The night before a Party in which many *Erês* came, in anticipation of the occasion, the president of the Casa Santa reminded everyone that if we are not like children, we will not enter the Kingdom of God.

Children are a permanent presence in the Casa Santa. They are awarded many privileges, such as leading processions. Parents bring them when they come to rituals. During the solemnest of moments, the laughter of children playing outside always breaks the silence. Very often, two young ones suddenly run through the main church hall chasing each other and giggling as they pass through, breaking the stillness of the moment's concentration. Children are welcome presences and their liveliness is not stifled or repressed. The *Erês* have the same privileges.

Whereas all other categories of spirit receive some treatment that marks a separation with other participants (usually deference), the *Erês* mingle straightforwardly with no protocol. Especially remarkable is the blurring of the distinction between adult

and child. No distinction is made between children and *Erês*. They play together, share chocolate and candy, tell each other funny things, etc. Such direct horizontal intermingling does not happen with other categories of spirits.

Several forms of conviviality also permeate Parties. For example, free food and drinks are frequently distributed among all participants from large communal pots. Most Parties end with the sharing of cake. In short, Parties are loose rather than solemn events and people engage in individualized behavior. They are almost identical to profane celebrations.

Parties in the Barquinha are a celebration of the harmonious blending of alterity and diversity that does not require renouncing uniqueness (see Overing & Passes 2000:2). Notably, these are not somber, solemn or rigid events, but are instead characterized by lightness and laxity. Interestingly, in hymns and other instances, the dancing rituals are sometimes called “playing games” (*brincadeiras*), and the dancing is called “playing” (*brincar*) (e.g. see Figueiredo et al 1996:89; Paskoali 2002:197; Sena Araújo 1999:222). This lightness is activated intensely when *Erês* descend, and begin to play and mess around. For me, the mark of success of Parties is the harmony and good atmosphere that runs through the event. This is evidently accomplished considering that even non-Barquinha folk like to come.

In summary, while the success of festive dancing in the Santo Daime rests on the submission of individuals to the homogenous behavior required of participants, this is far from the case in the Barquinha. In the Barquinha, disruptive behavior is uncomfortable, but the exploration of harmony is attempted through the looseness awarded to persons to express themselves individually. A spontaneous orchestration of alterity through free

coordination is the result. I think that the comparison of the dancing rituals in the Santo Daimé and the Barquinha exemplify to a high degree the proposition that while the Barquinha seeks the conversion of the self, independent from its surroundings, the Santo Daimé places a high stress on collective coordination and homogeneity.

9. CONCLUSION

The central theme of this thesis is the way in which adherents of the Barquinha religion implement its mission of moral transformation and redemption. This covers many areas, but in this thesis attention has been given to the “mastery of spirits” and “mastery of self.” Although concomitant processes, they are not necessarily identical.

They are achieved in many ways, such as the use of Daime and penitential practices, in addition to spirit-possession. While the Daime intimately regulates the individual’s spiritual performance and truths, and penitential practices frame the individual’s lifestyle limitations and requirements, spirit-possession has a social mediatory and social regulatory function. Spirit-possession is the moralized interface that mediates individual consciousnesses.

Like the other Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions, the use of Daime is a fundamental means of moral transformation and introspection of the participant. However, the Barquinha reaches out to a wider public than those who find appeal in the Daime. The Barquinha has a pastoral service. Outsiders talk through their worries with calm and gentle elderly spirit-healers, receiving emotional comfort, reassurance and encouragement. Spirit-possession is equally fundamental for mediating relationships among regular participants. Spirit-possession in the Barquinha should be recognized as a moral practice and considered for the way in which it facilitates evangelization, charity and social solidarity. Social relationships are moralized through the intervention and mediation of the spirits.

The spirits embody socially shared moral stereotypes and agencies that are considered appropriate for each of the societal positions represented in the categories of

spirits. For example, Christian sacraments in the Barquinha are only provided by Catholic priest-spirits. The mission also includes an ongoing postmortem baptism of pagan spirits. After baptism and evangelization, these former pagans become the healers of the mission. They utilize their pre-modern knowledge and expertise for the benefit of others. They tap on a domain of popular knowledge regarding healing and magic that, through them, is institutionalized in a positive way.

Mediums also use spirit-possession to develop their own moral advancement. The choice to receive healer (or other) spirits is a moral commitment to remain in the mission, fulfill ritual obligations and reconfigure their lives according to the moral demands implicit to the responsibility. The commitment of mediums to the mission requires a total reconfiguration of their lives. Essentially, they adopt a life of penance and self-transformation through labor and charity. Senior mediums often gradually acquire more spirits over time, covering the several categories and liturgical forms of implementing charity. The agency of mediums is exercised through their spirit allies.

Thus, the Barquinha is engaged in a permanent “mastery of spirits.” Whether disembodied or embodied, the different participants are permanently working on an improvement of their own selves, a “mastery of the self,” and coordination with allies. Simultaneously, the spirits labor for the same goal with clients that seek the charity service. The healers console and encourage a transformation of the self in the client and, if necessary, also subdue and convert unenlightened entities (*exús*) that might be afflicting the client, in order to eventually transform these entities into healers.

Other Brazilian Ayahuasca Religions are somewhat self-contained, and sometimes even physically generate independent rural or semi-rural communities of co-

residence, as is the case of the Santo Daime. However, the Barquinha exists in relation to non-members requiring conversion or assistance (whether human or spirit). The churches are urban and located in accessible locations where all sorts of unrelated people converge in order to receive the benefits of healing and charity.

In the Barquinha, healing and conversion are not an isolation from the milieu, but instead a modified mode of insertion. This is achieved in several ways, including the charity service for human clients, and emblematically typified in the rites for baptism of pagan spirits or exorcisms that temporarily remove the suffering or blind creature from its abode, only to return as a healer later on in its moral development. In sum, I conclude that the Barquinha fits well with the characterization of being a ‘religion of the self.’

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APPENDIX

Letter of Approval issued by Research Ethics Board of University of Regina (see following page).