

## Bibliography of the Brazilian **Ayahuasca** Religions



Beatriz Caiuby Labate

Rafael Guimarães dos Santos

Isabel Santana de Rose

Govert Derix

Translated by Brian Anderson

Revised by Matthew Meyer

...this unpleasant  
tasting vine  
caught the attention  
of intellectuals, who  
soon baptized the plant  
as a "sacrament"  
and categorized  
these folk practices  
as "religious."

OVER the past decade, we have observed an enormous increase in the number of studies on the so-called "Brazilian ayahuasca religions." This category refers to religious movements originating in Brazil that incorporate the use of ayahuasca in their ritual practices: Santo Daime (with its two denominations: Alto Santo and Cefluris), União do Vegetal (UDV), and Barquinha.

Because of this increase and the difficulty of accessing research materials, we have compiled a bibliography on this topic that aims to be as exhaustive as possible, to provide a panoramic view of the current state of the literature, and to serve as an useful guide to researchers in the area. The bibliography is posted on the MAPS web site at: [maps.org/ayahuasca/ayahuascabibliography.pdf](http://maps.org/ayahuasca/ayahuascabibliography.pdf)

As recently as 30 years ago in Brazil, ayahuasca was an almost unknown drink, wrapped in an aura of mystery and associated with "exotic cults" of the distant Amazon rainforest. Starting in the 1970s, these religions were "discovered" by hippies, artists, intellectuals, people in search of healing, and the merely curious. In the early 1980s they found adherents among segments of the middle class in Brazil's large urban centers. It was not long before this unpleasant tasting vine caught the attention of intellectuals, who soon baptized the plant as a "sacrament" and categorized these folk practices as "religious." In a similar fashion, these groups were rapidly sensationalized by the mass media. Starting in the 1990s, Santo Daime and the UDV began to cross the ocean in the direction of the Old World. Today, Santo Daime has centers in at least 21 countries on four continents while the UDV has official affiliates in the United States and Spain, and a small, incipient group in Italy. Thus, the Brazilian ayahuasca religions have competed for space with other religions and have traversed various symbolic, economic, and

cultural boundaries, thereby contributing to ayahuasca's status as a truly transnational "pan-entheogen."

The pioneering work on the Brazilian ayahuasca religions was done in Brazil in the 1980s (Monteiro da Silva 1983; Alverga 1984; Fernandes 1986; Henman 1986; Couto 1989; Fernandes 1989). The 1990s also saw the production of texts that became important references (Groisman 1991; Alverga 1992; Dias Jr. 1992; MacRae 1992; Goulart 1996; Araújo 1997; Groisman 1999). Since then, there has been a steady expansion of studies in this area. According to our survey, 36 such academic works currently exist in Brazil. This includes 26 masters' theses and six doctoral dissertations on Santo Daime, Barquinha, the UDV and their descendants.

The topic of the ayahuasca religions has also gained academic attention outside of Brazil. We have found 20 masters' theses and doctoral dissertations on Santo Daime, the UDV and Barquinha, eight of which are in English, six in German, three in Italian, two in French and one in Spanish. In Brazil, as well as in other countries, studies of these religions tend to fall within the realm of anthropology. However, the range of publications currently spans 11 different disciplines, especially psychology, psychotherapy, religious studies, and medicine.

Outside of Brazil, a large portion of the publications on the ayahuasca religions comes from the United States. Many of these publications differ from their

counterparts from other countries because of their pharmacological emphasis. Therefore, despite the existence of many works written in English, there is still a major gap in that language, especially in the area of anthropology, where not a single good book has been published on the subject. The exceptions, like the works of Groisman (2000) and MacRae (2006), do not exist in book form. We also note that almost all the literature in English fails to recognize the corresponding Portuguese-language literature. This most likely is a result of foreign researchers' lack of proficiency in Portuguese. According to our survey, the European country that produces the most on the topic is Germany, with 23 publications and an emerging group of researchers at the University of Heidelberg. This fact is interesting considering that in Germany Santo Daime holds an unfavorable legal status and is fairly disorganized, especially in comparison to its branches in Spain and Holland. In Holland, Cefluris has a significant presence and has overcome challenging legal processes in defense of its religious freedoms. Holland has an impressive production of 16 publications, despite the fact that there are no theses written in Dutch on the topic. In Spain there are about 25 publications, a large part of these being translations of texts by Brazilian researchers. Besides the countries already mentioned, there are also publications in Italian, Japanese, Danish, and Norwegian.

The large increase in studies on Santo Daime, the UDV, and Barquinha is related to the national and international expansion of these groups. At first, the Brazilian ayahuasca religions were studied mainly in terms of their historical, cultural, and symbolic aspects. With the recent expansion of these groups and the insertion of ayahuasca into a "market logic" of religious goods, the theme of the religious use of ayahuasca has become ever more closely linked to contemporary debates about "drugs." The national and international negotiations of the legality of consuming this drink and the legal status of these religious groups have drawn the attention of civil society, the government, and the media. This phenomenon has amplified the discussion of this topic and given

momentum to new academic studies. These studies have played a fundamental role in the process of social legitimization for these groups.

The studies of the ayahuasca religions have attempted to reflect the proliferating modalities of ayahuasca consumption, thus requiring the studies to increase in number and diversify their approaches. The survey that we present here shows how this field of study is shaping up in Brazil and gives an indication of the field's international potential. The current state of the literature and the present boom in studies demonstrate the contemporary relevance of this discussion and the urgency for publications in English on this topic. •

BEATRIZ C. LABATE  
(bia\_labate@yahoo.com.br) is a doctoral candidate in social anthropology at Unicamp and a researcher in the Interdisciplinary Group for Psychoactives Studies (NEIP.info);

RAFAEL GUIMARÃES DOS SANTOS  
(banisteria@gmail.com) is a doctoral candidate in pharmacology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain, and a researcher in NEIP;

ISABEL S. DE ROSE  
(belderose@yahoo.com.br) is a doctoral candidate in anthropology at Federal University of Santa Catarina Florianópolis and a researcher in NEIP;

GOVERT DERIX  
(govert@derixhamerslag.nl) holds a master's in philosophy and is the author of a book on ayahuasca.

BRIAN ANDERSON (bta5ht@gmail.com) is an undergraduate in biochemistry at the University of Pennsylvania and a researcher in NEIP.

MATTHEW MEYER  
(mm6wu@cms.mail.virginia.edu) is a doctoral candidate in sociocultural anthropology at the University of Virginia and a researcher in NEIP.

With...  
the insertion of  
ayahuasca into  
a "market logic"  
of religious goods...  
ayahuasca has become  
ever more closely  
linked to  
contemporary debates  
about "drugs."