

Preprint manuscript of: B. C. Labate & I. S. de Rose, "Santo Daime", *Dictionary of Contemporary Esotericism* (ed. E. Asprem), Leiden: Brill. Archived at ConTERN Repository for Self-Archiving (CRESARCH)
<https://contern.org/cresarch/cresarch-repository/> Feb. 5, 2019.

Santo Daime

Santo Daime is the most well known of the Brazilian ayahuasca religions: syncretic religious movements that emerged from the social-economic relations of the declining rubber industry in the Amazon. Its symbolism draws primarily upon Catholicism, African religiosity, European esotericism, and Amerindian shamanism. This religion became popular mostly due to its ritual consumption of ayahuasca, a bitter psychedelic Amazonian brew prepared from the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine and other additives, and known for its strong psychoactive properties.

Santo Daime emerged in the State of Acre in the north of Brazil by the Afro-Brazilian native of Maranhão State, Raimundo Irineu Serra (1890–1971), known as Mestre Irineu. Mestre Irineu founded the group in the 1930s, after a vision he had of the Queen of the Forest, representing the Virgin Mary. Another main religious figure of the "Doctrine" is Juramidam, who is considered to be the spirit of Daime and of Mestre Irineu himself. Santo Daime started off as a small congregation with communal features, formed mainly by Amazonian *caboclos* and Afro-Brazilian immigrants from the Northeast of Brazil. It was formally established in 1945, gained government recognition in 1971 and, by the end of the twenty-first century, had begun to spread all over the world. In this religious movement, ayahuasca is known as *daime* and is ingested at many occasions during an intense ritual calendar. The most important among these ceremonies are the *concentração* ("concentration") and the *bailado* ("dance rhythm"). Although singing the "received" religious hymns is central in all the *daimista* ceremonies, the *concentração* is also marked by periods of silence while the participants remain seated and concentrate, or meditate. In the *bailado* the daimistas sing and dance in ceremonies that can last up to twelve hours.

Santo Daime encompasses two principal denominational divisions: several groups generically identified as the "Alto Santo line", and a number of others popularly called the "Padrinho [Godfather] Sebastião line". While Alto Santo remains practically restricted to small communities in the State of Acre, the "Padrinho Sebastião line" has expanded nationally and internationally. This line was founded by Sebastião Mota de Melo (1920–1990), known as Padrinho Sebastião, in 1974, and is represented mainly by the Church of the Eclectic Cult of the Universal Flowing Light (*Igreja do Culto Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal*), or ICEFLU. The group is headquartered at the Céu do Mapiá village, founded in 1983 by Padrinho Sebastião in the State of Amazonas.

Initially, the group was composed of about 40 families who lived in a communitarian congregation, and until the 1970s, ICEFLU remained practically restricted to the Amazon region. It was first sought out by middle class travelers influenced by counterculture values and interested in off-the-track spiritual experiences. Since the 1980s, this organisation has spread outside the Amazon, and centres connected to ICEFLU are now found in all major cities in Brazil. More recently, it has also spread throughout the world, and is currently present in at least 43 countries. Therefore, although ICEFLU is not so large numerically, with around four thousand officially enrolled members, it has been the main branch responsible for Santo Daime's expansion. However, numerous small organisations also self-identify as "Santo Daime", allowing a fluid membership, and the headquarters of ICEFLU in Céu do Mapiá has, in the last years, lost much of its institutional ability to represent all of them.

The expansion process has generated profound social and demographic transformations in the group's composition, dynamics, and religious symbolism. Most of Santo Daime's current members are highly educated, come from the middle and upper urban classes, and are influenced by the values and practices of the New Age movement. Consequently, themes such as healing, self-knowledge, environmental sustainability, shamanism, and traditional cultures have entered the daimista hymns and cosmology. Although Santo Daime today is not a large movement numerically, it may be considered an important

heterogeneous and transnational religious network that is part of the dynamics of the contemporary global religious field.

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