

Shamanic Medicine in Brazilian Naturology: Influences and Origins

323

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Abstract – This study presents the influences that structure the Neo-shamanism practiced by Brazilian naturologists trained at the University of Southern Santa Catarina, a system they emically call «Shamanic medicine» or «Shamanic cosmology». 74 hours of interviews were conducted with the creator of this system, as well as with 18 other Brazilian naturologists or naturology professors. Based on these interviews, four sets of influences were analyzed: (1) strong influences: religious goods directly transplanted into the practice of naturology; (2) weak influences: punctual experiences of the founder that impacted this form of Neo-shamanism; (3) invented tradition: alleged influences that have no concrete connection to Shamanic medicine in Brazilian naturology; and (4) parallel influences: religious exchanges made by naturologists that have reflexes on their form of Neo-shamanism, but that are discouraged or disregarded by the creator of this system. A strong influence of New Age esotericism and the Rajneesh Movement was observed, to the detriment of weaker influences of the traditional Peruvian, Ecuadorian, Navajo, Cherokee, and Apache Shamanisms. A lineage of Mapuche Shamanism was alleged, but wasn't attested to in the naturologic practices. Finally, parallel influences of Guarani Shamanism, Santo Daime, and the Red Path were attested to among many naturologists, but discouraged or disregarded by the creator of this Neo-shamanic system.

1. Introduction

Naturology is a health movement that emerged in the 19th century in Southern Europe as a response to the growing industrialization of medicine. Similar to the German naturopathy developed around the same period, naturology is based on a vitalist paradigm and uses non-allopathic therapies (e.g., diets, baths, medicinal plants, and massages) as well as traditional systems of medicine (e.g., acupuncture and Āyurveda)¹.

¹ A.B. Correia (ed.), *Grande enciclopedia portuguesa e brasileira*, XVIII, Lisboa, Editorial Enciclopédia, 1950; J.L. Castro, *Naturologia: a saúde integral do indivíduo e da sociedade*, Sintra, Publicações Europa-America, 1986; C.C. Ventura, *Naturologia: pontos nos Is*, in «Jornal Espaço Público», Feb. 3, 1999. Available via <http://www.publico.pt/espaco-publico/jornal/naturologia-pon>

To the scholar of religions, an interesting feature of naturology is how its health approaches are fraught with spiritual content. According to Leite², a strong influence of esotericism as well as appropriations from Asian religions in a New Age fashion – especially content from India and China – is observed in the therapeutic practice of naturologists. Naturologists, however, often deny this claim and demonstrate strong opposition to identifications of their praxis with anything that could be called «religious» or «mystic»³. Although naturology is indebted to classical esotericism and the New Age movement, naturologists avoid this identification due to the fact that they wish to be recognized by the Brazilian National Congress as health professionals. That is their political agenda since 2010. This, of course, requires that naturologists present naturology to Brazilian society and to political institutions as a science, or more specifically, as a new science⁴.

Much has already been discussed about the scientific status of naturology. Some authors have come to the conclusion that it is a pseudoscience⁵. Others have understood it as a new science based on complexity thought and transdisciplinarity⁶. In the middle of this debate, the attention of the scholar of religion is drawn to the relations towards the spiritualist framework of the naturological practice. Those who conclude naturology is not a true science focus strongly on its esoteric features, disregarding the fact that there is something academic about naturology, even though it is not the hegemonic academic format. And those who hold that naturology is a new science tend to minimize or ignore the New Age and esoteric approaches of naturologists, presenting them purely as scientists.

In Brazil, naturology has also a peculiar characteristic in comparison to the rest of the world; it was institutionalized as a course of study in uni-

tos-nos-is-129130. Accessed Apr. 16, 2018; F.L. Stern, *A naturologia no Brasil: histórico, contexto, perfil e definições*, São Paulo, Entre Lugares, 2017.

² A.L.P. Leite, «Naturologia, religião e ciência: entremeares da construção de um campo» (master's thesis), 2017. Retrieved from Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo database.

³ F.L. Stern - A.L.P. Leite, *Questões postas aos naturólogos pela ciência da religião*, in «Rever», 17, 2017, 3, pp. 167-179, here pp. 168, 171-173.

⁴ D.V. Teixeira, «Integridade, interagência e educação em saúde: uma etnografia da naturologia» (master's thesis), 2013, p. 107. Retrieved from Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina database.

⁵ See for example W.P. Reis, *A pseudociência nas universidades brasileiras*, in «Conferência Iberoamericana sobre Pensamento Crítico», 1, Buenos Aires 2005; L.R. Tessler, *Naturebologia*, in «Cultura científica», Apr. 13, 2008; O. Pessoa jr, *O fenômeno cultural do misticismo quântico*, in O. Freire jr - O. Pessoa jr - J.L. Bromberg (eds.), *Teoria quântica: estudos históricos e implicações culturais*, Campina Grande, EDUEPB, 2011, pp. 279-300.

versities in the 1990s, which ensured it a distinct status from that which it holds in countries like Portugal, Spain and Italy. In European countries, the scientific validity of naturology tends to be more questioned, and hence their governments have shown reservations to recognizing or authorizing university degrees in naturology. Despite naturology becoming a course of study recognized by the Brazilian Ministry of Education, however, several researchers demonstrated relations between Brazilian naturology and New Age esotericism⁷. Also, an empirical research applied in one-third of all Brazilian naturologists showed that 51.7% of them objectively declared themselves as New Age adherents⁸.

In this paper, I will present the case of the undergraduate program in naturology at the University of Southern Santa Catarina («Universidade do Sul de Santa Catarina» in Portuguese, abbreviated to «UNISUL»). This institution teaches a course called «Shamanic cosmology» or «Shamanic medicine» to its students. It states that Shamanic medicine (always in singular) is a system of traditional medicine, and one of the pillars of the practice of naturology⁹. No other recognized naturology program in Brazil teaches any kind of Shamanism to its students as part of the training in naturology, nor does it present this subject as foundational to naturologic praxis. No evidence was found that European naturologists adopt Shamanism as prominently as in this Southern Brazilian case¹⁰.

The University of Southern Santa Catarina included Shamanism in its naturology curricular matrix in 2004. According to Teixeira¹¹, although some naturology students already maintained contact with indigenous

⁶ Cf. A.E.M. Silva, *Naturologia: um diálogo entre saberes*, Curitiba, Prisma, 2013; N.F. Barros - A.C.M.B. Leite-Mor, *Naturologia e a emergência de novas perspectivas em saúde*, in «Cadernos Acadêmicos», 3, 2011, 2, pp. 2-15.

⁷ I.S. Rose, «Tata endy rekoe – Fogo Sagrado: encontros entre os guarani, a ayahuasca e o Caminho Vermelho» (doctoral dissertation), 2010. Retrieved from Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina database; E.J. Langdon - I.S. Rose, *Contemporary Guarani Shamanisms: Traditional Medicine and Discourses of Native Identity in Brazil*, in «Health, Culture and Society», 3, 2012, 1, pp. 30-48; D.V. Teixeira, «Integridade, interagência e educação em saúde»; A.L.P. Leite, «Naturologia, religião e ciência».

⁸ F.L. Stern, *A naturologia no Brasil*, p. 296.

⁹ UNISUL, *Projeto Pedagógico do curso de Naturologia*, Tubarão 2014, p. 11.

¹⁰ There is no mention of shamanism on the websites of the European institutions of naturology. Citing the case of Portugal, their naturology courses demonstrate a strong identification with traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture, several massage techniques, and esoteric practices such as astrology and astral projection (cf. *Instituto Português de Naturologia*, <https://www.ipnaturologia.com/>). The focus of the naturology training in Spain is on naturist therapies such as hydrotherapy, Bach flower remedies, iridology, medicinal plants, and natural diets (cf. *Instituto de Estudios de Naturologia*, <https://www.carlosleston.es/>).

¹¹ D.V. Teixeira, «Integridade, interagência e educação em saúde», p. 69.

peoples, there was no previous reference to Shamanism in the curricular documents of the naturology program of this university. Even after this inclusion, nevertheless, there have been almost no publications to date examining what naturologists understand by Shamanism. What they do and how this is incorporated into the naturologic praxis remain unexplained. At the time of writing of this paper, only two master's theses¹² and two published papers¹³ discussing Shamanic medicine in Brazilian naturology were found.

Despite the fact the bachelor's degree in naturology at the University of Southern Santa Catarina has been recognized since 2002 by the Brazilian Ministry of Education, and some of its therapeutic practices have been subjected to the normal academic standards of scientific proof, its Shamanic teachings have been passed on in a manner similar to an oral tradition throughout these years. As I have noted in my field research, there are books listed in the course's pedagogical project and syllabus, but the classes are, in fact, based on the life history of Professor Roberto Gutterres Marimon. Teixeira also noticed this in his ethnography of Brazilian naturology:

«[Shamanism] is taught from the personal experience of a Professor ... who traveled the Americas and encountered various forms of Shamanism, particularly the Andean Shamanism of Peru. The contents addressed by him in the classroom are intrinsically related to his personal experience and the initiations he experienced with the various Shamans he met during his travels. According to this professor: 'It is not written, what I studied in my way'»¹⁴.

Indeed, naturologists trained by Marimon demonstrate difficulty in pointing to any written references for his teachings. Almost all of them also declare that in the absence of Professor Marimon, there is no other person who could replace him at the University of Southern Santa Catarina. There is a lack of written production that ensures the perpetuation of his knowledge, and Marimon has never prepared a substitute to assume his position. With his retirement in latter 2018-early 2019, it is not possible to attest to the continuity of this practice among Brazilian naturologists. Most likely it is going to disappear.

¹² *Ibid.*; A.L.P. Leite, «Naturopologia, religião e ciência».

¹³ F.L. Silva - R.G. Marimon, *A relação homem-natureza na concepção naturológica: as relações xamânicas*, in «Cadernos Acadêmicos», 3, 2011, 2, pp. 73-89; F.L. Stern, *Reflexões sobre o uso da nomenclatura 'medicina tradicional' pela naturologia*, in «Cadernos de Naturologia e Terapias Complementares», 3, 2014, 4, pp. 53-63.

¹⁴ D.V. Teixeira, «Integridade, interagência e educação em saúde», p. 72 (my translation).

To outsiders, the Shamanic medicine taught by Marimon could be understood as an invented tradition. If one takes Hobsbawm's¹⁵ definition for what is an invented tradition, in fact, it applies to the object. However, one should not see it as a simple deliberate creation. Naturologic Shamanism is a bricolage of the spiritual and cultural experiences that Marimon acquired throughout his life, and not mere inventions of his imagination.

This work, therefore, aims to present the origins of the content taught by Marimon to the students of naturology at the University of Southern Santa Catarina. For this purpose, 74 hours of interviews were conducted with Marimon and with 18 professors of naturology and naturologists who claim to work with Shamanic medicine.

One last point that needs to be addressed concerns my interviewees' confidentiality. As stated by Bremborg¹⁶,

«generally, anonymity should be aimed at in the report, which could be done by giving each person a code name or a number. However, if small, specific groups are researched, it might be difficult to guarantee full anonymity when referring to situations and statements».

According to recent surveys, the population of Brazilian naturologists does not exceed 1,200 persons¹⁷. Naturologists working with Shamanism are even fewer. As stated in a socioeconomic profile of Brazilian naturologists, only 14.5% (*circa* 175 persons) claim to frequently use Shamanic medicine in their practices¹⁸. Although it is possible to guarantee some degree of anonymity of these interviewees, Marimon has been the sole professor of Shamanism throughout the history of Brazilian naturology. It wouldn't be possible to grant him anonymity. For these reasons, all my interviewees have provided informed consent for their names being retained in this study, and have all been provided with a copy of the consent forms they signed. Nevertheless, I will not name them even if they have consented to it. The only exception will be Professor Marimon. Following the norms of the National Council of Ethics in Research of

¹⁵ E. Hobsbawm, *Introduction: Inventing Traditions*, in E. Hobsbawm - T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 1-14.

¹⁶ A.D. Bremborg, *Interviewing*, in M. Sausberg - S. Engler (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, London, Routledge, 2011, pp. 310-322, here p. 320.

¹⁷ F.L. Stern, *A naturologia no Brasil*, p. 57; M.A. Passos, «Perfil sócio-econômico profissional dos naturólogos do Brasil» (bachelor's monograph), 2015, p. 6. Retrieved from Universidade Anhembi-Morumbi database.

¹⁸ M.A. Passos, «Perfil sócio-econômico profissional dos naturólogos do Brasil», p. 14.

Brazil, the research project was submitted for ethical appreciation on April 14, 2016, and the application was authorized by the Ethics Committee of the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo on May 30, 2016.

2. The problem of defining Shamanism

Academically the term «Shamanism» has always been ambiguous. Derived from the Evenki *shānmán*, it appears in written Chinese since at least the twelfth century¹⁹. Originally it concerned the religious practices of the «barbarians» that made the Chinese court retreat during the Jin Dynasty. The wider European adoption of the word dates from the twentieth century, but its interpretation is based on influences on the tribal religions that precede it.

Until the turn of the twentieth century two intellectual groups could be identified in Europe: the Illuminists, who treated the natives practically as irrationals, and a group that referred to the natives as religious virtuosos, the germ of the «noble savage» image, a counter-response to tendencies towards the sublimation of religions²⁰.

Although the term «Shaman» was introduced to the European Academy by Pelliot, it only became an anthropological constant after Eliade²¹. Originally Eliade used it to refer only to the Siberian people. However, as other scholars have come into contact with foraging societies in the Americas, Africa, Polynesia, Australia and Europe, the lack of a better category to understand similar religious expressions has led to the adoption of the word. This has led the term «Shamanism» to be used, to a greater or lesser extent, to describe every form of tribal worldview of hunter-gatherer groups that involves *trances*, soul journeys, contact with the otherworld, and spiritual negotiations for community survival²².

Although Eliade defines «Shaman» as «ecstatic» or «in trance»²³, Shamanism is a broader concept encompassing diverse practices ranging

¹⁹ G. Kósa, *Eliade and the First Shaman*, in M. Hoppál - Z. Simonkay (eds.), *Shamans Unbound*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2008, pp. 177-183, here p. 177.

²⁰ K. von Stuckrad, *Reenchanting Nature: Modern Western Shamanism and Nineteenth-Century Thought*, in «Journal of the American Academy of Religion», 70, 2002, 4, pp. 771-799.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 773.

²² M. Aldhouse-Green - S. Aldhouse-Green, *The Quest for the Shaman: Shape-Shifters, Sorcerers and Spirit-Healers of Ancient Europe*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2005.

²³ M. Eliade, *Shamanism: An Overview [Further Considerations]*, in L. Jones - M. Eliade - C.J. Adams (eds), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Detroit, Macmillan Reference, 2005², pp. 8274-8280, here p. 8276.

from healing rites of men and women of medicine to a series of rituals of witchcraft, hunting, inner journeys and communication with supernatural beings and forces from the otherworld (spiritual world)²⁴. In this sense, Shamanism mingles with everyday life to the point that the Shaman is not distinguished from the tribe. The most common academic approaches consider that it is not possible to understand Shamanism by isolating its practices from its ethnicity.

The word «Shamanism» became popular among Western masses with the advent of the 1960s counterculture, undergoing a strong psychologization. The nefarious spirits of the natives were replaced by discourses of personal empowerment. Inspired by Eliade, Jung and Joseph Campbell, Newagers changed the meaning of Shamanism to something related to the human capacity to access spiritual levels of reality and to establish a more harmonious relationship with nature. In other words, «shamanism was no longer regarded as a spiritual path limited only to “classical shamanic cultures”. Instead, ... shamanism was considered available to everyone – even to those in urban contexts that are estranged from nature»²⁵. Regarding Eliade’s role in this process,

«Eliade never wrote for his academic audience ... Eliade has made a lasting impression on popular audiences, and he became one of the academic authorities for feminist interpretations of the evolution of religion, for the universal claims of New Age movements such as ‘White Shamanism’, and for Jungian interpretations of religious consciousness»²⁶.

Concerns for personal growth and the development of human potential were quite important for New Age circles during the 1960s and 1970s²⁷. So, indigenous knowledge was culturally appropriated by New Age groups, which came to regard it as useful in promoting human potential and welfare²⁸. Geertz highlights, quite critically, the importance that self-help assumes as the main method in these contexts²⁹.

²⁴ M. Aldhouse-Green - S. Aldhouse-Green, *The Quest for the Shaman*, p. 10.

²⁵ K. von Stuckrad, *Reenchanting Nature*, p. 774.

²⁶ A.W. Geertz, *Archaic Ontology and White Shamanism*, in «Religion», 23, 1993, pp. 369-372, here p. 369.

²⁷ W.J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden, Brill, 1996, pp. 48-50.

²⁸ G. Lindquist, *Shamanism: Neoshamanism*, in L. Jones - M. Eliade - C.J. Adams (eds), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, pp. 8294-8298; A. Caicedo, *Neochamanismos y modernidad: lecturas sobre la emancipación*, in «Nómadas», 26, 2007, pp. 114-127.

²⁹ A.W. Geertz, *Archaic Ontology and White Shamanism*, p. 369.

As Shamanism became popular in New Age, demands for more general explanations that justified the emic vision of these groups began to foster various writings. One of the first authors that reached great prominence was Carlos Castañeda. His earliest books are the result of participatory researches with indigenous *yoemes* from Northern Mexico. These researches, which served as a basis for both his baccalaureate and doctorate in anthropology, are now widely criticized. However, since Castañeda declared in his work that he was recognized as a Shaman himself by his interlocutor, his books were taken as «proofs» that through personal effort anyone can become a Shaman, even if one is originally not part of an indigenous group.

Another example is Michael Harner, a white American anthropologist who began to consider himself a Shaman in 1987, in what we would today classify as a New Age self-identification. Harner is the responsible for the notion of «core Shamanism», which refers to the activities that he considered to be basic to every Shamanic system in the world: ecstasy, dance, drums or percussion, interaction with the otherworld, and communication with spirit animals. By removing the ethnic and cultural peculiarities of each Shamanic system, Harner believed that it would be possible to identify the core of being a Shaman, making the Shamanism accessible to urban spiritual seekers.

In addition, others were important for the diffusion of this thinking, in which ethnic particularities are ignored in order to prioritize great similarities. Some examples cited by Hanegraaff³⁰ are Roger N. Walsh and Frank Walters. Von Stuckrad³¹ also cites Joan Halifax, Nevill Drury, Steven Foster, Jonathan Horwitz, Felicitas Goodman and Gala Naumova. Although controversial and often refuted by the actual academic anthropology, their monolithic conceptions of shamanism became popular in Western European and North American countries.

This semantic shift, by a logic of its own, led to a new notion of the word «Shaman», which popularly became defined not by the ethnicity and the tribal social role that the Shaman plays, but by the way he or she interprets the world. So, unlike the traditional academic conception of Shamanism, in New Age anyone could become a Shaman through personal effort and a reconfiguration of his or her way of seeing the world³².

³⁰ W.J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, p. 60.

³¹ K. von Stuckrad, *Reenchanting Nature*, p. 774.

³² W.J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, p. 52.

Furthermore, in New Age, Shamanic healing became a metaphor for quantum energy. There is a relationship – commonly very explicit – between what New Agers call the «Shamanic model» and spiritualist interpretations of quantum mechanics. New Age Shamanic techniques are based on practices in which the Shaman «travels» to the realm of non-matter, which is understood to be purely formed of light, energy or waves, where it is possible to transmute ego into Self³³. This is called by Hanegraaff as «Shamanic consciousness movement» and it is closely related to transpersonal movement³⁴.

The terms «urban Shamanism» and «Neo-shamanism» have been coined to differentiate the category of Shamanism as used by anthropology from this later conception, characterized by a psychologized transplantation of native knowledge to great urban centers³⁵. Neo-shamanism can be identified as a commoditization of indigenous religious goods to meet a market demand generated by New Age spiritual seekers³⁶. As it is an answer to a post-New Age tendency, this phenomenon does not precede the 1960s.

In Brazil, thanks to neo-esoteric circuits, indigenous cultural practices are disseminated into large Brazilian urban centers, such as São Paulo³⁷, Brasília³⁸ and the Florianópolis metropolitan area³⁹. Some of these Brazilian urban Shamans are initiated in places like United States and Mexico, in the Andes, Patagonia and the Amazon. When they return to Brazil, they try to integrate their instructors and the native Brazilian culture into a single common lineage. Their practices blend particular readings of elements from rituals, healing practices, myths, dances and the pharmacopoeia of many different ethnic groups.

³³ L. Amaral, *Carnaval da alma: comunidade, essência e sincretismo na Nova Era*, Petrópolis, Vozes, 2000, pp. 65-67.

³⁴ W.J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, pp. 52-53.

³⁵ *Ibid.*; G. Lindquist, *Shamanism: Neoshamanism*.

³⁶ A.L.P. Leite, *Neoxamanismo na América Latina*, in «Último Andar», 26, 2016, pp. 204-217, here pp. 206-207.

³⁷ J.G.C. Magnani, *O xamanismo urbano e a religiosidade contemporânea*, in «Religião e Sociedade», 20, 1999, 2, pp. 113-140; J.G.C. Magnani, *Xamãs na cidade*, in «Revista USP», 67, 2005, pp. 219-227.

³⁸ D.E. Siqueira, *Religiosidades no convencionales y New Age en el Valle del Amanecer, Brasília*, in R. De La Torre - C.G. Huet - N. Juárez (eds.), *Variaciones y apropiaciones lationamericanas del New Age*, Guadalajara, Publicaciones de la Casa Chata, 2013.

³⁹ I.S. Rose, «Tata endy rekoe – Fogo Sagrado ...»; E.J. Langdon - I.S. Rose, *Contemporary Guarani Shamanisms*.

As it is possible to surmise, the Shamanism taught in the bachelors program in naturology at the University of Southern Santa Catarina cannot be understood as a traditional Shamanism *stricto sensu*, but corresponds to New Age Shamanism. Although Marimon presents his practices as traditional and declares himself as the grandson of a Mapuche woman⁴⁰, he was raised in a Christian home in the urban metropolitan area of Porto Alegre in Southern Brazil. His parents were, in fact, white descendants of Spaniards, and he has never belonged to any indigenous tribe. His Shamanic knowledge derives from personal searches, courses, workshops, books and tourist trips geared toward mystical experiences. In other words, the manner in which Marimon compiled his Shamanism is similar to the means by which New Age seekers usually constitute their spirituality: through cultural bricolages of punctual experiences from different origins.

3. Main practices of Shamanic medicine in naturology

Before proceeding to the influences observed in Shamanic medicine and, more specifically, in Brazilian naturology, the main practices reported by my interviewees will be briefly presented. Five practices were identified as the most common forms of naturologic Shamanic therapy: (1) Shamanic wheel, (2) color/moon medicine, (3) number medicine, (4) spirit animals, and (5) crystal healing. These practices are guided by four concepts that achieve paradigmatic status in naturologic Shamanic practice: (1) the concept of healing, (2) the four elements, (3) the concept of subtle energies, and (4) *chakras*.

The concept of healing originally comes from medical anthropology. Thus, it is an etic term. The appropriation of an etic term in an emic context⁴¹, in any case, is not uncommon in esoteric contexts⁴². Marimon's adoption of healing is recent, so much so that it was not included in the pedagogical project of his discipline until his retirement⁴³. Although he

⁴⁰ Marimon, personal interview, Jun. 3, 2016.

⁴¹ The terms «emic» and «etic» come from «phonemics» and «phonetics». In the study of religion (*Religionswissenschaft*), they were first applied by Platvoet to represent the distinction between intra-religious and extra-religious perspectives. Cf. J.G. Platvoet, *Comparing Religions: A Limitative Approach*, Den Haag, Mouton, 1982.

⁴² W.J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Spiritualities as Secular Religion: A Historian's Perspective*, in «Social Compass», 46, 1999, 2, pp. 145-160; C.L. Albanese, *The Subtle Energies of Spirit: Explorations in Metaphysical and New Age Spirituality*, in «Journal of the American Academy of Religion», 67, 1999, 2, pp. 305-325, here pp. 315-316.

⁴³ Cf. UNISUL, *Projeto Pedagógico do curso de Naturologia*.

has been a professor of naturology since 1999, it was only in the later years that he introduced this word in his classes. Similar to what was reported by Hanegraaff in the New Age scenario⁴⁴, Marimon's adoption of a formal academic category is an attempt to legitimize his practices, in order to justify them as science. But this adoption could be questioned as to how much of it remains academic in the Shamanism of Brazilian naturology. Rather than turning to renowned academic authors (e.g., Arthur Kleinman, Allan Young, Paul Bloise, François Laplantine), Marimon prefers such approaches as those of David Cumes and Ken Wilber, which mix the concept of healing with the New Age quantum discourse.

The division of the world into four elements also influences the therapeutic practice taught by Marimon, particularly the practice of the Shamanic wheel and color medicine. Marimon assumes that the Fire-Earth-Water-Air division is universal to all indigenous cultures. He ignores the origins of this concept as an Indo-European construction that is alien to the native peoples of the Americas. His interpretation of each element derives from Neo-Shamanic books, though he sometimes also uses some emic literature from Modern Paganism. Marimon resolves conflicts in interpretation between these esoteric materials by virtue of self-perception. In other words, he confesses that he teaches students whatever he feels is the most correct interpretation⁴⁵. The idea of subtle energies is not exclusive to Marimon's classes, but is transversal within Southern Brazilian naturology. It is most prominent in the naturologic utilization of aromatherapy⁴⁶. The idea of subtle energies is historically derived from vitalism, and is popular in various forms of alternative medicine besides naturology⁴⁷ (Fuller, 2005). Subtle energies are, almost by definition, understood as changing energies⁴⁸. In Brazilian naturology, however, subtle energy is understood as an immutable energetic signature, a soul-like essence intrinsic to each being⁴⁹. The concept is used in naturologic Shamanism to explain the medicinal properties of each element of nature (e.g., crystals, animals, and colors).

⁴⁴ W.J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*; W.J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Spiritualities as Secular Religion*.

⁴⁵ Marimon, personal interview, Jun. 22, 2017.

⁴⁶ F.L. Stern, *A naturologia no Brasil*, pp. 226-227; S. Guerriero - F.L. Stern, *Concepções de energia na Nova Era: o caso da naturologia brasileira*, in «Caminhos», 15, 2017, 1, pp. 4-25, here p. 15.

⁴⁷ C.L. Albanesse, *The Subtle Energies of Spirit*; R.C. Fuller, *Healing and Medicine: Alternative Medicine in the New Age*, in L. Jones - M. Eliade - C.J. Adams (eds), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, pp. 3848-3852.

⁴⁸ C. L. Albanesse, *The Subtle Energies of Spirit*, p. 315.

⁴⁹ F.L. Stern, *A naturologia no Brasil*, p. 15.

The use of *chakras* was not introduced to Brazilian naturology by Marimon, but was largely developed by him. As explained in a history of naturology in Brazil⁵⁰, Brazilian naturology courses were far more esoteric in their early days than at present. The strong appeal of *chakras* for early Brazilian naturologists was easily noticeable, and there was a belief that it would be possible to measure *chakras* with the aid of dowsing, pendulums, Kirlian photography, reflexology or *ryodoraku*. Marimon has been one of the major professors to promote methods of measuring *chakras* among naturologists. One example is found in a 2011 article he co-authored, which states, «it is observed ... with ryodoraku measurement, the variation of the energetic pattern presented by chakras»⁵¹. As a reflection, there is a confluence between his interpretation of *chakras*, the four elements, and the states of humor, feelings and the conscience. This is an important part of the Shamanic cosmology in naturology.

The Shamanic wheel refers to a ritual developed by Marimon that amalgamates diverse experiences from his life. It is largely based on the Neo-shamanic book *Four-Fold Way* by Angeles Arrien⁵², but it incorporates ritualistic elements of Marimon's devising. All the naturologists interviewed recognized the importance of the Shamanic wheel for Marimon's teachings, but they stressed that he did not teach them how to employ it for themselves. The most common use of the Shamanic wheel among naturologists is as an aid for self-help practices presented in Arrien's book. I also noted a certain «oracular aura» around it. The common belief among naturologists is that a Shamanic wheel would produce results similar to a «spiritual photography» of a moment in the querent's life. One interviewee also told me that Marimon sometimes opens Shamanic wheels as a graduation gift, to «predict» the energies that the newly formed naturologists will need to succeed in their lives⁵³.

Color medicine, sometimes also called moon medicine, is a form of crypto-astrology based on esoteric courses Marimon attended in Bahia, north-eastern Brazil, in a context related to the Rajneesh Movement. This is the most conspicuous practice among the naturologic Shamanists, attested to by all the interviewees. It refers to a process of classifying people according to twelve colors that are considered to have references

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-143.

⁵¹ A.C. Gemelli - R.G. Marimon, *A gemoterapia como instrumento na terapêutica naturológica: um estudo de caso*, in «Cadernos Acadêmicos», 3, 2011, 1, pp. 72-102, here p. 82 (my translation).

⁵² A. Arrien, *Four-Fold Way: Walking the Paths of the Warrior, Teacher, Healer and Visionary*, San Francisco, HarperOne, 1993.

⁵³ Interviewee A, personal interview, Nov. 28, 2016.

to energies given out by the moon, according to the month of conception, fetal development, and the month of birth. The twelve colors are considered to be manifestations of the four elements, and each element is related to three colors in this system⁵⁴. The color significances are based on classical astrology⁵⁵, but Marimon also imbued them with their own meaning through syncretism with the color therapy used by Brazilian naturologists – especially Peter Mandel’s school of color therapy. I classify this concept as crypto-astrology (from the Ancient Greek *krúptō*, meaning «hidden») because the relationship between the colors and the astrological signs is not clear to the students nor to the professor himself. This influence, however, is undeniable to the connoisseurs of astrology.

Number medicine is a form of numerology taught by Marimon. From the numerical value of a person’s date of birth, naturologists claim to be able to know a patient’s personality, life purpose, and how best to approach him or her⁵⁶. The system is authored by Marimon, but it is also based on courses he attended in the Rajneesh Movement. The process of calculating the numerical value bears influences from classical numerology, and the interpretation of each value comes from the Neo-shamanic book *Rainbow Spirit Journeys*⁵⁷.

Spirit animals are guardian spirits which can be invoked during Shamanic therapy in Brazilian naturology. According to interviewees, each person has his/her own spirit animal. In addition, everyone could also have secondary animals for specific moments in their lives. The spirit animal grants particular characteristics to each individual. There is a belief among naturologists that when someone receives a spirit animal, one incorporates the characteristics of that animal⁵⁸. The process for identifying one’s

⁵⁴ I.F.B.O. Alves, *Compêndio de naturologia: um guia prático para consulta* (Students’ workbook for the UNISUL Clinic School of Naturology), Florianópolis, UNISUL, 2016, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁵ The reference-book used by the professor states that this is based on the work of the British astrologist Martin Schulman. There is also a table used by the naturology students of the University of Southern Santa Catarina that marks the regency period of each color, which presents very similar dates to those of classic astrology. For instance, this table shows the regency period of golden color from March 20-23 to April 20-23. Also, this table classifies golden as a fire color. In classical astrology, the solar regency of Aries starts approximately on March 20 and ends around April 21. Aries is also a fire sign. The next color is green, whose regency period is from April 20-23 to May 20-23. Green is shown as an earth color in this table. Once again, the solar regency of Taurus runs from about April 20 to May 21. Taurus is also an earth sign. There are such strong consistencies with all the other astrological sun transits. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 52.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 53.

⁵⁷ W. Moondance, *Rainbow Spirit Journeys: Native American Reflections, Meditations and Dreams*, New York, Sterling Publishing, 2000, pp. 123-124.

⁵⁸ D.V. Teixeira, «Integridade, interagência e educação em saúde», p. 72.

spirit animal varies greatly according to the interviewees. The meaning of each animal, nonetheless, is guided almost unanimously by the book *Medicine Cards*⁵⁹, a Neo-shamanic tarot. Notwithstanding, I do not consider the usage of spirit animals as a form of cartomancy. Although the animal interpretations are based on a tarot deck, naturologists do not shuffle and draw cards, but only rely on the book for information. The selection of the animal is made through conscious choice, dream interpretation, or by means of simple forms of Neo-shamanic rituals.

Finally, the usage of crystal healing in naturologic Shamanism originates from Marimon's formal university education in geology. As a professional geologist, his early adult life was marked by field trips to wild sites and backlands. Marimon worked for the Brazilian government and Vale S.A. (a Brazilian mining multinational corporation) for two decades. It allowed him to come in contact with different groups belonging to the Caboclo⁶⁰, Cafuzo⁶¹ and Sertanejo⁶² cultures in Brazil. In each location he visited, he merged his knowledge of geology with local systems of medicine and his personal spiritual worldview. In the end, he came to the conclusion that geochronology bears intimate relation to the history of mankind. In Marimon's words:

«Geology is like that, nothing just happens ... When the magma began to fracture, to be re-assimilated by the mantle and to be retransformed and thrown out again, it was sort of refining that primary magma and ended up [creating] more and more acidic [minerals], with more quartz, more potassium, more things that did not exist at the beginning of Earth's formation. So silica, aluminum and all the minerals we have today began to be formed by this transformation of the crust ... This [is an] idea of the world in constant transformation, the idea that nothing is stopped and everything is always in constant creation-birth-death-recreation. So it was easy for me to understand the vision of [alternative] medicine»⁶³.

As a result, Marimon created his own system of crystal healing, heavily oriented by *chakras*, Peter Mandel's color therapy, and traditional Chinese medicine, all merged with quite difficult technical concepts of geomorphology. By itself, this already makes his crystal healing difficult to understand for other people. Besides, Marimon also argues that only translucent and pure gems (i.e., very expensive ones) would possess full

⁵⁹ J. Sams - D. Carson, *Medicine Cards: The Discovery of Power Through the Ways of Animals*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1999.

⁶⁰ Related to mestizo descendants of native and white people.

⁶¹ Related to mestizo descendants of native and black people.

⁶² Related to Sertão, the Brazilian backlands.

⁶³ Marimon, personal interview, Jun. 28, 2016, my translation.

healing properties, but they are inaccessible to most naturologists. So, although crystal healing was richly attested to by interviewees, no one but Marimon himself stated that they used it.

Interestingly, indigenous pharmacopoeias are not included in Marimon's curriculum. This is due to the fact that Brazilian courses in naturology have specific components on phytotherapy. Those herbal medicine classes aren't focused on Shamanism or ethnobotany, but on phytology, the phytochemical properties and pharmacokinetics of active principles found in such plants⁶⁴. In other words, naturologists learn about herbal medicine in a paradigm closer to standard scientific pharmacology. Although there are theoretical discussions about entheogenic plants in the Shamanism classes, there is no real utilization of any plant in this context. Naturology students do not learn how to apply any kind of plant from Marimon. This is relegated to the phytotherapy professors. As a reflex, there was no overt identification of herbal medicine with Shamanism by the interviewees.

4. Strong influences

The influence of esotericism and New Age is indisputable in Marimon's work. From the authors he uses to the practices he teaches, there is a strong transplantation of esoteric knowledge into his naturology classes. As a requirement of the University of Southern Santa Catarina, which seeks to maintain the academic character of its courses, these esoteric influences are often disguised as «science,» or as something Marimon discovered during his field trips as a professional geologist. There is a deliberate silence regarding their esoteric and mystical roots. In doing so, however, Marimon gets even closer to the New Age movement, as he seeks support from such authors as Ken Wilber, David Cumes, Michael Harner, Angeles Arrien, Barbara Tedlock and Fritjof Capra.

As stated previously, numerology, tarot, the theory of the the four elements and astrology represent a large part of Marimon's teachings. The *chakras*, withal, are used in this form of Shamanism. To the naturologists, all these contents represent Shamanic knowledge. But when they are questioned about where those teachings came from, the most common answer is «from the native North Americans.» This identification with North America comes from the importance of the book *Four-Fold*

⁶⁴ UNISUL, *Projeto Pedagógico do curso de Naturologia*, pp. 102-106.

*Way*⁶⁵, the strongest bibliographical influence in Marimon's classes. Like Harner, Arrien possesses formal training in anthropology but defends a universal vision for Shamanism, in which all tribal people are regarded as sharing the same fourfold system. She attests that this system has relationships with the classical four elements and the cardinal points:

«My research has demonstrated that virtually all shamanic traditions draw on the power of four archetypes in order to live in harmony and balance with our environment and with our own inner nature: the Warrior [Air, North], the Healer [Earth, South], the Visionary [Fire, East], and the Teacher [Water, West]»⁶⁶.

Obviously, Arrien is not in tune with the dominant anthropological academic paradigm, since she presents the monolithic conception of core Shamanism and ignores ethnic particularities. However, her books are popular in Neo-shamanic contexts. In the case of Brazilian naturology, her book was cited by all the interviewees. Arrien's fourfold program of Neo-shamanism assumes the status of an authority among Brazilian naturologists. As Arrien declares she based her work on field observations of native Americans, a predilection for them among Brazilian naturologists was noticed. This issue was also addressed by Teixeira⁶⁷ in his ethnography of Brazilian naturology.

Although Arrien does not write of numerology, *chakras*, tarot or astrology, Professor Marimon's naturology students eventually assume that all the knowledge presented by him comes from the native North Americans. However, numerology, *chakras*, tarot, the four elements and astrology are not part of any native American cultural system. *Chakras* are a completely alien conception to the traditional American cultures. Although there were American peoples heavily oriented by the stars (e.g., Mayans and Incas), their astral lore was different from classical European astrology. European astrology is a mix of Ancient Greek science and the Mesopotamian as well as the Egyptian astral traditions, with some later influences from India, China and the Arabic nations⁶⁸. The color medicine taught by Marimon is mostly based on classical astrology. In this sense, Marimon's Shamanic practices are closer to European esotericism than to any medicinal system based on numbers, colors or astral knowledge of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. A few interviewees were aware of that:

⁶⁵ Cf. A. Arrien, *Four-Fold Way*.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶⁷ D.V. Teixeira, «Integridade, interagência e educação em saúde».

⁶⁸ I.P. Culianu, *Astrology*, in L. Jones L (ed.), *Encyclopedia of religion*, p. 563.

«The Shamanic medicine of naturology, in my opinion, is a New Age practice that has many influences without adhering to any specific culture or ethnicity. It's very much that New Age thing, where everything fits, everything is merged, where chakras, [Chinese] meridian system and indigenous knowledge are related ... A native person has never heard of chakras and meridians ... It wasn't invented by Marimon, because in fact Neo-shamanism exists all over the world. But naturologic Shamanism has his characteristics. [Marimon] uses this New Age way of building his knowledge, which is seeking for various sources superficially and putting it all together ... This universal Shamanism, when compared to the range of Shamanic cultures studied by anthropology, is very poor. But it works ... Everyone tells me that Marimon's technique is infallible»⁶⁹.

In general, New Age healing is governed by mental processes. Guided views, meditation, the search for hidden meanings behind illnesses, and the re-education of the consciousness are at the core of New Age therapies⁷⁰. This has strong confluences with the naturologic conception of Shamanism, as seen in the focus on perception and conscience, the absence of physical interventions, and the lack of practical classes in Marimon's teachings. The interviewed naturologists stressed several times that Shamanism is a worldview, a cosmology or a paradigm more than a set of therapeutic practices or a cultural system. According to them, what makes a Shaman is one's worldview, and not what one does or the way the society sees him or her. That is also how New Age groups tend to describe Shamanism⁷¹.

Furthermore, four interviewees also stated that they see no difference between Marimon's teachings and the ideal for naturologic therapy: the *interagency relationship* («relação de interagência» in Portuguese). Interagency relationship is the most visible emic category of Brazilian naturology. Naturologists carry an assumption that only the patient is able to conceive of his/her own health process. The naturologist, therefore, is only a facilitator who presents a proposal for a therapeutic approach, which would be different from the vertical model of conventional medicine⁷². They believe that the healing process can only happen as long as the interagency relationship is established.

According to naturologists, the interagency relationship «is based on the non-passivity of the patient, attributing autonomy stimulus to him/her ...

⁶⁹ Interviewee B, personal interview, Feb. 22, 2017.

⁷⁰ W.J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*; L. Amaral, *Carnaval da alma*.

⁷¹ W.J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, p. 52.

⁷² N.F. Barros - A.C.M.B. Leite-Mor, *Naturologia e a emergência de novas perspectivas em saúde*, p. 10.

[and] delegating to the patient a relevant part in the development of human potential»⁷³. In other words,

«the person does not have to be guided, manipulated or forced to follow a certain direction, because within everyone there is that tendency to [self-cure]. The therapist's role is solely to arouse such tendency»⁷⁴.

As discussed elsewhere⁷⁵, the connection between the idea of interagency relationship and the New Age thinking is undeniable – especially, with healing perspectives from the Human Potential Movement. Shamanic therapy is seen as synonymous with interagency relationship by some naturologists because the same values so dear to interagency relationship – and therefore to New Age healing – are also central to naturologic Shamanism. Among these naturologists, the focus is on awakening the patients' perceptions, the development of their potentials, the search for personal growth, and the patient's contact with their own inner healing power through guided visions or meditation.

In addition, Marimon's past in the Rajneesh Movement cannot be disregarded. Many things taught by Marimon are what he learned in that context. Also, almost all of his Shamanic experiences were mediated by Ma Deva Asha, a *sannyasin* who was both his therapist and his teacher in the Rajneesh Movement. Asha was responsible for Marimon formally seeking Shamanism, since she showed him an image of a native North American after a meditation and said that the figure represented his Inner Self. Before he met her, Marimon's spiritual path was fragmented: he passed through Yoga, Candomblé, Spiritism, Astrology, Tarot, Qabala, Amazonian Caboclo culture, Sertanejo culture and Popular Catholicism. But after meeting her, he started focusing his spiritual searches on indigenous themes. Likewise, Asha accompanied Marimon on several of his trips through South America, to support him in his *peyote* and vision quest rituals⁷⁶. I will return to this point later in the paper.

Some practices Marimon taught to naturologists were transplantations of rituals he experienced in the Rajneesh Movement. Two interviewees described a class in which Marimon asked the students to stand naked and look at themselves in a mirror. He instructed them to focus on

⁷³ R.K. Carmo, «A relação de interagência sob a perspectiva da abordagem centrada na pessoa» (bachelor's monograph), 2012, p. 2, my translation. Retrieved from Universidade do Sul de Santa Catarina database.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15, my translation.

⁷⁵ F.L. Stern, *A naturologia no Brasil*, pp. 205-215.

⁷⁶ Marimon, personal interview, Nov. 3, 2016.

the body part they least liked about themselves and to try to mentally magnify that aspect they don't like⁷⁷. The exact same practice was described by Marimon as a ritual in which he took part in the context of the Rajneesh Movement⁷⁸.

5. Weak influences

In analyzing the then-emerging New Age movement, Campbell described the plethora of different spiritual offerings that seemed to pop up in Western cultures during the 1960s and 1970s, as a cultic milieu powered by a legion of spiritual seekers. These religious exchanges would foster a continuous supply of seekers to the milieu, but at a higher difficulty to turn seekership into membership. In this sense, Campbell divided the participants of New Age groups between «adherents» to a particular brand of cultic culture and «general seekers»⁷⁹.

Some decades later, Heelas took Campbell's classification as the basis for an economic reading of this phenomenon. Heelas distinguished New Age people into «believers», «seekers» and «part-time New Agers». Although he attests to the existence of New Age believers in the 1990s – the suppliers of its religious goods – the most common profile was that of «part-time New Agers». Their main characteristic would be that of buyers of spiritual experiences, which they would not even have to believe in to enjoy them. «Few are seekers, moving from path to path on a spiritual quest; even fewer are believers, engaged by specific spiritual paths»⁸⁰. In his words:

«Part-time New Agers might select a workshop to experience what it is like to have mystical power ('become' a 'shaman'); buy New Age music to 'take in' the experience of being peaceful; obtain a crystal to experience energy; practice rebirthing to experience 'physical immortality'; go on courses to experience their natural emotions; or do any number of other things in order to 'consume' the wealth of experiences that (supposedly) lie with the perfect realm within»⁸¹.

⁷⁷ Interviewee C, personal interview, Jan. 4, 2017; Interviewee D, personal interview, Apr. 1, 2017.

⁷⁸ Marimon, personal interview, Apr. 20, 2017.

⁷⁹ C. Campbell, *The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization*, in M. Hill (ed.), *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, London, SCM Press, 1972, pp. 119-136, here p. 128.

⁸⁰ P.L.F. Heelas, *The Limits of Consumption and the Post-Modern «religion» of the New Age*, in R. Keat - N. Whiteley - N. Abercrombie (eds.), *The authority of the consumer*, London, Routledge, 1993, pp. 102-115, here p. 98.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

As one can conclude, that is a scenario of prolific religious traffic and low commitment from the seekers. Precisely, the way New Age spiritualities are often constructed is through personal manipulations of distinct cultural symbolic systems in order to meet individual demands⁸². These classifications help to understand the relationship between naturologists and their Shamanic medicine.

It is important to keep in mind that the adherence of naturologists is ultimately to naturology itself, and not to Shamanism. Among the interviewees, it wasn't uncommon to find amalgamations of Shamanism and different practices used in naturology. The influences of traditional Chinese medicine and color therapy on Marimon's crystal healing system was cited in the previous section. But other examples are noticeable. One respondent said that she practices «Shamanic reiki»⁸³; another reported protocol of «Shamanic reflexology» and «Shamanic massage» using the four elements⁸⁴; a naturologist recalled his art therapy professor borrowing elements from Marimon's Shamanism for her own classes⁸⁵, as it was confirmed by this professor herself⁸⁶; and a naturologist declared that she practices a syncretism between Marimon's Shamanism, Wicca healing and circular dances⁸⁷. Regarding the latter, although it is not officially recognized by the Brazilian naturology leadership and its representatives, the use of Wicca healing in Brazilian naturology clinics was attested to by a previous study⁸⁸.

With Brazilian naturology imbued with New Age influences⁸⁹, a greater appeal to esotericism within the naturologic practice of Shamanism is not a surprise. However, one may also notice other weaker influences on the Shamanism of Brazilian naturology. One of the few examples already registered prior to my research is that of Peruvian Shamanism⁹⁰. Marimon had undergone some Shamanistic experiences with *peyote* in Peru.

⁸² W.J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Spiritualities as Secular Religion*, p. 147.

⁸³ Interviewee C, personal interview, Jan. 4, 2017.

⁸⁴ Interviewee E, personal interview, Mar. 29, 2017.

⁸⁵ Interviewee F, personal interview, Jan. 11, 2017.

⁸⁶ Interviewee G, personal interview, Jan. 11, 2017.

⁸⁷ Interviewee H, personal interview, Oct. 18, 2017.

⁸⁸ F.L. Stern - A.M. Moreira, *Mitologia como terapia: o caso da naturologia*, in «Debates do NER», 1, 2017, 31, pp. 199-226, here pp. 217-220.

⁸⁹ Cf. D.V. Teixeira, «Integridade, interagência e educação em saúde»; F. L. Stern, *A naturologia no Brasil*; A.L.P. Leite, «Naturopatia, religião e ciência».

⁹⁰ Cf. D.V. Teixeira, «Integridade, interagência e educação em saúde», p. 72.

The manner in which he pursued such experiences was similar to that of those whom Heelas classified as seekers: he possessed commitment to his own spiritual quest, but no major obligations to the tradition he visited. His *peyote* experiences were all mediated by Ma Deva Asha, who accompanied him to Peru to give him spiritual support⁹¹. In his words:

«She was my guardian. She was with me. She accompanied me when I traveled [to Peru] to attend the peyote ceremonies. She said, 'I'll go with you because sometimes you go [to the otherworld] and you don't come back. And if I go, I can pull you down'. She knew I had difficulty in coming back. Sometimes I don't even know how to get back»⁹².

Marimon presented Asha as his therapist and spiritual guardian, and demonstrated that she exercised a larger religious role over him than any native Shaman he visited to undergo his *peyote* rituals. In that sense, he was an adherent to the Rajneesh Movement, but a seeker to Peruvian Shamanism. After her death and Marimon's withdrawal from the Rajneesh Movement, he considered becoming a guardian of the *peyote* medicine in a 30-day initiation ritual in Peru. Eventually he chose not to do so⁹³. Though he continues to maintain some contact with a Shamanic therapeutic space in Peru, he still doesn't have any major responsibilities to it. He only travels there once a year, usually during his winter vacation, where he conducts circumstantial spiritual work with some groups of tourists.

In addition to Peruvian Shamanism, minor influences from Ecuadorian Shamanism are present in Marimon's work too. Sabine Elisabeth Hertwig, a Brazilian naturologist and former student of Marimon, married an Ecuadorian Shaman called Juan Alejandro Valdivieso. Although Marimon acknowledges several naturologists who work with Shamanism, Hertwig is the only one whom he recognizes as a fully realized Shaman. They have maintained a strong relationship even after she migrated out of Brazil. This friendship put Marimon in contact with the Shamanism of the High Andes of Ecuador. Once a year, Hertwig and Valdivieso usually visit Marimon's home in Brazil, and they establish spiritual exchanges⁹⁴.

In addition to these two influences, Marimon also claims to have visited a number of countries in search of local Shamanisms: Chile, Mexico, Argentina, Panama, Guatemala, and the United States, to list a

⁹¹ Marimon, personal interview, Nov. 3, 2016.

⁹² Marimon, personal interview, Nov. 3, 2016, my translation.

⁹³ Marimon, personal interview, Nov. 17, 2016.

⁹⁴ Marimon, personal interview, Nov. 17, 2016.

few⁹⁵. These contacts are divided into two moments in his life: a pre-Rajneesh Movement period, and the experiences he underwent after he met Ma Deva Asha and she showed him the image of a native North American in a meditative-therapeutic context.

The post-Rajneesh Movement experiences were marked by personal searches of Marimon, which he describes as «elemental initiations». He looked for places where a native man or women would ritualistically bury him (Earth initiation), submerge him (Water initiation), or lead him to the crater of an active volcano (Fire initiation) so that he could acquaintance himself with it as a rite of passage. The feelings he faced during these experiences are described to his students during his classes, merged with the teachings of Arrien's book. Marimon declared that his Water and Fire initiations took place in Chile⁹⁶. He did not mention further details regarding the location of his Earth and Air initiations.

The pre-Rajneesh Movement experiences, notwithstanding, were cruder. His mediating agents were generally popular culture, the ideal of the noble savage and tourism. Marimon states that these youthful experiences were only imbued with meaning by him later in his life. It was in this context that he came into contact with the Apache, Cherokee, and Navajo cultures. Among his many experiences, he described his visit to the Cochise Museum in the United States, a urine therapy session with a native in Texas, and a visit to a Navajo tribe during his travel to the Grand Canyon⁹⁷. Also, Marimon admitted to a great childhood passion for Western films. The Western theme was common in his childhood games, in which his brother played the role of a cowboy and he played the role of a native⁹⁸. His youthful interest in the native North American culture also influenced him in his search for literary works on Shamanism. As a result, the books on Shamanism he bought almost always describe the native North Americans rather than the native peoples of Brazil and South America⁹⁹. However, it is not possible, on this basis, to conclude that the Shamanism of Brazilian naturology is founded on native North American Shamanisms. Although there is an effect on it, this is a weak influence when compared to the transplantations of religious elements from esotericism and the Rajneesh Movement.

⁹⁵ Marimon, personal interview, Aug. 11, 2017.

⁹⁶ Marimon, personal interview, Nov. 24, 2016; Marimon, personal interview, Aug. 5, 2017.

⁹⁷ Marimon, personal interview, Jun. 14, 2016; Marimon, personal interview, Jun. 17, 2016.

⁹⁸ Marimon, personal interview, Jun. 14, 2016.

⁹⁹ Cf. Marimon, personal interview, Sep. 8, 2016, when he presented me his bibliography.

6. Alleged but not proven influences

Only one influence was identified in Marimon's speeches of which I could not find any trace in the Shamanism of Brazilian naturology. When I began interviewing him in mid-2016, Marimon introduced himself as the grandson of a native Mapuche woman. In his narrative, his grandmother had been abducted from her tribe by his grandfather, a Spaniard who fled from war to South America. According to Marimon's telling, his grandparents had settled in Uruguay, and a few years later they moved to Rio Grande do Sul in Southern Brazil¹⁰⁰.

Marimon evoked this story to claim that Shamanism has always been a part of him, with a discourse that he was born to seek it because he has indigenous blood¹⁰¹. I asked, then, whether his siblings are interested in Shamanism. He said no. When asked whether he had contact with his Mapuche grandmother, he also said no. Describing his childhood, Marimon told me that he grew up in a Catholic-Spiritist home¹⁰². He stated that he had received no indigenous teaching from his family, and presented Spanish culture as the reference of his childhood formation. He told me that he only knew that his grandmother was Mapuche after he had entered adulthood. He then stated that he visited the region where she had been born to «connect» with her¹⁰³. He also stated that his Fire initiation took place in the Villarrica volcano in a region once occupied by Mapuche people¹⁰⁴.

None of the basic constituents of the Mapuche religion were found in my research. While Mapuche Shamanism is strongly marked by gender, the Shamanism of Brazilian naturology seems to have few restrictions in this respect. Bagicalupo¹⁰⁵ describes a religious system in which women are the most common agents of Mapuche Shamanism, as they are considered to be closer to nature than men. In addition to that, she notes that although there are men who act as Shamans in Mapuche groups, they usually dress as women to do so. None of the male naturologists who work with Shamanism that I interviewed dress as women. Neither

¹⁰⁰ Marimon, personal interview, Jun. 3, 2016.

¹⁰¹ Marimon, personal interview, Oct. 10, 2017.

¹⁰² Marimon, personal interview, Jun. 3, 2016.

¹⁰³ Marimon, personal interview, Apr. 20, 2017.

¹⁰⁴ Marimon, personal interview, Aug. 5, 2017.

¹⁰⁵ A.M. Bacigalupo, *Shamans of the Foye Tree: Gender, Power and Healing Among Chilean Mapuche*, Austin TX, Texas University Press, 2007.

does Marimon. Moreover, although naturology is predominantly a female profession – 82.5% to 86% Brazilian naturologists are women¹⁰⁶ –, the number of male and female naturologists working with Shamanism is similar. In this sense, Shamanism stands out in Brazilian naturology because of the roughly equal number of men and women working with it, which is not the typical profile of naturology in this country.

Regarding the common gender position among naturologists working with Shamanism in Brazil, the most noteworthy discourse was that of sex equality. Taking Marimon as an example, in one of the interviews he spent an afternoon discussing sexuality and gender roles in his vision of Shamanism. Contrary to the strongly gendered context described in Bagicalupo's research, the scenario presented by Marimon was one of free love, in which both women and men are equally complementary and their sexuality should be lived with no restrictions. Even when asked about homosexuality, Marimon maintained that everything is allowed in Shamanism¹⁰⁷. This is much closer to the Rajneesh Movement, one of the strong influences in Marimon's practices, than to any form of traditional Mapuche Shamanism.

It is also important to mention that none of the naturologists interviewed had heard that Marimon has a Mapuche grandmother. They stated that this was a subject he had never discussed in the classroom. So, at this point, I go back to Hobsbawm's category of invented tradition. Hobsbawm defines invented tradition as an «attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past»¹⁰⁸. He also explains that «all invented traditions ... use history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion»¹⁰⁹. Hobsbawm's concern revolves around rituals and ceremonies that evoke the past. I apply his category here, however, in an extension of his original thought. According to Benthall,

«to become widely accepted, religions need to be old ... it is one of the most important criteria. Religions are a special case of cultural heritage property rights, which are required to have patina»¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁶ M.A. Passos, *Perfil sócio-econômico profissional dos naturólogos do Brasil*, p. 8; F.L. Stern, *A naturologia no Brasil*, p. 274.

¹⁰⁷ Marimon, personal interview, Oct. 13, 2017.

¹⁰⁸ E. Hobsbawm, *Introduction: Inventing Traditions*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹¹⁰ J. Benthall, *Returning to Religion: Why a Secular Age is Haunted by Faith*, London, Bloomsbury 2008, p. 55.

Benthall cites the new religious movements as an example of groups that present themselves as older than they actually are to obtain instant social respect. This is a way of seeking legitimacy and social justification.

Howsoever, Marimon does not need to legitimize himself before the students, since two former coordinators of the naturology program at the University of Southern Santa Catarina have identified him as one of the most popular naturology professors among students¹¹¹. All naturologists interviewed also attest to Marimon's popularity. Therefore, in whose eyes did Marimon want to legitimize his work by declaring that he is the grandson of a Mapuche woman? My hypothesis: (1) in the eyes of the researchers or (2) in those of the University of Southern Santa Catarina itself.

As to the first hypothesis, the limits of interviews as a method of collecting data have been widely discussed. The most common bias relates to data reliability.

«There are ... limitations related to the content, what people are able or wanting to talk about. They might lie on purpose, but they might also have untrustworthy or incomplete memories or idiosyncratic perceptions»¹¹².

I am not claiming that Marimon has lied about his heritage. I am pointing out, however, that while he alluded to his Mapuche ancestry in the interview, it seems he did not consider important to mention it to his own students. According to Boni and Quaresma (2005), one of the greatest methodological challenges of interviews is reading between the lines. The researcher must remain alert because the respondents may try to impose their own definitions. They may also try to pass off a different image of themselves:

«The interviewees can assume a role that is not them, a character that has nothing to do with them, i.e., they can incorporate a character they think the researcher wants to hear. Thus, consciously or unconsciously, the interviewees are trying to deceive the researcher»¹¹³.

It is emblematic that Marimon tended to speak more of his Mapuche ancestry in our first meetings. It also struck me that, in one of the interviews, he contradicted himself by saying that his grandmother was

¹¹¹ Interviewee I, personal interview, Nov. 22, 2016; Interviewee G, personal interview, Jan. 11, 2017.

¹¹² A.D. Bremborg, *Interviewing*, p. 319.

¹¹³ V. Boni - S.J. Quaresma, *Aprendendo a entrevistar: como fazer entrevistas em ciências sociais*, in «TESE: Revista eletrônica dos Pós-Graduando em Sociologia Política da UFSC», 2, 2005, 1, pp. 68-80, here p. 77, my translation.

Inca rather than Mapuche¹¹⁴. But after a few months of interviews, he gradually abandoned this narrative to the point that, if I did not address the subject, it wasn't spontaneously mentioned by him. My interpretation is that he realized over time that I was not there to ratify or to invalidate his practices and relaxed.

As to the second hypothesis, virtually all interviewees have declared uncertainties about the future of Shamanism in Brazilian naturology. Some professors have reported that Marimon has always faced suspicion from a section of the administrative staff of the University of Southern Santa Catarina because of the heterodox nature of his teachings¹¹⁵. Considering the difficulty Marimon presents in explaining his knowledge in terms of the normal academic standards, he may have evoked a traditional heritage so that it would be present in my results. Perhaps he has emphasized this so that it could be cited as a justification of his position as a university professor after my research is published¹¹⁶.

7. Parallel influences

There is a distinction between what religious leaders say about their groups and what the believers actually do. Religions are collective constructions, which are perpetuated continuously and independently. This is an ambiguous process constructed by many people with their own interests and motivations. Believers do not think and practice the exact same thing. That is why leaders sometimes fail to direct symbolic rearrangements of their group as they intend. Although naturology is

¹¹⁴ Marimon, personal interview, Apr. 27, 2017.

¹¹⁵ Interviewee J, personal interview, Nov. 11, 2016; Interviewee H, personal interview, Nov. 22, 2016; Interviewee G, personal interview, Jan. 11, 2017; Interviewee K, personal interview, Feb. 3, 2017; Interviewee E, personal interview, Mar. 29, 2017.

¹¹⁶ There have been reports of several groups accepting to be studied by or even searching for scholars of religions in an attempt to legitimize their practices. Since this is outside the scope of this text, I will not go further into this. Having said that, I will indicate some cases for those who wish to read about it. For a Central American example on Muslim minorities, see F. Usarski, *O pesquisador como benfeitor? Reflexões sobre os equívocos da ciência prática da religião e sua alternativa*, in «Ciência da Religião Aplicada», 2, 2018, pp. 64-77. About religious groups entering Chinese universities for legitimization, see Xí Wūyī (2015) *apud* N. Cao, *The Rise of Field Studies in Religious Research in the People's Republic of China*, in «The China Review», 18, 2018, 1, pp. 137-163. For an example of an evangelical deputy that quotes a scholar of religions to justify a bill of his authorship to the Brazilian Federal Congress, see M. Feliciano, *Projeto de Lei Nº 309/2011*, Brasília, Congresso Nacional do Brasil, 2011. Available via: <http://www.camara.gov.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=491602>. Accessed May 24, 2018. Available via: <http://www.camara.gov.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=491602>. Accessed May 24, 2018.

not a religion in the strict sense, when dealing with naturologic Shamanism, Professor Marimon can be considered as close as one can be to a charismatic religious leadership. As such, there are certain practices of naturologists that Marimon disapproves of, discourages or disregards.

The three main parallel influences on Shamanism in Brazilian naturology are Guarani Shamanism, Santo Daime and the Red Path. All of them were briefly observed in naturology¹¹⁷, and none are recognized as official contents of Marimon's classes. In Brazil, these three spiritual systems are intrinsically mixed. As explained by Rose¹¹⁸, in the last two decades a network has grown among Brazilian Guaranis, Santo Daime, and the Sacred Fire of Itzachilatlan – a North American Shamanic group also known as the Red Path. This was called the «alliance of the medicines», and it is the primary reason for the appropriation of *ayahuasca* and other related practices such as *temazcal* (sweat lodge) and the vision quest by the Guaranis.

As previously mentioned, the Shamanic medicine classes of the naturology program of the University of Southern Santa Catarina have a very theoretical character. In that sense, students who long for a more practical experience in Shamanism need to seek it outside the university walls. Since the beginning of this naturology program, this has generated conflicts between what the university formally teaches and the personal searches of these students. This has been further exacerbated due to an extension project that works on the revitalization of Guarani cultures in the region of Santa Catarina. This project is organized by another professor from the University of Southern Santa Catarina, but it does not focus on Guarani Shamanism or Guarani medicine. This is a social project for the assistance and cultural preservation of the Guarani people. However, many naturology students have participated in this project to visit indigenous Guarani villages¹¹⁹. This is the most practical experience with an indigenous culture offered by the University of Southern Santa Catarina.

As naturologists learn Shamanism through the conception of core Shamanism, as much as they consider Marimon's teachings to be based on the native North Americans, there is a widespread perception that Guarani Shamanism is very similar (if not the same thing), and that it

¹¹⁷ I.S. Rose, «Tata endy rekoe – Fogo Sagrado ...»; E.J. Langdon - I.S. Rose, *Contemporary Guarani Shamanisms*; D.V. Teixeira, «Integridade, interagência e educação em saúde».

¹¹⁸ I.S. Rose, «Tata endy rekoe – Fogo Sagrado ...».

¹¹⁹ Interviewee L, personal interview, Feb. 7, 2017; Interviewee G, personal interview, Jan. 11, 2017.

can be easily merged with the Shamanic medicine of naturology. This results in many naturology professors of the University of Southern Santa Catarina criticizing this social project, since it generates a parallel curriculum from the one formalized by the collegiate of naturology¹²⁰. However, all respondents who asserted that they work with Shamanism in naturology have had at least one encounter with Guarani people.

Another important point is that in recent decades the Guarani people have adopted practices of other indigenous ethnicities as part of their own practices. These practices are, for the most part, religious transpositions from the Red Path and Santo Daime. One of the most interesting and strongly adopted practices is the appropriation of *ayahuasca*, a plant native to the Amazon¹²¹. In the context of naturologists who work with Shamanism, all the interviewees asserted that they have had previous experiences with *ayahuasca*, and many of them recognized themselves as belonging to some *ayahuasca* religion.

The recognition of an assumed increase in students who religiously use *ayahuasca* disturbs the majority of the naturology professors of the University of Southern Santa Catarina. Although *ayahuasca* is not treated as a drug by the government, it faces the same stigma from the largest part of the Brazilian population. So, in my field research, I noticed some allegations that Marimon's Shamanic classes would lead to this assumed increase in *ayahuasca* usage among naturology students. However, Marimon presented himself as a great critic of Santo Daime and *ayahuasca*.

When asked whether Santo Daime was a form of Shamanism or not, Marimon replied: «I don't know. I have no idea. I think they are totally different things ... They're not Shamans as we conceive it, like those persons who are there [in the wilderness]. They walk in many worlds. I always think that people who do this are lost. That's my opinion»¹²². One key reason for his resistance to Santo Daime is *ayahuasca*. Although he has undergone some spiritual experiences with its aid, Marimon sees the transplantation of *ayahuasca* to urban contexts as a corruption of its subtle energies. Marimon believes that a plant of power only possesses its spiritual potential in its native environment. A desert plant like *peyote*, for example, would only possess its full properties when

¹²⁰ Interviewee G, personal interview, Jan. 11, 2017.

¹²¹ I.S. Rose, «Tata endy rekoe – Fogo Sagrado ...».

¹²² Marimon, personal interview, Nov. 17, 2016, my translation.

used in the desert. That is why Marimon sought to travel all over the Americas to undergo his Shamanistic rituals: he wanted to consume the entheogenic plants in their original environment. As *ayahuasca* is native to the Amazon, its consumption in Southern Brazil does not seem logical to him. That is why he asserts that when he tried *ayahuasca*, he did so in the Peruvian Amazon.

However, there is another point to be noted: whereas Daimists describe themselves as a religious group, Marimon does not consider his Shamanism a religion¹²³. Moreover, the presence of Christian symbolic elements in Santo Daime also concerns him:

«They bind people to a rite, a chant, an idea, a predetermined search to such an extent that everyone who drinks *ayahuasca* sees the Catholic Church [symbols]. Everyone sees saints, angels, God ... This is because of their chants ... They have that entire saint matrix. You meet people who talked to the Virgin Mary, people who sat at the God's feet, and it goes on ... So much so that 15 years ago they called [Santo] Daime as 'bottled Christ'. Everyone experiences the saga of crucifixion, of sacrifice¹²⁴.

Marimon also demonstrated resistance to Guarani Shamanism. As the extension project of the University of Southern Santa Catarina with the Guarani is organized by a professor who is a former Jesuit priest, Marimon assumes that it has a hidden catechetical agenda. In addition, the assimilation of *ayahuasca* by the Guarani is seen as an abomination by Marimon, something he regards as the rape of the original Guarani culture¹²⁵. As a result, although Marimon admits that he has engaged in some exchanges and has visited the Guarani villages in the past, he prefers to stay away from this project and does not recognize it as Shamanic work.

8. Conclusion

This text presented the main influences and origins of the most common practices of the Shamanic medicine in Brazilian naturology. This article ratifies other previous social studies, reaffirming the connection between Brazilian naturology and New Age esotericism. As it was presented, the conception of Shamanism among Brazilian naturologists is related to New Era Shamanism. Further, New Age esotericism and the

¹²³ Marimon, personal interview, Dec. 1, 2016.

¹²⁴ Marimon, personal interview, Nov. 17, 2016.

¹²⁵ Marimon, personal interview, Ago. 11, 2016; Marimon, personal interview, Nov. 17, 2016.

Rajneesh Movement exert the strongest influences on Shamanic medicine in Brazilian naturology.

Although there is strong claim in the naturologists' discourses that Shamanic medicine in Brazilian naturology is based on the indigenous knowledge of native Americans, this study showed that the Apache, Cherokee, and Navajo Shamanisms exert a weaker influence on this Shamanic medicine than New Age esotericism. Besides, their alleged Mapuche influence cannot be attested to by this research. Themes central to European esotericism, such as *chakras*, numerology, and astrology, assume a much more important role in the Shamanism afferent to Brazilian naturology than any traditional indigenous form of American Shamanic practice.

Due to the excessively theoretical approach of the University of Southern Santa Catarina on this subject, it has also been shown that there are parallel influences of Guarani Shamanism, Santo Daime, and the Red Path on the Shamanic works of Brazilian naturologists. These are the contexts in which naturology students have a more practical experience of Shamanism outside the university walls. This independent quest for Shamanic practices, however, leads to conflicts between the institutionalized form of Shamanism taught by Professor Marimon and the parallel Shamanic knowledge acquired by his students.

This work demonstrated that although there is a great appeal to indigenous things among the naturologists who work with Shamanism in Brazil and a self-description of it as a traditional medicine, in fact there are little indigenous or traditional contents in their practices. Shamanic medicine in Brazilian naturology would be more accurately described as the New Age health system disguised as a traditional indigenous system of medicine. In other words, it is an example of an invented tradition inside the Brazilian university. Yet this does not mean that such Shamanic medicine is illegitimate or useless. Naturologists attest to its worth, and that is what matters to them.

Lastly, other minor influences were also mentioned by the interviewees. Those listed here are related to those which appeared prominently in my field research. The investigation of these other influences may thus be an interesting object of research for future studies on Shamanism in Brazilian naturology.