

Intergalactic Space-Time Travelers

Envisioning Globalization in Brazil's Valley of the Dawn

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ABSTRACT: The Valley of the Dawn (Vale do Amanhecer) is a new Brazilian religion known for its creative synthesis of elements drawn from a diverse range of cultural and national contexts. This article considers the Valley as an example of the interrelations between religion and globalization, exploring how conceptual changes associated with contemporary processes of globalization such as time-space compression and deterritorialization function as structuring elements within the religious imaginary laid out by the Valley's founders in the 1960s and 1970s, a period of rapid economic, social, and political change in Brazil.

KEYWORDS: Brazil, religious imaginary, globalization, Valley of the Dawn, time-space compression, New Age, Third Millennium

*An Indian will alight from a brilliantly colored star
From a star that spins with astounding speed
And will land in the heart of the southern hemisphere
In America, in the blink of an eye
After the extermination of the last indigenous nation
And of the spirit of the birds and of the source of crystal clear waters
More advanced than the most advanced of the most advanced technologies*

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*An Indian preserved in full physical form
In all solid, all gas, and all liquid form
In atoms, words, soul, color, in gesture and smell
In shadow, in light, in magnificent sound
At a point equidistant between the Atlantic and the Pacific
From the resplendent object the Indian will descend
And the things I know he will say and do
I don't know how to describe explicitly
And what in this moment will be revealed to all humankind
Will surprise everyone, not for being exotic
But for the fact of having always been so obvious*

Caetano Veloso, "Um Índio" (The Indian)¹



Photo 1. *Pai Seta Branca in outer space. Courtesy of Joaquim Vilela.*

AN INDIAN FROM OUTER SPACE

With its references to cultural-ecological devastation and the imminent arrival of a celestial messenger bearing a revelation, Brazilian singer Caetano Veloso's 1976 song "Um Índio" (The Indian) plays with a familiar theme of apocalyptic expectation. This version, however, has a Brazilian twist: the cosmic traveler is figured

as an indigenous Indian whose intergalactic mission brings him to a “point equidistant between the Atlantic and Pacific,” the very heart of South America: central Brazil.

Veloso, one of Brazil’s most beloved singer-songwriters, composed “The Indian” after visiting the religious community known officially as Social Works of the Christian Spiritualist Order,² and more popularly as Valley of the Dawn, whose mother temple is located in central Brazil some forty kilometers outside the federal capital of Brasília. A story prevalent among Valley members holds that after meeting the movement’s charismatic founder Tia Neiva (Aunt Neiva) and visiting the colorful temple she and her followers had built, Veloso was inspired to compose the song in homage to the community’s most sacred entity, Pai Seta Branca (Father White Arrow), depicted in the distinctive iconographic style of the Valley as a regal Indian chieftain dressed in full eagle-feathered war bonnet and holding a white arrow.³

Within the Valley of the Dawn’s millenarian cosmology, Pai Seta Branca is considered a “Planetary Master” (*Mestre Planetário*), a highly evolved emissary from a distant planet whose animating spirit is responsible for the evolutionary progress of humanity from its rude beginnings towards ever more advanced cultural and spiritual states. At different times in accordance with events on Earth, Pai Seta Branca has taken terrestrial form and among these incarnations is said to have manifested as Saint Francis of Assisi, Egyptian boy-king Tutankhamun, and the disciple (and putative gospel author) John, as well as the indigenous chieftain by whose name he is known today among Valley of the Dawn members.⁴ In a complicated set of mystical correspondences, Pai Seta Branca also is understood as a spiritual compatriot of Jesus Christ⁵ and an emanation of Oxalá, a Yoruba deity brought to Brazil by enslaved Africans and cultivated by practitioners of Candomblé and other Afro-Brazilian religions.⁶ He also has a female counterpart, Mãe Yara, who is said to have incarnated on Earth as Saint Clare of Assisi.

According to the Valley’s *doutrina* or teachings, extraterrestrial missionaries under the direction of Pai Seta Branca colonized Earth approximately 32,000 years ago and were responsible for the evolutionary progression of modern *Homo sapiens* from earlier species, as well as the technologically advanced constructions of Machu Picchu, Great Pyramids of Egypt, stone megaliths of Easter Island, and other ancient architectural wonders. Valley members consider themselves to be present-day incarnations and spiritual inheritors of this highly evolved extraterrestrial vanguard charged with realizing Pai Seta Branca’s plan for the spiritual evolution of the planet. Through successive levels of initiatic training, they claim the power to manipulate time and space through the performance of *trabalhos* or spiritual works aimed at redeeming lower-level spirits and liquidating their own karmic debts before the imminent advent of the Third Millennium. At that time



Photo 2. *Pai Seta Branca's statue in the Mother Temple. Courtesy of Kelly E. Hayes.*

Pai Seta Branca will arrive “in the blink of an eye” from his astral abode to usher the most evolved spirits, some incarnate in human form, home to their true spiritual birthplace: Capela, the “brilliantly colored star” of Veloso’s song.

Offering its adherents a sweeping cosmological vision that integrates an eclectic array of religious ideas and pop culture memes—everything from beliefs about the mystical significance of the ancient pyramids and Space Age-era fascination with UFOs to more traditional millenarian and Christian imagery—Valley of the Dawn presents the kind of globalized bricolage found among many of the new religious movements that have emerged in the West since the 1950s. Its multicultural pantheon of supernatural beings, which recognizes Catholic saints, Afro-Brazilian orixás, and Indian chiefs, as well as spirits of elderly black slaves, gypsies,

Roman legionnaires, and medical doctors, among many others—all recast as avatars of a highly advanced race of extraterrestrials—dissolves frontiers of time and place, nation and race in an all-encompassing schema that recapitulates the history of individual adherents and the community itself as part of a great cosmic drama unfolding over millennia.

Not only is this pantheon of spiritual entities derived from an array of cultural contexts and eras, the Valley teaches that each community member possesses a vast “transcendental heritage,” a unique trajectory of selfhood that encompasses a minimum of nineteen different incarnations stretching back in time and place to the individual’s earliest, extra-terrestrial origins.⁷ Thus the ordinary working- and middle-class Brazilians comprising the Valley’s membership were also indigenous chieftains, ancient Egyptian sacerdots, Spartan warriors, Mayan princesses, Roman caesars, medieval French nuns, nineteenth-century Russian gypsies, and so on, identities that form an important basis for the community’s internal organization and the performance of multiple daily rituals in the temple and its environs.

This conspicuous spatial and temporal fluidity recalls David Harvey’s notion of “time-space compression.” Harvey coined this phrase to describe dramatic alterations in the ways people experience time and space as a result of various transformations over the last fifty years.⁸ In that time, new and faster means of communication, transportation, and financial transactions; electronic technologies capable of beaming information around the world instantly; and ever-accelerating flows of goods, ideas, and people across geographic and cultural boundaries have profoundly minimized the physical and social distances that separate people, magnifying the degree to which the global is imbricated with the local.

Of course, globalization itself is nothing new. Humans long have lived in communities shaped by networks of exchange that link people across territorial or cultural boundaries or in political systems that aspire to global reach. Some have argued that the entire conceptual apparatus underpinning modernity—the nation-state and notion of the individual self, the formation of a world system of societies embodied in such institutions as the United Nations and the World Bank, even the very idea of a common humanity—are products of long-term processes of globalization.⁹ Nevertheless, the end of the twentieth century has revealed a radically intensified phase of globalization associated not merely with technological innovations but also with the vicissitudes of advanced capitalism.¹⁰

While there is a great deal of scholarly debate about the various sources of this recent phase of globalization and its impact in different parts of the globe, most theorists agree it has provoked certain fundamental shifts in the ways people experience and conceptualize the

world—an arena traditionally the province of religion. Yet, as Thomas Csordas has observed, the role of religion remains understudied and undertheorized in the burgeoning academic literature on globalization, which tends to focus on its economic, political, and cultural dimensions.¹¹

Heeding Csordas' admonition that globalization ought to be understood as "a multidimensional process in which religion, popular culture, politics, and economics are coeval and intimately intertwined,"¹² my objective in this essay is to observe some of these interconnections at close range. Taking as my example the Valley of the Dawn, I consider how certain aspects of this late twentieth-century phase of globalization are expressed in the movement's "religious imaginary"—the imaginative and collectively shared representations that foster a common sense of identity, meaning, and purpose among Valley members and structure how they pursue their collective life. The religious imaginary is expressed in mythical narratives, ritual practices, symbolism, imagery, vestments, and other creative processes and expressions and while it is subject to systemization and rationalization, it extends beyond these deep into the unconscious. Like the concept of the social imaginary to which it is related, the notion of the religious imaginary directs analytical focus to the ways that the creative imagination, rather than reason or rationality, contributes to the construction of social institutions and practices.¹³ More specifically, I argue that processes akin to time-space compression and deterritorialization, or the weakening social significance of specific spatial locations, are key structuring elements within the religious imaginary developed by Valley founders in the 1960s and early 1970s, a period of rapid economic, social, religious, and political change in Brazil.

TIME-SPACE COMPRESSION AND DETERRITORIALIZATION

Perhaps the most profound shift associated with globalization in the modern period has to do with the social significance of time and space.¹⁴ As speedier ways of producing and exchanging goods and information overcome the barriers of distance, time seems to accelerate as space collapses. *Time-space compression* refers to the resulting alterations in the ways people experience temporal and spatial structures of social existence and represent these to themselves.¹⁵

Similarly, as goods, ideas, and people become more mobile, so do social relations and activities. This *deterritorialization* means that physically discrete locations no longer demarcate the "social space" in which human activity takes place. Distant events and forces can influence local ones and vice versa, relativizing distance and proximity. In Anthony Giddens' words, "the very tissue of spatial experience alters conjoining

proximity and distance in ways that have few close parallels in prior ages.”¹⁶ Consequently, local and territorially specific realities are no longer the only inspiration and context for cultural production as a transnational circulation of ideas, symbols, and practices produces ever more inventive fusions.

Such global cultural flows, as Arjun Appadurai observes, supply people with a complex repertoire of narratives, elements, symbols, images, and other creative fragments out of which to construct what he terms “imagined worlds.”¹⁷ When collectively shared and invested with superhuman power, these imagined worlds become tangible and can give rise to functioning religious systems. While the Valley’s imagined world tends to strike outsiders as especially fantastic (as all imagined worlds appear to those who do not share them), it continually is made real for participants in ritual acts and discursive formulations.

THE VALLEY OF THE DAWN AND ITS FOUNDERS

The Valley of the Dawn—which today claims more than 800,000 adherents and over six hundred affiliated temples throughout Brazil, Europe, Japan, Bolivia, Uruguay, Guyana, and the United States¹⁸—largely is the creation of two people: Neiva Chaves Zelaya (1925–1985), affectionately known as Tia Neiva, a former truck driver and single mother whose visionary experiences are the foundation and *raison-d’être* of the movement’s existence, and Mario Sassi (1921–1995), an early convert who renounced his family and former life to become Neiva’s companion, lover, and intellectual codifier of her visions.

Together they developed an elaborate religious system that assimilated various beliefs and cultural trends in Brazil during the 1960s and 1970s, reconfiguring them within a theological framework grounded largely in Theosophical ideas, Kardecist Spiritism, and a highly abstracted understanding of Christianity emphasizing Jesus’ ethical teachings of love, tolerance, and humility.

According to the popular narrative of the Valley’s origins, Tia Neiva was a young widow with a third-grade education and four small children when she moved to Brasília in 1957 to work as a truck driver in the *ultramoderno* capital city then under construction.¹⁹ Soon afterwards, she began to suffer from visual and auditory hallucinations that persisted until her death in 1985. Initially terrified by these “visions of illuminated beings, visions of deformed beings, disequilibrium, conflicts,” as a doctrinal tract described them, Tia Neiva soon became convinced that they were visitations from various spiritual and extraterrestrial beings, among them Pai Seta Branca and his female counterpart, Mãe Yara.²⁰ In the course of her contact with these and other “spirits of light,” Tia Neiva claimed to receive esoteric teachings about the extraterritorial



Photo 3. *Photograph of Tia Neiva and Mario Sassi on the Temple grounds.
Courtesy of Kelly E. Hayes.*

origins—and eventual destiny—of humanity on the distant planet of Capela. Following Pai Seta Branca’s directions, Tia Neiva established a small spiritual community in 1959. Ten years later, after the dissolution of that group and convinced she had been chosen to prepare humanity for a new era referred to as the Third Millennium or the Age of Aquarius, Tia Neiva, together with Mario Sassi, founded the Valley of the Dawn.²¹

Sassi, who came to Brasília from São Paulo in the early 1960s to work in public relations at the newly founded University of Brasília, first encountered Tia Neiva in 1965. Convinced that Tia Neiva was a prophet who exemplified the Christian ideal of unconditional love, a “superbeing” who represented “the Spirit of the Truth” and whose “fundamental mission was to prepare us for the future,” Sassi left his job, wife and family and joined forces with Neiva in 1968, becoming her common-law husband.²² The following year they established the Valley of the Dawn in a rural area outside Brasília, where they lived with a small group of followers.

As Neiva’s confidant and lover, Sassi was privy to the most intimate details of her personal and spiritual life as well as the revelations she claimed to receive. His descriptions and the explanatory framework he built around these experiences constitute the intellectual foundation of the Valley’s *doutrina*.²³ In addition to writing a series of theological works systematizing Neiva’s visions and explaining the spiritual realities they purported to reveal, Sassi authored a biography about Neiva and edited

her writings, which consist mostly of short epistles outlining principles of the *doutrina* or exhorting her followers to embody them. Together with Sassi's books, these *cartas* or letters hold canonical status among Valley members.

But Sassi's contributions to the Valley went beyond recording and interpreting Neiva's visions: he also served as the movement's "secretary-general" and official spokesperson. In this position he received journalists, researchers, religious authorities, and other visiting dignitaries, gave interviews to the press, trained other mediums, gave lectures on the *doutrina*, and helped consolidate the Valley's corpus of rituals. In 1978 he was consecrated as one of the "Trinos Triada Presidentes," the apex of the Valley's leadership hierarchy just below Tia Neiva. However, a couple of years after Neiva's death, and as a result of internal clashes with the other Trinos, Sassi left the *doutrina* to found his own spiritual community in a nearby town. He died in 1995 and the community he founded fell apart, with many of its members returning to the Valley. Despite his differences with the movement's leadership after Tia Neiva's death, Sassi today is held in great esteem by Valley members who remember him as a great intellectual and "spiritual scientist." Many of his teaching talks are available for purchase on CD and his books continue to be sold in the Valley.²⁴

An avid reader of Spiritist literature with an interest in psychic phenomena, Sassi drew freely from his studies in various esoteric philosophies to interpret Tia Neiva's visions.²⁵ In particular, he saw parallels between Neiva's descriptions of her astral adventures and the accounts of Brazilian Spiritist writers Edgard Armond (1894–1982) and Francisco Cândido (Chico) Xavier (1910–2002), to which Sassi occasionally made reference.²⁶ The idea of a group of technologically advanced extraterrestrials sent to Earth from the planet Capela, for example, was the central premise of Armond's 1949 work, *The Exiles of Capela*. Sassi's reading also exposed him to a network of ideas shared worldwide among other Spiritist, Theosophical, and Esoteric groups, and his writings are filled with references to animal magnetism, vibratory planes, ectoplasmic energies, reincarnation, and other concepts prominent in the literature associated with those movements.

Like other millennial and UFO groups of the New Age movement, Valley members believe that Earth is on the cusp of a new era of spiritual enlightenment, and that through their individual and collective efforts they are preparing humanity for transformation to the Third Millennium, the transition to which most participants believe is already underway.²⁷ From Kardecist Spiritism, the Valley inherited an emphasis on mediumship, and the conception of a universe composed of a material plane surrounded and interpenetrated by a series of astral or spirit planes. After death, the individual's disincarnate spirit lives on in one of these planes, according to his or her level of moral evolution and

wisdom, continually being reincarnated on Earth in order to redress karmic debts and learn appropriate lessons that will facilitate spiritual evolution. By developing their faculties of mediumship (two forms of which are recognized by the Valley: fully conscious and partially conscious), adherents become sensitive to spiritual realities and are able to manipulate spiritual energies that foster their own evolution and help others suffering from afflictions that are spiritual in origin.

The highly evolved “spirits of light” cultivated by Valley members as spiritual guides or mentors have completed their own reincarnational process and have chosen to help incarnate humans evolve. But lower-level spirits also can attach themselves to human beings, provoking all manner of psychological and physical problems. Much of the Valley’s day-to-day work consists of performing a variety of healing rituals intended to “indoctrinate” these troublesome spirits and guide them to their proper place in the universe. Once these “obsessing” spirits have been removed, an individual’s “energetic” field can be restored to equilibrium.

BRAZIL OF THE 1960S AND 1970S

While elements of the Valley’s *doutrina* pertain to a global milieu of ideas and practices often glossed as New Age, the *doutrina* itself took definitive shape within the specific context of Brazil during the 1960s and 1970s, a period of tremendous economic and social transformation driven partly by state-sponsored efforts to modernize the country. Beginning in the 1950s, large federal investments in heavy industry, infrastructure, and transportation, along with the expansion of national markets for consumer goods, had intensified urbanization and the development of an industrialized working class. As the national economy shifted its orientation from agricultural exports to modern industry, thousands of rural laborers and peasants from impoverished agricultural states in the northeast moved southward seeking work in factories, mines, and the ancillary service industries that sprang up around them.²⁸ Like Tia Neiva, many headed for central Brazil to work in the construction of Brasília, the new capital city built in the late 1950s whose creation captured the popular imagination. Many of the nationalist and mystical expectations that built up around Brasília found expression in the religion that Tia Neiva and Mario Sassi created.

Emerging *ex nihilo* in the arid plateau of central Brazil, Brasília was a vivid symbol of the nation’s rush to modernity, the centerpiece of the promise made by President Juscelino Kubitschek (1956–1961) to achieve “fifty years progress in five.”²⁹ Designed by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, protégés of the great twentieth-century urbanist Le Corbusier, and built in a little over three years, the new capital was intended

to inaugurate a new era for the country, galvanizing the economy and catapulting Brazil from the third to the first world.³⁰

From its very beginning, Brasília was invested not only with national but also cosmic significance. Kubitschek himself often referred to the prophecies of nineteenth-century Salesian monk, Dom João Bosco (1815–1888), as confirmation that Brasília was predestined for greatness.³¹ Legend has it that in 1883 the Italian mystic dreamed he was traveling in South America between the fifteenth and twentieth parallels when he came upon “a land of incomparable riches,” and was told by an angel that “a Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey” would be unearthed there.³² Brasília’s planners were quick to note that this location corresponded to the coordinates of the city, and Dom Bosco’s vision became one of several foundation myths recognized in the city’s history books and popular lore.³³

Other forms of mystical speculation focused on the city’s layout and architecture. Brasília was said to be a repository of energetic power points and cryptic symbols indicating its supernatural origins. A popular book still sold in various kiosks throughout Brasília, for example, identifies various pyramidal structures and numerologically significant codes ostensibly inscribed in the city’s built environment as evidence that the inspirational force behind its construction was the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten, reincarnated in the body of Juscelino Kubitschek.³⁴ Others interpret the city’s airplane-shaped *Plano Piloto*, Costa’s original layout for the city, as proof that Brasília and its environs are centers of enhanced spiritual and cosmic energy that facilitates communication with extraterrestrials. Valley members share these convictions, considering the area to be a special center of “irradiation” where the Capelans have focused their missionary efforts and a new Promised Land where the Third Millennium will be realized.³⁵

Despite the optimistic future the new capital seemed to herald, soon after its official inauguration political chaos engulfed the country. Kubitschek’s successor resigned after a year in office, and conflict erupted over the succession of his left-leaning vice president, who was accused of being a communist. In 1964, a right-wing military faction seized power and declared a state of emergency, instituting measures to suppress political parties and labor unions, censor the media, and restrict civil liberties. Deprived of peaceful avenues for protest, some radicals went underground, forming guerrilla groups in urban areas such as Rio and São Paulo, where they conducted high-profile bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, and bank robberies. As the regime battled these domestic enemies the repression intensified, peaking in the late 1960s. By the mid-1970s the military government’s campaign of torture and surveillance had succeeded in destroying the armed resistance, and rising unemployment and inflation were plunging the country into an economic depression.

Meanwhile, a few kilometers away from Brasília, Tia Neiva and Mario Sassi served a population largely left behind in the rush towards modernity: illiterate immigrants, struggling rural families, abandoned children, and all manner of ill, mentally disturbed, and destitute inhabitants of poverty-ridden satellite cities that developed around the outskirts of the capital.³⁶ They established an orphanage and, along with a small group of mediums, provided a range of spiritual services and other forms of assistance to a growing clientele of supplicants. Sassi reported that in these early years they often worked from dawn until dusk to attend long lines of people.³⁷ The community grew slowly at first, but as the Valley's reputation spread it swelled to several hundred, then several thousand members. By the time of Tia Neiva's death in 1985, the Valley of the Dawn had become an established religion with thousands of members and a number of affiliated temples in other Brazilian states.

DETERRITORIALIZATION: LOCAL FRONTS IN A COSMIC WAR

Born in a difficult and confusing period in Brazil's history, the Valley reflects the distinctive *zeitgeist* of its foundational era in many ways. Traces of the political, cultural, and social effects of the country's rush to modernize—itsself deeply intertwined with various processes of globalization—are reflected in the religious imaginary developed by Tia Neiva and Mario Sassi. Translated into the language of supernatural influences, some of these processes are directly apparent. Others, such as time-space compression and deterritorialization, are more evident as structuring elements within the Valley's cosmology, ontology, and repertoire of ritual practices.

The political turbulence of the 1960s was directly addressed in Tia Neiva's early visions. In a series of revelations chronicled in Sassi's writings, Neiva was told by her spirit mentors that Brazil's political upheaval was actually the manifestation of a primordial drama begun millennia ago when a group of spirits revolted against their Capelan masters. Full of ego and consumed by their lust for power, these rogue spirits, known as Falcons, continued their struggle over the ages by working through human beings to carry out their nefarious plans for earthly dominance. Particularly susceptible to their baleful influence were politicians, intellectuals, and scientists.

According to Johnson Plata, a Capelan who frequently appeared to Tia Neiva in visions, "the Falcons are very adept in politics and form a specialized group. Their capacity to influence public men is so great that many times these men are taken over by hallucinations and commit the greatest aberrations."³⁸ In this fashion, the Falcons were able to "disturb the political-administrative life of the country, as they are doing

presently.”³⁹ As the political situation became more chaotic, Johnson Plata advised Neiva to move her community temporarily from its location along the highway leading to Brasília, warning:

That area along the highway to Brasília is going to be very dangerous in the next days. The present administration of your country is practically dominated by Falcons, and we are concentrating all of our efforts so that the Brazilian problem is resolved without bloodshed. One of the alternatives is the renunciation of the current President. But this will create problems of another nature, since the Vice President is subject to corruption of his power. It is very probable that there will be a revolution. For this reason, we want our tribe to move away from there. Our mission is very delicate and we don't want to risk it.⁴⁰

Effectively dislocating these events from their immediate social and historical contexts, Neiva's vision relocated them within a more expansive framework that assigned ultimate agency to forces distant in both space and time. In this deterritorialization, local politics were construed as a consequence of global and cosmic forces. At the same time, by working with the Capelans to carry out their mission and counter the Falcons, Tia Neiva and her community became participants in a great mythic drama that had both national and cosmic significance.

Beyond deterritorializing the political machinations that led to Brazil's military coup, these and other revelations about the Falcons also reveal a deep ambivalence about science and the technological achievements of modernity. The appropriate use of science, considered both a civilizing agent as well as a source of great harm, is a matter that receives a great deal of attention within the Valley's *doutrina*. According to the Valley, the Falcons were members of a group of missionaries originally sent from Capela to facilitate humanity's spiritual and cultural evolution. Because of their great scientific knowledge and technical abilities, they had “an important civilizing mission” and were behind many of early humanity's important steps on the long march from primitive to civilized, imparting, for example, the knowledge of metal smelting and other skills that enabled early humans to exploit their environments. In time, however, the Falcons “developed their pride to a point that they overcame the beneficent influences of their masters and overdeveloped their reason and egocentrism.”⁴¹ In Sassi's account, rather than return to Capela, these spirits “remained in the ethereal plane, forming a true army of scientists there, principally chemists and physicists. Eternally preoccupied with intellectual knowledge, they founded on the ethereal plane great schools and universities similar to those on Earth.”⁴² From these schools, the Falcons attempt to lead humans away from the “path of Master Jesus,” the Christian laws of love, forgiveness, humility, and concern for others.⁴³ Their influence is evident wherever “man, blind with pride, judges that his scientific

knowledge gives him divine powers.”⁴⁴ From the Valley’s perspective, this egocentric use of science is one of the greatest problems of the modern age, a problem Sassi returned to frequently in his writings and one that provided a foil for the Valley’s own understanding of science.

MODERN SCIENCE VERSUS SPIRITUAL SCIENCE

Modern science, rather than bringing greater prosperity and peace to ever more people, has been used for exploitative and even inhumane purposes. “This phenomenon,” Sassi observed, was “particularly evident in this second half of the twentieth century, in which scientific achievements, for example, coexist with the progressive devaluation of human beings.” He continued:

While scientists put thousands of costly satellites in orbit and manufacture expensive atomic bombs, whole populations die of hunger and the planet’s surface vanishes in the progressive destruction of nature. This [discrepancy] is the fundamental aspect of all of the problems that afflict humans.⁴⁵

Threatening the life of the planet itself, the “current sorcerer’s apprentices,” as Sassi described them, “are pleased to ‘sweep’ territories with their atomic bombs, forgetting that they are unable to stop the ‘broom’ and ‘buckets of water’ [from destroying everything].”⁴⁶ Having fallen under the sway of the Falcons, modern scientists are like “sorcerer’s apprentices” using their valuable knowledge to gratify their own egos and in the service of conquest and earthly domination, rather than “according to spiritual criteria” that will enlighten humanity and fulfill the divine plan.⁴⁷ By focusing exclusively on the physical plane and discounting the spiritual, science impedes humanity’s spiritual development. It no longer serves as an instrument of progressive human evolution, but rather perpetuates destruction and suffering.

In the Valley’s understanding, science must be counterbalanced by faith. Indeed, the Valley sees its mission as unifying science and faith, an endeavor symbolized in Valley iconography by a giant ellipse in purple (representing faith) and yellow (representing science), colors that also adorn the sashes worn by Valley members.⁴⁸

A popular saying of Tia Neiva encapsulates this balance: “faith that negates science is as useless as science that negates faith.” Science counters faith’s tendency towards blind dogmatism while faith opens science to spiritual realities.⁴⁹

Accordingly, Valley members don’t understand themselves to be involved in a faith-based religion at all, but rather a *doutrina* or learning process grounded in scientific principles. “This is not exactly a religion,”



Photo 4. One of seven ellipses in and around the Mother Temple.
Courtesy of Kelly E. Hayes.

a high-level male member informed me in 2010. “It’s a spiritual science. We are scientists of the spiritual world.”⁵⁰ Notwithstanding these and similar claims by adherents of the *doutrina*, it should be noted that the “science” practiced at the Valley ignores widely agreed upon rules about naturalistic explanations, empirical evidence, and experimental verifiability upheld by conventional scientists, and consists largely of assertions about the “scientific” nature of various spiritual practices and beliefs and theological literature purporting to explain them methodically as “scientifically” based.

The concern to present the *doutrina* as based on sound scientific principles is particularly evident in Sassi's work, which is filled with dense explanations of the technical details involved in arcane processes like astral travel as well as a host of other supernatural or otherwise empirically unverifiable phenomena. Indeed, while Valley members revere Tia Neiva as a prophet-like figure, Sassi is remembered as "the professor and scientist of the Valley of the Dawn" responsible for "translating the spirituality that manifested through Tia Neiva into a complete spiritual science."⁵¹ In practice, this meant that Sassi was at pains to explain Neiva's complex and sometimes baffling accounts of out-of-body travel or contact with alien life forms on other planets as logically consistent and compatible with science. He often appealed to technologies of modern life for explanatory analogies. Searching for ways to explain, for example, how extraterrestrial beings from distant Capela were able to communicate with Neiva, he invoked the time-space compression of modern communication systems: just as a radio or television set could instantly receive information beamed to it from far away, so extraterrestrial beings or spirits could project themselves instantaneously across the barriers of space and time.

This kind of receptivity, which the Valley considers a type of spirit mediumship, was not limited to Tia Neiva, but is available to all humans. As I detail below, by serving as receptors for "ectoplasmic" energies from different "vibratory planes," mediums are able to communicate with and even manifest spirits from distant times and faraway places.

TIME-SPACE COMPRESSION: MEDIUMSHIP

Mediumship is not only scientifically credible but also real because, according to Sassi, cosmic reality itself is composed of at least seven dimensions or "vibratory planes." Among these planes are the physical, the ethereal (or psychic), and the spiritual, corresponding to the body, the soul or psyche, and the spirit.⁵² Each dimension is subject to laws particular to it; thus, the physical plane is governed by the laws of physics that regulate the properties of and relationships between physical matter (including time and space), while psychic and spiritual phenomena, which do not possess physical properties, follow their own set of laws. The Capelans, thanks to their advanced spiritual and technical abilities, had developed ways of manipulating these dimensions that enabled them to project themselves (and appear to Neiva) on the ethereal plane without leaving the physical plane of Capela "in a system of projection similar to the transmission of images in a television."⁵³

According to the Valley, all human beings exist within these three planes, but most are conscious only of the first and, to a lesser extent, the second. With training and discipline, humans can develop heightened

powers of perception and other skills, including the ability to communicate with or manifest spirits who inhabit the spiritual plane and to “manipulate” the energetic forces of the ethereal plane. Such skills are understood as forms of mediumship and part of the Valley’s mission is to help people develop them.⁵⁴

A few extraordinary people like Tia Neiva possess a superior and exceedingly rare form of mediumship called *clarividência*, the most extensive form of time-space compression in the Valley’s *doutrina*. Sassi defined it as a form of “simultaneous consciousness,” which enables the person to exist and act within, while being fully conscious of, each vibratory plane simultaneously.⁵⁵ Because of her *clarividência*, Tia Neiva was conscious of and could act in each plane—physical, ethereal, and spiritual—independently, traveling backwards in time over multiple lifetimes and forward into the future, visiting distant planets like Capela as well as different civilizations at specific historical eras, and moving within and between dimensions, all while maintaining her normal existence in the terrestrial world.

According to Sassi, this extraordinary faculty enabled Tia Neiva to obtain information about the past and future of the Earth, learn techniques for manipulating energetic forces of other dimensions, and apprentice herself to the most highly evolved spirits as well as human masters.⁵⁶ Among the latter was a contemporaneous Buddhist monk named Humahã.⁵⁷ Although the monk lived in a monastery in the mountains of Tibet, for five years he and Tia Neiva met daily in the ethereal dimension where he instructed her in advanced esoteric teachings, including a technique of time-space compression that Sassi termed “doubling.” According to Sassi:

When doubling, the medium only projects a part of him or herself. This projection “goes” to another place, does what needs to be done, but with full [i.e., conscious] control in both locations. Depending on the technical-mediumship conditions, the part that is projected can even materialize in the location. Hence we characterize this phenomenon as ubiquity, the simultaneous presence of a person in two different places.⁵⁸

Neiva’s eventual mastery of doubling gave her access to the past and future of each individual, which enabled her to help people and effect spiritual cures. As Sassi described it:

In Neiva’s case, she might be listening to one person recount a story [about a second person] while engaged with that [second] person in a different place. While conversing [with the first person], she doubles herself, goes to the second place, sees that person, and returns, all in a fraction of a second, and this helps her counsel the [first] person. It’s also common for people to consult Neiva before a trip to see if everything will go well, if they should travel. Using the same technique, she verifies the outcome of the trip and advises them whether they should travel or not.⁵⁹

All experienced mediums are capable of this kind of doubling, although unlike Tia Neiva they do not retain complete consciousness of their simultaneous presence in each of the various dimensions. Nevertheless, the ability to direct what the *doutrina* calls “ectoplasmic energies” allows mediums to manipulate time and space, which are most “concentrated” on the physical plane. This has some interesting implications for the Valley’s understanding of the self.

TRANSCENDENTAL SELVES/TRANSCENDENTAL HERITAGES

Like other New Age movements, the Valley understands time as a cyclical flow in which present, past, and future are linked through the concepts of karma and reincarnation. Valley *doutrina* teaches that the individual’s present circumstances reflect the karmic accumulation of their previous lives just as their conduct in the present will affect future lives. However, this idea of a transcendental self has developed in a direction somewhat different from that of other New Age groups. Through a kind of time-space compression, Valley members not only have access to the trajectory of their past lives, but in collective rituals are able to reenact episodes from a vast “transcendental heritage” spanning the history of the planet. Moreover, certain rituals like the *trabalho* or “work” of the Turigano, discussed in the next section, are understood to “recover” past events whose negative karmic charges ripple out to the present day.⁶⁰ These rituals are thought to advance participants’ spiritual evolution as well as the planetary “readjustments” necessary for the Earth to enter the final stages of the Third Millennium.

At the most basic level, Valley *doutrina* teaches that each individual human being is comprised of a spirit temporarily incarnated in a physical body. While physicality is a passing state associated with terrestrial existence, the spirit itself is “transcendental,”⁶¹ existing both before and after the physical body and, following the laws of karma, periodically reincarnating on Earth. Like many other groups influenced by Spiritist literature, popular in Brazil since the writings of Allan Kardec (1804–1869) first began to circulate in the late nineteenth century, the Valley understands the Earth to be a place of expiation where one can either make amends for one’s karmic debts, evolving into a higher state, or accrue new karmic debts, thus extending the cycle of reincarnation into the future.

Reincarnation on Earth is more than just a punishment; it is a precious opportunity to work towards one’s own spiritual evolution as well as that of the entire planet. Because we are now entering the Third Millennium, however, there is an urgency that Valley members feel. As one woman explained, “because of the ascendancy of the planet,

passing on to another dimension, a higher dimension . . . we have the opportunity to repay our karmic debts faster.”⁶² Having passed through various reincarnations before their present one, Valley members have acquired a significant number of karmic debts to repay.

The aggregate of these successive incarnations constitutes each member’s “transcendental heritage.” This heritage extends from the individual’s present incarnation as a Valley member back through time and space to a special group of missionaries from Capela. Originally sent to the Earth by Pai Seta Branca to establish the foundations for human evolution, these missionaries are known as Jaguars.⁶³ According to the *doutrina*, the Jaguars passed through multiple incarnations as kings and queens, culture heroes, warriors, healers, sacerdotes, artists, and scientists in diverse civilizations, but also generating karmic debts from their various activities on Earth. As spiritual descendents of the Jaguars, Valley members are the products of this “transcendental heritage.” Their presence at the Valley enables them to continue the Jaguars’ original mission of facilitating humanity’s spiritual evolution through rituals of spiritual healing offered nearly round-the-clock at the temple, but it also offers them opportunities to liquidate their own karmic debts before the transition to the Third Millennium is complete. At that time, Valley members believe, the Earth will enter the Age of Aquarius and the era of karmic redemption will close.

Tia Neiva taught that upon disincarnating, spirits with similar karmic profiles become associated with one another in the astral world. Over the course of millennia, these groups of like-minded spirits form what is called a *falange*, or phalanx. The Jaguars themselves constitute one such *falange*, but there are many others recognized at the Valley. Some of the most important, particularly for female adherents, are the *falanges missionárias* (missionary phalanxes). After passing through the requisite initiations, Valley members can join any one of the twenty-two *falanges missionárias*; twenty are reserved for women and two for men. Their choice is understood to be a result of something in that individual’s past lives or “transcendental biography” that links them to that *falange*, in other words the individual is the product of earlier incarnations that pertain to that *falange*. Each *falange* has a special *indumentária*, or identifying uniform, as well as specific tasks to perform in one or more of the Valley’s many rituals as well as a complementary role they play on the spiritual plane, typically assisting other spirits who are lost at some point in their transcendental past and guiding them to their appropriate place in the astral world.

Members say that the *falanges missionárias* were “brought by Tia Neiva from the spiritual plane” in the course of her travels through time and space. Each possesses its own unique transcendental heritage: a kind of spiritual force field generated by disincarnate spirits from different times and places who have joined together because of their similar karmic profiles. *Falanges missionárias* are thus transnational as well as

transcendent, and include spirits from civilizations and eras spanning the globe, from Old Kingdom Egypt to ancient Greece and Sparta, and on through first-century Palestine, medieval Spain, revolutionary France, czarist Russia, and so on. Also represented are pre-Colombian Incans, Mayans, and other indigenous tribes. The most important of these incarnations gives each *falange* its name.

Olivia, whom I interviewed in 2010, explained the Dharmo-Oxinto *falange*.⁶⁴ The name Dharmo-Oxinto, she told me, “means the path of God. We originated in Egypt during the era of the Pharaoh, the Ramses.” Like all Valley members, Olivia learned about the transcendental heritage of the Dharmo-Oxinto in courses she completed at the Valley and in and her own study of Tia Neiva’s sayings and messages as well as Sassi’s works and other secondary materials that have accumulated since Tia Neiva’s death. Much of this is available online. The Valley’s official website, for example, lists the histories of each *falange*. It describes the Dharmo-Oxinto as the original “priestesses of Horus with great gifts of healing.”⁶⁵ In other incarnations, Dharmo-Oxinto helped wounded soldiers in the Peloponnesian wars, lived as cloistered Catholic nuns in France, and as gypsies in Andalusia “enchanted noblemen and kings with their magic and beauty.”⁶⁶ According to Valley members, this transcendental past and its cumulative karma of compassion and succor endows members of the Dharmo-Oxinto *falange* (and other *falanges*) with an enhanced ability to manipulate beneficial spiritual energies in Valley rituals.

A *falange* member who has developed the requisite skills of mediumship can access specific points in the vast transcendental heritage of her *falange*, temporarily channeling an earlier identity or even interacting with other spirits associated with a particular time and place. This access to the transcendental past is an important component of the Valley’s notion of karmic redemption: by “recuperating” their transcendental heritages, Valley members can “correct the errors” of the past through a form of time-space compression made possible by particular rituals. For example, in the weekly ritual of the Turigano, various Valley members act as a collective to correct errors generated by an event that supposedly took place in ancient Greece. They do so by reenacting the event in an “indoctrinated” form that reflects Jesus’ Law of Forgiveness, thereby *suavizando* (softening or reducing) its karmic effects.

RECUPERATING A TRANSCENDENTAL HERITAGE: THE TURIGANO

The ritual of the Turigano is one of a number of regularly performed rituals that purport to “recuperate” a significant episode in the Jaguars’ collective past to facilitate the spiritual evolution of present-day

Jaguars.⁶⁷ The ritual itself refers to the period when Jaguars were incarnated as soldiers and citizens of ancient Sparta. It centers on the legendary warrior-hero Leonidas, a Spartan king during the fifth century B.C.E. known for leading an alliance of Greek forces against the invading Persians at the battle of Thermopylae. With his forces greatly outnumbered by the Persians, Leonidas perished and the Greeks were routed. Legend has it that the king had been warned of his death by the oracle of Delphi, which declared that Sparta would only be spared from destruction at the hands of the Persians by the death of the king.⁶⁸

Tia Neiva's version of the story retains the figures of King Leonidas and the oracle of Delphi but elaborates considerably, adding a whole new character, an exiled queen around whom the action revolves. In this version, Leonidas was the younger son of the King of Sparta, to whom the king had chosen to pass his throne. According to the story told by Valley members, Leonidas' elder brother, seeking to overthrow Leonidas, went to the King of Athens and asked him to raise an army to defeat his younger brother. However, Leonidas learned of the plot to overthrow him and took action, kidnapping and imprisoning the Athenian king's daughter. In despair, the King of Athens sought assistance from the Oracle of Delphi, the shrine of Apollo presided over by the priestess Pythia, whom Valley members understand to be one of Tia Neiva's past incarnations.⁶⁹ Pythia, seeking the liberation of the exiled queen, went to intercede with Leonidas, but "while Leonidas left with his protecting troops, the great disaster was already happening: the opposing force was hiding and no one knows what happened to the exiled queen."⁷⁰ Valley members consider this version to be historically accurate and to have generated a legacy of karmic debt for the Jaguars, the Spartans' spiritual descendents, which ripples out to the present day.

The reenactment of this story in the ritual of the Turigano is a complex affair involving dozens of participants, including various highly evolved spirits of light, represented by special mediums, as well as members of the *falanges misionárias*.⁷¹ Because of the Dharmo-Oxintos' role in the Peloponnesian war as battlefield nurses and war widows, their presence is essential. Together with other representatives of diverse offices within the Valley's complex spiritual and administrative hierarchies, they form a "court" of persons who bring their combined spiritual powers to the proceedings. Following a lengthy series of ritual pronouncements that "open the current" for the ritual, the participants are asked to:

Bring your thoughts to the frontier of karmic destinies, because within a few minutes, we will be revisited by our Peloponnesian kings, guided by the great Apollo. Pythia will bring the transcendent law of Turigano, with the order of God all mighty father, to take all the bitterness from our hearts, returning to us the cup of life, the achievement, power, and light which shall pulse throughout our being.⁷²

After the representatives of elevated spirits participating in the ritual announce their presence and recount their particular spiritual lineages, a female medium representing Pythia engages in a ritualized exchange with Leonidas (also represented by a medium), telling him that “only his goodwill can free [the exiled queen].” To this, the medium standing in for Leonidas asks her to submit to a test: if Pythia can make the drums play by themselves, he will release the queen. After Pythia has satisfied his request, Leonidas replies that he wants “to be one of the many Spartans to bring offerings to your oracle and lay them at your feet! Bring the queen, who will no longer be exiled. . . .”⁷³

By reenacting a different ending to the story of the exiled queen, participants “recover” this transcendental history and transform it into a source of positive, rather than negative, karma for all Valley members. The actions of Leonidas and Pythia in the liberation of the exiled queen, as ritually performed by their spiritual descendents and representatives, are understood to exemplify Jesus’ law of love and forgiveness, and thereby ameliorate the pain and suffering provoked by the original event. This ritual reenactment not only lessens the negative karmic load of the original events, it also demonstrates the superiority of the spiritual forces represented by Tia Neiva (and manipulated by present-day Jaguars) over the warlike forces of ancient Sparta. By continually working to transform the negative karma they have accumulated in the course of multiple lifetimes through the ritually enacted time-space compression made possibly in ceremonies like the Turigano, present-day Jaguars work to recover their shared transcendental heritage and transform it in preparation for the Third Millennium.

GLOBALIZATION AND THE VALLEY OF THE DAWN

In the Valley of the Dawn, we see a local religious imagination reconfiguring social, political, economic, and technological changes associated with modernity and globalization, and forging them into a unique cosmological vision. The transnational flows of ideas, images, and narratives associated with deterritorialization and other contemporary processes of globalization⁷⁴ are readily apparent in the Valley’s multicultural pantheon, which assimilates a wide variety of supernatural entities and historical figures from different eras and contexts, as well as elements from Spiritualism, Christianity, and Theosophical and other Esoteric traditions—themselves examples of transnational movements.

Understood as a set of conceptual changes that impact how we understand time and space, the effects of globalization also are reflected on the deeper level of cosmology, ontology, and ritual performance. I have tried to sketch how processes like time-space compression function as “structuring structures” within the Valley’s distinctive religious

imaginary. Thus we see repeated in various ways processes in which temporal and spatial barriers are dissolved—if only at the level of the imaginary—and local events are conjoined to those that are distant in both time and space. In rituals like the Turigano, for example, Valley members revisit episodes in their mythical past in order to “recuperate” them, transforming past errors by performing new endings for long-ago events. Although far removed from the Valley’s temporal and spatial location, these events nevertheless are considered to have continuing karmic effects as part of the community’s transcendental heritage. Their ritual recuperation is considered indispensable for the participants’ spiritual evolution and the planetary readjustments necessary before the current age of karmic redemption ends and the Earth passes definitively to a new phase.

Similarly, in the spiritual powers attributed to Tia Neiva we can discern an imaginative form of time-space compression that enabled her to travel to distant times and places while continuing her physical life on Earth, conscious of her actions and able to act simultaneously in all these different space-times. Valley members attest that in her intergalactic travels, Tia Neiva brought back from the spiritual plane the various *falanges missionárias*, each of which, like the Dharmo-Oxinto, is believed to share a unique transcendental trajectory that spans time and space. Through the time-space compression that mediumship enables, *falange* members are able to access these different incarnations, manipulating the positive karma of this energetic force field for diverse ends, as in the ritual of the Turigano.

However, even as the conceptual changes associated with globalization and the technology of modern communications structure how Valley members understand phenomena like mediumship, the *doutrina* displays a distinctively ambivalent attitude towards science and technology more generally. Although science is accepted unquestioningly as a legitimate and authoritative explanatory paradigm, the technological developments science has made possible are deeply problematic from the Valley’s perspective. Indeed, in the Valley’s religious imaginary, national political life and modern science are understood to be deeply interconnected, with disturbances in one area related to distortions in the other.

In an increasingly interconnected world, the Valley of the Dawn offers its members an identity unbounded by time and space. This deterritorialized identity is rooted in something we might gloss as both “transnational” and “transcendent”: a state that integrates past, present, and future in a kind of cosmic citizenship in which distinctions of space and place, past and present are blurred. Some authors have suggested that deterritorialization and other dynamics associated with contemporary processes of globalization have contributed to the emergence of fundamentalist religious movements that seek to foster an intense sense

of attachment to local territories, thereby reinscribing an almost provincial attachment to the local as a way of dealing with the various disjunctive effects of globalization. The Valley of the Dawn provides another example of the complex relationships between religion and globalization, one in which the religious imagination responds to the disjunctures of the modern world by grounding identity not in local spaces, or by attempting to recreate the social conditions associated with an idealized past, but in an imagined world that is both transnational and transcendent.

ENDNOTES

¹ My translation; thanks to Eliza Teixeira Duarte for checking it. The song appears on *Doces Bárbaros*, Veloso's 1976 double album with Gilberto Gil, Maria Bethânia, and Gal Costa. This and all other translations from the Portuguese are my own.

² Obras Sociais da Ordem Espiritualista Cristã-Vale do Amanhecer.

³ The story of Veloso's composition is recounted in Maria Cristina de Castro Martins, "O Amanhecer de Uma Nova Era: Um Estudo da Simbiose Espaço Sagrado/Rituais do Vale do Amanhecer," in *Antes do Fim do Mundo: Milenarismos e Messianismos no Brasil e na Argentina*, ed. Leonarda Musumeci (Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 2004), 120. The use of elaborate feathered headgear was found among some Great Plains tribes in North America, but not among the South American tribes that Valley members associate with Pai Seta Branca. This is one among many examples of the Valley's synthesis of images, narratives, symbols, and other elements drawn from disparate sources into a wholly new imagined world.

⁴ On the apostle John as a reincarnation of Pai Seta Branca, see José Carlos do Nascimento Silva, "O Evangelho do Jaguar" (self-published pamphlet, 2001), 3. See also "Jesus," *Observações Tunarã*, at <<http://www.obstumara.com.br/doutrina/10-j/418-jesus.html>>, accessed 2 October 2012.

⁵ There are some differences in the ways individual Valley members understand the relationship between Pai Seta Branca and Jesus Christ. For some, Pai Seta Branca is a highly evolved spirit of light occupying the same evolutionary level as Jesus, spoken of as "Jesus' right hand," a divine brother or spiritual equal. In what Valley members call *cantos*, discursive formulations intoned in ritual settings, Pai Seta Branca often is referred to as Jesus' brother. See Marcelo Rodrigues Reis, "Tia Neiva: A Trajetória de Uma Líder Religiosa e Sua Obra, O Vale do Amanhecer (1925–2008)," Ph.D. diss., University of Brasília, 2008, 174, 187. For references to Pai Seta Branca as the "right hand of Jesus," see Ana Lúcia Galinkin, *A Cura no Vale do Amanhecer* (Brasília: TechnoPolitik, 2008), 67. Similarly, a formal prayer to Pai Seta Branca suggests that he shares Jesus' divinity but at the same time is separate from him: "Divine Seta Branca, You are the Law of God, immaculate art Thou, together at the feet of Jesus. Seta Branca our beloved, You are the Love and the Light, that illuminates tyrannical hearts, guiding your children to Jesus." See Carmem Lúcia Zelaya, *Os Símbolos na*

Doutrina do Vale do Amanhecer: Sob Os Olhos da Clarividente (Brasília: Tia Neiva Publications, 2009), 108. Others understand the relationship in an “*ordem decrescente*,” a descending spiritual order with Jesus occupying the highest position and Pai Seta Branca working in harmony with, but positioned beneath, Jesus. Despite these differences, Valley members agree that Pai Seta Branca—not Jesus—plays the messianic role of assisting humanity in the turbulent transition to the Third Millennium.

⁶ According to *Observações Tumarã*, a website dedicated to clarifying Valley doctrine and maintained by José Carlos do Nascimento Silva, a high-ranking member of the Valley’s leadership whose official title is Trino Regente Triada Tumarã: “Pai Seta Branca is one of the names received by the luminous spirit of Oxalá, the powerful orixá who presides over the karmic development of our planet and to whom was given the mission of spiritualizing humanity.” See “Pai Seta Branca,” *Observações Tumarã*, at <<http://www.obstumara.com.br/doutrina/16-p/557-pai-seta-branca.html>>, accessed 6 July 2012.

⁷ See James Holston, “Alternative Modernities: Statecraft and Religious Imagination in the Valley of the Dawn,” *American Ethnologist* 26, no. 3 (1999): 618.

⁸ David Harvey, *The Culture of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 240.

⁹ Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992), 8; Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990).

¹⁰ On the globalization of capitalism, see Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, eds., *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001); and Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, “Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming,” *Public Culture* 12, no. 2 (2000): 291–345.

¹¹ Thomas J. Csordas, “Modalities of Transnational Transcendence,” in *Transnational Transcendence: Essays on Religion and Globalization*, ed. Thomas J. Csordas (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 1.

¹² Csordas, “Modalities of Transnational Transcendence,” 3.

¹³ The concept of the social imaginary has a long history in the social scientific literature, particularly among the French. In the English language literature, Benedict Anderson, Charles Taylor, and Arjun Appadurai, among others, have used the concept to good effect. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1991); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions Of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); and Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ These descriptions are not meant to be exhaustive. They represent a distillation of many different sources, including: William Scheuerman, “Globalization,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, (Summer 2010), at <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2010/entries/globalization/>>; Frank Lechner, The Globalization Website, at <<http://www.sociology.emory.edu/globalization/index.html>>, accessed 2 October 2012; Harvey, *Culture of Postmodernity*; Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*; Robertson, *Globalization*; and Appadurai, *Modernity At Large*. Most of these sources use somewhat different

terms to describe similar processes; I have drawn on their descriptions, synthesizing and in some cases combining them in my own definitions.

¹⁵ Or as Harvey put it, time-space compression refers to “processes that so revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves.” Harvey, *Culture of Postmodernity*, 240.

¹⁶ Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*, 142.

¹⁷ Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy,” *Public Culture* 2, no. 2 (1990): 6–7.

¹⁸ The Valley’s official website claims there are 656 registered temples. “Vale do Amanhecer,” at <<http://valedoamanhecer.com/va/>>, accessed 2 October 2012. The figure of 800,000 adherents is from current Valley president Raul Zelaya Chaves’ preface in Deis Siqueira, Marcelo Reis, Jairo Zelaya Leite, and Rodrigo M. Ramasotte, *Vale do Amanhecer: Inventário Nacional de Referências Culturais* (Brasília: Superintendência do IPHAN no Distrito Federal, 2010), 9.

¹⁹ The origin myth emphasizes Tia Neiva’s pioneering status as Brazil’s first licensed female truck driver. See Ana Lúcia Galinkin, *A Cura no Vale do Amanhecer* (Brasília: TechnoPolitik, 2008), 49–51. For a more complete biography of Tia Neiva, see Marcelo Reis, “Tia Neiva: Traços de um Itinerário Existencial,” in Siqueira *et al*, *Vale do Amanhecer*, 163–231.

²⁰ Mestre Itamir Damião - Adjunto Prerô, *Apostila de Recepção* (Vale do Amanhecer, n.p., 2004), 7.

²¹ The Valley’s roots go back to this earlier organization called the União Espiritualista Seta Branca (Spiritualist Union Seta Branca), or UESB, founded in 1959 by Tia Neiva, and a medium called Mother Neném. The community subsequently was divided by jealousies and theological differences, and in 1964 Tia Neiva, along with her family members and followers, moved to Taguatinga, a satellite town on Brasília’s periphery. In 1965 she met Mario Sassi and in 1969, on the orders of Pai Seta Branca, Tia Neiva and Sassi founded the Valley of the Dawn in a rural area near Planaltina. The town that has since grown up around the temple also is called Valley of the Dawn. For the basic history of these events see Mario Sassi, *2000: A Conjunção de Dois Planos* (Brasília: Editora Vale do Amanhecer, 1974), 5–6. The original text lacks page numbers; the numbers given here refer to the PDF version I was given by a Valley member. See also Reis, “Vale do Amanhecer: Aspectos de Sua Dimensão Cultural,” in Siqueira *et al*, *Vale do Amanhecer*, 100–09; Galinkin, *Cura no Vale do Amanhecer*, 45–46; Aracky Martins Rodrigues, and Francine Muel-Dreyfus, “Reencarnações: Notas de Pesquisa sobre uma Seita Espírita de Brasília,” in *Indivíduo, Grupo e Sociedade: Estudos de Psicologia Social*, by Aracky Martins Rodrigues (São Paulo: Editora USP, 2005), 238–39.

²² Sassi himself describes their first encounter and its affect on him in *Conjunção*, 2–4. The quote is from p. 4.

²³ Although it is impossible to know with certainty which parts of the Valley’s *doutrina* came from Sassi and which came from Neiva (who always emphasized her Catholic upbringing and seems to have shown little interest in intellectual pursuits), it is clear that Sassi was instrumental in its creation. Neiva’s grandson, Jairo Oliveira Leite Junior, described Sassi in an interview as involved in “the

work of translating knowledge that she herself had difficulty assimilating and transmitting,” suggesting that Neiva did not always understand the revelations she claimed to receive. Jairo Oliveira Leite Junior, “O Jovem Diretor da Biblioteca do Jaguar,” *Jornal do Jaguar* 1, no. 2 (November/December 2005): 3. Sassi wrote that Pai Seta Branca had given him the mission of “giving testimony to the Spirit of Truth.” See Sassi, *Conjunção*, 4–5. On the various contributions of Tia Neiva and Mario Sassi to the Valley, see Galinkin, *Cura no Vale do Amanhecer*; Reis, “Tia Neiva: Traços de um Itinerário Existencial,” in Siqueira *et al*, *Vale do Amanhecer*, 192–203; Erich Gomes Marques, “Os Poderes do Estado no Vale do Amanhecer: Percursos Religiosos, Práticas Espirituais e Cura,” M.A. thesis, University of Brasília, 2009, 7.

²⁴ See Reis, “Tia Neiva: Traços de um Itinerário Existencial,” 194–200. On Sassi’s departure from the Valley see Marques, “Os Poderes do Estado,” 8–9. Sassi himself wrote several letters detailing his perspective on the schism, which he attributed to the other Trinos’ refusal to sanction his work with the spirit of Tia Neiva, whom Sassi claimed was being incorporated by a medium. Three of these letters written in 1990 are available under the heading “A Cisão” (the Schism) at <http://www.valedoamanhecer.net.br/publique/news_content.php?fileName=271>, accessed 18 August 2012.

²⁵ According to historian and Valley member Marcelo Reis, who has written extensively about Tia Neiva’s life and the development of the *doutrina*, Sassi was an intellectual dilettante who “never devoted himself to one specific branch of knowledge in which he could develop his intellectual aptitudes. He seems to have focused and channeled his education and intellectual capacity in favor of Tia Neiva’s ideal.” Reis, “Tia Neiva: Traços de um Itinerário Existencial,” 195.

²⁶ Edgard Armond, *Os Exilados da Capela* (São Paulo: Editora Aliança, 1987); Francisco Cândido Xavier, *Nosso Lar* (Rio de Janeiro: Federação Espírita Brasileira, 1944). These works were widely available in the 1960s and continue to be popular. Marcelo Reis discussed some of Sassi’s other intellectual influences in his doctoral thesis. See Reis, “Tia Neiva: A Trajetória de Uma Líder Religiosa,” 208–10.

²⁷ On the characteristics of New Age millennial groups, see Phillip Charles Lucas, “New Age Millennialism,” 567–86; and Robert Pearson Flaherty, “UFOs, ETs, and the Millennial Imagination,” 587–610, both in *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²⁸ Neiva herself sojourned through the states of Goiás, Minas Gerais, Paraná, and São Paulo in search of work before landing in the new federal district. See Damião, *Apostila de Recepção*, 4–7.

²⁹ As Kubitschek’s 1955 campaign promise put it. See James Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 84. The idea of moving the capital to the interior dated back to the middle of eighteenth century and had been championed by various statesmen as a means to populate and develop the country’s interior. The Republican Constitution of 1891 set aside 14,400 square kilometers in Central Plateau for this purpose. Holston, *Modernist City*, 17.

³⁰ Holston, *Modernist City*, 4.

³¹ See, for example, Juscelino Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília* (Rio de Janeiro: Bloch, 1975), 19.

³² Cited in Holston, *Modernist City*, 16, quoting Ernesto Silva.

³³ Holston, *Modernist City*, 16.

³⁴ Iara Kern, *De Aknaton a JK, das Pirâmides a Brasília* (Brasília: Coronário Editora, 1995).

³⁵ See Sassi, *Conjunção*, 48, 59. Today these and other beliefs about the mystical significance of the city and its association with extraterrestrial or other supernatural powers are not confined to the New Age movement, but are promoted in official government publications, pedagogical materials, tourist-oriented websites, and other media. The ideas are shared by *Brasilienses*, or inhabitants of the city, across lines of class, occupation, and religious affiliation. See Caroline S. Tauxe, “Mystics, Modernists, and Constructions of Brasília,” *Cultural Geographies* 3, no. 1 (1996): 45–46. As well, since its inauguration in 1960, the city has become a global destination for UFO enthusiasts, psychics, mystics, alternative healers, and spiritual seekers, and has attracted a wide variety of New Age, Esoteric, and mystical groups. See Tauxe, “Mystics,” 43.

³⁶ For sociological data on Valley members and clientele from the 1970s, see the timeline in Galinkin, *Cura no Vale do Amanhecer*, n.p.

³⁷ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 6.

³⁸ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 30.

³⁹ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 28.

⁴⁰ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 29–30. This accurately reflects events of the early 1960s, which saw the resignation of President Jânio Quadros and the subsequent overthrow of Vice-President João Goulart in a nearly bloodless coup that the military dubbed the “Revolution of 1964.” However, it is impossible to tell from Sassi’s description, published several years after the fact, whether the vision took place before the military coup or afterwards.

⁴¹ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 29.

⁴² Sassi, *Conjunção*, 29.

⁴³ According to Sassi, it had been revealed to Tia Neiva that one way the Falcons led people away from the path of Jesus was by creating the cult of the “bloody Jesus hung on the Cross.” Johnson Plata had informed Neiva that, “in reality, this Jesus is merely the reflection of your unconscious masochism, unrecognized pain and frustrations. The real Jesus Christ is all lightness, very different from your crucifixes and sculptures full of bloody red.” Sassi, *Conjunção*, 29.

⁴⁴ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 34.

⁴⁵ Sassi, *Uma Pequena Síntese da História, Atividades e Localização, no Tempo e no Espaço, do Movimento Doutrinário da Ordem Espiritualista Cristã, em Brasília, no Vale do Amanhecer* (Vale do Amanhecer, n.p., 1979), at <<http://origensdoamanhecer.blogspot.com/2011/12/o-que-e-o-vale-do-amanhecer.html>>, accessed 2 October 2012.

⁴⁶ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 53. The reference is to *Der Zauberlehrling* (“The Sorcerer’s Apprentice”), a poem by Goethe, which became much more widely known as a result of “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” scene in the Disney film *Fantasia* (1940).

⁴⁷ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 51–52.

⁴⁸ Valley members assert that the ellipse functions to “capture and distribute energies.” The seven ellipses on the grounds of the Valley “symbolize the evolution of Christianity from its martyr phase (karmic phase) to its scientific phase,” as a Valley periodical put it. Fabiany Glaura, “Nossas Armas: A Elipse,” *Jornal do Jaguar* 1, no. 2 (November/December 2005), 3.

⁴⁹ Kazagrande, *O Centurião Final* (Vale do Amanhecer: Doutrina do Amanhecer, 2011), 99.

⁵⁰ Interview with Mestre Itamir Damião, Vale do Amanhecer, July 2010. I conducted fieldwork data cited in this article over six weeks in July 2010 and May 2012.

⁵¹ Mestre Dilo, “So Há uma Porta de Saída dessa Ilusão, e essa Porta É o Coração,” *Tempo Aralton do Amanhecer Blog*, at <<http://araltondoamanhecer.blogspot.com/2011/09/recebemos-e-repassamospara-analise.html>>, accessed 2 October 12. In fact, some members claim that Sassi was a sociologist at the University of Brasília before abandoning his career to join Tia Neiva in founding the Valley of the Dawn. However, while he matriculated in the social science program, Sassi never completed his degree and his last job was in public relations for the University of Brasília. Reis, “Tia Neiva: Traços de um Itinerário Existencial,” 195.

⁵² Sassi, *No Limiar do Terceiro Milênio* (Brasília, Editora Vale do Amanhecer, 1972), 4. Elsewhere he speaks of other dimensions such as the astral plane. Sassi, *Conjunção*, 24–25.

⁵³ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 13.

⁵⁴ The Valley understands mediumship to be related to karma as well as to Christ’s plan for human salvation. As Sassi wrote, “mediumship is the main weapon of karmic redemption during the current phase of the planet. It is an intrinsic part of Christ’s plan for the redemption of spirits.” Sassi, *Conjunção*, 27.

⁵⁵ As Sassi wrote, “What distinguishes a *clarividente* from regular human beings is what we might call ‘simultaneous consciousness,’ the capacity to simultaneously live in each of the different planes, subject to the particular laws that rule each, and the possibility, at the same time, of communicating with each of these planes.” Sassi, *Conjunção*, 9.

⁵⁶ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 9.

⁵⁷ Also spelled Umahã, Humahan, Humarran or Humarram.

⁵⁸ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 15.

⁵⁹ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 15.

⁶⁰ On the significance of “the recovery of a transcendental heritage,” see Reis, “Tia Neiva: A Trajetória de Uma Líder Religiosa e Sua Obra,” 160, 202.

⁶¹ Sassi, *Conjunção*, 8.

⁶² Interview with Valda, Vale do Amanhecer, July 2010.

⁶³ The name Jaguar refers to an important episode in the group’s mythological history when Pai Seta Branca took terrestrial form as the leader of an Andean tribe known as Jaguars (due to their ferocity in battle). According to the story, Pai Seta Branca, the “Great Jaguar,” saved his people from slaughter by the Spanish *conquistadores* through the calming power of his words, displaying not

only courage but Christ-like love. Following the convention of the Valley, I capitalize the term.

⁶⁴ Also spelled Dharman Oxinto, Dharma Oxinto.

⁶⁵ “Dharmo-Oxinto,” Vale do Amanhecer, at <<http://www.valedoamanhecer.com/falanges/dharman.htm>>, accessed 2 October 2012.

⁶⁶ *Manual das Dharman Oxinto* (Vale do Amanhecer: n.p., n.d.), 9.

⁶⁷ See Marques, “Os Poderes do Estado,” 44; “Turigano,” Observações Tumarã, at <<http://www.obstumaran.com.br/doutrina/20-t/753-turigano.html>>, accessed 2 October 12.

⁶⁸ William Smith, ed., “Leo’nidás I,” *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (London: John Murray, 1873), at <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0104:entry=leonidas-i-bio-1>>.

⁶⁹ This version of the story was recounted to me in 2012 by one of Tia Neiva’s early converts who today occupies a position of authority in the movement’s hierarchy and is held in great esteem among community members. Interview with Mestre Caldeira, Adjunto Yumatã, Vale do Amanhecer, May 2012.

⁷⁰ From “Turigano,” Observações Tumarã, at <<http://www.obstumaran.com.br/doutrina/20-t/753-turigano.html>>, accessed 2 October 2012.

⁷¹ These include the Dharmo-Oxinto, Yuricy, Jaçanã, Grega, and Nitiyama *falanges*.

⁷² “Turigano,” at <<http://www.obstumaran.com.br/doutrina/20-t/753-turigano.html>>, accessed 2 October 2012.

⁷³ “Turigano,” at <<http://www.obstumaran.com.br/doutrina/20-t/753-turigano.html>>, accessed 2 October 2012.

⁷⁴ Like the global flows that Appadurai termed the “mediascape.” See Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference,” 7.