

Jardim da Natureza Work

Somewhat in the middle of my time in Céu do Mapiá, a small group of us (mainly non-Brazilians) took part in a “*caminhado*,” a Daime-fueled “walk through the forest.” We had been told that we would be walking through the rainforest and doing two works in two different locations along our itinerary. It ended up, however, that we didn’t do all that much walking. Instead, we started in the *Jardim da Natureza* (Nature’s Garden), a cleared area in the forest that I’d at times walk to from the inn in order to do some Tai Chi, and we basically stayed there for the whole work. The reason why we didn’t go to the other locations (which had happened in all the previous *caminadas* – they only take place twice a year, towards the end of the June festival and the end of the December festival) is that Madrinha Rita showed up, which she’d never done before during the entire ten years that this type of work had taken place. Not surprisingly therefore, the powers-that-be decided to just stay put in order to enjoy her presence for as long as possible (she wouldn’t have been able to have been driven to the next location where we were supposed to have gone.)

I was delighted to see her there. Besides being a major blessing, having her there was also really touching: she basically sat in the front seat of passenger’s side of this small, rundown, low-to-the-ground VW station wagon, parked maybe 100 feet from the group of us who were singing the hymns – just sitting there, the window open, listening to us sing. She was really elderly and rather feeble, so it was amazing that she came and stayed for as long as she did – i.e., most of the afternoon.

We had been told that that the work would begin at 9:00am, so (yet again!) being the good boy scout that I was, I got up at 7:00, showered, shaved, and quickly ate breakfast so that I’d be ready to go at a

little before 9:00. But the Brazilians at the inn didn't exactly seem to be in a hurry, and Ron didn't even wake up until 9:15. So I was pretty sure that it wouldn't begin at the official time. But by 9:30 I simply couldn't bear it, and I told Rick and Ron that I'd meet them there.

When I got there, there were only a handful of people, almost all of them foreigners in either their twenties or thirties, and all of them (in different variations) neo-hippies. For quite a while we sat around on some of the stumps that acted as seats in the cleared area under the forest canopy and talked casually with each other. Everyone seemed very at ease, everything was really relaxed, there was nothing forced or awkward.

Then, around 10:30, a group of Brazilians started to arrive, bringing a bunch of the white plastic chairs that are used in the church, as well as a table. They placed a serving container of Daime (basically a gallon sized milk jug with a spigot on it) on top of the table, as well as a simple Cruzeiro and some serving glasses. The chairs were set up in a loose square in a back corner of the cleared area of the Jardim, and then we waited around some more until the guitarists and the young girls who "pull" the hymns (that is, who lead the singing of the hymns) arrived. By 11:30, more or less, everything was ready to go, and Antônio Paulo, an important figure in the administrative hierarchy of Céu do Mapiá, gathered us all together and gave a short talk, in English, about this work. He said that there really weren't any rules for this work; that it was meant to be informal; that it was seen as a way to drink Daime and sing hymns in the middle of the forest; and that people should feel free to get up and move around if needed, as long as we didn't go too far away.

He also said that the Jardim came about many years ago when Padrinho Corrente (a revered elder in the Santo Daime) had a strong *miração* of a group of people dressed in white *fardas* singing hymns in the middle of the forest. So, they created this space in order that this type of work could be done (we weren't wearing *fardas* at all – the only requirement for the men was that we wear long pants).

[Sidebar: Several weeks earlier at the inn I had spoken with Roberto, a man in his 40's who was a long-time resident of Céu do Mapiá. He told me a story about Baixinha (literally: “little short one”), the tiny, cross-eyed, pot-bellied, stringy-grey haired “*Mãe do Santo*” – the head of an Umbanda fellowship – who helped to train Jonathan Goldman and who played a crucial role in the introduction of Umbanda into the Santo Daime. Apparently, when Baixinha first came to Mapiá in the 80's, she led the first ever Umbanda *gira* (literally “spin,” *giras* are one of the central ritual forms of Umbanda) in the Jardim da Natureza, right where we were having the *caminada* work. She was channeling Tupinimba, her *caboclo* – her Indian spirit guide – and at some point during the work she was challenged, forcefully, by this really large and extremely aggressive man. Roberto said that Baixinha, probably no more than five feet tall, promptly picked this guy up and threw him across the packed earth circle where they were doing the ritual, then wrestled him, and even played around with him some, finishing by putting her foot on his chest as he was lying on the ground on his back, and throwing her scarf down on him as a sign of victory over him. (Coda: Roberto learned how to play the drums for the Umbanda *giras* from Baixinha's husband, a world-class musician from Rio.)]

The Jardim da Natureza was also seen as a place for the children to come to learn about different plants, and to do crafts (even though Antônio Paulo admitted that this aspect of the Jardim had been rather neglected recently: there used to be signs on the different trees with the name of their species, etc.). He

also mentioned that the Pousada 2000 (the formal name of the inn where we were staying) was also explicitly created to be a place for people to be able to easily come to the Jardim and spend time there.

Anyway, very soon after his talk, I saw Antônio Paulo walk briskly up to John, this classic older neo-hippy decked out with a stringy little beard and a short ponytail (he and his girlfriend Emily just sort of travelled around, working with leather, making simple jewelry, etc.). Antônio Paulo came right to the point with John, telling him that he couldn't do the work wearing shorts. I could tell that John and Emily were getting a little upset. (I later learned that they had been led to believe that the caminada was just a casual walk in the woods, and since they lived about an hour's walk away, they'd miss out a lot of the work if John had to go there and back). So, I quickly volunteered to go back to my room at the inn with John and let him borrow a pair of my pants (luckily, he was about my size). Voila: problem solved.

When we returned, and walking there and back took about ½ an hour, they were already serving the Daime, and fairly soon afterwards, the work actually began – starting with the hinário of Madrinha Julia – an elderly matron/disciplinarian of the church.

The work happened in a cleared out, roughly circular area of the Jardim, approximately seventy feet in diameter. The floor of that cleared area was cracked dry clay, packed down by years of previous works, littered here and there with some large, dead, brown leaves. It was basically flat, with a few roots occasionally breaking the plane of the ground like the backs of whales surfacing for air. In the middle of the circular area there was a beautiful, exceedingly tall tree, its trunk about 3 feet in diameter, shooting straight up into the air until it reached the sunshine. At that point it opened up into a few

branches that supported its lacy, exquisitely delicate, crown of leaves. Stuck in the earth in front of the tree was a rough cruzeiro (basically a tree branch, cut into three pieces, with the two shorter pieces serving as the horizontal cross bars, lashed to the vertical upright pole with thin vines). Someone had also arranged some well-worn sawed-off sections of a large log in a circle a few feet back from the tree, creating a well-marked raised earthen area in which they'd planted some small bushes.

The circular cleared space wasn't much to look at: here and there around the periphery there were several two-foot sawed off sections of logs (about a foot in diameter) that served either as rough stools or as the supports for rough-hewn boards – thereby creating a few, fairly dirty, but functional, benches. The real beauty of the place was in the forest that surrounded the cleared area. The forest was incredibly lush, filled with numerous varieties of extremely tall, straight-trunked trees that towered over us (and provided much-appreciated shade that, thank God, lowered the temperature at least 10 degrees); trees whose leaves, of all different shapes and sizes, rustled and stirred, along with the leaves of the smaller trees and bushes that filled the lower levels of the forest (some of the “smaller” trees were actually huge palms) as the occasional breeze blew through, whispering and then whooshing through the thick green foliage, producing a soft lulling sound that was complimented by the assorted cheeps and chirps and peeps and crackles of the insects chiming away in the foliage. (These were the “good insects.” There were also much more annoying varieties: the gnats that nipped at your ankles, the tiny wasps/bees that loved to land wherever they could on your body and then go for blood – a blood lust that was only matched by the occasional monstrously large horse fly, one of which later raised a rather painful, swelling bump on my right ankle.) I don't want to over-emphasize the annoyance factor however: my experience at the Jardim, especially during the work, was filled with a profound sense of peace and beauty; it was as if there was a soft blanket of sacred silence draped over everything; and

with that silence, a visceral feeling of receiving the blessing of this immense, astonishingly variegated, and gorgeous, forest that surrounded all of us on all sides.

I was seated right up front, sandwiched between Philippe (a French philosophy teacher who had been there since Rick, Ron and I arrived) on my right and this young Brazilian man on my left, with Rick and Ron on the right of Philippe. It ended up that we were directly facing where Padrinho Alfredo and Madrinha Nonata sat when they arrived (which happened not too long after the work began – by this time many other Brazilians had come, especially a strong contingent of the young girls who “pull” the hymns).

We had barely begun to sing when I felt the Force come on. And it kept coming, and coming, wave after wave of it, growing in intensity, until it felt like I was this tiny boat in the middle of a hurricane. My fingers were gripping the sides of my plastic chair, and at one point I was pushed down and back so strongly by the “weight” of the Force that I momentarily had this image of crashing to the ground, the chair shattered under the impact. It was one of the strongest, most sudden, onslaughts of the Force that I had felt in quite a while: it was as if the gates of Heaven themselves were opening and the armies of God were pouring out, angels and archangels led by St. Michael, his sword blazing. What can you do in such an overpowering tidal wave of Light and Glory and Holiness except to just hold on tight, while simultaneously, and paradoxically, letting it sweep you away . . .

Which it did, for the next several hours. I tried to sing the hymns, but that was soon impossible. I rather quickly put my hinário (a spiral bound collection of hymns) down on the top of my backpack, and took off my glasses, since I could feel my mediumship coming on, and when that happened, I often

would wipe my face with my hands, or brush back my hair, or shake my head – so taking off my glasses gave me more freedom of movement, and allowed me to turn within more easily.

[Sidebar: I talk in great detail about mediumship in the book, but for now, I should at least note that there are numerous different manifestations of mediumship. Mediumship is not simply, or even primarily, the incorporation of suffering spirits. In fact, it's not at all clear, at least to me, whether mediumship always revolves around an ontologically distinct "being" or whether these sorts of bodily movements and shifts in consciousness are not also, at least at times, manifestations of a visceral responsiveness to varying fluxes of conscious transpersonal Energies that flow in-and-through our *aparelhos* (our body/minds). And, let's be honest, mediumship is also probably much, much more as well.]

When my mediumship kicked in, my body just wanted to move: rocking back and forth while I snapped my fingers, my right leg vibrating like a plucked guitar string, my hands forming all sorts of *mudras* (the ever-shifting hand and finger "gestures" that strikingly resemble the stylized and highly formulaic hand/finger positions of classical Indian dance), e.g., the mudra where my fourth finger, next to the pinky, goes forcefully down to the palm, and the other fingers are extended, with the pinky leaning against the third, middle finger; as well as the "deer mudra," the one where my middle two fingers extend down and forward, while the pinky, the pointer finger and the thumb extend up vertically.¹

During the next few hours, at various times, my face would get all twisted up and the fingers of one hand would then rest on one eyebrow as I hunched forward, like I was some sort of jungle version of The Thinker; or I would find myself davening and rocking and bowing from the waist like a God-intoxicated student of the Torah; or my head would shake back and forth, round and round my neck,

rotating around my spine, as the spine itself would circle and spiral, causing my torso to bend and sway in turn, which itself then turned into a much more gentle, repetitive movement in which the left side of my torso raised while the right side sank, and then the reverse, my physical body following the up and down, ebb and flow of the energy as it rose and descended, from the earth to the sky, and back again. Or, a subtle but insistent tremor would begin in the lower part of my spine, rippling upward, gently creating rhythmic pulsational spaces between the vertebrae, until I would find my eyes rolling back in my head as my attention was carried upwards and inwards, and I would begin to bath in this golden light that was pouring down and through me, feeling myself powerfully gripped by ecstasy, my back and neck arched back, my jaw relaxed, breathing in deeply through my nose and out through my mouth.

While all of this was happening, another part of me was simply sitting back within, very calm, watching all of it taking place.

Nonetheless, there were also times in which I struggled within myself with the issue of just how appropriate all of this body movement was. There was a part of me that was acutely aware of the fact that almost everyone else (especially the people up front, i.e., Padrinho Alfredo and Madrinha Nonata, as well as my friends to my right) were physically calm, erect, and firm; they were very present, singing the hymns, and playing their maracá. But at some point I just had to give myself some slack, especially since I didn't really have many options – as it was, I had to work really hard just to tone down my mediumistic movements to a dull roar. And besides, I realized that a crucial aspect of my own spiritual journey was learning how to let go of the need to please or placate others rather than

honoring what the Daime wanted to give me, moment to moment. It seemed important, at least during that work, to give space for my mediumship to flower.

That was what a small “voice” inside of me was saying to myself, while yet another part of me simply couldn’t let go about how I was coming across to others, and continued to be worried if I was crossing any protocol lines, so every now and then, especially later, when things had calmed down a bit, and I had put my glasses back on, I’d look up and I’d see Padrinho Alfredo, almost directly across from me, noticing me moving mediumistically. But there was never any judgment or concern in his face, just a little smile playing across his lips. I was also comforted when at one point he shouted out: “Viva a Cura!” (“Hail the Healing!”) which let me know that mediumship was indeed acceptable in this work, since healing works are works that are open to mediumship.

But apparently my partner next to me, Phillipe (the French philosophy teacher) wasn’t so sure about that conclusion, because at one point he picked up my hinário (which, as I mentioned, was on top of my pack, at that point on the ground between our two chairs) and handed it to me, signaling that it’d be a good idea for me to sing, and soon after, also signaled that I should put my glasses back on again. My agreement with myself was that, if I could sing, I would, so I tried, but it just wouldn’t happen. Instead, I continued to be swept away in the Force, so my eyes would close, my body start to move, and I’d end up simply doing a variety of what I had done before, but holding onto the hinário in one hand.

Amazingly, at least to me, Phillipe (maybe five minutes later), took the hinário from my hand and muttered that if I wasn’t going to sing, that he would (he didn’t own this hinário). I was surprised, and somewhat amused, at the strength of the internal “fuck you” that came up within me when he did this; how my mind quickly went into different varieties of this mental dialogue: “You don’t have a clue

what's going on within me; who are you to act like you have the right to tell me what to do; who are you to think that you know what's best for me," etc. etc. I actually did talk with him afterwards, during the break, when I wasn't so charged, but – here's hoping! – less to “correct” him, and more to simply touch base with him so that I could figure out what was going on with him during that time, as well as to let him know: hey, I was doing the best that I could. I think that I can truthfully say that my anger at that point had pretty much evaporated, especially since I could tell that he had, more or less, been well intentioned.

After we finished Madrinha Julia's hinario, a break was announced. I felt so good within myself, so alive, so energized. Rick and Ron seemed to think that I had had a really hard work, but I thought it was wonderful to feel the Force so powerfully. (I also laughingly said: “Hey, that was me putting a lid on my mediumship!”). At one point I went over to John and Emily who were just hanging out on a couple of stumps, and they asked me if I wanted some *rapé* [pronounced “ha-pe.”] I asked, “What's that?” They told me that it was a type of snuff made by the indigenous people in the rainforest, made of a variety of power plants, that you snort up your nose. They said that it was rather mild, and that it'd be really good for my sinus congestion. Being the mildly adventurous person I was, I said sure, and John unpacked this little soft leather pouch that had a few small glass jars strapped into one side, and a couple of small wooden blowing implements (basically a couple of thin wooden tubes joined together at interesting angles) cradled in the other side. (I later learned that this *rapé* applicator is called a “*currippe*,” [pronounced coo-ree-pee].) He had me smell the various *rapé* stuffs in the different jars, saying that unlike most other *rapé* snuffs, they didn't have any tobacco in them. (He also mentioned – and I found out later that he was correct – that Mestre used to use *rapé* a lot.) One smelled really “green,” the other sort of flowery. I told him to pick which one that he thought would be best for me.

He then put a small pinch in one of the tubes, and placed the end of another of the wooden tubes inside one of my nostrils. He told me not to inhale; he blew into one of the tubes; and up it went. It felt good – very cleansing and clearing, not intense at all. I didn't really "feel" much from it, however, just a sort of inner "opening."

[Sidebar: Rapé is a psychotropic snuff that is utilized by many daimistas. Personally, I'm not at all drawn to it (frankly, I'm just not fond of tobacco, especially its addictive qualities, and tobacco is typically one of the central ingredients of rapé). However, I have several daimista friends who I love and respect who turn to rapé often, saying that it helps them to ground and to clear their head. I can certainly understand the appeal, but at times it seems that many daimistas become rather dependent upon this powdery substance. I still vividly remember one work in a church in the US in which I was acting as a guardian. The energy got really intense, and then all of the sudden, almost a third of the men, all of them fardados, surged up from their seats, in a sort of wave formation, and hustled out to the parking lot to snort rapé – leaving the rest of us to fend for ourselves, for quite some time.]

Soon after experiencing rapé for the first time, I walked, rather briskly, over to the inn. Thank God it was so near, because I had some pretty major diarrhea, and another bout after the work itself. But having diarrhea really wasn't a problem: there was no cramping or urgency. In fact, in many ways it actually felt good – a needed cleansing.

After the break, we drank Daime again and then sang Madrinha Nonata's hinario. She then sang, by herself, some of Padrinho Paulo's hymns while playing the guitar. Then Padrinho Alfredo led us in singing quite a few Santo Daime hymns that seemed somewhat familiar, but not enough for me or Rick

to know what they were (at least one was either received by, or dedicated to, Glauco – the leader of the São Paulo church who had been recently murdered, because at the end of the hymn he was “viva’ed” – a signal that the hymn that we had just sung was linked to him in some way). Then there were some hymns that I thought were perhaps from Padrinho Alfredo’s hinário (whereas Rick thought perhaps that they were from “Nova Jerusalem” – Padrinho Sebastião’s final hinário).

[Sidebar: Later on in my spiritual development in the Santo Daime, I began to recognize, increasingly powerfully and clearly, how much it helps to really know the hymns that I am singing. Having these hymns as part of my Santo Daime repertoire enables me to feel deeply “plugged into” the highest “vibrations” of the Current that is flowing through the salão in the form of the (literally!) vibratory words and music of each specific hymn. Knowing each hymn enables me to energetically unite with everyone, all of us singing together, all of us rowing our “boat” joyfully and in unison.]

What this hinário confusion meant for me was that for a couple of hours after the break, I never even cracked open a hymn book. Instead I just sat there, rocking and swaying in the Force. The Force, and the associated bodily movements, was milder than in the first section of the work, but it was still powerful. During this entire time, the “locals” (not surprisingly, but still amazing to me) seemed to know each hymn by heart, and they sang and played the guitar with a lot of fervor.

At some point during this period of time, I felt my heart open wide to both Padrinho Alfredo and Madrinha Nonata. I felt such love for them. It felt like I was energetically reaching out and embracing them, loving them as they were, just relishing their particularities, loving them without asking them to

be different than who they were, without asking anything from them, so filled with gratitude and appreciation for who they were, and what they had brought, and continued to bring, to this world.

We ended the work with the Oração (Madrinha Rita, who had stayed for basically the whole work, sitting there in the VW station wagon, left just before the work closed.)

God that Bugged Me

During this work there were also a few rather odd events that took place that are (hopefully!) worth mentioning. For example, at some point I was sitting there in my white plastic chair when all of a sudden I noticed this huge, brightly colored caterpillar climbing up the back of the chair of a man from Bolivia who was sitting to my left in the row in front of me. The caterpillar was probably over three inches long, with thin, florescent green lines of color going the entire length of its body. The various segments of its body (about every quarter of an inch) were marked by ridges of short bristly red hairs, while its entire body was covered with longer, thinner red hairs. In addition, emerging out of both ends of its body were quite a few, almost one inch long, bright yellow antenna/stalks, each of which moved independently, searching and probing the air around it. This otherworldly being, just charged with presence, was steadily working its way up to the Bolivian man's neck/shoulders, so I bent down to get a large leaf, in order to convince it to climb on, so that I could put it on the ground.

However, Jorge, sitting to my right, saw me doing this, and signaled for me to stop. I whispered to him that I didn't want the Bolivian man to be freaked out by this insect, but Jorge was adamant that I shouldn't interfere. By this time, the Bolivian man (about 30ish, very small and thin) must have heard us, because he turned around and basically agreed with Jorge, moving the caterpillar with the leaf to his

cloth hinário bag under his chair, and asked me to let him know if the caterpillar got onto him (which it did at another point later in the afternoon – he simply gently transferred it back to his bag).

After a while, I became convinced that the caterpillar was a type of “pet,” or “familiar” of this man. It hung around in the man’s bag, poking itself out now and then, and if it wandered too far from the bag onto the ground, the man would somehow seem to know, and would block it from going too far.

But at the very end of the work (we were singing the closing hymns), he let it wander further, and it began to make its way towards me. I watched, intrigued, as it slowly marched, seemingly purposefully, up to my right shoe. I decided that this was as far as I was willing for it to go, so I moved a bit, and it then proceeded to make its way onto my bag; it then crawled onto my “OM-decorated” baseball cap that was sitting on top of the bag. Because the bag was open at the top and I didn’t want a caterpillar hitchhiker, I finally moved the cap, and the caterpillar, to the ground. However, as soon as I did this, a Brazilian man sitting behind me quickly bent down and forcefully swatted the caterpillar off my cap, using a small lighter. It landed several feet behind me – I then heard the man forcefully stamping the ground several times with his foot. (I didn’t see the actual squashing of the caterpillar – it all happened so suddenly. I would *love* to think that it got away, but I sincerely doubt it).

I actually felt bad for the little being, and for the Bolivian man. I signaled him and grimaced, shrugging my shoulders (I had hoped to point it out to him after the work was closed so he could retrieve it.)

When the work did finally close, I showed him the general direction in which the caterpillar had been flung, and the Bolivian man did search for it, but it was never found, dead or alive. I told the man that I was sorry, and he said, shrugging, that he had discovered it during one of his walks into the forest

during the work, and it had come during a particularly powerful and meaningful moment for him. Nonetheless, he wasn't going to get overly sentimental about it. (I will say, however, that it seemed to mean a lot to him that I had actually cared about his "familiar.")

Another fascinating feature of the work was that one of Padrinho Alfredo's young sons came to play guitar. He was an exceptional guitarist, but he was also a teenager, which meant that he just loved to grab the attention of everyone with his playing. And apparently, this work was his moment to be the star, so he just cranked up his amp and let it rip. At first (I'll admit) his Jimi Hendrix-esque riffs were rather distracting, but I eventually figured that there was nothing that I could do about it, so I just let the jacked-up notes wash over me and even at times really appreciated his level of skill.

[Sidebar: A few weeks before this work, I was lounging around upstairs in my hammock, listening to Rick talk with Roberto, one of the primary guitarists in Mapiá (the same man who told me the story about Baixinha.) According to Roberto, there were a lot of really skilled, but spiritually (and physically) young men who played in the works, and like most male teenagers, they liked to show the teenage young women how good they were with the guitar. And because they didn't have the opportunity to play in a rock or blues band, at times during works the temptation to show off their chops could be irresistible. Although Roberto understood all of this, he also felt that it could at times be distracting. He felt that a guitarist in the Santo Daime should play rather simply, in order to not be overly jarring for people who were going through delicate moments in their inner process. But he also felt that at times it was appropriate, if a guitarist felt guided from within, to add some extra touches, to keep things "alive" during the works. The key issue to him was the inner attitude of the guitarist: staying humble, attuned, and guided from within.]

Post-Jardim da Natureza Work: Financial Intensity

A few days later, at the tail end of a six-hour dance work, that had then seamlessly transitioned into a two hour Santa Missa, while Rick and I were trying to hand off an envelope from our American contacts to a woman who they were friends with, Antônio Paulo brought over a rather small and hunched up local man who often served Daime on the women's side. (I'm still not quite sure why the person who serves Daime has to be a man.) I acted as translator. It was tough, because this man for some reason was really angry and worked up, and it took me a while to figure out why. It finally became clear that the work in the Jardim da Natureza was not covered by the seventy-five reais a week "donation" (six hundred reais total in my case) that we had previously given to Arquibaldo – one of the head administrators of the village – when we first arrived. Rick and Ron and I had heard Antônio Paulo ask, before the work began, if people could give a donation for the work, but we had assumed that this request was aimed at the people who had not yet contributed their weekly "dues." But apparently we were mistaken. And to make matters worse, for some reason that was never clear to me, this man had contributed over two hundred reais to make the work possible (neither Rick nor I could ever figure out what would have cost them anywhere close to that much), and he very strongly wanted us to give a donation for the work (when I asked how much he was talking about, he said between thirty to forty reais). I told him that we thought that we had already made our donation earlier, but the man, getting rapidly more agitated, insisted that the Jardim da Natureza work wasn't covered by our weekly dues. Rick said that he was willing to contribute, but he had me tell the man that he had literally no money (which was true: by this point I had loaned Rick about two hundred reais, simply to tide him over until the electronic money transfer from his U.S. bank could happen, a process which, not surprisingly, had been going on, with no discernible progress, for over two weeks). The little hunched

over man didn't like this information one bit, and gestured animatedly at the four little girls (his granddaughters?) who were hovering around him, emphasizing that he had a lot of people to care for. I assured him that we'd make the donation, but did he really need it right now? Couldn't he wait until next week when Rick's money came? Again, no dice. He insisted on walking us home that night so that he could get the money right then and there. I told Rick that I'd pay his portion, and so we agreed and headed back to the inn. The little man quickly out-paced us in the dark, and (after all of that fuss!) we never saw him again that night (we had just assumed that he'd be waiting for us at the inn, since he knew where we lived.)

On the way there, I told Rick and Ron that I didn't feel good about how all of this had been handled and that I thought we should talk with Antônio Paulo about it. They basically agreed with me. Then, after getting up around 10:00am (after getting to bed around 4:00am), I stood outside my room on the little walkway that was outside our side of the inn, and shared my misgivings with Soraya: how we should have been told, ahead of time, that the caminhada would cost extra; how I had specifically asked Arquibaldo if our earlier donation covered all of the works and he had said yes; how the caminhada was listed in the official calendar of the church; how the real issue wasn't the money, but being blindsided like this, after hours and hours of dancing, at past 3:00 in the morning, etc. She completely agreed with me; she said that she was embarrassed by how we had been treated with so little respect; that sometimes money creates a really negative energy in Mapiá and people get greedy; that unfortunately Padrinho Alfredo had some people around him who were rude and coarse; and that she was going to let Padrinho Alfredo know what had happened.

I was glad that we had this talk: it helped to make me feel at least somewhat bit better when the

little bowed-over man showed up during breakfast, and we gave him his “donation.”
