

**'Til the End of Time:  
The Differential Attraction of the  
'Regime of Salvation' and the 'Entheotopia' of Canudos**

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*INTRODUCTION*

The Canudos massacre and the completion of a hundred years since the annihilation of the settlement has called a renewed attention to the religious movement created and headed by Antônio Conselheiro. As such, not surprisingly, a number of questions have rekindled debates about the nature of the movement, the war and the appraisal of the Conselheiro. From the start of the rising notoriety and fame of Canudos, after its refoundation as Belo Monte, much debate arose as to the right definition and interpretation of this phenomenon. The most famous book about Canudos, translated into English, *Os Sertões* by Euclides da Cunha, shows clearly some of the issues at stake in this disputed terrain of competing interpretations: the enigma of the causes of its origin and the fierce loyalty of the participants. In fact, the principal causes are sought in an external mode of explanation, particularly the geographical factor (nowadays known as ecological determinism) and the racial composition of the population of the backlands thought to make up a substantialized and internalized explanation of certain dispositions. All of this also posed serious questions about the destiny of the whole nation, as the ideology of the ethnic character of 'brazilianhood' is very much caught up in notions of the supposed "racial" composition of the Brazilian people.

The work of Euclides da Cunha acquired such status as a 'fundamental book' of Brazilian literature and as the definite statement on the subject that it stifled for a long time the appearance of other testimonies and other interpretations<sup>1</sup>. When the subject was being opened up, in the forties, it was in a timid way that a reporter interviewed some survivors of the massacre and registered some divergent views from the participants themselves. When the interpretations were being put in a more modern framework of theory, in the late fifties and sixties, the resulting works relied on strongly marxist inspiration (Facó and Moniz) or on a messianism caused by a social state of '*anomie*' inspired by Durkheim (Ma.I. Pereira de Queiroz). Both these perspectives draw on the very difficult socioeconomic situations in the sertão as the basic cause of the movement. That is, both still tend to locate the causality in question outside the participants' own conceptions and motives and do not discuss these very much. Of course, the

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<sup>1</sup> And, as Calasans, not without a pun, has observed for a considerable time, almost erased the "non-euclidean" writings after the war and before this book appeared in print (see Calasans 1997).

testimonies of direct participants and the oral tradition of their descendants had not yet begun to be collected as worthy of scholarly attention, except, still timidly, in the life's work of the dean of Canudos studies, José Calasans. However, even as the documentary sources can still be further explored, the major possibility to renew the perspectives on Canudos lies in the oral tradition of the survivors' descendants.

Apart from the continuous efforts by Calasans -- but generally published in daily papers or out of the way publications -- the major works only begun to reappear in the nineties, at the eve of centennial dates: the only work in English being the first, *Vale of Tears* by Levine (orig. 1992); the same author organized a special volume of a journal which contains several important contributions but especially is laudable because of the very good summing-up by Calasans of his basic views, after a lifetime of dedication to Canudos, in an interview with historian Sebe Bom Meihy (*Luso-Brazilian Review* Vol. 30, No. 2, Winter 1993)<sup>2</sup>. This work seems to be the major source on Canudos, and even for some other religious movements in Brazil (discussed in the last chapter of the book), for non-Portuguese speaking scholars. This, from a Brazilian point of view, is understandable but regrettable, an impediment to the wider circulation of ideas. As such, its somewhat critical reception in Brazil -- after its translation, because Brazilian debate on Canudos shows the same, inverse, tendency -- probably has passed largely unnoticed. That is, apart from some strong points like the incorporation of more ample documentary sources, the book suffers from a series of unfortunate small factual inaccuracies that detracts the more knowledgeable public from its more general theses (some pointed out by Calasans 1995, cf. Reesink 1996 for discussion). The general thesis relies heavily upon a millenarian and messianistic explanation but still, though for lack of information not surprisingly, does not really enter into the subject of an interpretation of the significance for the participants themselves, even though it makes a laudable attempt to do so and stresses the heterogeneity of the attractiveness of Canudos as well as its internal diversity. Still, in a way, the reader does wonder, at the end of the book, if what is meant by these terms really relates to an interpretation that is not always quite clear in stating what is actually proposed<sup>3</sup>.

Different authors in Brazil (not counting Calasans) have discussed several parts of the subject and come up with interesting reworkings in this last wave of studies. The best, in my opinion, is the thesis by Otten, which also contains a good review of the strong and weak points of previous attempts, but which heavily concentrates on a reconstruction of the theological stance of the Conselheiro himself and not on the religiosity of the followers (cf. Reesink 1996). The most well known effort in Brazil, however, judging from newspapers (like being advertised in one of the few ones with national import) purports to be a radical attempt to "open up discussion" and to refuse any "millennial" and "messianistic" interpretation (Villa 1995). Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that religion is put in a prominent place but it is not demonstrated as to how this would be so in actual Canudos practices or the conception of the Conselheiro; and, even if the major reason given for the persecution by the government is a good point, it is

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<sup>2</sup> This seems to be the only rendition of the work of Calasans in a journal of the English language, an unfortunate circumstance in itself, but it is unclear to me whether this interview, not translated, has received sufficient attention of non-Portuguese speaking scholars. The current article consists, actually, of a condensation of my previous papers published in Portuguese and of limited access to non-Brazilian readers, either because of limited circulation of the journals or because of the language barrier (see bibliography).

<sup>3</sup> Thus, a reviewer of the book commented that the text was too unorganized and that the question of what made the participants act still remained largely unresolved (Groot 1994: 101-102).

insufficient as the sole cause in a more complex situation<sup>4</sup>. Thus the framework of explanation continues not to be directed towards a internal comprehension of the sociocultural phenomenon. Later works demonstrate the tendency in the literature to be strongly related to disputed points of interpretation, a tendency towards a practical logic to explain certain actions and, especially in the more pamphletarian recent literature, a strong projection of current viewpoints and political issues into the portrayal of the Canudos social system. Nowadays, as always, but probably more strongly so, “Canudos” is the site of a disputed memory by people and social groups in the present. Some social memories, until recently unheard of, are the oral traditions of Indian groups in the sertão, and these can assist us in the construction of a more complex view of Canudos and also point to the some the symbolic logic involved: a regard that largely has escaped even the analysts who searched to comprehend the participant’s view of the significance of Canudos.

#### *THE INDIANS OF MASSACARÁ AND THE PERSONAL ATTRACTIVENESS OF CANUDOS*

Massacará is a small village to the south of Canudos and originates from a seventeenth century mission which ‘benefited’ from a posterior land-grant by the Portuguese Crown.. Possibly the oldest mission establishment in the area (some reports indicate 1639 but the mission appears more firmly in the existing documentation from 1689 on, under Franciscan control), it also suffered from the beginning from the greed of encroaching large landowners that cast an envious eye upon the permanent water resource. The well is located at a place called Ilha, a locale contained within the limits of what should be properly demarcated as Indian land -- in itself, of course, considerably smaller than what used to be their territory --, but as early as the eighteenth century this scarce resource led to the contestation of the demarcation of the Indian land, very likely concurrent with attempts to corrupt the leader of the team executing the actual measurements on the ground. In the nineteenth century, the local strong man (in normal usage called a “*coronel*”) succeeded, according to Indian oral tradition, by means of a ruse to ‘buy’ the well. Powerless to redress this wrong, the Indians still managed to hold on to a fair portion of the land indirectly watered by the water resource and by far the best land of all their territory for agricultural purposes.

In this way, the Indians, being the subordinate part in an interethnic system, suffered continuous pressure upon their best land. Historically, the general consequences for the Indians were such that any protection lessened in time and their possibilities for any maneuvering in favor of their land cause was out of the question by the time of the last half of the nineteenth century. The same “colonel”, José Américo Camelo de Souza Velho, actively supported the repression forces sent by the government, as a firm representative of most of the landed elite in the sertão, like his cousin the Barão de Geremoabo, who campaigned in favor of violent destruction of Canudos. In a letter he clearly expresses his disdain for the followers of Canudos, calling them all ex-slaves and criminals, with not a single “*human being*” among them (Levine 1995: 140)<sup>5</sup>. Small wonder that oral tradition in Massacará reports slaves on his ‘property’ at Ilha and the use of physical punishments for Indians not submissive to the exercise of his power in

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<sup>4</sup> Which is a merit of Levine to call attention to; this book and Otten were ignored even when this thesis was published some years later, for a further appraisal see Reesink 1998a.

<sup>5</sup> I have studied this Indian group in a monograph and I have accompanied the Kaimbé Indians since the latter part of the seventies. These efforts are part of a larger research program dating from the beginning of the seventies and that, nowadays, is located at the Federal University of Bahia, Department of Anthropology and Post Graduate Program in the Social Sciences: the PINEB, Research Programme of the Indian Peoples in the Northeast of Brazil, headed by Pedro Agostinho and Ma. Rosário Carvalho.

the area. When forces from Canudos were on their way to attack his house, however, a loyal free employee living on a fazenda to the north sent a messenger with a warning and the whole family fled and escaped to the south before the forces led by Pajeú arrived and destroyed the house. In this case, the godfather relation established as a mediating tie towards a free, but inferior, man functioned more strongly than the attraction exercised by Canudos.

Not all landless, poor peasants or Indians automatically were attracted to Canudos either. Simplifications about the total adherence of certain social categories either in favor or against Canudos abound but are usually not completely supported by a reality that proves to be much more complicated and diversified than usually is taken into consideration. The statement by José Américo is not true either, but part of the process of stigmatization that led to the justification of the escalation of violence: certainly 'whites' participated in Canudos, even as there was a sizable presence of ex-slaves, and the majority of the population were normally law abiding citizens, exactly the same as the Conselheiro had been when living under the monarchy. This is what actually could be expected of a religious movement that imposed a regime of strict rules to be observed in the regulation of social relations. The major social group that did not fall in any way under the spell of this religious regime seems to have been the landed elite. This group had very little to gain personally or as a category by a social construction of a *socius* that in fact contested the foundations of the 'normal', hierarchical and hegemonic sociocultural order. Returning to Massacará, under the pretext of aiding the capture of the "*mean and miserable bandits*" escaping from Canudos, the same "colonel", loyal citizen to the Republic, used the opportunity to expel the Indians still living at Ilha from their houses and fields<sup>6</sup>. He burned the houses and used the materials from the Indians' possessions to build his own 'properties', threatening to kill any Indian encountered. Many Indians "ran," many went "out into the world." The population declined but the remainder never forgot. It would take a hundred years to see the return of the Indians to these lands and the final decision in the case is not formally decided yet in court.

The most generalized memories on Canudos among the Indians in Massacará are these atrocities and the injustice committed by the "colonel" that almost inviabilized the very existence of the group, the more so as he extended his 'possessions' to even more portions of Indian territory. These events, and the general persecution of ex-followers of Conselheiro, left an indelible imprint on the oral transmission and, as a result, part of the narrators in Massacará are not very happy to admit the participation of any of their group in Canudos. After all, this was the alleged reason for their misfortune: "*But this proof that this or that Indian was a jagunço e went to Canudos to fight, that proof has not appeared*" (JNV; all translations mine, for the original and more elaborate quotes, see Reesink 1997). From his point of view the lure of "*a river of milk and a land of couscous*" (made of corn) was an illusion that turned into "*a river of blood and a riverbank of corpses*" (Mascarenhas 1995). Admitting that other people talked about Indians going to Canudos, the narrator, at the time prompted by a third person present, actually confirmed the fact that the participants interred their possessions at Ilha before leaving. Still, sharing the terrible end of Canudos, few came back to disinter their belongings and even if the narrator admits about another neighborhood that "*they say there were Indians that went*", he

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<sup>6</sup> Expressing a long tradition of supposed elite purity against racial taints that conveys the conception of a substantialized personnel identity where the worth and expected qualities of a person derive, at least in a large part, from inherited characteristics carried in his "blood". This, of course, is the dilemma of Euclides da Cunha's discussion of how to attain "progress" with the majority in the "nation" being of an inferior "mixed" population. The conception of substantialized inferiority of the people by the upper classes is elaborated upon as part of the *visão do litoral* by Levine (1995).

insists in not being sure about it. Others, however, like the third person present at this conversation, do not hesitate to confirm that Indians participated in Canudos.

The old man, the first narrator, does have a point though. We cannot ascertain how many Indians were attracted to go to Canudos and how many were not. What is certain, however, is the verification of a differential attraction within the same social category. Take the case of Muriti. Over a hundred years ago a few Indians from Massacará had moved to a locale some distance to the south. Now a small village called Muriti, at the time the population was sparse and lived scattered around the countryside. When the Conselheiro came back from cutting the beams necessary for his construction of the New Church, he and his followers followed the route that came from Mirandela, on his way to Massacará, and passed through the valley of this rural neighborhood. Some brothers who lived in this usually very quiet place were very much disturbed by all the commotion caused by the procession and they fled to the high margins of the valley, looking on from high up and from a safe distance (as they themselves told me in the seventies). Procuring isolation and to leave in peace is also a strategy to live one's own life. At the other end of the scale, the same event caused such an impression that many were convinced that a better life would be possible in Canudos.

In fact, another narrator, son of a non-Indian who succeeded in escaping and settling in Massacará marrying an Indian, even after describing how people took their own manioc flour with them, tells that the people in Canudos were astonished by the way the Conselheiro provided food for them: "*This man is God, to realize an effort like that, giving food to so many people*" (Mascarenhas 1995: 50). By coincidence, the years of Canudos's existence were relatively abundant years, not stricken by the terrible draughts but blessed with rainfall. Abundance in this sense -- rainfall that supported the subsistence farming practiced at the margins of the watercourses -- was in all likelihood interpreted as a sign of the positive state of relation between heaven and earth created at Canudos and as no coincidence at all. For some quite clearly a real relative abundance: even if there was not a real river of milk, the river and its margins provided some measure of agriculture of subsistence crops and the uplands pastures for the goats (hides an important cash commodity for trade in a poorly known but important long range integration of economic exchange).

Several narrators express different visions of Canudos that derive from varying family histories, different positions in the present and personal characteristics. The more detailed oral tradition usually is told by narrators with special interest in the past and direct genealogical ascendants who participated in some way in Canudos. Some narrators tend to recount some extraordinary event, like the older woman that does not remember much details from the stories by her grandmother (that lived through the war as a young girl) because she did not pay attention at the time. Now, following in a way the reorientation of memories once clandestine and repressed but now, in the whole region, being valorized by higher class outsiders, she regrets this lack of attention. She does not recall whether the food distributed at the *barracão* (here usually an open structure that serves as marketplace) was for free, but it seems likely as the Conselheiro is known to have been trying to secure the supply of cattle for meat distribution<sup>7</sup>. One morning, with the hill facing Canudos replete with enemy people, the future husband of her grandmother went to fetch meat for her to cook for her group when a cannonball hit the distribution place, killing people all over the place. The man was not hit, but the meat had human brains all over it.

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<sup>7</sup> Expression taken from a pamphlet in which José Américo defends himself from accusations of unjustified violence committed after the ending of the War.

However, under the circumstances, she washed the meat and they ate it anyway. In this sense, not surprisingly, some of the more out of the ordinary happenings tend to be recorded, combined with the understandable fascination with the War of Canudos in itself, and details of more normal course of social life are more difficult to obtain.

The family history of another old Indian ex-leader (like the first old man quoted) reveals all the aspects mentioned. His father went to Canudos with a party of men that joined the forces of Canudos, part of the rallying around the saintly man in response to the government attack. As he was a boy, he only saw the "small town" as he was sent back with the animals used for the trip because there was nowhere to leave them around in the semi-arid surroundings of Belo Monte<sup>8</sup>. His mother, on the other hand, stayed for some time in Canudos as her parents went there. In fact, she told her son everything, because there were things she did not want to talk about, yet her story reveals an significant vision of Belo Monte:

*S.P.: Who saw a lot of the Canudos War was my mother. But what she saw was when the War started, my grandmother, the mother of my mother, said to my grandfather. She said, let's go to, to Belo Monte? My grandfather said, he said, I am not going there. Going to do what? Come on, let's go. Because, she was, she was not really healthy. If I were to die and went to Belo Monte to pray according to the instructions of my Father Conselheiro, I know I shall be saved. Well in that case, let's go then. After arrival, she fell ill with a fierce fever and died.(...) She got there and died, ended up dead. My grandfather did not leave and stayed for a while and, after a short time, he returned, hiding on the way. He came back, came to Massacará. A son of his fell ill too, of the same problem of which she died. And he ended up dying in Massacará, they brought him carrying on their backs. On foot, with him on their backs. The boy. (...) It was my mother's mother that died. My mother, at the time, was turning into a young girl. Maturing into a young girl.(...) because she wanted to go, to have a look at the beauty that was Canudos.(...) She thought that that place was beautiful as they were saying that there was a river of milk and a riverbank of couscous. I do not take after her because I do not like neither milk nor couscous [the narrator laughs].(...) My grandfather did not think so either. Because he wanted, he was like me, he wanted to be in his own home, his house and his own fields. Over there he did not have anything like that.*

Prompted by a question about his own visit to the area of Canudos, he tells of his dislike of the place, because of its arid character, while he himself is a peasant strongly attached to the land and its cultivation. He did not see any arable land because the lake had taken all of it, flooding the margins of the river and small affluents where moisture retained did enable some subsistence agriculture. After recounting that his mother did not expound on most of the atrocities of the war and people being killed, he narrated that she told one example of a curious man exploding everything in a house when trying to disassemble a bomb not yet exploded. Then he concluded:

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<sup>8</sup> There is some difficulty in establishing to whom this meat was really distributed, as the Conselheiro surely felt a strong obligation towards in inner core of followers, but is said to have complained of the quantity of people who arrived whom he had not invited. Meat, of course, is the most valued food and flour seems to have been usually brought, at last by the Indians, usually scarce in the peasant diet and would make the strongest impression, unlike manioc flour. Frei João de Monte Marciano commented upon the people of the *Companhia do Bom Jesus* (a sort of brotherhood of the Conselheiro) being fed by their leader, but those not enlisted depended on their own resources; Monte Marciano: 1995: 135). This too may have varied over time. This economic system of redistribution, in Polanyi's terms, has yet to be analyzed.

*S.P.: She said she saw a lot of things there that she did not like to tell any one about. What she saw there. Those who stayed there. She thanked God, they thanked God for the day when the old man said, let's get out of here. I don't want to stay, Canudos is not for me, no, this is not my place. Let's go to my fields. So they returned, they left.*

In the view passed by his mother, people cared for their own food, bringing some beans, a little manioc flour, whatever they had available. At the same time, people had to be careful not to get shot by some bullet flying around, the fighting only quieting down at dusk, the same time when the prayers at the church started. His grandfather did not appreciate the War:

*S.P.: My grandfather was not very ignorant. He certainly was not going to be around where the bullets were hitting. He always stayed aloof. My grandfather was an Indian who know how to bless himself. He was not going to stay just anywhere.[his name is] Catarino. My grandfather was not somebody ignorant.(...) He did not like Canudos. He went, that was because of his wife. Never for his own sake. By himself he never would have gone to Canudos.*

That is, his grandfather was a knowledgeable person who knew how to say a prayer for his own benefit, constructing a strong connection to the supernatural. In fact, Catarino is more widely known as the last Indian in Massacar who was able to enter into contact and converse with the *encantados* (literally, the enchanted, supernatural beings who live scattered around the countryside, almost all, apparently, in outstanding rocks, wells or high-up ridges). In that sense he was the last Indian who was *sabido*, wise (knowledgeable), and not *tolo*, ignorant (literally, fool). Circumstance that, not surprisingly, made him into a more general reference in the social memory of the Indian group that speaks of the loss of a certain, specifically ethnic, knowledge of religious competence. A religious man, therefore, and some-one that could be expected to feel the attraction of the Conselheiro. Notwithstanding the religious inclination, the reasons for his dislike are clear: his land is the territory of his forefathers where he owns his fields and has built his house. In other words, he, as an Indian peasant, is firmly attached to his home territory, where the peasant existence of being the head of the family and the social reproduction of the domestic unit are literally grounded on the land. Nothing of the kind was to be found in Canudos: no land for tilling, no real house (probably), in sum, no mode of social reproduction of the family, either in material terms or in the realization of the diverse roles enacted by its members, in particular by the *pai de famlia*, the head of the household. The domestic role of wife and mother is much less affected.

Thus, the pull for being attracted to Canudos should be stronger than the peasant's attachments and, in part, this helps to explain the differential attraction to Canudos for men and women (raised by Levine 1995: 157). In the case, the motive is clear and relatively simply stated. It is the core of Christian faith, the preoccupation with the immortal soul after death drives the grandmother to Belo Monte<sup>9</sup>. Ill and worried about her salvation, she insists on going to Belo Monte because of the guarantee it offers of being certain of salvation. Though abstracting from a single case, she is representative of at least a sizable class of people attracted to Belo Monte. In this way, it is the "*rezar pela carta do Pai Conselheiro*" that founds her

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<sup>9</sup> That is, for lack of grazing lands for the horses or mules, either because of the semi-arid region did not support any more animals or because the fighting did not allow for the use of any pastures. His father was a black man, many blacks seem to have lived in Junco, a small village on the road to Mirandela after Muriti, and perhaps an important number of blacks were in the party.

certainty, that is, in fact, more than just to pray: she implies the place to be in close contact with the supernatural as a result of the following of a set of rules proclaimed by a religious leader who has the authority of being the spokesman of God by his impressive oratory and the force of setting his own example of the real practice of these dictums. This means the movement of the *Conselheiro* is, first of all a *movement of salvation*, and the establishment in one locale is the territorialization of this movement in a space-time where there reigns the correct way of living to attain salvation: it entails a *regime of salvation*. Secondly, it also signifies the supernaturally privileged person is not a messiah but a person like a saint, as, actually, is the case in almost all of the so-called messianic movements in Brazil<sup>10</sup>. The role played by the *Conselheiro* is that of the *prophet*, a human person, but one calling for all people to follow the regime of salvation God has determined long ago when, at the time of preaching, normal daily life is in flagrant contradiction to prescribed norms, rules and principles<sup>11</sup>.

This conception accounts for a statement often cited but rarely placed into further context. When Euclides da Cunha witnessed the questioning of a young *jagunço*, the boy denied that miracles constituted the attraction exercised by the *Conselheiro*. Instead, when asked what it was that was promised that made them fight so hard, the answer was simple: "*to save our souls*" (see, for example, Levine 1995: 28-29). That may not make sense to a modernist positivist, but it does refer to what is the core of faith -- and it represents Euclides da Cunha at his most ethnographic moments -- concurring exactly with oral tradition. Salvation depends on the proper way of living and the proper way of dying (known as "*a boa morte*", the good death). The right way of living can thus be translated as the *regime of salvation* where a set of explicit and implicit rules serve as guidelines for the conception and construction of a *socius* that is oriented towards the goal of salvation but, exactly because of this moral, ethical and even aesthetical order, simultaneously entails the realization in social life of notions of justice and fairness<sup>12</sup>. The *regime of salvation* is a synecdoche to express the core of this Christianity and its consequent implications of a worldview that confers significance in an encompassing way to the cosmos, the worlds, the sacred and the profane, the location and role of the human being and the conception of personhood. It is not chance that the manuscript dated 1895, and in all likelihood rightly attributed to the *Conselheiro*, is called: "*Remarks about the precepts of Divine Law of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the salvation of mankind*".

This significance of salvation has been noted by observers like Otten and Levine, though in some moments more than others, when, for example, discussing the manuscripts or remarking

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<sup>10</sup> I am not a medievalist and I do not want to evoke connotations of misplaced apparent similarities over long periods of time, but it is striking how the same question is paramount in the debates among the people and their conversions (or not conversions) to 'heretics' in Montaillou, described by Le Roy Ladurie, particularly when people were thought to be dying. The question is, in itself, the fundamental point, and thus the core of dispute, in Christianity. It is quite possible that the remark registered by Frei João de Monte Marciano, when asking who was responsible for what he considered an extreme mortality in Canudos -- *it is the Good Jesus that sends them to heaven* -- points to exactly the same significance as the grandmother's (Monte Marciano 1995: 134).

<sup>11</sup> Like an independent observer reported the statement of a woman in the Chapada Diamantina, far away from the real conflict: "*And who knows, maybe he really is saint Anthony*" (Reesink 1998b). The *Conselheiro* himself did not identify himself as someone of special supernatural quality, but the terms used to address him reveal a particular reverence and those used to refer to him imply in a range of possibilities up to being a saint. In other words, this projection also was varied and not fixed.

<sup>12</sup> That is, he himself did not claim this status, or any other special supernatural status, but he acted as if in the social role of a prophet (in a Weberian sense). Villa (1995) elaborates on prophets but does not make clear the connection with the *Conselheiro*. Of course, a "councilor" is someone who is a speaker who is especially authorized to remind of God's word. Prophecies in the strict sense of the word are uncertain and difficult to ascribe to the *Conselheiro*, but some indications will be discussed further on.

upon the prominence of the notion of individual, and not collective, salvation in the ideas of the Conselheiro (1995: 195). The notion proposed reformulates ideas already present but draws attention to aspects in a way that may facilitate a more profound internal comprehension of the significance of Canudos. Thus, not surprisingly, the regime could be regarded as the major point of attraction for a heterogeneous population, appealing to people from many different social categories sensitive to their personal salvation. Yet, the implication of the construction of a socially fairer and just social order can be very attractive in itself, like Levine also stresses at several points: a catholic worldview "(...) *emphasizing ethics, morality, the virtues of hard work, and piety*" (Levine 1995: 195). One does not exclude the other, actually it is likely that pragmatic reasons and more pious motives coexist in varying degrees, and usually are not easily distinct, but intermingled, because intimately related (like the fact that abundance is connected to work imposed by God and to the state of relations between God and His people on earth). What the examples of the father (to fight), and the grandfather (no living conditions), do show, is that the attraction of Canudos is variable in time and must be seen in processually. And, the thousands that did not go to Canudos are not necessarily less pious or less pragmatic than the thousands that went.

#### *THE INDIANS OF MIRANDELA AND THE MASSIVE CONVERSION TO CANUDOS*

The Kiriri Indians of Mirandela present a case quite different from that of their close neighbors in Massacará. One of the four missions known as "the Kiriri missions" in the area of the sertão, all dating from the latter part of the century that ends with the land 'grant' from the Crown in 1700; that is, the same 'benefit' that also guaranteed the land base in Massacará. These four were administered by the Jesuits, and after their expulsion they changed names and were transformed into another form of civil administration. The three missions in Bahia were profoundly affected in the process and most of the Indians lost their territories. One of them ended up turning into the town of Pombal and another into the town of Nova Soure, also known by its former name of Natuba. The territory was apparently completely lost in Pombal and the Indian group disappeared and the land was mostly lost in Natuba, where there are, however, a number of descendants of Indians up till today. That means that at the time of Canudos at least part of the important contingent from Natuba -- with this population the Conselheiro seems to have had a special relation and the town almost was completely deserted in favor of Canudos -- must have been of Indian descent. In fact, the son of a woman that went to Canudos (and was taken prisoner) still affirmed that he "*is on the side of Jesus and not on the side of the devil*" (in 1998; he has various close kin clearly of Indian descent). He himself considered that the time now has come and God has marked the year 2000 as the end of time and he hoped to be alive to see it. Yet, this millennial expectation has not necessarily been transferred from the time of Canudos, because his mother told him that the Conselheiro said that the monarchy must return before the end: the world shall not end with the republic and the monarchy shall be restored, even if only for a single day.

It is difficult to assess the force of the millennial element in Canudos but, again, this probably varied at different points in time for the Conselheiro himself and certainly must have varied among the population in Belo Monte. It is interesting to observe that the mother of the old Indian in Massacará reported the same precondition before the end of the world:

S.P.: "*The monarch would reign, again. The world had to end the way had started. It was not with the republic, it was with the monarch.(...) Yes, the more he said it was this. He said, there*

*will be a time when man will pass by here high over in the air. There will exist some black horses with eyes of fire. [relates this invention of man to the devil and to car accidents in the present]. He said, man will have time to move over the heads of the people. I will die, but those he will remain are yet going to see it. Really, we did. People of those times used to say though, but how can it be that someone moves overhead? When in 38, who never saw one before, in 38 one passed right over here. From Massacará in that direction, moving that way. Everybody took a fright, women lost children and so, that were in their bellies. A lot of people were scared, because of the noise, that cross moving in the sky. It was terrifying. They went, where they went, the old people remembered the talk from the Conselheiro, that he said that man would move over our heads. By air, and everything was seen. People already saw what he was talking about.*

It is quite clear that the prophesies narrated place the end of the world at a point in the future that is not immediate. Differently from the narrator in Natuba, the current narrator does not believe in the coming of the immediate end of the world even though certain prophesies are already fulfilled. However, it is also clear that the end is not far, because "*we are not living at the beginning, we are already near the end*". The feeling of living at the end of the times is something apparently fairly well present in the sertão up to today (example by Pessar cited in Levine 1995: 199)<sup>13</sup>. It can safely be assumed that this diffuse notion of living at the end of the times was prevalent in Canudos but that it does not necessarily entail a general conception of the imminent coming of the end. It probably was, of course, a variable idea among the inhabitants of Belo Monte. In this oral transmission of the legacy of the Conselheiro -- the narrator recognizes that the man used to say many things when preaching at night and he does not know all of it -- it becomes quite clear that the Conselheiro also preached strongly inspired by Revelation: however, in terms of warnings of a time to come, the dangers of false prophets and false gods. Thus his understanding is clearly that the end of the world was not imminent. "*No, he did not say that the end of the world was near. He used to say that there would come this time, there would come that time but it was not right away, it was not just yet*". This probably was a general attitude accepted among at least an important part of the population. It concurs with the conclusion of Otten that the writings of the Conselheiro himself show how he thought the monarchy would return and there would be a certain time-span before the end of the world (Otten 1993: 92; Levine cites the same proposition but at one moment links this to Sebastianism and at another admits not really knowing what was the emphasis given by the Conselheiro to the Apocalypse, 1995: 199; 234).

In the memories of the Kiriri no predictions of the end of the world appear. Yet, the oral tradition is, on the other hand, extensive and quite elaborate. The events of Canudos and its aftermath were quite dramatic for the history of the Kiriri people and it is not without reason that many stories are told. The stories of oral tradition report in particular what happened to kin, usually direct ascendants, but the importance of Canudos profoundly affects the general history of the group and the social memory about it far exceeds the familial level. In that possible sense of ethno-history that is a history as told and conceived by the people in question, Belo Monte is a significant mark in Kiriri history. Little of the significance for the Kiriri has transpired in the literature though. The first modern ethnography of the Kiriri refers to the facts only rapidly, but

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<sup>13</sup>The same has been noted for Pau de Colher, a socioreligious movement of the thirties in a small locale in the sertão north of the São Francisco river but still in Bahia. The end was predicted, but not in the immediate and nearby future. The major figure here, also called "conselheiro", the one who gave the initial impulse, was not a messiah and the project proposed was not millenarian in the sense of any sort of collective salvation still on earth (Pompa 1998: 68).

represents it in a way that fairly indicates this relevance. In fact, the Kiriri lost their best shamans in the War, lost the best parts of their territory and lost the occupation of any house in the village in the very center of their land. In a word, the results were disastrous for the sociocultural reproduction of the Indian group. The deleterious effects caused enormous difficulties in the following years, up to the point that during the worst drought of the thirties Indian children were sold in Sergipe. It would take a hundred years and many years of struggle and deprivation to recover the Indians' exclusivity of all of their territory.

Even so, it will be no surprise that the general situation of the Indians is still in a way a product of the War of Canudos. From the Indian point of view, one of the worst consequences was the loss of the last supernatural specialists (*pajés*) who were conversant in the old Indian language<sup>14</sup>. These shamans maintained the contact with the supernatural entities already mentioned, the *encantados* (their own set of them), and this contact was and is seen as the fundamental relation that guarantees the sociocultural reproduction as an ethnic group and the general well being of its members. Losing the specialists meant impairing this relation conceived as absolutely essential to the welfare of the group, in all its aspects. The supernatural dominated and dominates daily life and tends to be seen as determining the course of events. The recuperation of the village of Mirandela, a few years ago, is attributed to the action and guidance of the *encantados*. At the time of Canudos the ritual called *cururu* provided the means of contact: with the aid of the beverage made of the bark of the roots of Jurema (an entheogen of a variable possible potency) the *entendidos* (as said, 'knowledgeable') were able to converse with the dead and they knew how the souls used to travel. Portuguese is not an efficient language for this contact. When the general situation permitted, many years later, in the seventies, the Indians learned a similar ritual, *Toré*, from the neighboring Tuxá in order to fill this keenly felt symbolic deficit. Still, at the end of the period when the relation with the supernatural was not as it should be because they had become more *toló* (as said, ignorant), the Indians affirmed that without the protection of their *encantados* they would not even have survived at all, but would have been gone "*without leaving seeds*" (Bandeira 1972: 82-83). And:

*"If it was not for this, they would dominate the Portuguese [local term for the opposite group], and would expulse them from their lands. They would be rich. They would control nature, work less and would not have so many illness. There would not be any plagues on their fields, nor lack of water or prolonged droughts. They would just have to, in return, comply with their obligations towards the enchanted"* (Bandeira 1972: 82).

What appears is a deeply religious people, with a profound interest in its relation with the supernatural, that at the time of Canudos still maintained the best part of their territory and their privileged channel with the enchanted supernatural agents. That is, even at this very low point in the correlation of forces in the thoroughly asymmetric interethnic system, in which the Indian group found itself dominated, the situation certainly was not the worst possible. In fact, this group seems to be better off than their "*cousins*" in Massacará at the same time because there was no *coronel* of the stature of José Américo. In this context, the Conselheiro passed through Mirandela. From the small monograph by Ma. Mascarenhas (1995: 25-46), a summary of the impact of the Conselheiro as reported in oral tradition can be given (in italics literal quotes, the other text also seems to follow closely the original statements):

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<sup>14</sup> Intermediaries in the contact with the supernatural and not translatable as "chiefs", as in Levine (1995: 158-9). There are a number of misunderstandings about Indian peoples in this book.

- He was bearded and made the impression of being small and fragile. He knew how to speak, gave good advice and was called *my Good Jesus*. He more or less said 'God in heaven and the king on earth'; the monarchy was the law of God on earth and the republic destroyed this law, imposing a law of injustice, like the tablets of the new taxes that were broken in Natuba and Canudos was constructed following his doctrine.
- The Conselheiro brought together a lot of people and the people said *let's go, cause I'm not going to stay here*. Entire rural neighborhoods went to Canudos, because the "experience of the sabidos" [the wise ones, i.e. with shamanic capacities] said that *Our Lord of Ascension* was only in appearance and invited everyone to go to where problem of the War was occurring. The Conselheiro spoke of his *mission*, for the good of all, and called the Indians to his side. The word spread rapidly around, including about the river of milk and the riverbanks of couscous, and they said, *let's go, let's go*.
- The place to search for the beams of wood for the church in Canudos was a suggestion of Antônio Fogueteiro [an Indian and the only one personally known in the literature, though not as an Indian] because they knew the region of Bendó, behind Mirandela, where there was wood of adequate size. After the cutting of the wood, it was necessary for the Conselheiro to give nine taps on the trunk for it to become light enough to be lifted and carried. The Indians carried the wood. *The Indians all went. You could count the ones that did not. They went because they wanted to, not because they had made a promise ["promessa" to a saint, that would make it an obligation].* On the way they had feasts at night and when they stopped the Conselheiro would speak and the people would put into their heads to say *let's go, let's go*. They did not take anything to eat but wherever they went were always well received, and it was *holy merrymaking* until Canudos [*santa alegria*", literally "saintly joy" but in fact an idiomatic expression to say a 'lot of merrymaking' but the "saintly" is actually quite appropriate in the context]. However, though many Indians went, there is a statement that a father prohibited his daughter, who wanted to go, to go with them.
- The Indians participated in the first battle and one of them died [and, in that way, would be the first to die for Canudos].
- The water was water and the stones were stones in Canudos, and so they did not do agricultural work but came back to their fields to process manioc and take the flour to Canudos; they did not get hungry, but when the provisions were all consumed, they went hunting and gathering in the neighborhood. Coming and going they said *it is all right over there*, that it was a feast, the greatest joy in the world. The Indians participated in the prayers and had their own prayers too. *All of the people in Canudos were living according to the doctrine of God.*
- The *pajés* of the Kiriri aided Pajeú against Moreira César, discovering the route he was taking and offered the advice to try to hit him in the eye with an arrow. After completing the siege, many people died because of the cannonballs, and the *jagunços* let the people leave, *those who do not want to die can leave*. Many died and those who went away did not have a thing, they run a lot of risks when returning and they hid out in the wilds on the tablelands of Jeremoabo. When they came back, their lands were occupied, they lost much land and even had to work on the land they had lost in exchange for nothing more than food.

This collation of the narratives immediately stresses the importance attributed to the participation of the Indians by their own conceptions. Apparently unknown to other social groups and categories, the Indians participated in a way that they find highly significant, playing a prominent role. They were enthusiastic about the Conselheiro, accompanied him, counseled him about the wood for his church and carried it by themselves. Afterwards they even contributed to their own maintenance and possibly donated flour to redistribute in Canudos by going back and forth between their fields and Canudos. Again, it must be noted, the timing seems to be important, the major migration seems to be shortly before the outbreak of the final cycle of hostilities as that was initiated by the problem of the non delivered wood from Juazeiro (or even when it had already started as one of the points mentioned). They defended Canudos and, according to their interpretation, were the first to give their blood in its defense (discounting Maseté in the process), used their *ciência* (supernatural knowledge and capacities) to orient the fighting and many valiantly fought and died themselves. Their dedication to the Conselheiro and the cause of Canudos was thus of quite a high level, employing all sort of means at their disposal to this cause.

Still, as already noted, even though the situation on a regional and state level was one of a very low point in the asymmetrical interethnic relations, the Kiriri still had a significant number of natural and supernatural means before their decision to go to Canudos. What is remarkable is the character of massive participation. The mentioning of a father prohibiting a daughter to join the movement shows that both the presence of an exception and the exceptionality of this refusal. Moreover, just like the decision of the head of the household in Massacará, it shows the relevance of the family and the role of the 'father of the family' in the decision making process. In general, the decision to migrate was a family decision, that is of a *casa*, a household, the principal unit of social reproduction. In the case of the Kiriri -- notwithstanding a clear notion of Canudos being a more just and equitable social organization and, very likely, the idea informed by their proper parameters of justice, that the Indians at that time were unjustly persecuted and suffering -- that still does not explain the collective character of their adhesion. This is even so when Canudos entails a religiously inspired and sanctioned moral and ethic basis for a different comprehensive social order, that is, a foundation of the order of the world as it should be, a complete cosmo-vision, in obvious contrast to what reality was for Indian peoples.

Thus a context of relative deprivation seems to be a necessary but not sufficient condition. When examining the points especially mentioned, some of these merit attention as to what possibly was the interpretation behind the collective decision to go to Canudos. First, the parameter of justice is evident in the notions about the *unjust law* of the Republic (new taxes) compared to the reign of the monarch supported by God. That is, clearly the former order was being identified as a religiously sanctioned social and political organization in the larger society, a schism to be reproduced in the later synchronic opposition between the *doctrine of God* realized in Canudos and the secular order of the Republic. However, as much as the attraction is of religious infusion of the social world, it is noteworthy that "salvation" is not even mentioned. No doubt the "doctrine of God" implies accepting the fundamental notion of salvation, it is not individual salvation that seems to stand out as the reason for the attractiveness of Belo Monte. Furthermore, it is noted that no "promise" was involved, that is, no religious injunction, as in a pilgrimage, made the Indians move. By their own account, their participation was voluntary, and, by the way, full of joy. In fact, though austerity ruled certain aspects of life, in general the festive aspect of life in Canudos followed normal feast practices: for example, a good celebration of a

saint's day involves a lot of fireworks and what is called "movement" (many activities and many people). It is no accident that an old woman in Sergipe (area of influence of Canudos) told Calasans that the Conselheiro was very much remembered at festive occasions (in Villa 1998: 96).

More than a regime of salvation, the main motivation for the Kiriri seems to be a general change of the religiously imbued order of the world. Certainly, the Conselheiro preached, telling about 'the good for everyone' and caused a very favorable impression because referring to a social order founded on God's precepts. That is, of a social order being subordinated to the supernatural, just like the firm convictions of the Indians held as premise for the influence of the *encantados* in all of everyday life. More than that, the adhesion of entire neighborhoods is stated as a result of *the experience of the knowledgeable*. In that sense, in conformity to the Indian's particular cosmo-vision, the specialists with privileged access to the supernatural beings conceived of as of Indian origin must have consulted with these agents and elicited an interpretation from them. Every important phenomenon concerning the destiny of the community necessarily passed through this channel and commanded the actions taken (as they still do). In this case, they were informed that the 'Our Lord of Ascension was only present in appearance' and invited everyone to join in the efforts of Canudos. Differently from Massacará, the "enchanted" were consulted for a collective process of interpretation and decision making and they informed the Indians about the advice and state of the patron saint of the community.

Most importantly, this attributed a clear significance to Canudos: the supernatural agents ascribed the general and global interpretation and the guidelines for collective action. The joyous fervor caused was enthusiasm in the old sense, the one of the presence of the sacred in the participant. Today, the *encantados* and the saints are both different branches of a religious system headed by a superior but somewhat distant God. The *enchanted* and the saints are parallel and fairly autonomous parts, analogous in being intermediaries between Indians and God, but not interchangeable or really comparable. They differ in that the *enchanted* do detain a more active role in their sphere, and seem to be practically independent, while the saints are more clearly subordinated to God, do not possess much force of their own and function by means of 'promises'. The patron saint of Mirandela is considered by the Indians as their highly valued property and its material image is its real presence. Thus, the elements contained in the oral tradition are quite in accordance with the current religious order: the more active part rendered Canudos intelligible and the patron saint clarified its stature in the Catholic part. For the Indians the two parts are co-existent and not contradictory, but conceived of as being Indian in its totality. It seems reasonable that this totality was prevalent in much the same terms a hundred years ago and that the current understanding of the interpretation inherent in the oral tradition is close to the original interpretation of the time.

In the founding history of the Kiriri, still remarkably similar in some aspects to mythologies of other Indian peoples, the saints are Indians transformed as a result of the deluge. Other Indians appeared after the flood, were blessed by God and are the ancestors of the current generations. Jesus Christ walked on earth, was well received by the *caboclos* (as the Indians were called) and performed a series of beneficial feats of transformation of the world<sup>15</sup>. Christ also christened the Indians, taught them how to live and is considered a divine being, though not

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<sup>15</sup> And, nobody knows how the "portuguese" were originated. Moreover, not only the Indians were the original owners of the land before the deluge and after the flood, but Cabral, in this nationalistic year of the so-called "500 years of Brazil" in Brazil, also was an Indian, as was the princess who ordered his voyage! (for all of this history of the Kiriri about their own history, see Bandeira 1972: 78-79). It can be noted, by the way, that the enchanted are also thought of as deriving from Indian ancestors and their location is also in the middle of the world of *encantados*.

equivalent to God. Thus, the contemporary order in the world is the result of divine agency of transformation and the order itself is a conjunction of the natural and the supernatural, in a way, actually, inseparable. Here too, the supernatural was and is decisive. Furthermore, the Lord of Ascension is a form of Christ, so His interpretation, as an hierarchical superior, must have carried a lot of weight. It might be possible that it was conceived of as an extension of the times of transformation. But, in any case, the center of the Indian territory is the center of the world, and in the middle of the center is the church and the image of the saint is, again, the most central element of the building. The image is the synecdoche of the Indian group as collectivity. If, then, the image was only present in its outwards ‘appearance’ and in reality had gone to Canudos, then the center of the world and its reifying sacred focal symbol had moved to a different location. In a sense, the very essence of the Indian group would have relocated: *their saint* is the most central and distinctively singularly Indian in this part of the Indians’ religion and it provides their particularized anchorage in space-time from the very moment of foundation of the mission<sup>16</sup>. The encompassing representative of the Indian collectivity would ‘re-center’ the world and Canudos, it seems probable, would have been temporarily become the very heart, supernatural and natural, of the whole world, in lieu of Mirandela.

If this interpretation seems in all likelihood reasonably well founded, then the collective and massive character of the way the Kiriri accepted Canudos is comprehended in terms of the very specificity of their religious worldview. That is, all of its fundamental parts play a role in defining the meaning of Canudos from the Kiriri’s point of view and continued to do so when participating in its life and struggle. Part and parcel of Canudos, but ethnically singular and, again probably, spatially expressed in the existence of the “*street of caboclos*”<sup>17</sup>. In this way, on their own terms, the participation differs from other social categories and from other Indian peoples, containing many components that most certainly would not be approved by the orthodoxy of the Conselheiro (like *encantados*). The Conselheiro himself was called *Bom Jesus* and that may be a sign of a certain identification of his person with a saint. That is, maybe he himself would be, up to an uncertain degree, be identified with Jesus, a saint, and thus, for the Kiriri, different from the more divine being Jesus Christ. His exemplary life and his preaching could be interpreted as such: the Indian notions of saint include that they walk quite a lot on earth and their differences with men and “enchanted” are predicated upon their not eating or drinking while in this world. It is known that the Conselheiro fasted regularly, ate very little and does not seem to have had the habit of eating and drinking in public. In this way, he himself could have been identified as a “saint” and made yet a further point of attraction of Canudos to the Kiriri.

The religious order founded in Canudos by the Conselheiro presented sufficient similarities to the cosmo-vision of the Kiriri to attract them to its *regime of salvation*. The relocation of the center of the world points to something more than the living of a life with as little sins as possible in order to gain salvation. Instead of a utopia, mentioned in the literature even when discarded as not applying to Canudos, the comprehensive worldview and project could be coined an *entheotopia*. The concept of an *entheotopia* comes from the inadequacy of the idea of utopia -- which, after all, is a “nowhere” place and ideal state – maintaining the notion of

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<sup>16</sup> The only problem with this interpretation is that Bandeira does not mention that the saint was found by the Indians, as in almost all cases in the founding histories of Indian missions in the sertão. This general model can be fairly safely supposed, however. Another problem is that the type of saint in question is thus a “found image” and normally the image is not thought of as separate from the saint (like when the saint was found and usually insisted on returning to the location where the image was found and on being provided with a chapel only at that particular place). Perhaps this patron saint was an exception or the explanation a instance of a particularistic creative interpretation.

<sup>17</sup> Even if we do not know whom actually lived there, the oral tradition makes abundantly clear the particularity of their participation as a group and they probably were the most numerous *caboclos* easily identifiable as such.

a locus in combination with *entheos*. The reformulation proposed by some students of “hallucinogens” as to this term (because the concept conveys the wrong idea that psychoactive plant substances are purely the producers of illusions), employs a new term for a differently envisioned notion. The concept renamed, “*entheogen*”, refers to a substance that produces a “*God generated within*” (Wasson in Wasson et.al.: 30). Therefore, in analogy, when *entheos* (which also reminds of the root of enthusiasm, originally ‘imbued with God’), materializes in a *topos*, the ensuing *entheotopia* comprises the project of the realization of God’s will and presence and His sociocultural regime in a concrete topography and time. And that, of course, is the conception of Antônio Conselheiro and the core of his followers: the establishment of a territorialized space-time where the *socius* should be in harmony with, and entirely at the service of, the realization of God’s rules and where the correct way of living shall determine the salvation of the immortal soul of those submitting to this religious regime, a *regime of salvation*. At least for the core of the movement, Canudos territorialized a socioreligious movement, turning it into an *entheotopia* with a distinct *regime of salvation*.

The religious enthusiasm was aroused in the Kiriri by the visit of the Conselheiro and created the conditions for their particular interpretation of what the place of the approximation of the sacred to the earth and its realization in social life should be. For the Kiriri, this did not entail a messiah, or the announcer of the millenium, but the presence of a mediator like a “saint”, securing a special link to the heavenly realm of the sacred and the resulting benefits of that mediation. Two of them, possibly, one in the person of the Conselheiro and the other in the image of their patron saint. The Kiriri, as far as known in history, have always had a fundamental relation to the supernatural, recreating their ‘original aboriginal’ religion throughout time and integrating a version of catholicism into a new dynamic system. Applying their particular religious knowledge and construing their own proper interpretation -- as far as we know it and may assume its attributes --, the Kiriri conceived their own version of an *entheotopia* in Canudos. The re-centering of the world probably implied a special relationship with the supernatural in Canudos, epitomized by the presence of the patron saint, and that is also signaled by the prominent presence of their best shamans and the leadership commanded by the agency of the *encantados*. Thus, in sum, for the Indians, a *socius* clearly imbued with sacredness in everyday-life and comprising their own singular modality of an *entheotopia*.

#### CONCLUSION

The usual classification of “messianic” or “millenarian” movement tends to obscure a religious movement such as Canudos because, even though there are certain elements that may relate to a messiah, the major thrust of the significance for the major part of the participants lies in different aspects. Canudos does not seem to be really messianic or millenarian in the sense defined by the literature (Levine 1995: 7). In fact, as Levine also notes, the definite refusal of the Conselheiro to be identified as anything but human, what correlates with his summing up of only three miracles attributed to the Conselheiro, as these are definitely of minor order and proof coming from uncertain sources (Levine 1995: 232). These do not include the proof for the Kiriri, the famous lessening of the weight of the wood, though also mentioned for the carrying of stone or other heavy weight by another survivor (this seems to be a stock in trade and quite useful for a builder like the Conselheiro; Levine 1995: 158), and by Indians in Massacará as well. Lightening of weight, however, though significant, does not count as a really important miracle in the sertão. Still, as said, a spectrum of degrees of ‘sanctity’ pertained to the leader and he certainly was generally considered someone with a special relation to the supernatural, in at least in some

degree, by almost everyone. Such authority could also be derived from an ethic and moral conduct simply being in correspondence with his own preaching. Unlike the beginning of his career, by the time of settling in Belo Monte, Antônio V.M. Maciel definitely had grown into the charismatic leader *Conselheiro*.

At different times, in different places and to different social categories, the leadership of the *Conselheiro* and, later on, the social formation of Canudos were interpreted in multiple ways. The differential attraction of Canudos is exemplified in the example of the two Indian peoples discussed here. Though acknowledging the necessity to take into account the specific particular circumstances of time and space, what does not seem to be the case in most of the literature, a few general points can reasonably be proposed to be considered for more generalized validity. First, the oral tradition really brings us closer to significance of the *Conselheiro* and Canudos for the participants. Second, from the reactions of the Indians in Massacará a broad spectrum of response appears and, at one end, permits to develop the notion of a *regime of salvation*. Third, the massive, dedicated participation of the Indians of Mirandela derived from the engagement of their total religious system and concurrent conception of the place of religion in the world. This case points to an ample collective sociocultural elaboration that can be translated in the concept of *entheotopia*. These interpretations and concepts can be extended to be thought to apply to Canudos at large. It is notable, in this respect, that the definitions used, for example, by Levine (1995: 7) for messianic movement and millenarianism concentrate on, respectively, universal salvation and collective salvation. And, it is also remarkable how the construction of a social order with a set of rules, precepts and principles, props up in the discussions, as well as the idea of justice and religious sanction in the collective construction of this sociocultural project.

The proposed terms are, then, not anything really new, but instead of fitting Canudos into categories of doubtful application -- even when a small but uncertain degree of messianic and millenarian thought was present --, the concepts *regime of salvation* and *entheotopia*, emerging from these two cases of little known Indian participation, redirect and reformulate ideas that may benefit the research on what Canudos really signified for its adherents. In this regard, they may be closer to aid in attaining an internal comprehension of the sociocultural logic involved than the previously mentioned concepts, and a correction to the emphasis on the logic of practical reason prevalent in earlier studies. In fact, when an old *cabocla* could not keep up with the pace set by the republican soldiers who kept prisoner a group of women and children after the end of the War, she went into the bush expecting to end her suffering while saying to the others: "*Until the Day of Judgment*" (Barros 1995: 80). The same expression was used at the parting of someone leaving Canudos at the height of the War and expecting to take leave for the last time in this life. Taking leave till the end of time then, when this life and suffering shall be over and shall be reunited at the Day of Judgement: there and then the salvation of their immortal souls shall be decided for eternity; and that really is the purpose and meaning of life.

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