THE NICHE GLOBALIZATION OF PROJECTIOLOGY: COSMOLOGY AND INTERNATIONALIZATION OF A BRAZILIAN PARASCIENCE

Anthony D’Andrea

INTRODUCTION: STRUCTURE AND AGENCY IN ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH


Over the following twenty-five years, IIPC grew into a network of regional branches and spin-off associations operating across Brazil and several countries. In 2002, Vieira and a few hundred Projectiologists moved to the new campus-like *Center of Higher Studies of Conscientiology* (CEAE in Portuguese) located in the continental hinterland of Iguassu Falls and kick-started a radical restructuration of IIPC. In this process, all international affairs were transferred to the newly created *International Academy of Consciousness* (IAC, originally in English), a small and nimble non-profit organization run by a team of mobile teachers crisscrossing Portugal, UK and the US. According to an internal report (IIPC 2004), over 100 teachers, 500 volunteers and 12,000 students are annually involved with Projectiology and Conscientiology. They are mostly white, college-educated, urban middle-class Brazilians interested in developing their psychic, spiritual and personal abilities.
These figures are very modest when compared to other parasciences, such as Transcendental Meditation, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Scientology or Osho Meditation, what begs the question of why and how such a difference in scale could take place. Upon the case of Projectiology, this chapter therefore develops a research framework that can be usefully employed in the analysis of other new religious, spiritual and parascientific groups undergoing internationalization.

As its more basic task, this chapter summarizes the organization, cosmology and ethos of Projectiology, focusing the analysis on the main conditions, barriers and mechanisms shaping its international expansion to this point. The working premise set forth in this study argues that IIPC’s organizational dynamic is determined by cosmological representations and behavioral dispositions that Projectiologists hold towards spirituality and society at large. For the careful testing of this premise, primary data sources used in the study include: internal literature, ethnographic fieldwork in former IIPC headquarters in Rio de Janeiro (from 1986 to 1991) and branches in Barcelona and Madrid (summer 1998), content and ethnographic analysis of online resources (IIPC websites, social media updates and videos, email-based discussion lists), in addition to unstructured interactions with Projectiology teachers, volunteers, sympathizers and so-called ‘dissidents’ carried out over the years until present day 2012.

For the sake of economic writing, any reference to ‘Projectiology’ also includes Conscientiology, unless otherwise noted. A ‘Projectiologist’ refers to anyone who studies and practices either or both parasciences, is influenced by its ideas at a significant level, and is or has been involved with the organization as a student, teacher or volunteer. The ‘IIPC network’ refers to a range of organizations including IIPC, CEAEC, IAC and spin-off associations. In particular, IIPC and CEAEC are main references of activities in Brazil, whereas IAC relates to international operations. This study does not address other organizations that may incorporate Projectiology teachings but are not formally related to the IIPC network.

The chapter is structured as follows. The next section reviews key issues intersecting globalization and new religious movement studies in order to outline a conceptual framework that guides the examination of Projectiology’s internationalization patterns. In the second section we investigate how its cosmology and ethos directly affect the organizational culture, strategies and practices of the IIPC network, which, in turn, shape the nature of its internationalization. The third section illustrates this point, by focusing on how this internationalization is directly affected by