

“I spent marvellous!”

Brazilian gold miners and religious beliefs in their
quest for gold



Eline de Smet (1898000)
VU University
Master thesis Social and Cultural Anthropology
24-06-2011
Supervisor: M. de Theije
Second assessor: T. Salman

Preface

This thesis is the result of doing the Master Social and Cultural Anthropology at VU University in Amsterdam. I want to thank all the people that have been supporting me during this year.

First of all, I want to thank my supervisor Marjo de Theije. Thanks to her, I found a subject that kept me interested during the whole year. She always responded with encouraging e-mails when I wrote her (sometimes frustrated) messages during my fieldwork, and always kept me motivated by giving quick and constructive feedback. Thank you!

I also want to thank all the people that were of great help to me during my fieldwork in Brazil. Armin Mathis, thanks for bringing me in contact with Peri. Peri, thanks for taking care of me, and for helping me with all your contacts in the field. Ivo Preto, thanks for helping me accommodate in Agua Branca and for writing and calling your contacts to help me. Joel, thanks for the accommodation and for helping me around in Itaituba. Thanks Paulo Lira for helping me to go to Crepurizão. Antonio José, thank you for taking care of me in Crepurizão, for all the meals and the transportation to Independência and Agua Branca. Paulo Carneiro and Gustavo, thank you for all the facilities in Canaã and for guiding me around and for helping me to get in contact with respondents in the gold mine. And of course thanks to all the garimpeiros that were prepared to converse with me and to let me take note of their lives, whose names, as a matter of fact, have been falsificated in order to protect their anonymity.

And of course, thanks to my family and friends for all the mental support during this year!

Table of Contents:

1 Introduction	5
2 Regional background	8
2.1 Gold mining in Brazil	8
2.2 Life in the garimpo region	10
<i>Socio-economic relationships in the garimpo</i>	
<i>The currutelas</i>	
<i>Autonomy versus social insecurity</i>	
2.3 Religious background	16
3 Religion, desire and insecurity	19
3.1 Desire and moral agency	19
<i>Justification of transgression</i>	
<i>Time and desire</i>	
<i>Individual or social?</i>	
3.2 Religion, desire and insecurity	22
<i>Religion and the consumer culture of modern capitalism</i>	
<i>Religion and coping with insecurity</i>	
4 Ethnographic data: Desire and Insecurity	26
4.1 Gold fever	26
4.2 Security and insecurity in the garimpo	29
<i>Living conditions</i>	
<i>Social climate</i>	
<i>Technology and moral economy</i>	
4.3 Spending money	32
<i>Conspicuous consumption</i>	
<i>The family back home</i>	
<i>The unmarried garimpeiro</i>	
<i>Family in the garimpo region</i>	
4.4 Future perspectives	37
5 Ethnographic data: Religion in the garimpo	40
5.1 Churches with gold fever	40

5.2 Christian lifestyle in the garimpo region	43
<i>The church as a social network</i>	
<i>Psycho-social advantages</i>	
<i>Various Christian conducts</i>	
<i>Church adherents' view of the garimpeiro</i>	
5.3 Garimpeiros and religious beliefs	47
<i>Garimpeiros' participation in the church</i>	
<i>Garimpeiros' view of churches' morality</i>	
<i>God's influence on garimpeiros</i>	
<i>Religious garimpeiros</i>	
<i>Supernatural agency of gold</i>	
6 Conclusion	54
7 References	57
8 Executive summary	61

1 Introduction

'I spent marvellous!', I heard a man exclaim in Itaituba, a small city in the Amazon of Brazil. One could be inclined to imagine this man to be a rich businessman, but the opposite is true: it was a broke gold miner. The exclamation of this *garimpeiro* (a Brazilian word for small-scale gold miner) implies a pride in spending money, a desire to act out wealth. What does this pride tell us of his life in the gold mines? This thesis will be concerned with the social dynamics in small-scale gold mines in Brazil.

Gold mining has a long tradition in Brazil. Albeit gold mining has gained keen attention after the big gold rush in the 1980's, (Cleary 1990; Larreta 2002; Rocha 1999) the state has already been known to deal with it since the 16th century. Since the 18th century, a split can be discerned between formal and informal mining (Cleary 1990:203). The informal, small-scale gold mining sector is called *garimpagem*. Their diggings and the communities formed around these diggings are called *garimpos*.

In Brazil, *garimpagem* has been producing far more gold than the formal mining sector. However, it has often been defined illegal, viewed by the government as a socio-political and ecological threat (Cleary 1990). *Garimpagem* is destructive for the environment and has caused disease among indigenous cultures (Rocha 1999). *Garimpeiros* were described as marginal, poor, desperate, greedy and violent men. The *garimpo* is also known to be a 'wild west', where *garimpeiros* drink and fight a lot and where most women are prostitutes. However, this image of *garimpeiros* has been nuanced by social scientists (e.g. Cleary 1990; Larreta 2002; Slater 2002).

In 2005, the Brazilian federal government has again declared a certain area as nature reserve. However, the *garimpeiros* continue working there illegally. The interests of the government obviously do not comply with those of the *garimpeiros*. In literature is also stated that the socio-economic benefits and importance of *garimpagem* are often being overlooked (Heemskerk 2003; Hilson 2002) and that the legislation has not led to social and environmental improvements (ibid). This thesis is an attempt to contribute to the recognition of the social concerns of the small-scale gold miners in Brazil.

What might seem to come from an unexpected quarter, is that a central concern in this thesis is the *religion* of gold miners. At least, that appeared unexpected for the gold miners themselves. However, studying religion can give insight into community dynamics, into the maintenance and definition of a collective identity (e.g. see Theije 2008; Nash 1979) and into the making of authority claims (Dawson 2007:3). It is thus through the study of religious beliefs, that I have investigated cultural and social dynamics in the *garimpos*. The following research question is aimed at to be answered:

'How do the religious beliefs of small-scale goldminers in the Brazilian Tapajós region mediate the interplay between insecurity and desire in their quest for gold?'

In order to facilitate answering this research question, the next three subquestions have been formulated:

- Which religious beliefs (co)exist among the gold miners and in which contexts do they make use of religious practices or discourses?
- What does human security mean for the gold miners?
- How are garimpeiros' practices and discourses about desire related to moral agency?

Insecurity and desire in this research I assumed to be important in the dynamics around the motivations of garimpeiros' agency. Various authors describe that garimpagem entails physical, economic and social risks, but still is an attractive occupation. Insight into the desires, into the beliefs, hopes and imaginaries of garimpeiros, is therefore important. Herein has been attended especially towards their envisioned futures. Garimpeiros are motivated by imaginary futures (Halvaksz 2008; Larreta 2002). Many anthropologists study the past to understand the dynamics of the present, of which some even argue that by knowing the past we can better understand and 'forecast' the future (Zuiderwijk 2000:11). In my study, however, future perspectives of the garimpeiro have been investigated in order to understand behaviour in the present. In this respect I will contribute to the anthropology of time.

But a more important contribution will be made to the anthropology of religion. The bad reputation of the garimpeiros points to a tension of their behaviour with a Christian conduct. The Christian morality of an abstemious lifestyle seems to conflict with desire for great wealth. During the fieldwork I have adopted a pragmatic approach towards religion. Therefore, the research question aims to give insight into how religious beliefs help the garimpeiros in the management of their desires and insecurities. However, a reverse view appeared to be equally applicable: namely, how the garimpeiros' desires and insecurities affect their adherence to a religion. It relates to the question if religion fosters social change, or if social change fosters religious change. The data in this thesis point to a mutual relationship between one's social context and one's religious practice. I will argue that for most garimpeiros, the absence of a family and community life implies a degree of 'liminality' from a social context and therefore also from a religious lifestyle.

The fieldwork has been done in the Tapajós region in the Brazilian state Pará. Methods used were participant observation and semi-structured interviews. I have conducted 21 interviews: Four interviews were with people from the churches; the rest with garimpeiros, of which eleven were workers, and six were 'donos', bosses in the garimpo who own land and/or machines. Participant observation consisted of visiting church cults and masses, and participation in every-day life in various garimpos and communities nearby called *currutelas*. Here I collected data in observations and in informal conversations. In conversations I have also used 'projective techniques', in which informants were asked to comment and reflect on another person's behaviour or on 'the garimpeiro' in general. Projective techniques were a tool to (partly) deal with an ethical dilemma, since there was the assumed risk of affecting the respondents by letting them make self-reflections, the risk of making them feel bad about their moral behaviour or their life situation.

In the next chapter, I first discuss regional background information. It is information about the socio-economic life in the garimpo, but also religious background information. Chapter three contains a theoretical framework, concerning literature of religion, desire and insecurity. This will ground the arguments that I make in the ethnographic chapters: Chapter four concerns desire and insecurity, followed by Chapter five which focuses on religion.

2 Regional background

2.1 Gold mining in Brazil

2.2 Life in the garimpo region

2.3 Religious background

2.1 Gold mining in Brazil

As noted in the introduction, gold mining has a long tradition in Brazil. The legislation around garimpagem has always been incomprehensive, but the real-life effects were only damaging since the gold rush that started in 1979, with an explosion of the gold price and a gold strike in Serra Pelada. Gold digging in the Amazon reached national importance (Cleary 1990; Larreta 2002). With garimpeiros regarded as individualistic, greedy and undisciplined, the gold rush was perceived as a potential social and political threat (Cleary, 1990:197). However, the creation of ‘garimpeiro reserves’ did not prevent garimpeiros to enter areas meant for formal mining companies.

In the same year, a terrible economic crisis began in Brazil, in which the government was forced to think about the possibilities in gold production in garimpagem (ibid:201). The government saw the exploration of mineral resources as fundamental to the national security or to the country’s development process, and began to act in the gold market as a gold purchaser (Rocha, 1999). Low prices of goods and fuel made mechanised gold digging an attractive business.

Another aspect that influenced the expansion of garimpagem, is the policy of colonisation of the Amazon region that the government carried out in the late 1960’s. The military regime saw the Amazon as an ‘empty’ wilderness that needed to be occupied, and stimulated migration to this area. Agricultural colonies were installed, highways constructed, and big hydroelectric projects were set up (Rocha 1999; Larreta 2002; Perz et al. 2010). But the mechanisation and building of dams also caused a lot of small farmers to become landless. Large tenants occupied and privatised land, even using threats and violence to claim land (Perz et al. 2010:459). As (unexpected) consequences of the policy, a migratory labour force was created and an informal economy arose (Larreta 2002). In the late 1980’s, the economic policy led labour and capital to flee into the informal mining sector, where controls and taxes were ignored (Rocha 1999).

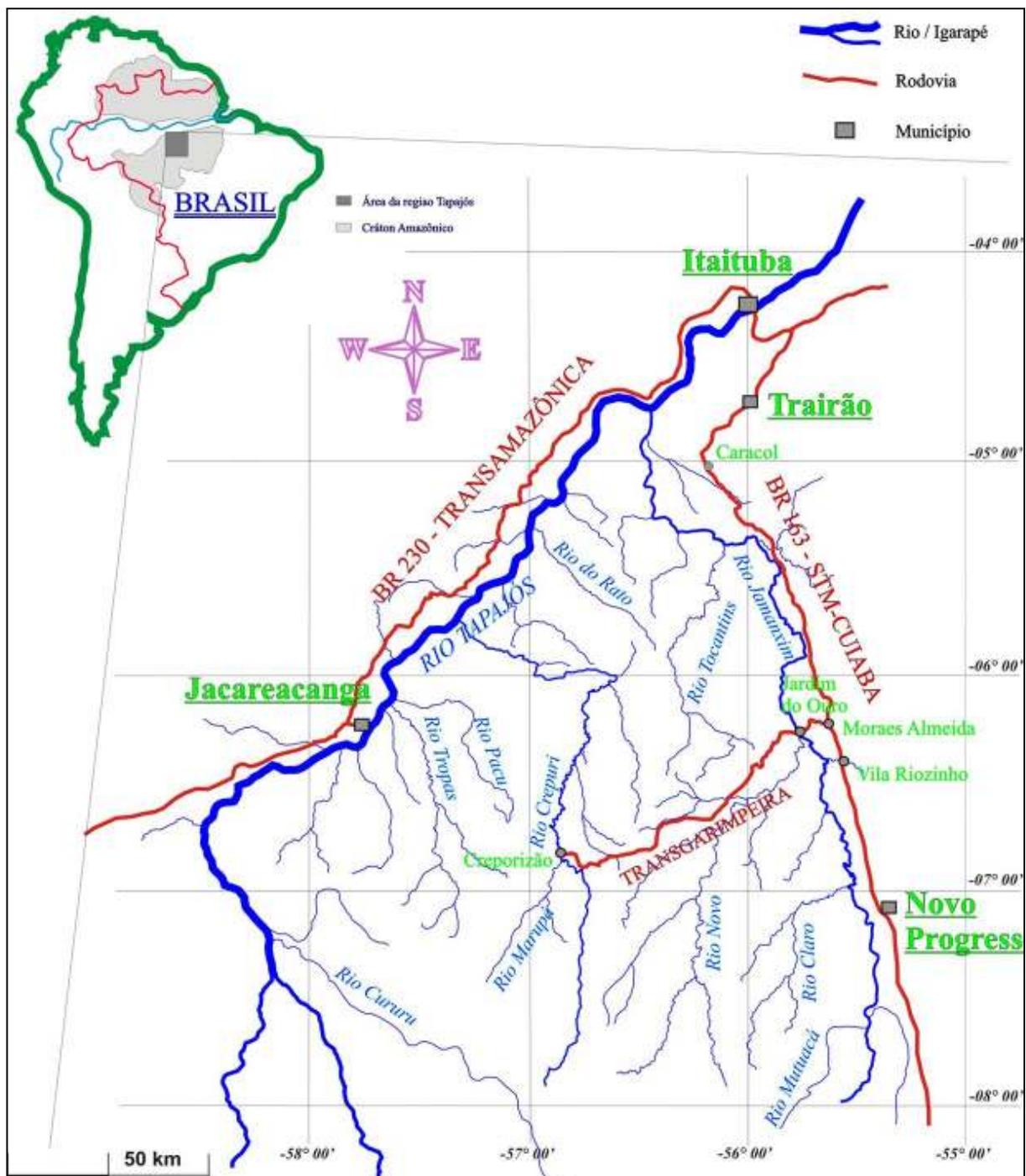
The Brazilian state policy towards garimpagem has thus been inconsistent, reacting to socio-political circumstances rather than attempting to shape them. The incomprehensive legislation has not led to social and environmental improvements, and the government lost the confidence of both the formal and informal mining sector (Cleary 1990:208-209; Hilson 2002).

In the Tapajós region, in the state Pará, gold was discovered for the first time in 1956 (Cleary 1990:12). In 1958, one of the world’s most important gold deposits was discovered here. The gold fields expanded during the 1960’s along the Tapajós River, near the town Itaituba. Gold

attracted a lot of people to the region (Larreta 2002:14-15). The Tapajós region has always produced more gold than any other region of garimpagem in Brazil (Cleary 1990:16). In the 70's and in the rest of the century, Larreta wrote, gold has been the main agent of transformation of both the ecological and the social landscape (2002:12). Nowadays, Itaituba has around 100.000 inhabitants.

2.2 Life in the garimpo region

The Tapajós region is a thinly populated area, has few roads and also river transport is difficult because of rapids. Due to the local geography, access is difficult, and therefore air flight is important as the principal medium for opening up a new area of gold extraction (Larreta 2002:22; Cleary1990:67). As a consequence of insufficient roads constructed by the federal state, 'informal' roads have been created. One such informal road is the 'transgarimpeira' road, which is important for access to many garimpos (Grupo de trabalho interministerial 2006:59-60). However, in rainy times the roads are bad and therefore air flight remains an important transport medium.



Socio-economic relationships in the garimpo

The social and economic relationships in the garimpo are fundamentally structured in terms of an occupational hierarchy (Cleary 1990:82). The most important social division in the garimpo is that between *donos* and workers (Cleary 1990:87). Workers receive either a daily wage (*diarista*), or a percentage of the gold produced (*porcentista*). They also receive food and accommodation. I have done participant observation in the garimpo Canaã. Three other garimpos I have just visited for a day or less. Whereas Cleary writes in his ethnography that most workers are *diaristas* (1990:74), in Canaã all workers were *porcentistas*.

In the literature, authors write about different types of donos, who work on different scales. Some depend on manual technology, which is only efficient on alluvial deposits and small rivers, while others own machinery, with which they can also work primary deposits, gold embedded in rock (Cleary 1990; Larreta 2003). An example of manual technology that is frequently being used, is the *caixa*: the ground that contains the gold is proceeded through this wooden construction with water, in order to extract the gold (see



picture). During my fieldwork, all donos appeared to have machinery, yet still of different mechanisation scales. In Canaã they only had hydraulic equipments to work alluvial deposits; in other garimpos there were excavators, tractors and mechanical crushers. Moreover, a distinction was being made between donos of land and donos of machines, though one could be both. The type of technology used to extract gold affects the socio-economic relationships in the garimpo (Cleary 1990:6). Although technology in garimpagem is limited, it has been discovering and producing far more gold than the formal mining sector in Amazonia, because they are financially viable where mineral deposits are only marginal for large-scale companies (Cleary 1990:6; Hilson 2002:8). Since the 1970s, more sophisticated machinery has made garimpeiros technically capable of mining a greater range of gold deposits (Cleary 1990:10). Larreta writes that this development has depersonalised labour relations, and that the mechanisation created more liberty, but also more dependency (2002:71;79). This development has continued in the area. Nowadays, the 'easy gold' is almost gone, which means that few gold can be found in fluvial deposits. Gold is more to be found in rocks and deeper underground, which requires more technology.

Mechanised gold production was pioneered in the Tapajós region. One particular mechanical innovation, the balsa (raft), was especially associated with the Tapajós (Cleary 1990:16). It enabled garimpeiros for the first time to extract gold from large rivers. In this type of garimpagem, both the dangers and rewards are high, and it attracts mostly

porcentistas (ibid:84-85). At the moment the balsa has almost disappeared. Instead, the more advanced draga is now used in the rivers. But in general, as compared to the 80's and 90's, garimpagem has diminished and many people have left the region. Nowadays, the most adventurous people try to find their luck in the Guyanas. In these countries is being found more gold now, but it is also said to be dangerous for Brazilians due to their illegal status. Various persons told me of instances of violence and robberies that had occurred to their friends in Suriname. About French Guyana is being told more of the risk to be caught by the gendarme and to be put out of the country.

In the garimpo one also finds *sócios*, businessmen who provide supplies, machinery or financial backing to donos in return for a share of gold. In addition, there are other people in the region who may not be permanently resident in one garimpo, but nevertheless depend upon them for their living: cooks, gold buyers, prostitutes, pilots, smallholders, bar owners, and others (Cleary 1990:74). Cleary and Larreta also write of the presence of *cantineiros*. In the cantina garimpeiros chat, drink and listen to the radio. However, in Canaã, there was only an encampment for the garimpeiros. Other garimpos that I visited did have a television and a place to sit and chat next to the kitchen. But for drinking and amusement, garimpeiros needed to go to a *currutela*. Currutelas are supportive cores for the garimpos, with shops, bars and hotels. In the currutelas also live families. Garimpeiros usually do not have a house and family here, but rather stay in hotels. They visit the currutela to spend money and then return to work. The main part of my fieldwork has been done in currutelas.

The currutelas

I have done participant observation in three currutelas: Cabaçal, Crepurizão and Agua Branca. They are very different from each other. Cabaçal is a small currutela that exists more than ten years. The shopkeepers are like funders of the currutela and also sell electricity to the houses. Cabaçal exists of two streets of about 100 meters. The first street is along the waterside, where most bars and shops are located. Most bars are also hotel



and/or brothel, there is no neat distinction between these categories. At the end of the street there is a church, named the Assembly of God. The second street only exists of family houses and a small soccer-basketballfield. There is no school, but there are plans to fund one. The federal police comes once every fortnight; the place they use as office also functions as a hotel. There are about seven garimpos nearby from which garimpeiros visit this currutela, mainly on Sundays. From Canaã, every Sunday about fifteen garimpeiros come to Cabaçal by

canoe.

The main part of the participant observation has been done in Crepurizão. Crepurizão is bigger than Cabaçal and already exists around thirty years. It has five streets. The main street is the most central and holds most commercial buildings. There are five churches of which four are in use; two Assembly's of God, one Catholic church and one Adventists of the Seventh Day. There are a health post and a public primary school, financed by the government. At the school there are also classes for adults at night. In the office of the federal police work four agents. The presence of the government in the currutelas seem not to be concerned with the illegality of (a part of the) small-scale gold mines nearby, on which people in the currutela depend for their income. Compared to the other currutelas that I visited and compared to the 80's according to the local oral history, Crepurizão is 'civilised'. There is less prostitution. Also, Crepurizão is home to many families. One informant explained Crepurizão to be like a village, but one that never reached maturity, because everybody comes here to earn money to take it away to the city. An event which demonstrates that they live as a community, was when a person died in an accident. All commerces were closed the next day and the celebration of carnaval was put off untill the next week. For me it was also easier to build relationships with people who live permanently in Crepurizão than with garimpeiros who were staying only a couple days and passing through. Crepurizão is the end of the 'transgarimpeira' road, which makes Crepurizão also a pass-through currutela from which people travel from and to Itaituba.



It was told that there lived much more people in Crepurizão in the time of the gold rush.

In the currutela Agua Branca there is the most 'gossip' about gold at the moment in the Tapajós region, the most gold fever. It is said to be more 'movimentado', more bustle. Near Agua Branca there are more richer garimpeiros. This attracts more prostitution in the currutela, as there is more money to be spent and earned. There are also more quarrels; how this is related to the amount of gold will be discussed in Chapter four. Agua Branca is a relatively new currutela. Unlike Cabaçal and Crepurizão, most houses are like baracs, wooden frames with plastic. However, the buildings in the commercial centre are made of wood and concrete. There are also a school, a health post and a federal police post. Many people in Agua Branca say that they liked Crepurizão more, because it is more a community. People in Crepurizão are said to be more welcoming and to have more intimate contacts. One young dono said that he cannot build up a life in Agua Branca, because he does not want the women who are in here (since most of them are prostitutes). Social (in)security, related to a

community or family life, thus seems to be significant in the discourses and behaviour of people living in the currutelas.

The garimpeiros come to the currutelas to spend their free time. There are some garimpeiros who have their family living in the currutela, but most of them stay in a hotel. There are garimpeiros that come together with their colleagues, but also lonesome garimpeiros looking for work.

Working on a digging usually takes about a month. During this month, they dig ground until they come to the *lagrese*, which is the layer of ground with the most gold (which has a certain structure). After extracting gold from this lagrese, the work is finished. The garimpeiros receive their percentage and can leave and do what they want. They usually spend their money and return to work - with the same dono or another. A social life is therefore not stable for the garimpeiro. They work together with some garimpeiros, and the next digging they work with others. Therefore it is difficult to have intimate and trustful friends. But they do have a lot of acquaintances. This is a difference with the people who live in the currutela. Dono's also use to be more 'friends' with people in the currutela, since they are often business partners for a long period.

Autonomy versus social insecurity

As noted before, liberty and dependency have been written of as simultaneous effects of mechanisation, enforced by depersonalisation (Larreta 2002:79). This ambivalence between liberty and dependency is very much at stake in literature about the social aspects of garimpagem. Besides the opportunity to become rich one day (Grätz 2003; Larreta 2002; Theije&Bal 2010), the very attractiveness of mining appears to be autonomy, agency or financial and social independency (Cleary 1990; Friedman 2007; Hilson 2002; Laretta 2002).

Fluctuating boundaries of norms and authority are central to the social life in garimpos (Cleary 1990:26; Grätz 2003:201; Theije & Heemskerk 2009). The socio-economic hierarchies contribute to creating a security of working arrangements, but are flexible enough so that there is real opportunity for upward mobility in the hierarchy (Cleary 1990:98; Grätz 2003:201). Cleary states that this opportunity and autonomy make garimpagem different from other hierarchical systems (1990:103).

According to Larreta, the experience of dispossession has an important place in the formation of the garimpeiros' identity. He has no home, and knows he is at the bottom of the social scale. The gold mine, however, is a space they dominate, a territory in which they are free to act. In the garimpo, he says, money is not the measure of value. To be bankrupt means a loss of independence, a loss of mobility (2002:46-47). The relation of 'gold fever' to a desired position on the social scale, I will later demonstrate to be of great importance for the garimpeiro.

Fluctuating boundaries make manipulation possible. This offers opportunities, but also entails mistrust. Grätz writes that "trust and mistrust are part of the special social and cultural embeddedness of gold mining" (Grätz 2003:200). Mistrust has turned out to be a significant obstacle in my access to respondents. Many garimpeiros thought that I was sent by the

government. For example, one person in Itaituba asked me immediately after being introduced, if I was secretly voice-recording him. Beforehand, I had expected that mistrust would not be a big issue if I would tell that I was doing research about religion. However, it appeared not so 'believable' why I would come all the way there to know about garimpeiros' religion.

Because everything is regulated by informal agreements, informal information networks and detailed local knowledge are important in garimpagem (Larreta 2002:93; Cleary 1990). Larreta speaks of 'regional cultural competence' (2002:103). A lack of local information has become another obstacle for me, namely in getting access into the garimpo itself. Therefore, the first 3.5 weeks of fieldwork have been done in Itaituba, followed by 5 weeks in the garimpos and in currutelas.

According to Theije and Heemskerk, we can speak of typical mining cultures, which 'evolve around reasoning, rules and procedures that are consciously or unconsciously being developed to establish social relations and modes of social integration adapted to a situation in which most people are not connected by kinship or ethnic and class ties.' (2009:7). Besides the fluctuous social life and distrust, most garimpeiros don't have a family in the region. This absence of kinship I will argue to be an important insecurity of influence to the garimpeiro's (moral) agency.

2.3 Religious background

Brazil is known as a quintessentially Catholic country (Mariz 1994:11). In the past century, however, there has been a continuous growth of non-Catholic forms of Christianity in whole Latin America (Benavides 2001:1767). A movement of ‘liberation theology’ arose in the 60’s, questioning the role the Catholic church had played in the maintenance of an unjust social order during the colonization of Latin America (ibid), trying to respond to the needs of the Latin American poor by ‘consciousness-raising’ (Stoll 1993:4). Moreover, there has been a striking growth of Evangelical Protestantism, mainly Pentecostalism. Contrary to the Catholic church, Protestants were not excessively hierarchical, bureaucratic, and dogmatic. Protestantism has grown by schisms and decentralization (Coleman, Aguilar, Sandoval & Steigenga 1993:117-118).

Stoll (1993:2) and Mariz (1994:19) note that a majority of the Latin Americans still call themselves Catholics, but of these relatively few participate in church life, while a much higher percentage of Evangelicals do. Mariz moreover states that most people which declare themselves Catholic in Brazil, are actually a kind of non-Romanized Catholics who do not feel obliged to have an exclusive religious identity or affiliation. In Brazil, only Protestantism requires an exclusive religious affiliation (1994:24).

Protestantism first arrived in Brazil in the 19th century, as being immigrant and missionary churches. They had very few converts; most of them were middle-class people (Mariz 1994:24). Adherents had to accustom themselves to the pastoral practices that were established by foreign missionaries as overseas extensions of their own denominations (Cleary 1997:5-7).

In the 20th century, a Pentecostal renewal was able to gain members among the poor in Brazil. Albeit their theological characteristics are profoundly Protestants, (emphasizing freedom of expression and the affirmation of the individual’s worth within the community,) Pentecostals in Brazil (and in the rest of Latin America) differ greatly from historical Protestants. Various authors emphasize that Pentecostalism is not a North American invasion or religious imperialism (Cleary 1997:4; Stewart-Gambino & Wilson 1997:229; Stoll 1993). Freston points to the infancy of Pentecostalism when it reached Brazil as an important factor in its autochthonous development (1995:121). There have been many schisms, and consequently there exist hundreds of small Pentecostal churches, of which a few large ones dominate the field (Freston 1995:120). The Assembly of God is the largest Pentecostal church in Brazil, founded in 1911 in Belém by Swedish missionaries (Freston 1995:121; Mariz 25).

Freston describes the history of Pentecostalism in Brazil as three ‘waves’ of institutional creation. The first wave was one of Pentecostalism’s origin and international expansion in the 1910s; the second was in the 1950s and early 1960s, cohering with urbanization and mass society, in which new enterprising forms of Pentecostalism came up. This second wave is also referred to as neo-Pentecostal or charismatic (Cleary 8-9). Cleary writes that “In contrast to the Pentecostals’ asceticism and modesty, the behaviour of some Neo-Pentecostals knew no restraints. They noisily entered politics, preached an ethos of consumerism.” (1997:9). This has also led to the emergence of charismatic forms of Catholicism, (Coleman et al., 1993:117-118), disrupting the Catholic-Protestant distinction (Stoll 1993:6). The third Pentecostal wave was in the late 1970s and 1980s, after the

authoritarian modernization of Brazil. In this wave, also identified as peripheral Pentecostalism, there was more emphasis on exorcism and healing (Mariz 1994:26) ¹.

Pentecostalism in Brazil constitutes one of the largest practising Protestant communities in the world (Freston 1995:119). The dominance of the Pentecostal churches was also confirmed during my fieldwork in the Tapajós region. In Itaituba there were about twice as much Pentecostal churches compared to Catholic churches. However, the Pentecostals have more small congregations, and the major part of the people still identify as being Catholic. But everybody agreed that the 'evangelicals' (which is used as an umbrella term for Latin American Protestants (Cleary 1997:7; Stoll 1993:3)) were gaining terrain.

The expansion of Protestantism is also noticeable in the garimpo: of the churches in the currutelas, the main part is Pentecostal. In table 1, an overview is given of the churches that were present in the currutelas where I stayed or passed through:

Table 1. Church presence in currutelas in the Tapajós region

	Protestant			Catholic
	Pentecostal		Adventist	Roman-Catholic
	Assembly of God	God is Love Pentecostal Church	Seventh-Day Adventist	
Água Branca	x	x		?
Cabaçal	x			
Crepurizão	xx		x	x
Crepurizinho	x		x	x
Maripa	x			

¹The third wave adapts to the changes of the military period (1964–85): industrial deepening; rapid urbanization caused by expulsion from the countryside; the modern mass media which reach virtually the whole population; the crisis of Catholicism and the growth of Umbanda; and the economic stagnation of the 1980s (Freston 1995:129).

Interviews revealed that churches in the garimpo region came into being since the end of the 80's and beginning of the 90's. About the "God is Love"² Pentecostal church I have no information how long it exists in the garimpo region, but it must be relatively new since Agua Branca is a relatively new currutela. The main part of participant observation in churches has been done in Crepurizão. Therefore I sketch the religious map of Crepurizão, which I think is representative for the religious map in the garimpo region.

The Catholic church in Crepurizão is visited poorly. This is because they have no priest; when every so many time the priest comes from Novo Progresso, the church is said to be full. But he only visits the currutela once in a while, at the most once a month. During the period of my fieldwork, the priest did not come at all, since the roads were muddy as a consequence of rainfall. A woman from Crepurizão opens the church on Sunday night to make little gatherings, because "You can't close the house of God". The Assembly of God and Seventh-Day Adventist do not depend on one priest for being visited. The Assembly of God has auxiliaries to lead the cult. They have two churches in Crepurizão; one is of bigger size than the Catholic church, the other is a smaller one. The Assembly of God has a cult or activity every day of the week in Crepurizão. Seventh-Day Adventists have three cults a week. They also have a priest who lives in Novo Progresso, but there are others leading the cults and adherents keep frequenting the church without priest. Their church is smaller than the Catholic, but is frequented by more people (usually ± fifteen persons were attending a cult). The Assembly of God, however, has by far the most churchgoers.



² The 'God is Love' is a Pentecostal church of the second wave of Pentecostalism in Brazil. It was founded in 1962 in São Paulo (Freston 1995:120).

3 Religion, desire and insecurity

3.1 Desire and moral agency

3.2 Religion, desire and insecurity

My research question implies a relationship between religion, desire and insecurity. Religion is assumed to impose a certain moral conduct, that may not comply with a greedy desire for gold and other aspects that appear in the garimpeiros' bad reputation. On the other hand, religion can facilitate the pursuit of one's desire and to gain security. In order to support the analysis of the role of religion for the garimpeiros' dealing with desire, first literature will be reviewed of the psycho-social dynamics of desire and moral agency. The second part I will discuss literature that concerns the relatedness of desire and insecurity with religion.

3.1 Desire and moral agency

Desire comes alive in a social context. There are cultural variations in the morality and control of desire, and in the possibilities of experiencing desire³ (Belk, Ger & Askegaard 2003). Carter writes that a problem of morality arises fundamentally because of the value placed on freedom (2003:163). One's personal freedom of pursuing a desire may be restricted by moral demands. Since garimpeiros appear to put high value on their autonomy, a problem of morality can be at hand.

Justification of transgression

People use moral rationalizations in order to justify the pursuit of their desires. Behaviour can be explained to be necessary and decent. We can also use the strategy of framing the object's or subject's attractiveness as irresistible, thereby externalizing the power of desire as residing in the object or subject itself. Seduction is rooted in everything that opposes rationality: destiny, magic, and passion (Belk, Ger & Askegaard 2003). Besides these individual justifications, there can also be more societal justification:

“There are also authorized times, places, and activities where the pursuit of desires (of various sorts) and transgressive transformations are allowed to take place. These loci may be thought

³ Belk, Ger & Askegaard explicate the difference between desire, need and want: “*desire is a notion directly addressing the social character of motivation. Even though we also use need in colloquial speech when we realize that this need is a social one, the use of the construct of need tends to naturalize the social institution that positions something as needed and therefore natural. This naturalization invokes the biological roots of needs. On the other hand, we find that the notion of want is too reassuringly controlled by the mind for it to cover the passionate aspects of desire. Furthermore, a want is normally taken as an expression of a personal, psychological preference structure. (...) Desire, then, directly addresses the interplay of society and individual, of bodily passions and mental reflection.*” (2003:328-329)

of as liminal or liminoid, in Victor Turner's terms (...). We may also find liminal occasions for transgressive indulgence of our desires during tourism and in special shopping venues." (ibid:330)

Maybe the garimpo can also be viewed as such a liminal occasion. As we can derive from this quote, liminal occasions are not only in a certain place, but also in a certain time. The experience of temporality I will later argue to be of great influence on the (transgressive) indulgence of the garimpeiro's desire.

Time and desire

Hope is the felt possibility or likelihood of realizing a desire. Hope can be nurtured by actions made to achieve the desire (Belk, Ger & Askegaard 2003:343). In this way, the hope for achieving a desire in the future, influences human behaviour in the present.

Garimpeiros are known to be destructive of the rainforest. An understanding of conceptions of time and the future is in literature revealed to be of importance in sustainability issues. Zuiderwijk (2000) for example writes of the time perspective hidden in nature or in agricultural work that shapes the temporal view of farmers. This may be comparative for gold miners, because they use to work on a gold deposit for about a month, get the proceeds and then start a working a new deposit.

In literature is written that the garimpeiro sees himself not as wage-earner or capitalist, but as a potential gold striker (Larreta 2002:56; Cleary 1990:101). Halvaksz (2008) and Larreta (2002:46;65) describe the role of desire in the folding of time and space: enforced by mining's aesthetic qualities, past mining successes appear as future possibilities. A garimpeiro's social practice is adapted to the temporal alternation of the *bambúrrio* and the *blefo*.⁴ Conversely, that of businessmen is adapted to the abstract time of capitalist accumulation (Larreta 2002:111-112). For the garimpeiro, desire thus seems to concern a near future, a hope to find a great amount of gold soon. Their moral behaviour may comply with what Gerard Persoon and Diny van Est write of 'economists', who value the satisfaction of needs in the present higher than satisfactions of needs in the future, leading to a kind of free-market environmentalism (2000:21). In order to understand one's behaviour, it is thus helpful to investigate how conceptions of the future function in present-day life. Wallman (1992) has labeled these 'contemporary futures'. In the ethnographic chapters I will demonstrate how the garimpeiros hoped-for and envisioned futures influence the conduct of their desire.

Individual or social?

"Whether a desire is sustained by hope is a function of both the accessibility of the object and the balance between the tensions of seduction and morality." (Belk, Ger & Askegaard 2003:244) Desire is either being legitimised or being reigned in and controlled. Control can be self-imposed as well as externally prescribed (ibid:330). However, moral requirements are not

⁴ *Bambúrrio* and *blefo* are words derived from gambling; 'bambúrrio' means having a gold strike, 'blefo' means being broke (Larreta 2002:24).

always viewed as restrictions on freedom (Carter 2003:162). Control does not always solely reign desires; it can also involve nurturing (future) desires.

Belk, Ger & Askegaard reveal in their research of consumer desire that beneath the desired objects, consciously or unconsciously, there is the desire for social relations. The distinction between individual and social concerns is thus not so easily-made in the discourse about desire.

“Our data imply that, on one hand, the vitality and pleasure of desire rest on breaking the order, monotony, routines, limits, and rules, but on the other hand, self-control, moral conduct, sociality, and mimesis are themselves desirable. These tensions are neither solely between the individual’s desires and social or self-constraints nor only between desires and sin. The tension is also between the individual’s own social, affective, moral desires (as in the desire for sociability) and more transgressive desires.” (2003:346)

So, the motivation for choosing between the pursuit of one’s individual desire or being moral can be said to be always in a social context. A social security perspective will thus reveal important information when investigating the motivation of garimpeiros’ moral agency.

3.2 Religion, Desire & Insecurity

In the previous paragraph, we have seen that desire is either being legitimised, or being reigned in and being controlled. Belk, Ger & Askegaard write that all major world religions have attempted to curb desires and inhibit their pursuit, acting thus as a force of external control. Christianity thereby attempts to keep desire focused on God and the church (2003:330). When speaking about religion as a force of external control, we should be careful about making generalisations. A Geertzian view brings us to realise that religion can be a model *of* reality as well as a model *for* reality.

Benavides writes of the double role traditionally accomplished by religion during the colonization of Latin America: that of validating a social order, while also providing the justification for judging that order (2001:1764). We could thus view religion both as a force of control (on reality) and as a force of justification (of reality). I would herein agree with Asad (1992:53) that the ‘reality’, or the psychical and social world, and the vehicles that give meaning to reality (in this case religion), as written of by Geertz, can not be separated. They are one.

The reviewed literature in this paragraph concerns the role of religion on the desire for wealth, and on coping with poverty, which are inherently related. Specific attention is given to Pentecostal Protestantism, since this religion dominates in the garimpo region.

Religion and the consumer culture of modern capitalism

The greediness that is being associated with searching for gold, can be viewed as immoral. Desire often tensions with religious morality. Roberts (2004) writes that in earlier centuries, the Christian church in Europe struggled with inner contradictions, for monastic organization created wealth while promoting an abstemious lifestyle. Later it struggled to find ways to redefine the role of religion under industrialized conditions (p.13029). In religious perspectives, capitalism has been viewed both as destructive and constructive.

Various studies of the non-Western world reveal religion to be a moral critic of capitalism. Taussig (1977) for example has described how among Colombian plantation workers, capital was explained to be unnatural and immoral, as being destructive of the house-holding economy; the Colombians believed that capital could only be made productive by making a contract with the devil. In the study of Birgit Meyer (1998), the Christian missonisation in Africa is revealed to have introduced consumption as a practice to emphasize individuality, a new modern Christian identity. This contributed to turning upside down existing societal and familial structures. Christians were expected to work hard, but also to abstain from worldly pleasures. However, goods that were ordinary for missionaries, were new and luxury for many Africans.

Moreover, John and Jean Comaroff (1992) demonstrate that the impact of Christian missionary activity in Africa, while ostensibly only spreading a religious message, actually reshaped everyday practices, personhood, and sociality, adapted to a capitalist economy. It reformed even those who didn’t convert. Protestant conversion, they note, “is itself an ideological construct framed in the bourgeois imagery of rational belief and the reflective self; of a moral economy of individual choice that echoes, on the spiritual plane, the material

economics of the free market.” (p.475) Religion can thus be powerful in ideological restructuring. Marx also pointed to the ideological dominance of religion: he considered all religions equally deprived of rational qualities and in opposition to rational thought, and therefore alienating people from their class interests (Mariz 1994:6).

However, religion is not only destructive or oppressive. People’s very motivation to adhere to a church can be found in its constructive force and in its benefit in people’s everyday lives. A famous theory is that of Max Weber about the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (1948). Weber shows how Protestantism ascribed meaning to materially instrumental behaviour that fostered capitalist and industrialized society. He points out that, although the core of religion is nonrational, religion can be a ‘carrier’ of rationalization, it can help people to adopt rational attitudes that correspond to a capitalist attitude (Mariz 1994:7). This will in the following be showed to be true for Pentecostalism in Brazil.

Jacka (2005) and Meyer (1998) emphasize the importance to examine the utopias or desires in the globalising world. In a situation of scarcity or absence of these desires, religious organizations seem to have the capacity to take up the dreams and imaginary dimensions that arise. Meyer writes that consumption reflects an interplay of anxiety and desire, and describes how neo-pentecostalism in Africa has helped people to consume without losing themselves, with a dialectic of possessing and being possessed (1998). Religion thus seems to be pragmatic in helping adherents to profit from, rather than falling victim to globalization and its capitalists values. I will later demonstrate that, for *garimpeiros*, the absence of kinship or household is an important factor in this interplay between desire and insecurity. When comparing with the above critics of capitalism, spending money on luxury is by most *garimpeiros* not considered as being destructive of the household, but it does affect one’s social security.

Religion and coping with insecurity

Since the most churchgoers in the *garimpo* region are Pentecostal, I will review some literature of how Pentecostalism can be used in strategies to cope with insecurity. Literature about evangelical Protestantism in Latin America reveals that it has been especially appealing to the poor and underprivileged (Mariz & Dores Campos Machado 1997:41).

The most studies of the pragmatics of Protestantism have to do with personal economy. However, we can not indiscriminately equate Protestantism with ‘the spirit of capitalism’ and the accumulation of personal wealth and private capital (Garrard-Burnett 1993:203). After the economic crisis in Latin America in the 1970s, it became clear that conversion has not proved to result in capital accumulation or upward social mobility (Coleman et al. 1993:132; Mariz 1994:34). Mariz writes that “For most poor people, religion is a means of supporting politically and economically advantageous behavior or an aid in avoiding the psychological disintegration or apathy created by poverty.” (1994:122). She describes two broad categories of subjective experiences that are useful for coping with poverty: experiences that foster modernization or rationalization (in the Weberian sense) and experiences that strengthen

solidarity among the poor.

The rationalization motivates people to adopt functional lifestyles. Pentecostals do this by introducing an universal ethic, by stressing a theoretical system, and by stressing individual choice (Mariz 1994:8). Pentecostalism may help the poor to save money through its emphasis on asceticism, by explicitly valuing saving, and by offering hope and faith in the future. It offers people confidence in the future through faith in God's plan.

The Pentecostal ethic does not emphasize working more, but it stresses consuming less (ibid:129-130). The ascetic codes block many forms of consumption, most importantly that of alcohol, that in some Latin American societies characterize masculine behaviour (Brusco 1993:147). The Pentecostal ethic also emphasizes marital fidelity (Mariz & Dores Campos Machado 1997:54). "Acceptance or participation in God's plan requires an adoption of ethical behavior, which for Pentecostals implies obedience to a universal moral ethic in private life" (Mariz 1994:65).

Protestantism has thus effect on the domestic lives of converts. It promotes the domestication of men: "Especially for men, conversion often entails the replacement of an individualistic orientation in the public sphere with a collective orientation and identity in the church and home. (...) It places the private realm of home and family at the center of both women's and men's lives. (...) Status achievement is reinterpreted in terms of family-oriented values, fulfilling the role of the good provider" (Brusco 1993:148-149).

Experiences that are also useful for dealing with poverty, are "those that strengthen solidarity and self-esteem among the poor and destroy the anomie and other negative psychological consequences of a situation of high deprivation"(Mariz 1994:137).

Self-esteem can be strengthened by the belief that anyone can be in touch with God. It fosters the development of a lay leadership and the development of small autonomous groups. Strength of self-esteem may moreover be gained by shifting emphasis from material richness to spiritual gifts or by the strive to construct the identity of a 'decent person'. Faith in a divine logic that guides and determines life offers another psychological advantage in the struggle for survival (Mariz 1994).

Pentecostalism is explained to be appealing for the absence of marked social inequalities among the members of their community. This promotes friendships and community identity. Pentecostalism is known as a religion that emphasizes individual experience (Cleary 1997:17) that doesn't provide material help for the poor (Mariz 1994:84). But with conversion to the church, one does develop alternative networks of mutual support, of fellow believers. This is not exclusive to Pentecostalism, nor exclusive to religious groups (ibid:93). But Latin American evangelical churches do seem to place a much greater emphasis on the notion of 'community' and 'belonging' than their Western counterparts (Garrard-Burnett 1993:205). Mariz writes:

"Despite their emphasis on individualistic interpretations of society and religion, Pentecostals acknowledge that the maintenance of their faith and special lifestyle depends on community support and control. Therefore they strengthen their community activities" (1994:140).

The literature thus demonstrates that Pentecostalism fosters a modern consciousness, a rationalization that is advantageous in the struggle for material survival. Although it helps more to endure poverty than to realize upward social mobility, Pentecostalism seems to offer more motivations that help the poor to survive than other religions, specifically through its emphasis on the family and its fight against alcoholism. In the ethnographic Chapter five I will discuss how religion affects the coping strategies of garimpeiros.

4 Ethnographic data: Desire & Insecurity

4.1 Gold fever

4.2 Security & insecurity in the garimpo

4.3 Spending money

4.4 Future perspectives

In the literature review has been demonstrated that religion is of influence on how people deal with their desires and insecurities. With the invocation of a moral ethic, it influences the pursuit of one's desire. However, the pursuit of desire (e.g. consumptive behaviour) can simultaneously imply securities as well as insecurities. With regulating the pursuit of desire, religion can invoke a functional lifestyle that diminishes insecurity. It can also provide psychological relief from insecurity and from the impossibility to pursue one's desire.

In this ethnographic chapter will be analysed how the interplay between desire and insecurity is at stake in the life of garimpeiros. Since the hope for achieving a desire or relieving an insecurity in the future influences human behaviour in the present, a chronological order has been used in this chapter. First, the garimpeiros' former motivation for coming to the garimpo will be discussed (4.1). In the next paragraphs, the present is at stake, discussing the perceived living conditions in the garimpo from a human security perspective (4.2) and the spending behaviour of garimpeiros which reflects their management of desires and insecurities (4.3). There will be concluded with a paragraph on the garimpeiros' future perspectives (4.4), which completes the analysis of the garimpeiros' behaviour as motivated by their desires and insecurities.

4.1 Gold fever

'Gold fever' is a well-known term to refer to a (greedy) desire for gold and richness. It is therefore interesting to know what is the role of this gold fever in the motivation for garimpeiros to go work in the garimpo.

The desire for richness is indeed what pulls one to the garimpo. Many came to the garimpo for it is easy to earn money in the garimpo. One informant (dono, age 63, in Itaituba) called it "Greed for gold, greed for metal, which defines the history of mankind. Gold always attracts the greed of men". By referring to the infinity of 'gold fever', he defines greediness as a natural - maybe also as not a 'bad' thing. It can thus be said to be a moral justification for his desire.

But gold fever is not the only motivation for entering the garimpo. There are also push-factors. Many garimpeiros came to work in the garimpo because they had no education: many are (semi-)illiterate, which involves a lack of options for employment. No education is needed to work in the garimpo. One worker told me that in the garimpo he earns four to five times of what he would earn while working in the city. Most of the garimpeiros have their

origin in the state Maranhão, which is a poor state. This corresponds with the socio-demographic background of the garimpeiros in the study of De Theije and Bal, who also write that most are unschooled or semi-literate people from Maranhão (2010:67-69). Also Heemskerk writes that gold mining has been explained by researchers as a last resort for poor, unemployed, poorly educated people (2003:268).

The gold fever of the garimpeiros could thus not only be explained as a desire for richness (pull), but also as a flee from poverty (push). Some informants also said that many come to the garimpo because they have a bad reputation in their place of origin. This cannot be verified well with my data: only one person told me that he went away for a quarrel, explaining that Maranhão is a cruel place; another person came to the garimpo after failing in politics. In literature is neither being written of a bad reputation as push-factor. However, Theije and Heemskerk do note that many people make the decision to come to the garimpo during a period of personal crisis, such as a divorce or losing one's job (2009:20).

Going to the garimpo is an adventure. The Tapajós region is even for Brazilians an exotic place. Many garimpeiros didn't come alone, but together with a contact or a friend. So usually one has at least some 'social security' while entering the garimpo. Once inside, each one has his own adventure. However, not everyone came only for the gold. Many younger garimpeiros came to the garimpo because their mother worked in the garimpo or currutela. Some even grew up there. Others grew up elsewhere, came to the garimpo to visit their mother and stayed working. They are thus a second generation working and living in the garimpo. The social security is a theme that will be elaborated more on later.

Many garimpeiros have entered the garimpo in the 80's. This is a time known as a gold rush period. However, the situation has changed a lot. The 'easy gold' is said to be gone now: the gold to be extracted is deeper, for which more advanced technology is required. This disappearance of 'easy gold' has also been noticed by Theije and Heemskerk (2009:14). While the gold price is good at the moment, it is difficult to find gold. When I came into the garimpo region, my first general impression was one of decayed glory in the middle of the Amazon. In the garimpo Independência, there is a big stone villa with swimmingpool, unused. In the currutela Crepurizão, the Catholic church has a building next to it for events, while at the moment the church itself is almost out of use. There is spoken of many people who were rich, spent everything because they thought the gold would never end, and who are poor now. An interesting example is the garimpo of São Raimundo: on the end of the landing strip for airplanes, there is a square. A square of about 40x60 meters, with benches and shrubs. There are some low concrete buildings and a decayed church without a roof. And there is an airplane which is broken. The owner of this garimpo used to be rich and has tried to establish his own village, but he is poor now. However, he doesn't sell his airplane because 'he likes to have his airplane'.

In creating my research plan, I assumed that for people with gold fever, gold would have a kind of symbolic meaning. I soon discovered that gold is only attractive for the money. There is the idea that with money you can have everything you want, so in etic terms we could still define gold as a symbol for desire and security. One's motivation to come to the garimpo to search for gold is often the desire for a whole different life situation. As has been revealed by Belk, Ger and Askegaard (2003), beneath the desire for an object, in this case gold, there is a conscious or unconscious social desire. Larreta writes that gold is the

concentration of desire (2002:45). “The lucky strike (...) is the abolition of historical time, the time in which work is needed, and of its sufferings. It is the conquest of a mythical space, characterised by the abundance of goods and, especially, of people and things transformed into pleasures” (ibid:45-46). While gold is being viewed as to bring tangible abundance, its symbolic value lies in a social, immaterial desire, reflecting the garimpeiros’ original social context.

4.2 Security & insecurity in the garimpo

As noted before, it is perceived to be difficult to find gold nowadays, since the 'easy gold' is gone. Consequently, many people have left the Tapajós region. But some people have stayed. An analysis of the life of the garimpeiro through a human security lense can give insight in the reasons for (still) being garimpeiro. It will reveal how the dynamics of desire (for security) and perceived insecurity motivates the garimpeiros' agency.

Living conditions

Difficulties that garimpeiros speak of have to do with health, discomfort, and isolation. Gold mining is though and unhealthy work. Many garimpeiros have suffered from malaria. Workers make long days, and usually work six days a week. Most of the work is done while standing in the water, which can cause skin problems. The work moreover means exposure to rain, sun, and the risk of snake or scorpion bites. Literature and media have also frequently made note of the poisonousness of mercury (e.g Rocha 1995; and see Slater 2002:125; Theije & Bal 2010:71), which is used as amalgam to which the gold clings, in order to extract it. Whereas Heemskerk writes that the garimpeiros in her research are aware of the risks of exposure to mercury (2003:275), the workers that I conversed with didn't make note of this risk. When asking donos about mercury, they would concern about pollution of the forest rather than the risks for garimpeiros (thus including themselves).

Living in the garimpo is primitive: as some say, 'like indians'. In some camps there is no electricity, which means that when it turns dark around 19h everybody goes to sleep. Spending the day in the garimpo is not so fun then. The diet is very basic and exists of every day rice, beans and meat.

In the experience of garimpeiros, most health risks cohere with isolatedness. For example, teeth problems cohere with the absence of a dentist.

However, since a couple of years there is an orhodontist who visits Crepurizão frequently, so facilities have already improved somewhat, at least for people who live in this currutela. The most important health risk spoken of is malaria. Garimpeiros speak much about in which garimpo or currutela there is a lot of malaria. Some had more than 100 times malaria, others only a couple times. For many garimpeiros, however, it has been a long time ago. Most people don't take prevention measures against malaria, except for sleeping with a mosquito-net in the camps. If one has access to medicines, there is perceived to be no big problem. It is a problem that he cannot



work, and the longer he waits to take medicine, the longer it takes to recover. In former times, it was more difficult to recover because one had to go to the city for treatment. Nowadays, there are farmacias in the currutelas and in the larger ones also health posts. A problem sometimes is that one cannot read the information leaflet, which carries the risk of taking an overdose.

While before there was only transport by airplane, nowadays there is also access by road and water. This means more liberty for the garimpeiro. But still, transport can be dangerous and long, especially in raintimes. It happens frequently that trucks fall over on the muddy roads. Access difficulties and remoteness make everything expensive. For children who live there, the isolatedness also limits possibilities for education. Moreover, the isolatedness limits the means for garimpeiros to keep in touch with their wife and family.

Social climate

But it is not all difficult in the garimpo: “If they don’t think it’s good, they would go away, you know. They think their life is good. Bad, difficult, suffering, but they adore it.” (Dono, age 66, in Itaituba).

The Tapajós region is said to have become more tranquil, because there is not so much gold found. In the times of gold rush, it was more dangerous. There were more quarrels, and there were many thieves. In the time that I was in the garimpos and currutelas, I’ve heard of two robberies and have seen one small commotion about a woman. They say that the people are more civilised nowadays. Also there is radio communication nowadays, so that the thieves are more scared and cannot escape easily.

The notion of a more civilised garimpo nowadays, appears in the discourse of many older garimpeiros. They are prone to mention that the people are polite, that everybody helps each other, or that everybody is ‘well-educated’. This is interesting because with ‘well-educated’ they mean well-mannered. While if some people speak negatively about the garimpeiro, ‘bad-educated’ and ‘illiterate’ are often used in one sentence. This points to a sort of social discrimination related to illiteracy. In the currutelas, not everybody speaks positive about the garimpeiros in this sense.

Technology and moral economy

The gold extraction requires more advanced technology as compared to the 80’s, as it has become increasingly difficult to find gold. This growing demand for mechanization will continue to develop. The mechanization and its coherent scale enlargement also implies bigger investments. Many therefore say that you need courage (to invest) to be successful in the garimpo. One does more investigation (taking samples in the ground) before starting to dig, but still, ‘garimpo is a lottery’. You still don’t know how much gold you will really find, if it will be enough to cover the investments. Theije and Heemskerk also write about the risk that comes with bigger investments in time, labour and machinery, thereby noting that the small-scale gold miners still use rather rudimentary technologies (2009:14). About the decision of where to start digging, a 55-year-old garimpeiro that chiefly did explorations in Canaã, explained: “*It’s like you choose between rice and beans.*” Since rice and beans are

their daily diet, he seems to point to a difficult, high-risk choice that his dono has to make.

The worker doesn't run a great economic risk. He doesn't have to make investments and doesn't have to pay for shelter and food while in the garimpo; usually he gets a percentage of the 'produced' gold, so he always has a bit. For him, there are good times and bad times.

The improved technology has brought more socio-economic distance between the donos and the workers, as was noted in chapter 2.2. It seems that these new technological developments are experienced as a threat by the workers. Some people that do business in the garimpos, said that the garimpeiros don't want to change. They said that the workers want traditional machines, because they are used to this. For the uneducated worker, technological developments may be felt as a threat to his garimpeiro existence, for the work itself can become more complicated. That

the workers don't want new technology, is difficult for the ambitious businessman or dono, because if the worker doesn't like it somewhere, he goes away. You have to be business partners. This mutual dependency is due to the very informality that characterizes relationships in garimpagem.

This relates to what Ferry writes of the 'social character' that minerals have for miners. This social character, he notes, is brought out by exerting social



claims over their extraction and change, placing them in social contexts, and using them to forge and strengthen social ties. Miners have a 'moral economy', in which social goals are privileged over purely economic goals (2005:424-425). The moral economy for garimpeiros seems to be centralised around a desire for autonomous agency, for independency.

Talal Asad wrote that "the increasingly sophisticated division of labor and the consumer culture of modern capitalism renders individual autonomy less and less feasible as a practical possibility." (1992:13). For the dono, bigger investments require more formal (trustful) relationships and sophistication, which in turn may threaten the worker's experience of autonomy and freedom. But also the dono's independency may be put at risk by adapting to and investing in sophisticated technology.

So, the relative isolation of the garimpo brings advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages have to do with health risks and social insecurity. The advantage is that it allows for an informal climate in which individual autonomy is feasible for men that come from a poor socio-economic background in which there are few opportunities to have this advantage. Expression of individual autonomy can be observed in the act of spending money.

4.3 Spending money

“When you are not producing, everything is difficult, everything is bad. For the machine owner as well as for the worker. He is sad, doesn’t drink, doesn’t have a girlfriend, doesn’t have fun. And now he is ugly, ill, things like this.”⁵

Gold is the concentration of desire: when you produce gold, everything in life is good. This points to the desire for a certain way of life. In this paragraph I discuss how the garimpeiros’ consumptive behaviour, the spending of the gold proceeds, reflects their desires and insecurities.

Conspicuous consumption.

One’s personal freedom of pursuing a desire may be in tension with moral demands. Literature about garimpeiros’ moral agency often concerns ‘conspicuous consumption’, a term which points to the consumer’s search for the gaze of the other. Gold proceeds are mostly squandered on women and alcohol -even by unsuccessful garimpeiros.

Cleary writes that the stories which garimpeiros most like to tell and hear are those of how spectacularly the proceeds of a gold strike were spent. The ideal garimpeiro is not only skilled, but can also afford to be spectacularly generous (1990:126). My data also reveal that garimpeiros take pride in spending money, as emerged in the utterance of the garimpeiro quoted in the introduction: “I spent marvellous!”. Despite his being broke now, this worker (like others) seemed proud to tell how much expensive things he had bought in former days, such as an airplane and a house. If a garimpeiro is broke, he will try not to show this, and still say ‘I pay your beer’ to a woman. With friends or colleagues it is different, they pay for each other. This leads us to recognize that, underneath the consumptive behaviour, the garimpeiros’ desired sociability has very much to do with women.

Rodrigo, one of my key informants in Canaã (34 years old, machine owner), said: “The garimpeiro without money feels like he’s nothing. How is he going to pay a beer for a woman?”. If the garimpeiro has no money, my informant continued to explain, he secludes himself. The garimpeiro’s self-esteem thus depends on his money. This coheres with an awareness of his social status. Without money, he is (or feels to be) at the bottom of the social scale. Spending money may be as a (temporal) sense of elevation on the social ladder. But there is also an awareness that he will somehow never be able to stay ‘high’ on the ladder because of a lack of education. Some spoke like ‘if you don’t have education, you stay at the bottom’, or ‘without education, you stay low like a beast’.

A gold strike is perceived to be the realisation of desire. Larreta (2002) even calls it the conquest of a mythical space:

“The mythical allure of this space is all the stronger, so long as one is not able to achieve it. Once gold is found, one sees that in the end the goods that one can consume are not so many, and that the garimpeiro is limited by a reality that reveals itself in all

⁵ “Quando não tá produzindo, fica tudo difícil, tudo ruim. Tá tudo tanto para o dono da máquina quanto para o garimpeiro. Fica triste, não bebe, não namora, não brinca. E agora fica feio, fica doente, e essas coisas assim.”

its poverty. To dream about gold is perhaps better than consuming it in the sad atmosphere of a rural brothel.” (2002:47).

Larreta hereby implies that garimpeiros are motivated by future dreams. Whereas the garimpeiro with gold may have a temporary good life, the sense of temporality may also help him bear the bad times.

The spectacular spending may be an acting out of independency, of enhancing prestige. But it may also be of a more communal social advantage. Slater (1994:724) writes that garimpeiros think that gold has to be redistributed communally, because possessing gold is believed to bring ill fortune. Communal distribution is in this context thus, somehow, providing more advantage or security than keeping proceeds for oneself. Douglas and Isherwood in this respect write of envy-deflecting mechanisms, “such as redistributing wealth through symbolic feasts and other rites of sharing, relying on evil eye amulets as a protection against envy, and avoiding conspicuous consumption that invites others’ envy.” (Belk, Ger & Askegaard 2003:329). But conspicuous consumption is not at all avoided by the garimpeiro. However, I may call it a ‘conspicuous communal distribution’: spending generously, paying drinks for friends, thereby balancing between the individual desire of social prestige and being a morally respected person.

The family back home

But if one’s desire has so much to do with women, what about the wife and children back home? Many garimpeiros had a wife and children when they came to the garimpo. If they have earned an amount of money, often they spent it on their family back home, for example on building a house. But, many have slowly lost contact with their family. Most only keep in contact by telephone, since garimpeiros often cannot read or write letters or e-mails.⁶ Another obstacle to visit or return to one’s family is that many garimpeiros don’t have documents⁷. Documents that are needed nowadays in order to travel by airplane. Almost all garimpeiros travel by road; one worker told me that it takes about a week to go to his family in Maranhão, in rainy periods.

A family has to be maintained financially. Rodrigo explained that most garimpeiros who come to the garimpo have never earned so much money before, and then like to spend, thinking that they will still save enough for their family. And then they get into the ‘circle of the garimpo’. Various persons explained that garimpeiros who go to the nightclub ‘forget’ about their family (with help of the women there), and then stay in the garimpo. Without a house. It also happens that when they return home, their wife already has another man. For the garimpeiro, to be able to keep his family depends on gold. “The financial situation is the major cause of separation”, one said. Those who do keep a family live a routine, bringing money to the city and returning to work. But Maranhão is far. In the following, I separately discuss the life of un-married garimpeiros and of those who are committed to maintain a

⁶ Internet is something that came into the region recently. There was internet in Crepurizão and Agua Branca, which was not publicly accessible, and in one garimpo that I have visited.

⁷ Documents of birth, and documents of identification like a passport and the CPF.

family; their consumptive behaviour and consequently, their lifestyle, are distinctive.

The unmarried garimpeiro

“90% spends”, a man told me in Itaituba, referring to the percentage of garimpeiros that does not save money for a family. The major part of the garimpeiros is single. Many of them stay years in the garimpo without visiting the city. Since they have no responsibility to a family, and since they already receive food and shelter, they can spend everything for themselves. Most garimpeiros spend their money on women and drinks. There are garimpeiros that don’t like to drink, but a woman is a desire for all.

I went a couple of times with the garimpeiros of Canaã to the currutela Cabaçal on their free Sunday. Most women there are prostitutes. There is in general a shortage of women in the garimpo. Interesting was that many garimpeiros spoke about a ‘namorada’, a girlfriend, in Cabaçal. Many garimpeiros like to stay with the same woman for a while. Rodrigo explained that first they pay a woman to carry out their ‘programmes’, and then after a couple of times it becomes a girlfriend. But girlfriends also cost money, and most women have a lot of ‘boyfriends’. Since there are so much more men than women in the garimpo, there is a lot of competition. Some men pay a woman for not going with someone else, spending the day together, and then call it a girlfriend.

Prostitution is seen as something that is not right. The garimpeiros don’t see the women in the garimpo as highly valued. As Rafael (pit worker, age 25) said to me in a bar in Crepurizão: “If a woman goes into a bar with a man, she already lost value”. He explained that then the people already think she will go to bed with him. They can call her girlfriend, because they like to stay with her, but, at least for him, it is more a satisfaction of necessities than love. The reference to necessity may be seen as a moral rationalization used to justify the pursuit of desires. But also seeing the contact with a woman like really going with her, seems to make the garimpeiro feel better, to make it (feel) more acceptable. Or at least it seems to make him come closer to comply with his desire for a relationship with a ‘valued’ woman. The garimpeiros’ discourses of women reveal an individualized moral ethic.

“It’s difficult for the worker to have a woman if he’s broke (...), it’s difficult for the garimpeiro to have rights if he’s broke”⁸

To stay longer with the same woman is not only morally advantageous. It enables one also to have credits. Since the garimpeiros receive the biggest part of their income after having worked the lagrese, they don’t have much money every week. But when the woman knows you for a while, you can have credit, stay with her and pay later.

You have to maintain a woman with money. Many women have children in Itaituba, they need clothes, etc. One garimpeiro in Canaã cynically said about a woman who frequently urged for money: “She already lost a lot of mothers.” The women that come to the garimpo, also come for the money. Some come to work as a cook, but almost all cooks also earn money

⁸“É difícil uma mulher quando tá blefado peão (...), é difícil para o garimpeiro a ter direito se está blefado.”

with selling their body. The women know that paying for her consumptions is a question of a man's pride. When I was having some beers with a cook in Cabaçal, she tried to catch attention of a man. Later she asked: "Do you ask him if he pays our beer?", "Aha", I said, "G. already told me you would teach me how to..." , on which she continued: "How to rob a garimpeiro of his gold!".

So, no money is no woman. For younger garimpeiros, the situation is a bit different than for older. The younger garimpeiros sometimes don't have to pay, when women want them. The older you get, the more you have to spend.

After all, everybody accepts that the women also go with other men and relationships are seen as temporary. About the competition on women, Joseph, a 19-year-old pit worker in Canaã, said: "one wins and loses, that's life here". Another expression of the temporariness of relationships was when a garimpeiro tried to convince me that he was interested in me, and wrote in my notebook: *I love you twice*. He explained, that if I would go away and if I would return, he would still love me. In general, young garimpeiros still want to build a future with a woman in the city, construct a family but not with a woman from the garimpo. Older garimpeiros sometimes have already spent a lot of money on women in the city and don't want this anymore. João (age 55), who works in Canaã, explained:

*Look, in this period I didn't have knowledge of the garimpo like this. (...) I had nothing. And I bought a house for 550 grams of gold, (...) a big house with my girlfriend. (...) In the same year I spent half a kilo of gold on the birthday of my eldest daughter of fifteen years. If I would get this half kilo of gold today, I would do other things. So, all these things. Here the people spend a lot with women. And on drinks, I used to drink a lot. If the garimpeiro is broke, he feels ugly, he's ill, everything. If he is on top of the gold, then he is beautiful, and many girlfriends appear, from one side to the other because they want to take gold from the worker, you understand? These things, the garimpo is like these things.*⁹

Family in the garimpo region.

There are garimpeiros with families that live in the currutelas or in Itaituba. For most of these garimpeiros, it is their second (or more) marriage. A family means responsibility: they need a house, food, school, etc. Some unmarried garimpeiros also still try to give money to their children from a previous marriage or to their parents. To keep a family means to invest one's money and time. It requires a whole different lifestyle from those garimpeiros who 'spend'.

Some married garimpeiros give all their money to their family, especially now that it is hard to find gold. They work and then go to their family. It is not easy to maintain a family, commuting between garimpo and city: "In the city one earns little, but he can control everything if he earns", one married dono said in Crepurizão. Donos and businessman who

⁹ "Olha, nessa época, eu não tinha assim conhecimento com garimpo (...) Eu não tinha nada. E comprei uma casa por 550 gramas de ouro, (...) uma casa grande com namorada (...) neste mesmo ano eu gastei meio kilo de ouro com o aniversário da minha filha mais velha de quinze anos. Se hoje pegasse essa meio kilo de ouro, faria outra coisa. Neh. Então, tem todas essas coisas. E aí o pessoal gasta muito com mulher. E bebida, eu bebia muito. Se o garimpeiro tá blefado, senta feio, tá se doento, ta tudo. Se tem cimo do ouro ele, ahi ele fica bonito, e parece muito namoradas, a um lado de outro por que querem tirar ouro do peão, entendeu? Essas coisas, garimpo é essas coisas aí."

live in the currutela use to have more stable relationships than workers. They often have a more stable residence. Some pay others to keep an eye in the garimpo, while spending time with their family in the city. Here, the roles can even be twisted: if he is successful, his wife has to take care that he is not haunted by other women in the garimpo.

The single garimpeiro has a sad time when he is broke, but for those with responsibilities to a family, to be broke can be a real crisis. They have to take care of the children. Many people prefer to let their children live in Itaituba. Having their children in the garimpo means a risk for the children to get malaria, but also there are few opportunities for education. In the garimpo Canaã, it was not even allowed for the cooks to bring their children, for the dono found this irresponsible for the above mentioned reasons. In Crepurizão and Agua Branca, there was primary education. But many children in the currutela's don't study, because they don't want to or because they don't have the required ID documents. Also there was a lack of teachers. Teachers don't get paid better than in the city. Most people that I interviewed wanted their children to study: they don't want their children to become garimpeiro 'without future'.

4.4 Future perspectives

A couple of years more and then go home...

All garimpeiros have the idea of leaving the garimpo one day. If possible. But they don't have a certain moment in mind to return: it depends on the gold. And the gold is difficult now. 'Only God knows', some say, or 'if God permits me to leave'. It seems thus that, although they feel autonomous and independent in the garimpo, they don't feel very able to create their own future. There are interesting differences between young and old garimpeiros, and between garimpeiros with or without a family. They have different homes to go to.

Young garimpeiros' discourses about their future are more ambitious. They are here to earn easy money in order to construct a future elsewhere. Many think of returning to Maranhão, studying more, setting up a business, or constructing a family. They also want a good woman, they don't want to marry a woman in the garimpo. However, for some young men it is not a question of returning, but of leaving: Some young garimpeiros or young men who live in the currutela, grew up there. These men usually have less concrete plans to leave.

Older garimpeiros in general have less plans to return to their State of origin. They either have a second marriage nearby, or live as single old man. Remarkable is that older garimpeiros speak more about saving money. As they are getting old, they start to think about economic security. Especially those who are married and have children. Married garimpeiros often envision their future having a house, sometimes also having a car. Paying their bills. They want to save money to spend the rest of their life with their family. But if they succeed is another thing. One of my key informants in Itaituba said about such a married garimpeiro: "These are dreams, he will never leave the garimpo, he has no education to do other work." People with children in the garimpo often also want to leave to make it possible for their children to get higher education.

A problem is that most garimpeiros don't have ID documents, which means that they are not able to lay any claim to retirement. If they want documents, they need to go back to their place of birth, to the Instituto Nacional do Seguro Social (INSS). On the other hand, one person explained that when he would stop with gold mining, it would be easier to stay in the Tapajós region because here you can still do business without documentation. This demonstrates that the modernization 'outside' the garimpo actually marginalizes the garimpeiro. They have their autonomy and agency only inside the informal garimpagem, and meanwhile alienate from the outside.

"I still have the plan to leave the garimpo. But I don't know if it will work out, hahaha", said the 47-year-old Felipe in Canaã. He has already spent 22 years in the garimpo. It seems that his laugh points to the nervousity he gets when he realises that his future plan is a dream that will be difficult to turn into reality. A couple of minutes later, Felipe said: "It's a resistant thought". Single aging garimpeiros seem to maintain the dream of 'going home', but there is also a sort of realisation that he probably won't. If they earn money, the garimpeiros say, they can go home to spend the rest of their life. But at the same time they are not really

economizing to do this. If they have a girlfriend in the garimpo they spend everything on her. And what is left of their home? Some don't have the will to return anymore but keep the option; others 'still have it'. João explained it as follows:

“Now when a heavy amount of gold appears, if I come to get 300 or 500 grams of gold, I could create a better future, buy a house outside, a terrain, whatever, but at the moment the situation is like this. (...) I like it here. I accustomed here. You know why? Here I walk around when I want (...) I get this canoe to Cabaçal, return at midnight or one or two o'clock, it's not dangerous (...) There are no fights, no commotion. (...) An old person here has a very big knowledge. In the city today I'm scared. If I'm in the city, I don't leave at night. Because of robberies. One who kills for a cigaret, for a real¹⁰. I think it's a very private life in the city. (...) so if I would like to go away, away to where? At my age with 55 years, I go to any city and what work can I do? There is no employment, I have no documents. I do have a professional card. But the age, nobody wants an old guy to work for him. So, for me, it's good here.”¹¹

As João's utterance shows, when a garimpeiro lives for a long time in the garimpo, he starts to have more social security in the garimpo region, where he knows everybody, and also more existential security: he 'is somebody', experienced in what he does. The only option for a better future than in the garimpo is when he earns a lot of money, at least enough to build a house. João continued to explain how you either conquer the garimpo by finding a lot of gold, so then the garimpo is temporal, or you don't and then time conquers you:

“He goes to Cabacal, he drinks. He spends with a woman and there he returns again. Then he goes to routine, goes to settle, and he goes perceiving that he is becoming old, when one didn't conquer. (...) thinking of the times before when he was not inside here. (...) My age has given in. And I have to remain here. But I think it's good.”¹²

When time conquers you, you cannot fulfill the desires anymore which you had in mind when coming to the garimpo. There is not much hope left for a victorious return home. This corresponds to what Theije and Heemskerck argue in their article of Brazilian garimpeiros in Suriname, namely that while entering the gold mines is relatively easy, financial and conceptual barriers often prevent miners from leaving. They describe that it is considered

¹⁰ 'Real' is the Brazilian currency.

¹¹ “Agora se pintar um ouro forte, se eu chegar pegar 300 ou 500 gramas de ouro, eu poderia creer um futuro melhor, comprar uma casa fora, um terreno, coisa qualquer, mas no momento a situação é essa. (...) Eu gosto daqui. Já acostumei aqui. Sabe por que? Aqui eu ando aqui a hora que quero (...). Pegar a essa canoa por Cabaçal, venho meia-noite, uma hora, duas horas, não tem perigo (...). Também não tem briga. Não tem confusão. A pessoa velho (...) conhecimento muito grande. Já na cidade, hoje em dia tenho medo. Se estou na cidade não saio a noite. Por causa do assalto. Aquele que mata por um cigarro, por um real. É uma vida é muito privado na cidade eu acho. (...) Aqui, eu acho bom aqui. Então se quer-se ir embora, embora para onde? A minha idade com 55 anos, vou para qualquer cidade e eu vou trabalhar de que? ...emprego não tem. Documento não tenho. Carteiro profissional eu tenho, mas a idade, ninguém quer um velho para trabalhar (...) Então para mim aqui está bom.”

¹² “Ele vai por Cabaçal, bebe. Gastam com mulher e aí volta de novo. Aí vai a rotina, vai amenizando, e ele vai percebendo que vai envelhecendo, quando a pessoal não venceu. (...) pensando tempos atras não, estava aqui dentro. (...) A minha idade ta vencido. E eu tenho que permanecer aqui. Só que... acho bom.”

humiliating to return ill or without (sufficient) money (2009:16-17), and that while continuing to work in the garimpo, many garimpeiros ultimately have nowhere else to go and there is no other job they know (ibid:20). In addition, my data reveal that older single garimpeiros seem to adapt their social desire, enforced by a realisation that they marginalised from the outside world and have better opportunities for a respected social status and social life when they stay 'inside'.

From the data we can analyse how the envisioned future of the garimpeiro affects how he behaves in the present. In the garimpo, primarily short-term personal desires are being indulged to. That garimpeiros are living an individual, autonomous lifestyle, appeared from the literature. My data have revealed that the perceived temporaryness of life in the garimpo plays an essential role in this.

The garimpo is seen as temporary. When a garimpeiro has a 'realistic' hope for a family life, he will adapt his moral agency to this, aiming to control his individual desires. When he has lost hope and his desire appears less realistic or concrete, he will indulge more in conspicuous consumption, spending money, temporally bringing him the experience of a desired social status. It seems that some are keeping up a 'near-desire', considering relationships with women maybe as long-term while also realizing that it is temporal because it does not live up to their real desire. Gold is the object desired, but the immaterial desire that lies underneath this, is for many people not feasible in the garimpo.

For the reason that in the garimpo there is no opportunity to achieve what is their real desire, I think life in the garimpo needs to be viewed as temporal. But this same experience of temporality may make of the garimpo a sort of liminal occasion in which one can indulge in one's desire. The absence of kinship and experience of autonomy enforce this sense of liminality. Once surrounded with liminality, the garimpeiro risks to be conquered by time. It appears that only a new family life can save him. In the following chapter will be revealed how religion plays a role in these dynamics.

5 Ethnographic data: Religion in the garimpo

5.1 Churches with gold fever

5.2 Christian lifestyle in the garimpo region

5.3 Garimpeiros and religious beliefs

In the previous chapter I have demonstrated that the desires and insecurities of garimpeiros are principally of a social order. The garimpo is perceived to be an isolated and temporal occasion. This temporality helps to endure the harshnesses of life in the garimpo, but also promotes an individualised lifestyle, through which garimpeiros become more and more marginalised from the ‘outside’ world. However, those who have a family nearby adopt another, non-temporal lifestyle, investing in a future with this family.

It is now time to turn to the role of religion in these dynamics. In this chapter, ethnographic data about religion in the garimpo will reveal the influence of religion on the garimpeiros’ desires and insecurities. The first paragraph addresses how the churches in the currutelas adopt an ethic related to the desire for wealth and to modern consumerism. Next, a description will be made of what it means for people to adopt a Christian lifestyle in the garimpo region. Finished will be with how garimpeiros perceive religion to be of meaning in their lives.

5.1 Churches with Gold fever.

The attitude of churches towards money and wealth is being reflected in their own commercial behaviour, related to missions, as well as in the moral ethic that they preach. In this paragraph I discuss the attitude towards wealth of churches in the garimpo region.

In conversations with people from the churches, there was often discourse about competition between the churches. As noted in the regional background, the Pentecostals are gaining terrain. According to the Catholics, this happens because the Pentecostals have more money, they get paid more and therefore have more time to go on missions and evangelise. The Catholic church is (also by themselves) said to loose terrain because they are conservative, as having no good awareness of the modern world: in former times people came to the church, but nowadays the church needs to go to the people.

The Pentecostals explain that they differ from Catholics because, unlike them, they find it valuable to go to small villages. In spite of the few residents, they still build a church to make it possible for them to adhere to a church. “The gospel is for everybody. (...) Salvation for everybody. We don’t have discrimination,” said a leader of the Assembly of God in Itaituba, who is concerned with missionary work. In Crepurizão, which has five streets, there are even two Assembly’s of God. One is a small building which is closer for the people on that side of the currutela. In some conversations with people of the Assembly of God, I was told that the Catholic church only wants to earn money, while they themselves do good work

with the money, spiritual work which is also social work. They go to ‘strategical places’, like near bars, on public squares, or on the streets in poor neighbourhoods, in order to convert people that they consider to be mostly in need of their socio-spiritual help. On Tuesdays and Thursdays in Crepurizão they often hold a cult in the main street near the bars, or at someone’s house – which is a manner to invite new people. During my participant observation, the Assembly of God also always had people at the entrances to welcome you or to invite you to come in. If you come in, they ask your name so that they can welcome you with all the people in the church. The Assembly of God moreover publishes Bibles ‘in the language of today’, which are said to be more accessible. The Pentecostals thus actively try to attract people into their church.

In order to do missions, the Pentecostals need money. They need financial support of their adherents. With respect to this, a Pentecostal dono remarked about Protestant missions in the garimpo region, that started in the end of the 80’s: “For sure the churches were very much interested because the money was easier to make”. We could thus say that the church also had some gold fever.

Evangelising is on the one hand being justified as making the church accessible for everybody. On the other hand, churches are being criticised for being commercial and out for money. Pentecostals and Adventists are criticised for demanding 10% of people’s income (tithe), and putting pressure on people to pay this. The tithe is said to be stated in the Bible¹³; Adventists explained that “everything we have is not ours, it is His”, and that you cannot rob God.

Catholics don’t believe that you need to give money in order to be with God. The Catholic church, however, is criticised for having expensive decorations like statues. This I couldn’t confirm with my observations. The main church in Itaituba had a big wooden Jesus on a cross, but for the rest there were only plastic flowers and some candles in glass cups.

What the churches do have in common, is that they don’t view the desire for richness and spending money as sins in themselves. Because the very fact of achieving richness, if you do, is thanks to God. God helps you to earn money if you live good. God gives you the ability to produce wealth.¹⁴ The way of spending money, however, can be a sin. Spending on women, parties and alcohol is a sin. If one uses money to maintain himself and his family, it is no problem. So, if one ever found a great amount of gold and he is homeless now, he did something wrong. Adventists spoke with a different accent about the ethics of money: “Loving money is a sin, loving money in front of God. Being rich is not a sin. Searching gold for sustenance is not a sin.”

¹³ Malachi 3.10: Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. (Bible citations from <http://www.biblegateway.com>)

¹⁴ Adventists knew to inform me that this is literally written in the Bible: Deuteronomy 8.18: But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

“God is the gate to success, (...), God is the gate to everyting you want!”, is what I heard in the Assembly of God. But then first you need to ‘accept Jesus’¹⁵, which means that you need to adopt to a Christian way of life, a Christian conduct. The next paragraph concerns this Christian lifestyle in the garimpo region.

¹⁵ ‘accepting Jesus’ is said in the Assembly of God to designate a conversion, to ‘accept’ the Christian conduct. This can only be done by going on your knees in front of the church.

5.2 Christian lifestyle in the garimpo region

A religious lifestyle seen through a human security lense can reveal how religion is of influence for people to deal with their desires and insecurities. To participate in the church means to have a social life. But for adherents of the Assembly of God or of the Seventh-Day Adventists, it is a social life that does not allow to have a drink in a bar, which thus excludes the type of social life that most garimpeiros maintain. This paragraph will reveal the motivations of people in the garimpo region to adopt a religious lifestyle.

The church as a social network

“Did you already convert? Are you already part of the family?”, I heard the auxiliary say in the Assembly of God in Crepurizão. In the other churches I heard or observed similar things. In the Catholic church in Itaituba, everybody sang a happy-birthday song to a boy who stood in front of the church with a pie. The Assembly of God moreover profilates itself as “the church who loves you” and stresses the need to have faith with your heart. People sing songs together in the church and have a chat after the church mass or cult. In the currutelas, especially the Assembly of God is being visited by families, as I observed in Crepurizão and Cabaçal. The Catholic Church in Crepurizão offers less a social net, since the church is almost empty¹⁶.

One evangelical dono said that thanks to the evangelical church, in the garimpo it is more civilised nowadays. It pulls people away from the nightclubs. The church unites people in a community. I think that it can also be the reverse, namely that the church was able to gain adherents because there are families who are in need of a peaceful community life. When I spoke to an Adventist about the number of churchgoers in Crepurizão, he implicitly affirmed the last:

“But in Crepurizinho there are more. (...) Here are many Adventist people, only here it is transit. They stay a bit, from here they will leave.”¹⁷

So the reason for someone to be in the currutela is of influence for going to the church or not. Those who live permanently in the currutela, are more prone to adhere to the church. Garimpeiros, as has been noticed before, have more fluctuate social contacts as compared to the people who live in the currutela. Most of them don’t have a house and family in the currutela. Theije and Bal also make note of a relative lack of commitment of garimpeiros, as compared to local residents, that make it easier for them to move (2010:68). The church may therefore not be appealing for garimpeiros as in offering a social network.

¹⁶ Unfortunately I could go only once to the Catholic church in Crepurizão, but that time there were only five people, of which three single old ladies, one young lady and one young man who worked for a supply shop in Crepurizão.

¹⁷ “Mas em Crepurizinho tem mais. (...) aqui tem muita gente adventista só aqui é transito. Eles ficam um pouco neh, daqui vão sair.”

Psycho-social advantages

The church is not only a social network, but for some people also a means for existential security, enhancing their self-esteem: One is able to have active roles in the realization of masses or cults, to have the opportunity to take a leading role, to speak in front of the church. Especially the Assembly of God offers its followers the possibility for a religious career. Auxiliaries are chosen by the priest or president who follows their development and behaviour. There are also many (selected) women who sing solo. Many followers thus have a chance to speak to an audience. The observation that these activities may enhance people's self-esteem, corresponds with what Mariz (1994) has written of Pentecostalism.

Besides the effects of religiously related practices, the very belief itself offers various kinds of psychological and imagined securities. The conviction that all luck and all good is because of God, helps to stand in life positively, to endure difficulties (as also written of by Mariz, 1994). The Bible that I got as a present also has a special index in the back: "Words for orientation and consult". It says where to read for example if you are worried about finances, or if you are angry, or ill. The Assembly of God moreover offers a weekly cult of marvels in Crepurizão, where the believers may put their personal wishes. Financial problems, pain in the back caused by washing clothes, whatever problem you want Jesus to solve for you, it is possible. And everybody leaves the cult blessed.

The most important imagined security that is spoken of by churchgoers in the garimpo region, is that of salvation. It is an imagined security concerning one's future. The discourse is that if one wants to be saved, he or she has to search for the right path now, because Jesus will resurrect soon. When during the fieldwork a tsunami occurred in Japan, this was regarded as proof that the world is starting to apocalypse. Members of all churches in Crepurizão said that it is written in the Bible that when Jesus will come back, he will contaminate water and earth. To be saved depends on one's behaviour, on the adoption of a Christian conduct. However, what the various churches see as a Christian conduct is not equal.

Various Christian conducts

The Adventists have the strictest Christian conduct of the churches in the garimpo. They differentiate from the others especially in their adherence to the Ten Commandments. One of the Commandments is to keep to the Sabbath, to take rest on the seventh day of the week. For them, the Sabbath is not on Sunday but on Saturday. They are critical of all other churches for not keeping rest on Saturday: for them, observing nine Commandments is equal to observing zero. However, in the garimpo there is usually being worked on Saturday. One could thus ask oneself if the Seventh-Day Adventist church is accessible to the garimpeiro at all, especially when they work for a percentage. Though, Adventists usually work together as a team, with an Adventist dono. In this way they can observe the Saturday.

People from the Assembly of God are allowed to work even on Sunday if they need it to earn their bread. Also they are less strict in their diet, as compared to Adventists. The Pentecostals of the Assembly of God have in common with the Adventists that they cannot drink or sell alcohol, cannot dance, celebrate carnival, or wear make-up. Also clothing has to be decent. Gold is in the Bible described to be not decent, but especially in relation to the

dressing of women, emphasizing inner beauty¹⁸. The President himself of the Assembly of God in Itaituba was showing his three golden rings, when I asked him if the desire for wealth is good or bad. He remarked that God decides if you gain wealth.

Catholics are less stricted to conduct rules and can for example drink some alcohol. One woman that went to the Catholic church in Crepurizão every week, said that “for evangelicals you don’t have your own life,” thereby referring to the (perceived to be) freedom-restricting rules that you have to live up to, the lifestyle you need to adopt in order to adhere a Pentecostal or Adventist church.

However, any Christian conduct seems to be in tension with the lifestyle of ‘conspicuous consumption’ that many garimpeiros adopt. The next section concerns the perception of church adherents in the currutela on these garimpeiros.

Church adherents’ view of the garimpeiro

The various religious people in the currutela have in common that they view (most) garimpeiros as people that don’t think about the future, and consequently commit sins. An Assemblist in Crepurizão said: “They have a rapid way of thinking, (...) of change. They don’t do what they think and don’t think what they do.” That garimpeiros commit sins by spending money on drinking in bars and on prostitutes, is, regarded to many people, related to their illiteracy, to a lack of knowledge.

The garimpo region is described by all interviewed church representatives as a backward region, in which people are isolated and have less knowledge of what happens in the world, and in which people have less study. An Adventist said that the garimpeiros are ‘*carente*’, which means lacking or deprived. When I couldn’t find the Adventist church and asked a man on the streetside where it was, it turned out to be a drunk garimpeiro. While he guided me to the church, he said that he thought that I was very good because I knew of the law. “The law?”, I asked. “Yes, the law of God”. This ‘sinner’ thus also related morality and/or status to (religious) knowledge.

For Pentecostals and Adventists, it is very important to study the Bible in order to be able to follow the right path. This can thus be a problem for illiterates. However, they say, it is possible – for there are ‘good examples’. People from the Assembly of God stress the importance to take the word of God into your heart, which can also be done by listening. Moreover, there are even stories of some who, after accepting Jesus, could suddenly read the Bible. For Adventists you need to study the Bible in order to become part of the church. Their preaches are also more related to Bible quotes, compared to the more charismatic oriented preaches in the Assembly of God.

But it is not too late: sinners can still change their life and be saved. If one studies the Bible, he will obtain the knowledge to do what’s good. Only if he already has the knowledge

¹⁸ Timothy 2.9-1-: I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.;

1 Peter 3.3-4: Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.

and thén does wrong, it is unforgivable and he won't be saved. If the garimpeiro wants to convert -it's hard but possible-, "he has to change his way of thinking", said an Adventist preacher in Crepurizão. Change his way of thinking, and not change back again.

Churches in the currutela are mainly visited by the inhabitants of this currutela. Frequenting a church has the advantage of a social network, and can also enhance one's self-esteem. With converting to an evangelical church, one has to adopt a lifestyle in which he or she 'thinks of the future'. However, it also means to adopt a moral ethic that restricts individual (im)moral agency. In the next paragraph I will discuss what church participation means in the perception of garimpeiros, and how they perceive religion to be the influence in their life.

5.3 Garimpeiros and religious beliefs

This last paragraph should complete the ethnographic knowledge needed to come to an answer to my research question of how religious beliefs of garimpeiros mediate the interplay between their desire and insecurity. First, an overview will be given of the religious beliefs and practices of garimpeiros: what religion they consider themselves to be part of, and how much they participate in various churches. This will be followed with an ethnographic description of the influence of religion on the garimpeiros' desires and insecurity, thereby making a distinction between married and unmarried garimpeiros.

Garimpeiros' participation in the church

*"The garimpo has nothing to do with religion. (...)The garimpo is a source of income"*¹⁹

Of the ten (formally and informally) interviewed donos, four said to be non-religious (and at least two also didn't believe in God), four were Catholic but not going to the church very much, and two were Protestant and also frequenting. Most workers don't practically go to the church. Of the twenty workers, two said to be Protestant, of who I've seen one frequenting. Almost 50% said to be non-religious but to believe in God; the rest said to be Catholic but not church-going, of who I often heard 'they say that they are Catholic but they are not'.

Identifying oneself as being religious is thus perceived to be related to frequenting or adhering to a certain church – and less to believing in God or any supernatural beings. Church adherents clearly differentiate themselves from other churches, for they believe that their interpretation of a Christian conduct is the best. This is slightly different of what De Theije writes of Brazilian garimpeiros in Suriname: here, a general form of Christian religion exists, since going to a specific church is difficult because of limitations by time, distance, and language. One is Christian or not (2008:73-75). This difference may exist because of the fact that in my case study there are often various churches present in the currutelas. In both cases, though, being religious means being included in a social category which has certain moral attitudes.

Although few literature exists of miners' religiosity, miners are more often than not written of to adapt their religious practice to the social context (e.g. Grätz 2003; Larreta 2002:193; Nash 1979). Of the workers in my case study, most had been Catholic before coming to the garimpo. Some visit the Assembly of God sometimes, because there is no Catholic church (mass) in the currutela nearby. But they don't identify as being Protestant, they didn't convert. They say that salvation doesn't depend on the religion. It depends on your faith in God and on if you follow his path. This is possible in any church. Thus they take over the (Protestant) discourse on salvation, and at the same time use it as argument for not converting to Protestantism. It appears that these (originally Catholic) garimpeiros do adopt a general form of Christianity, similar to what De Theije has written (2008).

Those that don't visit any church often say that there is no religion in the garimpo. They see life in the garimpo as a separate life(style), as a climate without religion: "The garimpo is only for work. (...) The garimpo is a life as such.", as spoken of by Joseph (age 44, pit worker in Canaã). They are only working there to get money and leave. Some mention that

¹⁹ "O garimpo tem nada ver com religião ... o garimpo é um fonte de renda."

they do visit the church when they are in the city (if they go).

So, all garimpeiros taken together, a minor part is Protestant. Pentecostal and Adventist churches, as related to their interpretation of a Christian conduct, demand more devotion and participation than the Catholic church. It appeared that most Protestant garimpeiros had been sinners before (“I drank, I had no knowledge”). All converted while being garimpeiro (except for the one that I didn’t observe to frequent the church). Some told that they converted when they had problems in life; another when he married. Conversion entails the adoption of a different lifestyle, and the motivation for this seems to be, consciously or unconsciously, the desire for social security. The converted Protestant garimpeiros all have a family to maintain in Crepurizão or Itaituba.

Garimpeiros’ view of churches’ morality

“Here, religion is commerce. (...) Religion is money.”²⁰

Many garimpeiros are critical of the churches for being commercial. One dono called the Catholic church a ‘sophisticated business’. The Protestants are seen as even more immoral for being commercial, for making people believe that they will be blessed when giving money. João is one of these critical garimpeiros:

“I think it’s a negation. Because in the period that I was Protestant, it is this which made me move away from the church. (...) Today you see critics, the Protestants all taking people away from the other. Protestants saying that they are Protestant but turn out to be not Protestant. The gold, Protestants are after the gold, the Protestant church asks for money, asks for gold. (...) That is not written in the Bible.”²¹

For many garimpeiros, the church thus lacks trustworthiness. This distrust and critic on commerciality, I think reflects the garimpeiros’ position in the society as being critical of ‘sophisticated businesses’.

Another reason for not going to the church, that in the garimpeiros’ discourses appears only for Protestant churches, concerns the Christian conduct, the rules. If the garimpeiro wants to adhere to a Protestant church, he has to adapt his lifestyle considerably. He cannot drink alcohol, not even go to a bar; he cannot go to a prostitute, he can only have a relationship with a protestant woman. As described in the previous chapter, drinking and women are the most important tangible desires for single garimpeiros, and almost the only amusement. So they have to choose either to go to the church, or go to the bars. “Going to the church,” Felipe said, “is only forgetting your rights”. Garimpeiros are in the garimpo to live an autonomous life. A free life that is difficult to go hand in hand with a religious lifestyle. Or in the words of João:

²⁰ “Aqui, religião é comércio, (...) Religião é dinheiro.”

²¹ “Eu acho uma negação. Por que na época que fui crente, é isso que fez a me afastar da igreja. (...) hoje em dia voce vê critica, os crente cada um tirar do outro. Crente dizendo que é crente, mas revolvem nao é crente. (...) O ouro, crente correndo atras do ouro, crente, as igrejas pede dinheiro, pede ouro (...) Na Biblia nao ta escrito isso aí.”

*“The garimpo is adventure. The Protestant is not allowed to take a chance”*²²

Interesting is that the church says that spending money is not wrong when it is used for sustainment, for necessary things. However, for the single garimpeiro other things are necessary than for a married garimpeiro. Despite that most garimpeiros don't practically frequent a church, almost all of them do believe in God. In the next section will be discussed how this belief affects their lives.

God's influence on garimpeiros

Before and while entering the field, I was very curious how a lifestyle with a lot of drinking and prostitutes could co-exist with a (Christian) belief in God. I wanted to know if the garimpeiro experiences a moral conflict. In conversating about this, I often heard comments referring to a distinctive life in the garimpo, like “The garimpeiro doesn't care about that. He wants gold,” which thus relates to the experience of liminality while being in the garimpo, in which the moral restrictions of their former (religious) life are not at stake. Or I heard individual justifying remarks, like ‘for me it is satisfying necessities’, or referring to a lack of amusement. It appears that garimpeiros, if it comes to sins, connect religious (im)morality more to the authority and doctrine of a church than to the authority of God. I want to argue that this is connected with the different rules of conduct that the various churches adopt as conditions for salvation. It allows for a personalised version of belief, an own style of Christian conduct.

Moral conduct is thus related to the choice for a lifestyle. Belk, Ger & Askegaard wrote of the effect of modernization to the way in which desire is being experienced and controlled. I quote: “Constraints on desire, no longer imposed by traditional institutions, are now embedded in the range of social lifestyles available for the choosing self. Ironically, while this modern reflexivity ostensibly attends inner rather than outer perceptions of what others expect of us, it involves an internalized, and thus even more effective, acceptance of non-imposed social morals.” (2003:331). Although traditional institutions have been constraining people's desires, Pentecostalism is characterised by an individual choice to convert, the individual choice for a religious lifestyle. The Pentecostal emphasis on the family and its fight against alcoholism seem to make the adoption of a non-religious lifestyle more appealing for the mainstream of garimpeiros.

Supernatural agency (God) is not perceived to constrain desire. The influence of God is more perceived as a force that does only good. He does many marvellous things, all the good things in the life of people: he gives them and their family health, and he gives courage to work. If there are dangers in the forest, only God can save you. And if you have a family, it is also thanks to God. The young garimpeiro Rafael also talks with God if he has difficulties with friends. For him, God is like an intimate friend. All these good things that God does, reflect

²² “O garimpo é aventura. O crente nao pode se aventurar.”

the physical and social insecurities of life in the garimpo, described in the previous chapter. The belief in God brings psychological relief to endure these difficulties.

I also asked many garimpeiros if God helps them to find gold. For some he doesn't, for some he helps sometimes –if you find a *bambúrrio* it is thanks to God. That God is perceived to do only good, is not surprising: the Devil is the one that does bad things. God will only punish you with death, with not saving you. And that is in the future. Since life in the garimpo is for many seen as temporary, this can thus also be a temporary non-religious life. One garimpeiro told me he would frequent the Catholic church in the future, when he will live in the city permanently.

Religious garimpeiros

The garimpeiros that do participate in a Protestant church, have a somewhat different discourse about this 'moral conflict'. They all say that thanks to the Holy Scriptures, they know now what is right and what is wrong, and consequently adapted their behaviour. Eduardo, a dono that I interviewed in Itaituba about his conversion to Pentecostalism, said: "Before I didn't know (...) But I didn't know anything of the Bible, because I, as Catholic, didn't have access to the Bible."

The 'Word of God' is almost used as a synonym for 'the Christian conduct'. Pedro, a garimpeiro who already has been adhering to the Assembly of God in Crepurizão for eighteen years, said: "Without education you have nothing to do with the Word". He seemed to mean that without education you cannot behave properly. It appears that this is a way to justify former sins. The Protestants make a clear difference between them as religious person and the garimpeiro who 'follows the desire of the flesh'. An Adventist dono explained it like this:

*"A person who is of the world, he is not equal to a person who is returned to God. Everybody is of the world, if it does everything for you everything is fun. Everything for you is good. Look, the garimpeiro he takes the gold, (...) he spends everything here in the nightclub. (...) because he doesn't have God in his heart. If (...) God in the heart, you will start to know what you have to do. And there you will have better reasoning, you will start to have more brains. That's the way it is"*²³

It is thus said to be all about knowledge. This complies with what is written in the literature of Pentecostalism that it fosters a consciousness, a rationalization. Knowledge of how to behave in order to be saved. And to spread knowledge, you need communication. In my operationalisation, I had formulated the sub-subquestion: 'How does religious communication enforce shifts from uncertainty to risk or from risk to uncertainty (see Grätz:2003) for gold miners?'. My data lead to a reverse answer: religious discourse shifts the possibility to a certainty (to be saved). At least, it is communicated as a certainty. But many garimpeiros prefer to keep the possibility than to devote to the certainty. To keep the 'maybe' means to

²³ A pessoa que está do mundo, ele não é igual que pessoa que está voltado para Deus neh, todos estão do mundo, se faz tudo para você tudo é alegria. Tudo para você tá bom. Olha o garimpeiro ele pege o ouro (...) ele gasta todo aqui no cabaret. (...) Por que ele não tem Deus no coração. Se (...) Deus no coração, se começa assim saber o que você tem que fazer neh. Ai se vai ter pensamento melhor, se vai começar a ter mais cabeça neh. É assim.

keep their autonomous free life, and leaves the future undefined. To devote to the imagined, futuristic certainty of salvation is only appealing for those who also have concrete future plans 'down here' which they want to become true.

Supernatural agency of gold

Another religious belief that appears in the literature of garimpeiros, is the belief of supernatural agency of gold. It is written that garimpeiros tend to conceptualize gold as an active, female agent, as an elusive femme fatale (Larreta 2002: 123 Slater 1994:743; Theije 2008:75). It is believed that gold can decide if it wants to be found by a certain garimpeiro (Slater 1994:724; Theije 2008:75).

In formal and informal interviews, I asked the garimpeiros about this 'enchanted gold'. About 40% said to believe in the supernatural agency of gold; one-third was convinced that gold is not enchanted, and the rest didn't know or said to believe it 'not yet'. The stories about the enchanted gold are diverse, but all have something to do with the mystery of gold, with the intangibility of gold, which corresponds with what is written in the literature. One exception is a person who told me that gold is enchanted for it makes people spend everything on drinking and women, thereby thus justifying immoral behaviour by blaming an external force. However, de Theije also writes that the gold is believed to do something with the man who found it (2008:75).

Several discourses are about that one person finds gold on a place where someone else didn't: "Gold has its owner." There are cases of visions, of dreams in which one is told where to find gold. But these visions don't occur so much. One person told that it occurs more in the state Amazonas. Another said that it occurs to persons who do prospection. I've met only one person who has had visions: a 75-year-old retired garimpeiro who lives in Crepurizão. He has had three dreams in which deceased persons told him where to dig for gold. Other garimpeiros relate the enchantment of gold to the fact that you can't get all the gold out of the ground (in a *caixa*, always some gold gets lost).

People who do not believe that gold is enchanted, predominantly mention that gold is a mineral like any other mineral and often refer to God as the creator and boss of nature. Most people who do believe that gold is enchanted, refer to the enchantment as a negative force, a demon or spirit, which makes the gold cursed. This is not God, because "God does only good" (Fabio, age 30, pit worker in Canaã). In the study of de Theije, the garimpeiros also perceive God to be more determining their luck or fortune (2008:76). Luck is thus thanks to God, and tough luck can be explained by the enchantment of gold. Slater also sees this conceptualisation of gold as a way to cope with bad luck:

"The stress on gold as a femme fatale has the effect of softening, if not denying, the existence of harsh social and economic realities. By suggesting that this unpredictable woman does not necessarily favor individuals with easier access to credit, essential supplies, additional laborers, and superior equipment, these stories deny the existence of increasingly clear-cut divisions among miners.(...) In addition, the depiction of gold as a woman whose conquest rarely brings

lasting happiness makes scant success or outright failure easier to bear.”
(1994:734-35)

The belief in supernatural agency of gold may thus argued to be an ‘envy-deflecting mechanism’. Moreover, three persons referred to macumba, in which agency is more of human kind. Two of them told that people can enchant gold by means of macumba, out of jealousy, so that one other can’t find the gold in his land. One of them also said that you can disenchant the gold by praying (so, here again God is the good power). The other said that macumba is used in prospection. Macumba is something not written of in the literature related to the enchantment of gold. But, as in the other stories, it can be seen as a belief that serves to make a lack of influence acceptable.

There are thus various stories. When asking about the enchanted gold, garimpeiros often said that ‘people talk about it’. Most garimpeiros don’t have a personal experience with it. Two younger garimpeiros said that they ‘started to believe in it’. This implies a flexibility in their belief: in their discourse they are implicitly saying that it is a belief created through communication. Many said that it is ‘the older garimpeiros’ who tell that gold is enchanted. This I cannot confirm with my data: there were old garimpeiros that didn’t believe it, and young garimpeiros that did. But it does appear that formerly or elsewhere these stories were more attendant, and I think this coheres with the decrease of gold found in garimpagem, which has diminished the need to deflect envy. It also coheres with the technological changes and the consequent practice of more prospection, that influenced the degree of ‘luck’ in finding gold. Formerly (or maybe elsewhere like in Amazonas), there were many people owning a small piece of land to work on (Cleary 1990:60-63). At this time, in the Tapajós there are bosses who own relatively large pieces of land²⁴, with business partners who get a percentage. There are thus less people to compare your luck with. The discourse about enchanted gold can therefore be argued to be an envy-deflecting belief, in an environment in which social relationships are not formally defined. Due to the formalizing effect of mechanization, these stories are less applicable. This does thus not comply with Slater’s note that the stories of enchanted gold deny the existence of increasingly clear-cut divisions among miners. My data tend to demonstrate the reverse, that clear-cut divisions make up for the disappearance of these stories. I can predict that the story about ‘the lost gold in the caixa’ will also disappear with more advanced technology to distract gold out of the ground. Nevertheless, I have already argued myself in this thesis that predictions for the future are of less importance than an analysis of the effect of future perspectives on behaviour in the present.

In this ethnographic chapter I have demonstrated that religion in the context of my fieldwork is a choosed-for lifestyle. When analysing the connection between religion and desire, we have seen that religion can be a constitutor of hope and self-esteem, a motivator to adopt a

²⁴ For example, the owner of the garimpo Canaã, first owned a smaller piece of land. As neighbouring land owners wanted to leave the region he purchased their land and now owns a big estate.

functional lifestyle, and an external force to control hope. The choice for this religious lifestyle seems only appealing to garimpeiros with a family, or to older retired garimpeiros in the currutelas. For them, the adoption of a religious lifestyle brings advantages of a stable social network. For the working garimpeiros without family, there is less realistic opportunity to maintain a stable social network. Moreover, the very attractiveness of working in the garimpo is the autonomous lifestyle. A religious conduct constrains their freedom and autonomy. It is perceived to be a temporal lifestyle. A religious lifestyle, on the other hand, is a permanent one.

When considering my research question of how religious beliefs mediate the interplay between desire and insecurity, we can say that religious beliefs affect the hope for pursuit of desire, and provide psychological relief in enduring insecurities. Religious conduct, however, is a choice for a lifestyle. The motivation for this choice is affected by ones social desires and insecurities, and also affects the social context in which these desires and insecurities exist. This goes in two directions.

6 Conclusion

Gold mining in Brazil mainly takes place in illegality. The Brazilian government sees garimpagem as being destructive for the Amazon rainforest. The Brazilian media have thereby been depicting the gold miners as desperate, greedy and violent men, spending their money on drinking and prostitutes (see Cleary 1990; Larreta 2002; Rocha 1999; Slater 2002). Moreover, garimpagem entails economic and physical risks.

In this thesis has been attempted to come to an understanding of the motivations of these garimpeiros to work in the garimpo. Since their problematic image concerns immoral behaviour, the study of the garimpeiros' religious beliefs has been assumed to reveal socio-cultural dynamics in the garimpo, especially concerning the tension between one's individual freedom and more communal moral constraints. By means of ethnographic fieldwork in the Brazilian Tapajós region has been aimed to answer the following research question:

'How do the religious beliefs of small-scale goldminers in the Brazilian Tapajós region mediate the interplay between insecurity and desire in their quest for gold?'

The data that have been collected in relation to the dynamics of garimpeiros' insecurities and desires, demonstrate that of most significance were their social concerns.

The garimpeiros' desires have been investigated through studying their consumptive behaviour and future perspectives. The data confirmed that many garimpeiros spend their money on drinking and on women. Many spending behaviour falls in the category of 'conspicuous consumption', consumption for the gaze of others, especially of women. This leads to the recognition that behind the desire of the 'object' gold, there is an individual's desire for social status and affection. Of importance herein is that most garimpeiros are illiterate and have their origin in the poor State Maranhão. The very self-esteem of the garimpeiro is affected by his ability to spend money, which is clear in the utterance of one of my main informants: "The garimpeiro without money feels like he's nothing. How is he going to pay a beer for a woman?" Spending money thus seems to let him feel to be a valuable person, to make him feel autonomous and independent.

The sense of freedom is an important characteristic of life in the garimpo. The socio-economic relationships are informal and fluctuous. One can work one month with a boss on a deposit and then get the gold proceeds and leave. On the one hand, this means freedom and autonomy, but on the other hand, there is no stable social life for the garimpeiro. The freedom and the relatively high income are attractive for the low-educated garimpeiro. However, it is a freedom within a marginal place. Many garimpeiros slowly lose contact with their family. They get adapted to a temporal view that is hidden in the (approximately) monthly accomplishment of a deposit.

One of my main arguments therefore is that the garimpo may be thought of as liminal or liminoid, in Victor Turner's terms. Belk, Ger & Askegaard relate liminality to "authorized times, places, and activities" where the pursuit of desires (...) and transgressive transformations are allowed to take place." (2003:330). The facts that working life in the garimpo is by everyone seen as temporary, and that there is no kinship or community life to adapt one's

moral agency to, are the factors that constitute the garimpo as liminal in time and space. This liminality makes it easier for garimpeiros to spend money on their individual desires, but at the same time makes them more liminal or marginal, by gradually loosening ties with their former social life. It can be seen as a vicious circle.

The study of the garimpeiro's religion has been, as was assumed, an important tool to come to an understanding of these socio-cultural dynamics. Yet, a contribution to the anthropology of religion can also be made.

Churches in the garimpo region are located in the *currutelas*, the communities nearby that function as supportive communities for the garimpos and where garimpeiros come to spend their money on free days. The churches most present and adhered to are Pentecostal.

Pentecostalism is known from literature to have an emphasis on family life and on fighting against alcoholism (Brusco 1993; Mariz 1994). Therefore not surprisingly, most garimpeiros don't frequent the church. Adhering to a Pentecostal church is perceived to be not possible to go hand in hand with their adventurous and free lifestyle. While they do believe in the existence of God, the constraints for their moral agency are perceived to be imposed by the authority of the church, not by God. God is perceived to do only good. He helps them to survive and gives strength to work.

The garimpeiros that do frequent the church, are those who have a family in the *currutela*. Hereby they adopt another consumptive lifestyle, in which they set themselves apart from other (non-religious) garimpeiros because they 'think of the future'. For them, the adoption of a religious lifestyle brings advantage of a stable family life and social network in the *currutela*.

The most important conclusion to make with respect to the garimpeiros' religion, is that religion is perceived to be a lifestyle that one can choose for. In relation to 'modernization', Belk, Ger & Askegaard have said that "Constraints on desire, no longer imposed by traditional institutions, are now embedded in the range of social lifestyles available for the choosing self." (2003:331). Pentecostalism is in the literature said to be appealing in the context of globalization and modernization, partly for its characteristic of individual choice to convert, which fosters a rationalization, a modern consciousness (Mariz 1994:8). But my data demonstrate that adopting such a religious lifestyle is only appealing in a social context that is perceived or desired to be permanent. The garimpo is the opposite, it is perceived to be a temporal lifestyle.

To come to an answer to my research question of how religious beliefs mediate the interplay between desire and insecurity, we can say that the data reveal that religious belief provides psychological relief in enduring insecurities and hope for achieving desire; whereas the practice of adhering to a church implies the choice for a lifestyle that can offer social security to those with a feasible and permanently envisioned future in the garimpo region. However, for most garimpeiros, the absence of kinship and community life, and the perception of life in the garimpo as temporal, makes the garimpo as a liminal occasion in which one's moral agency is individualised.

So, if the Brazilian government wants to protect the Amazon rainforest, it has to recognize the social concerns of the garimpeiro. It should realize that many garimpeiros have no 'home' to

go back to. They have no house. Moreover, many have no financial alternatives: for the garimpeiros it would therefore help a lot if it would be easier to get ID documents, either for their retirement or for other employment. The government can also invest in offering alternative unskilled employment. Garimpeiros are willing to work hard in return for a certain degree of autonomy. But it would be the best if the garimpeiros can be recognized for doing what they are competent in: gold mining. Further research should be done on how damaging small-scale gold mining actually is. The government should support efforts to mine gold in a sustainable way. Maybe small-scale gold mining provides more sustainable opportunities for the exploitation of resources from the Amazon rainforest than other exploitative industries.

7 **References**

- Asad, T. (1992). *Genealogies of religion: discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press
- Belk, R.W., Ger, G. & Askegaard, S. (2003). The fire of desire: a multisited inquiry into consumer passion. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 30(3), 326-351
- Benavides, G. (2001) Christianity in Central and South America. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 1764-1767
- Brusco, E. (1993). The reformation of machismo: asceticism and masculinity among Colombian Evangelicals. In V. Garrard-Burnett & D. Stoll (Eds.), *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America* (pp.143-158). Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Carter, A. (2003). Morality and freedom. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 53(211), 161-180
- Cleary, D. (1990). *Anatomy of the Amazon gold rush*. Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Cleary, E. (1997). Introduction: Pentecostals, prominence, and politics. In E.L. Cleary & H.W. Stewart-Gambino (Eds.), *Power, politics and Pentecostals in Latin America* (pp. 1-24). Boulder: Westview Press
- Coleman, K.M., Aguilar, E.E., Sandoval, J.M. & Steigenga, T.J. (1993). Protestantism in El Salvador: conventional wisdom versus the survey evidence. In V. Garrard-Burnett & D. Stoll (Eds.), *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America* (pp.111-142). Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Comaroff, J. & Comaroff, J. (1992). The colonization of consciousness. In M. Lambek (Ed.), *A reader in the anthropology of religion* (pp. 464-478) Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd
- Dawson, A. (2007). *New era- new religions: religious transformation in contemporary Brazil*. Bodmin, Cornwall: MPG Books Ltd
- Ferry, E. (2005). Geologies of power: value transformations of mineral specimens from Guanajuato, Mexico. *American ethnologist*, 32(3), 420-436
- Freston, P. (1995). Pentecostalism in Brazil: a brief history. *Religion*, 25, 119-133
- Friedman, J. (2007). Shame and the experience of ambivalence on the margins of the global: pathologizing the past and present in Romania's industrial wastelands. *Ethos*, 35(2), 235-264

- Garrard-Burnett, V. (1993). Conclusion: is this Latin America's reformation? In V. Garrard-Burnett & D. Stoll (Eds.), *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America* (pp.199-210). Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Grätz, T. (2003). Gold-mining and risk management: a case study from northern Benin. *Ethnos*, 68(2), 192-208
- Grupo de trabalho interministerial (2006) *Plano de desenvolvimento regional sustentável para a área de influencia da rodovia BR-163 Cuiabá-Santarém*.
- Halvaksz, J.A. (2008). Whose closure? Appearances, temporality, and mineral extraction in Papua New Guinea. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 14, 21-37
- Heemskerck, M. (2003). Risk attitudes and mitigation among gold miners and others in the Surinamese rainforest. *Natural Resources Forum*, 27, 267-278
- Hilson, G. (2002). Small-scale mining and its socio-economic impact in developing countries. *Natural Resources Forum*, 26, pp.3-13.
- Jacka, J. (2005) Emplacement and millennial expectations in an era of development and globalization: heaven and the appeal of christianity for the Ipili. *American anthropologist*, 107(4), 643-653
- Larreta, E.R. (2002). "Gold is illusion": *The garimpeiros of Tapajos Valley in the Brazilian Amazonia*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International
- Mariz, C. (1994). *Coping with poverty: Pentecostals and Christian base communities in Brazil*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Mariz, C.L. & Dores Campos Machado, M. das (1997). Pentecostalism and women in Brazil. In E.L. Cleary & H.W. Stewart-Gambino (Eds.), *Power, politics and Pentecostals in Latin America* (pp. 41-54). Boulder: Westview Press
- Meyer, B. (1998). Commodities and the power of prayer: Pentecostalist attitudes towards consumption in contemporary Ghana. *Development and Change*, 29, 751-776.
- Nash, J. (1979). *We eat the mines and the mines eat us: dependency and exploitation in Bolivian tin mines*. New York: Columbia University Press
- Persoon, G.A. & Est, D.M.E. van (2000). The study of the future in anthropology in relation to the sustainability debate. *Focaal*, 35, 7-28

- Perz, S. et.al. (2010). Intraregional Migration, Direct Action Land Reform, and New Land Settlements in the Brazilian Amazon. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 29(4), 459-476
- Roberts, L. (2004). Religion and economic life. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, pp. 13028-13034
- Rocha, J. (1999). *Murder in the rianforest: The Yanomami, the gold miners and the Amazon*. London: Latin America Bureau Ltd.
- Slater, C. (1994). "All that glitters": Contemporary Amazonian gold miners' tales. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 36, 720-742.
- Slater, C. (2002). *Entangled Edens: visions of the Amazon*. London: University of California Press Ltd
- Stewart-Gambino, H.W. & Wilson, E. (1997). Latin American Pentecostals: old stereotypes and new challenges. In E.L. Cleary & H.W. Stewart-Gambino (Eds.), *Power, politics and Pentecostals in Latin America* (pp. 227-246). Boulder: Westview Press
- Stoll, D. (1993). Introduction: rethinking Protestantism in Latin America. In V. Garrard-Burnett & D. Stoll (Eds.), *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America* (pp.1-19). Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Taussig, M. (1977). The genesis of capitalism amongst a South American peasantry: Devil's labor and the baptism of money. *Comparative studies in society and history*, 19(2), 130-155. Abridged.
- Theije, M. de (2008). Gold and God: on the relation between prosperity, morality and religion in the Gold Fields of Suriname. *Religião & Sociedade*, 28(1), 69-83
- Theije, M. de & Bal, E. (2010). Flexible migrants: Brazilian gold miners and their quest for human security in Surinam. In T.H. Eriksen, E. Bal & O. Salemink (Eds.), *A world of insecurity: Anthropological perspectives on human security* (pp.66-88). London: PlutoPress
- Theije, M. de & Heemskerk, M. (2009). Moving frontiers in the Amazon: Brazilian small-scale gold miners in Suriname. *European review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 87, 5-25
- Wallman, S. (Ed.). (1992). *Contemporary futures: perspectives from social anthropology*. London: Routledge

Zuiderwijk, A.B. (2000). The nature of time, the timing of nature: an embedded time approach to agricultural industrialization. *Focaal*, 35, 69-87

8 Executive summary

‘Gold fever’ is a term known to be used for people with a greedy desire for wealth. Brazil has known a big gold rush in the 80’s. Nowadays, there are still people working in small-scale gold mines, called *garimpos*, in the Brazilian Amazon. However, it has a bad reputation: *garimpagem* is known to be destructive of the rain forest, and *garimpos* are known to be a ‘wild west’, where poor and greedy gold miners drink and fight a lot and where most women are prostitutes. However, this image of small-scale gold miners, *garimpeiros*, has been nuanced by social scientists.

In 2005, the Brazilian federal government has declared a certain (new) area as nature reserve. However, the *garimpeiros* continue working there illegally. The interests of the government obviously do not comply with those of the *garimpeiros*. In literature is also stated that the socio-economic benefits and importance of *garimpagem* are often being overlooked and that the legislation has not led to social and environmental improvements. This thesis is an attempt to contribute to the recognition of the social concerns of the small-scale gold miners in Brazil.

Since the study of religion can give insight into community dynamics, it is through the study of religious beliefs, that I have investigated cultural and social dynamics in the *garimpos*. The following research question is aimed at to be answered:

‘How do the religious beliefs of small-scale goldminers in the Brazilian Tapajós region mediate the interplay between insecurity and desire in their quest for gold?’

The *garimpo* is a relatively isolated place. This brings advantages and disadvantages for the *garimpeiros*. The disadvantages have to do with health risks and social insecurity. The advantage is that it allows for an informal climate in which individual autonomy is feasible for men that come from a poor socio-economic background in which there are few opportunities to have this advantage. The sense of freedom is an important characteristic of life in the *garimpo*. However, it is a freedom within a marginal place. Many *garimpeiros* slowly lose contact with their family.

The *garimpeiros*’ desires have been investigated through studying their consumptive behaviour and future perspectives. *Garimpeiros* take pride in spending money, in consuming for the gaze of others, especially of women. This leads to the recognition that behind the desire of the ‘object’ gold, there is an individual’s desire for social status and affection. Of importance herein is the *garimpeiros*’ socio-economic background. The very self-esteem of the *garimpeiro* is determined by his ability to spend money.

The most important conclusion to make with respect to the *garimpeiros*’ religion, is that religion is perceived to be a lifestyle that one can choose for. My data demonstrate that adopting such a religious lifestyle is only appealing in a social context that is perceived or desired to be permanent. This means that the *garimpeiros* who frequent a church, are chiefly those who maintain a family in the region. For the mainstream of *garimpeiros* however, the *garimpo* is the opposite, it is perceived to be a temporal lifestyle.