

**Spirituality, Culture and Place:
The Rainbow Temple in NSW,
Australia**

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Abstract

This thesis is about the Rainbow Temple in Byron Shire, NSW, Australia. The diverse belief systems and the symbolic behaviours practiced by people who live at the Rainbow Temple constitute a particular identity assigned predominantly with what I call “Rainbow culture”. This culture is derived and constituted from the Rainbow Tribe gatherings practiced all around the world. The Rainbow Tribe (or the Rainbow Family) is an international affiliation of individuals who share common belief and identity systems, who gather periodically and intentionally to practice exclusive rituals and ceremonies. This study shows that the Rainbow Temple functions as a multi-cultural sphere and encapsulates various cultural and religious properties that cohere to and are associated with those exhibited in Rainbow Tribe gatherings.

Initially, according to its founder, the Rainbow Temple was not meant to have an affiliation with the Rainbow Tribe, but over time the Temple has evolved an association with Rainbow culture. Participants and informants recognize the Rainbow Temple as a “gathering” sphere or as a “centre” for Rainbow Tribe spirit, and attribute meanings of sacredness and inviolability to the Temple. I will examine these attributes and claim that they are part of a larger context.

To portray a viable ontological reality and explain the cultural occurrences in the Rainbow Temple, I have relied on three streams of knowledge. First, I have investigated similar recorded cases and relevant theories about identity systems, new religions and New Age spirituality. Second, I have gathered the descriptions, comments and reflections of the people who live at the Rainbow Temple. And third, I have considered my own experiences with the Rainbow Tribe and my fieldwork at the Rainbow Temple.

While on the surface, the cultural occurrences at the Temple seem to be a mishmash of ideas and practices, in this thesis I argue that there is a consistent ideology behind the confusion. I examine the foundations of some of the cultural processes and the symbolic behaviours which constitute Rainbow culture and Rainbow identity.

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Chapter one: Introduction

This MA thesis is about the Rainbow Temple, a place in the Rainbow Region,¹ NSW, Australia, where people live out their beliefs. These people come from different backgrounds, but identify as Rainbow people, who practice alternative lifestyle, adhere to a diverse belief systems and are part of the Rainbow Tribe culture. The Rainbow Tribe is an international affiliation of individuals who gather temporarily in meaningful rural areas, to practice their diverse beliefs and interesting ideologies. The first Rainbow Tribe gathering was held in Colorado, North America, in July 1972; subsequent Rainbow gatherings were held annually in various places in North America. Today, the Rainbow Tribe has expanded into an international movement, and gatherings are called by local Rainbow groups in many places around the world. The first time I heard of the Rainbow Family was in 1996-7 while travelling in South Asia. My own background (I grew up in the egalitarian communal environment of an Israeli Kibbutz) and my personal beliefs sparked my interest in the alternative meanings and interpretations that people who participate in Rainbow Tribe activities give to concepts like freedom, harmony and balance, and in the ways these people explore spiritual realms.

In recent years, I have spent time with Rainbow people and attended Rainbow Family gatherings in Israel, England, India and in Australia and New Zealand. I first heard of the Rainbow Temple in the Rainbow Region, NSW, Australia from friends from my kibbutz who stayed in the Rainbow Temple; I heard more about the Temple from people I met during Rainbow gatherings and activities. In 2006 I visited the Rainbow Temple for the first time. Since then I have returned to the Temple in January, February and March 2007, April 2008 and most recently in October 2008. I found the unique structure of the Temple, its natural location and the colourful people who practice their unusual ideology different from Rainbow Tribe gatherings I was familiar with. The Rainbow people themselves consider the Rainbow Temple to be unique because it provides a permanent gathering space, or arena, where Rainbow culture can be consistently and continuously practiced through time. In this thesis, I

¹ The Rainbow Region is a geographical area with symbolic significance. I will expand on this in chapter two, section 2.1.

argue that the Rainbow Temple is an important repository for the collective identity symbols and practices of the Rainbow people, and thus provides an important ethnographic field for the study of Rainbow culture and ideology.

1.1 Methodology; Ethnography; E.A.C (Ethical Approval Committee)

I first began academic research into Rainbow culture as a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Haifa, Israel. My continuing fascination with this social phenomenon, together with a somewhat cosmic conspiracy, led to my enrolment in the Department of Anthropology and the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Under the supervision of Associate Professor Jacqui Leckie (Department of Anthropology) and Dr. Erica Baffelli (Department of Theology and Religious Studies), I carried out fieldwork and further research, using various methods of qualitative research during April and October 2008 at the Rainbow Temple, NSW, Australia, for this MA thesis. The research and methodological tools used were approved by the Ethical Approval Committee at the University of Otago.

Qualitative research includes various methods and techniques for collecting data on human behaviours, beliefs, and practices. Writing an ethnographic account for this M.A. thesis involved core methodologies such as: participant observation, interviews, discussions, and written reflexive field notes. Among these techniques, participant observation is considered as the anthropologist's main tool, because the researcher must be able to "be there" (in the "field") in order to maximise hers/his understanding (Hume and Mulcock 2004, pp. xvii-xviii; Ellen 1984, pp.19-26). Participant observation requires researchers to use their personal social skills to interact and communicate with the people they study, but these situations are also enhanced by discomfort and awkwardness of balancing between distance and intimacy with the subjects of the research. I will expand on this methodological contradiction in chapter three.

My theoretical approach to problematic methodological issues and organizing qualitative material, fieldwork and ethnography, has been influenced by a number of works. Denzin (2007, 2008) writes on problematic issues which arise from the "field" and ways of organizing valuable qualitative material. Reading the works of Atkinson

(1992) and Silverman (2006) on techniques how to conduct a competent fieldwork and explore the ways ethnography appears whilst interpreting qualitative data was useful. In addition, Blaikie (2000) discusses strategies that show how to prepare research projects and techniques and ways in which the researcher can approach problematic methodological issues. I found Brettell (1993) and Marcus (1986) very important for understanding the politics and moral issues that develop in the field between the researcher and the subjects of study. Ongoing discussions with academic supervisors and colleagues have assisted me in processing these theories, and in the construction of a viable framework for my research and fieldwork.

During my fieldwork at the Rainbow Temple I participated in daily activities, rituals and ceremonies. I have encountered a lot of people and engaged in intensive interaction and shared personal information, some of which I am obliged to keep confidential. I have told Temple dwellers that I was doing research for an M.A. thesis, and gained a full consent from the people I have interviewed. However, to protect informants' confidentiality and to prevent uncomfortable situations, I decided to use pseudonyms, except for those of Guy and Fiore, in this M.A. thesis. The full reports, recorded accounts and any other ethnographic material which relate to this M.A. project will be kept confidential in compliance with the University of Otago's code of ethical conduct.

I have also used other sources for this M.A. thesis. I had conversation with people from the public sphere, editors of local magazines, writers of related themes, scholars and reporters, and meetings with academics. I met Associate Professor Carol Cusack (Religious Studies at the University of Sydney, Australia), Associate Professor Baden Offord (Cultural Studies at Southern Cross University, NSW, Australia) and Dr. Bill Metcalf (Griffith University, Queensland, Australia). In these meetings, relevant methodologies were discussed, and contributed greatly to my engagement in the "field". In search for previous studies, accounts or reports on the Rainbow Temple I have visited the State Library of New South Wales in Sydney and delved into the Rainbow Archives in the Mitchell Library. However, I did not find any information on the Rainbow Temple and hardly any useful information on the Rainbow Family or Rainbow culture, rather general information on development of MO's (Multiple Occupancy) around the Byron Shire. I have also visited and explored the local

libraries and archives (in the township of Byron Bay, Mullumbimby, Lismore, Rosebank and Nimbin). There were no written accounts about the Rainbow Temple, but I found interesting opinions and views on the Rainbow Temple expressed by the locals.

1.2 Uniqueness of the Temple and Importance of this study

The Rainbow Temple is a wooden structure built in 1981 by Guy Feldman and friends. It is constructed in the shape of the Star of David, two opposite triangles entangled and entwined, symbolizing the unification and balance of two contrasts.² The Rainbow Temple is located in the heart of the rainforest mountains, N.S.W. Australia, an area also known as the Rainbow Region. The Rainbow Region is an important geographical area in local Aboriginal folklore. It also has ecological meanings for local people, and is symbolically associated with hippie-culture. According to people who dwell there, the Rainbow Temple is a place that is open to all, where people can meet, share and practice Rainbow culture together with Guy, his family, and the Temple dwellers. In contrast to the ephemeral Rainbow gatherings elsewhere in the world, people at the Temple intensively and persistently express their identity through the performance of rituals and beliefs particular to Rainbow culture.

The Temple is considered to be a religious sanctuary by people within the Rainbow Tribe, and by others: local settlers, neighbours and local council members. People who live at the Temple and in the area, spend a lot of time performing religious activities, for example music and drumming circles, full moon raves, meditation and yoga. During these performances participants discuss mythological narratives, exchange spiritual experiences, practice rituals and other activities associated with religious behaviour. I believe that the ethnographic study of the Rainbow Temple, and the spiritual activities of its inhabitants such as the drumming circle, and full moon raves, can provide insight into Rainbow Family culture and ideology, and into the localisation of New Age religious movements into Australia.

² I will explain the significance of the Star of David in chapter two, section 2.4

In this M.A. thesis, I will argue that the Rainbow Temple functions as a centre where the Rainbow Tribe can perform their exclusive cultural and religious behaviours. Participants express their behaviour through the performance of rituals and ceremonies at the Rainbow Temple. I will argue that these complex behaviours are a symbolic manifestation of Rainbow ideology, and that these constitute a particular identity. I will describe the deep meanings which participants attach to their behaviours of Rainbow identity, and argue that these can be seen as a larger context. I believe this study will not only provide insight into Rainbow culture, but also contribute to the growing corpus of studies on New Age spirituality in Australia.

1.3 Literature, structure of thesis

While there is some information about the international Rainbow people and their gatherings, there is very little information about the cultural and religious behaviours taking place at the Rainbow Temple in Australia. My research will attempt to fill some of the gaps in the academic literature about the Rainbow People in general, and specifically, about the Rainbow Temple in Byron Shire, Australia. I will start with a brief review of the Rainbow Region, and a description of the history of the Rainbow Temple, followed by the circumstances that led to its creation, and a description of the community of people affiliated with the Rainbow Temple. In section 2.6 I will explore some of the rituals taking place in the Rainbow Temple, followed by a description of the relationship between the Rainbow Temple and the Rainbow Family.

In chapter three, I will explore the literature. I investigate a range of studies from different fields to achieve a better understanding of the cultural behaviours taking place in the Rainbow Temple. I will start with a brief review of approaches to ethnography, followed by a review on concepts of revitalization and utopianism. Next I will look at various approaches and theories to study concepts of identity and community. I will also look at studies on new religions, including the concept of New Age spirituality. I believe that this thesis will contribute to the knowledge of previously unattended literature on these cultural events and add to the mounting studies in this field.

In chapter four, I will bring the voices of the subjects of this study. I believe that the self-identification and self-recognition by the participants themselves are essential and

central for understanding aspects of their cultural and religious behaviour. In chapter five, I will critically examine the cultural occurrences in the Rainbow Temple. In this critical analysis, I will look at ethnographic data collected from the field, together with existing theoretical models (and similar cases) taken from relevant academic sources, and with my own reflection. This strategy will allow determining an understanding of Rainbow identity. I will conclude this study in chapter six, and suggest ideas for further research in the theme.

Chapter two: Historical Review

“It is a new world rising from the shambles of the old (if we can just join hands)”

This historical review of the Rainbow Temple consists of several sections and provides background and context. First I will provide an overview of the Rainbow Region, its geographical and demographical context, including a brief description of the settlements and the migration of settlers, and the ideas brought along with them. Next, I describe the circumstances that led to the creation of the Rainbow Temple and the personal experience of the founder, Guy Feldman. Explanations and descriptions given by participants in this culture consist of ideas of “synchronization”, a term I address in section 2.4. It seems that the cultural persistency of the Rainbow Temple depends much on the charisma of its leader, and the potency of the community. In section 2.5, I describe who the Rainbow Temple community are, and why they are there. The following sections describe aspects of the ritual life in the Rainbow Temple (section 2.6), and the relationship or correlation between the two cultural entities: the Rainbow Temple and the international Rainbow Tribe (section 2.7).

2.1 The Rainbow Region: An outlook

The Rainbow Temple is located in the heart of the Rainbow Region.³ The geographical boundaries of the Rainbow Region are “an area stretching from inland Lismore and Nimbin to the coast of Byron Bay and Ballina” (Offord 2002, p.2). The term “Rainbow Region” may have been coined by Captain Henry Rous who sailed with his ship *The Rainbow* up the Richmond River. The Rainbow Region is a location that encapsulates diverse cultural and ecological habitats. There are many ancient, sacred places associated with the Aboriginal people. More recently, the Rainbow Region has become an important site for immigrant settlers who wish to pursue a rural life-style and people affiliated with alternative and hippie-culture. These people are very aware of the ancient symbolic significance of the Region associated predominantly with Aboriginal culture.

The Aboriginal people call the Rainbow Region “Bundjalung country”, and they identify as “Bundjalung people” (Ginibi 1994; Wilson 2003). This Region is a sacred

³ See Fig. 1 and 2 – Map of the Rainbow Region, and of Australia.

place for the tribe to come to perform rituals, initiations and other ceremonies. Once these performances have been concluded the Bundjalung peoples will return to their dwellings beyond the mountains in the flat land. The Bundjalung culture is a source of inspiration for dwellers in the Rainbow Temple and the Rainbow People, and they say that they acknowledge the belonging, rites and rights of the Bundjalung people over the land. Symbols associated with Aboriginal peoples such as the Rainbow Serpent, and decorative motifs in an Aboriginal style can be found in the Temple (such as Aboriginal flags and paintings). Also, the Temple dwellers often use aspects of Aboriginal spirituality such as the mythology of Dreaming as a source of stimulation and encouragement, and they also show respect to the sacred spirits and sacred sites of the Bundjalung tribe.

2.2 The new settlers

During the mid 20th century there was a movement of people to the Rainbow Region, introducing new ideas of lifestyle. According to Wilson (2003), the alternative settlers who immigrated to the Region during the mid 20th century embraced the term “Rainbow Region”:

The alternative settlers who followed the Aquarius Festival in Nimbin, as well as earlier counter-culture immigrants around Mullumbimby, adopted the name because of the area's high rainfall and in keeping with the symbolic role of the rainbow in hippie-culture... more recently the term acquired connotations of diversity and multiculturalism

(Wilson 2003, p.2).

These alternative settlers, also referred as “new settlers” by Taylor (1981, p.2), were part of a movement of people away from urban and towards rural living. This movement was given the name “back to the land” existence and communal living (Taylor 1981, p.2 and p.32). This movement was a sign of discontent with unemployment in the cities and with capitalist, urban lifestyle, thus was a popular trend among young Australians in the 1960s and 1970s. This trend was part of the counter-culture movement in Australia which had parallels in Britain and U.S.A,

especially in the resurgence of communitarian ideology, utopian vision and other alternative settlements.

The Rainbow Region was a fertile environment for such alternative settlers to inhabit (Taylor 1981; Kijas 2003). “Alternative lifestyle” as Wilson (2003, pp.2-4) defined it meant rural living “in extended-family structures”, self-sufficient economy, ecological responsibility and awareness, a non-violent attitude and rejection of “the culture of capitalism”. Wilson describes this idea as follows:

Many Rainbow Region settlers so identified themselves through vegetarianism, eastern religious practices such as meditation, music and other creative expression, 'voluntary simplicity', or the rejection of unnecessary technology, environmental values, anarchism as a mode of organization, and their involvement in political campaigns such as saving the rain forest and decriminalising marijuana

(Wilson 2003, p.4)

Alternative ideologies, spiritualities and various religious practices in the Rainbow Region entwined with intentional communal settlements to provide a prolific environment for the Rainbow Temple to develop in. An example of these alternative settlements with new ideology in the Rainbow Region can be found at Dharmananda community or Bodhi farm, neighbouring communities which provide a reflection on the environment inhabited by the Temple.⁴

Rigby's definition (1974, pp.3-6) of such communities is useful for understanding the background of communal experience in the Rainbow Region. Communal living is cited as a frequent manifestation of counter-culture trends, where the tentative nature of these communes was based on a shared religious belief system of spirituality or

⁴ These settlements, according to Hamilton (an archivist whom I met during my field work – see section 2.5), are known as Multiple Occupancy (MO'S) residential lifestyles associated with Buddhism, social bond between members, and their structure is similar to an extended family of three generations.

mythology. It was also based on a shared political and economic ideology (Taylore 1981).⁵

In the 1960s and 1970s the Rainbow Region was a territory invigorated by new alternative settlements. Facilitating new settlers and advocating new ideas of spirituality, this environment provided the context, and most advantageous ground for the Rainbow Temple to grow.

2.3 Origins of the Rainbow Temple

“All of life comes from the balance of the opposites”

It was Easter Sunday and the first evening of Passover 1981; the full moon was on the rise when the first wooden poles of the Rainbow Temple were erected in the terrain of the rainforest mountains of the Rainbow Region, north-east coast of Australia. The establishment of the Rainbow Temple in 1981 was the beginning of a cultural journey which encapsulated various philosophies, religions, and accommodated a diverse and colourful community of people.

The Rainbow Temple is a four-storied wooden structure shaped as the Star of David built by Mr. Guy Feldman (age 62 at time of fieldwork in 2008) and friends.⁶ The land around the Temple, a private property owned by Mr. Feldman and shareholders,⁷ is a combination of native rainforest fauna and flora with wooden structures made for kitchen and lounge, compost toilets, wooden stage and recreational area. The ground floor of the Temple is commonly used for alternative recreational and religious activities such as the creation of art, yoga or meditation for groups or individuals. The second and the third floors are commonly used as a dormitory for overnight visitors and permanent dwellers. Upon climbing the stairs between the second and the third floors one comes across a little shrine containing symbols and imageries borrowed from various religions or philosophical perspectives such as the Jewish Star of David, the Aboriginal Rainbow Serpent, and photos of the Tibetan Buddhist Dalai Lama and Native American statues.

⁵ See also Metcalf (1995), Metcalf and Vanclay (1987) for similar ideas on Intentional Communities.

⁶ See Fig. 3 – The Rainbow Temple

⁷ According to informants, in the mid 1980's there were a few share holders (around 5), mostly neighbours, who purchased a total of seven shares from Guy.

This pattern of representations of symbolic religious imageries is repeated around the place: in the kitchen and lounge area, sitting area, other quarters and even the toilets. The fourth floor is known as the “lovers suite” and as well as being adorned with a variety of religious symbols has a magnificent view of the surrounding native bush. The large kitchen and lounge area provide the Temple dwellers with basic facilities such as running water, wood stove, gas, and apart from making food it is commonly used as a recreational area and a meeting place. The Temple is not reliant on the local Councils for electricity, water or sewage. Hot water and some electricity are provided through solar energy, and the occasional use of generator. My personal reflection while staying at the Temple was that the place offers comfortable facilities.

The origins of the Rainbow Temple are embedded in closely with Guy’s personal experiences. Guy’s personal trajectory crosses oceans: communal experience in the Israeli Kibbutz in late 1960s, dancing with the Aboriginal people in Arnheim land in Australia’s Northern Territory where he experienced their culture, through the ashram of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh in Puna, India where Sannyasins (devotees) explored new ideas on the meaning of life, and he also experienced “magical revelations” in Big Sur, California. All of these experiences have influenced the nature of the Rainbow Temple, affected the spirit of its inhabitants and constituted its uniqueness, a beginning of an enigmatic journey of enchantment as Guy describes it:

[On the creation of the Temple] *That full moon that I chose just because it happened to be the next one [and] also happened to be that it was the most auspicious day this century to start such a project because it was full moon in Libra and Libra represent the balance, and all of life comes from the balance of the opposites, the integration of hot and cold, man and women and yin and yang right across the board – the balance... I took the next full moon to raise the modern day Temple of David, David!*

(Guy, Field notes, April 2008)

2.4 Synchronicity

Guy, the Temple dwellers and Rainbow people give every mythological, spiritual or tangible production relating to the Temple a description with symbolic significance. Almost nothing in the creation of the Rainbow Temple is understood as coincidence; rather it is understood as synchronization, and I believe this is a fundamental idiom for Rainbow people. “Synchrony”, according to Guy and the Rainbow people, means a way to explain an occurrence that was meant or due to occur as part of the cosmic evolution or trajectory. For them, synchrony is an act or event that is an integral part of the chain of events which occur concurrently with a person’s wishes or abilities. Events “happen” in perfect accord and harmony with one’s needs; and are synchronized simultaneously with a person’s aspirations, wish or wills at a certain time and place. For example, the time of creating the Temple was not intentionally chosen by Guy and his helpers, rather “it happened to be” synchronized with significant events for them such as the full moon and Easter Sunday the “resurrection of love”.

The creation, productions, materials, inhabitants and mythology surrounding the Temple are all provided with carefully reasoned explanations. The description above, with its references to Easter, Passover, and Exodus, demonstrates how concepts from different religions are appropriated to explain the significance behind the creation of the Temple and is an example of how spiritual or astrological explanations are constantly manipulated by the Rainbow people in their attempt to attribute cosmic importance or sacredness to their experiences and environment. The Star of David that the Temple structure resembles is assimilated with deeply-felt beliefs in symbolic virtues such as harmony, love, unification and balance. The Taoist yin and yang symbol, and the astrological sign of Libra represent the ultimate unification of all; these symbols reappear around the place and are often mentioned in the Temple dwellers’ discourse.

I have noticed during my fieldwork at the Rainbow Temple that these sorts of symbolic interpretations are frequently expressed by individuals in the Temple’s community. I believe that this is an attempt to embody the Rainbow Temple with a prospect reality, and with its concept, especially during interactions with people outside the immediate community. During those interactions, and by explaining their

views to others, the symbolic manifestations become clearer and sharp for Temple dwellers and the Rainbow people. Such is the case with the symbolic meanings that construct the Temple's sacredness. The fact that the Temple was founded on "Easter Sunday, the resurrection of love" and also on "the first evening of Passover" which, according to Guy, recalls the exodus of the Israelites from ancient Egypt, symbolizes redemption, uniqueness and sacredness for them. For the community of people in the Rainbow Temple these re-appropriations of Christian and Jewish symbols help validate the sacredness in the creation of the Rainbow Temple, and to place the Temple in context with other consecrated mythologies.

2.5 Rainbow Temple community

The Rainbow Temple community plays a significant role in this cultural arena. The Rainbow Temple's community is a composition of Temple dwellers and local Rainbow people orientated to the Temple's sacredness and affiliated with its ideology. This ideology initially attracted like-minded people from the Rainbow Region. Over time, the Rainbow Temple grew in popularity and built a reputation among the Rainbow Tribe around the world. Being a director in this social performance, Guy describes the Temple's concept toward its human inhabitants:

the concept of the Temple is to bring people from all walks of life together to share light-heartedly in music in theatre in just normal day to day interaction without the aggression and without the disrespect that some might give each other in some other environments... the Temple meant to be a place where all who are in it are respected

(Guy, Field notes, April 2008)

People who live temporarily or permanently in the Rainbow Temple are Temple dwellers. These people can be characterized as "seekers", persons who are questioning their location; politically, socially and spiritually.

Most seekers are in a phase of being "inbetween" jobs, careers, decisions, and social circles, affiliation with institutions, belongings or spiritual understanding. The majority of the Temple dwellers I met during my fieldwork at the Temple identify and

situate themselves as seekers. While some of the seekers situate themselves in this phase reluctantly, most of them told me they do so with intent. It seems that these dwellers were always awaiting for something to occur or looking for a happening or perhaps an answer or revelation; dwellers were seeking something. The Temple's attitude towards these dwellers is very lenient, accepting even the most conspicuous negligence. The length of stay for dwellers who reside in the Temple is not fixed, and while some people stay for days or weeks, others spend months and even years. In this thesis, I distinguish between what I call temporary dwellers (up to one year seasonal cycle) and permanent dwellers (more than one year). Temporary dwellers are mostly young multi-nationals (backpackers or travellers) with a higher intensity of seeking and a low level of familiarity and experience with Rainbow culture. Initially, they do not necessarily intend to stay in the Temple, rather they "came across the Temple", or "heard of it" and decide to "check it out". Permanent dwellers are mostly middle-aged, mostly with Australian nationality, who have a low intensity of seeking and a high level of familiarity and experience with Rainbow culture. These people deliberately locate themselves with the Temple's environment.⁸ For some Temple dwellers the Rainbow Temple may also function as a backpackers or a hostel.

Not necessarily all Temple dwellers affiliate with Rainbow culture or see themselves as part of the Rainbow Tribe, but they are introduced to the essence of Rainbow culture through symbolic messages distributed around the place, by interacting with Rainbow elders, and with the spiritual environment and imagery.⁹ So to some extent, Temple dwellers appropriate Rainbow behaviour during their stay in the Temple. This behaviour resembles the analysis of seekers made by Wuthnow (1998), and I will use this analysis in chapter four to understand the concept of seekers in the context of the Rainbow Temple.

Rainbow people are those who identify as such, attend Rainbow gatherings, and participate in rituals, ceremonies and other activities, who share collective identity and affiliate with the Rainbow Temple concept. Rainbow people deliberately accommodate themselves in the Temple for various occasions (but do not necessarily

⁸ See table No. one.

⁹ See Fig.4 and 5.

reside permanently there). These people largely identify themselves with hippie-culture and with the alternative culture in the Rainbow Region, and consider themselves as an integral part of the Rainbow Family, practicing Rainbow culture. However, I acknowledge Hamilton's (April 2008) generic distinction between Rainbow people and the large Rainbow community: the latter is conceptualized as "all residents of the Rainbow Region regarded as Rainbow community".¹⁰ It is the Temple's community, together with Guy, that builds and maintains the place: cleaning, caring, doing art and music, and bringing their energy and spirit when organizing events and gatherings. The Temple, in return, provides its dwellers with facilities for human needs, a sense of security and warmth of a family. Moreover, the Temple provides a place for the community to practice alternative culture, innovative religious activities, seek, question and contemplate political, social and spiritual ideas. The Temple community reciprocates to the Temple's ideology by initiating and participating in rituals: full moon raves, music circles or Yoga classes, demonstrating diversity of religious behaviours through art, music or shared activities and ideas, while concurrently reflecting, experiencing and digesting the Temple's concept.

For example, a woman in her early forties, a musician, who dwelled in the Rainbow Temple for a few years in the past, but has been familiar with its nature for more than 20 years, reflects on her own experience:

to me the Temple like, like it's truly a Temple...magic happens there, things happen there that can't happen anywhere else, and it's not a Temple holding any particular spirituality or holding to any particular religion so its probably one of the most unique Temples you can find on the planet to this day because every other Temple is to a particular religion or to a particular guru, and the Rainbow Temple is a place where anyone can arrive and hopefully anyone can feel at home and

¹⁰ Peter Hamilton (died 23 October 2008) is a long-time archivist of intentional communities and Multiple Occupancy in the Rainbow Region, and a founding member of the Bodhi Farm community. He was a key player in the creation of planning legislation allowing Multiple Occupancy in NSW. I met him in April 2008.

anyone can stay for as long he or she wants to... so he [Guy] provided a place for that

(Janice, Field notes, April 2008)

This description of the nature of the Rainbow Temple epitomizes the experience of many people who were nurtured in the Temple and describe similar sensations such as “magic happens there” or “feel at home”. Accordingly, Temple dwellers feel secure and confident, and are able to take a more prominent role cultivating the Rainbow Temple’s day to day occurrences. The Temple’s community takes a leading part in this two-way process of cultural endorsement: absorbing, accepting and affirming the Temple’s ideology on one hand, motivating, instigating and operating its cultural environment on the other. When I interviewed Janice, she described in her own words the impressions the Temple had on people and the important role that the Temple’s community play:

the Temple is always a reflection of who's there, who is living there and who is holding the space, it is like a ship and the crew creates the atmosphere and what goes on there, sometime it's been like inviting lots of people very often and putting on shows and events and other times its more like a regular home and people just living, and sometimes there is a crew that put all it's energy into to the gardens and they are flourishing, and other times people doing heaps of art work, but I saw thousands, literally thousands of people come through there and most people had what you call epiphany, most people would write a postcard back a year later or three month later 'thank you Guy it was the most incredible time of life, I found something, I discover something' in themselves, which is really what its all about

(Janice, Field notes, April 2008)

The Rainbow Temple’s cultural endurance seems to be linked to the ties that exist between the Temple’s community, Guy, and the significant “others” (neighbours or Shire Council for example). The quality of these ties is a valuable indicator for the Rainbow Temple’s ability to persist. There were times in the past that the Temple was

empty of dwellers, and had to struggle for continuity and the spiritual and practical existence of the Temple seemed to be in doubt. During this time, the Temple, perceived by participants as a live human entity, was described as “sad and deserted”, and did not operate with full cultural capacity. Using Janice’s analogy, the “ship did not have enough engines”. This informant suggests that the cultural environment of the Temple tends to shift as one “crew” disperses, or another “crew” is formed, allowing the crew to create the atmosphere. In other words, the Rainbow Temple’s community, is a significant player, and is critical for the Rainbow Temple to thrive, maintain and represent its ideology.

2.6 Ritual life at the Temple

There are many activities and distinct behaviours at the Rainbow Temple. Some of these activities can be described as rituals, in the sense that Wuthnow (1987) uses this term.¹¹ In this sense, rituals at the Temple reflect both on the identity of the practitioners and on the nature of the arena where the rituals are performed. These activities or rituals are performed both individually and collectively, and to some degree, they reflect symbolic meanings. Some activities or rituals are personal practices, such as meditation or yoga, because they belong to an individual realm. However, when individuals perform private rituals together or alongside other individuals, they describe sharing some intimate qualities or feelings. Informants often described to me on separate occasions similar sensations and feelings which relate to a collective realm in which they engaged. I believe that these rituals at the Rainbow Temple are some kind of a dialectical experience between the individual sphere and communal sphere, such an experience also reflects on the ontology of the Rainbow Temple.

Rituals at the Temple proliferate a sense of communion and identity. Informants and participants describe collective senses of bond, family and “special connection” during some of the rituals in the Temple, especially during performances of collective activity. When Rainbow people, dwellers and other affiliated people join together in a celebrative social assembly in the Rainbow Temple, they apply a collective set of meanings to the rituals, and they describe the ambience of the ritual as a communal or

¹¹ I will address this theme in chapter three.

cooperative. For instance, the drumming or music circles which occur every now and again at the Rainbow Temple are meaningful events.¹² The drumming circles take place mostly on the main wooden stage which is located in front of the Temple; this wooden stage is an open airy place. A variety of instruments are used, but drums of all sorts are the most common, especially African drums. The number of participants varies, and everyone in the assembly are welcome to join the music circle, as long as they follow the course of the event, and do not interfere.

These circles are not a simple congregation, rather a significant social assembly where participants apply personal qualities in order to benefit: individually and collectively. Drumming circles are an arena where participants demonstrate their personal aspirations through singing, chanting, dancing and other “articulations of the self” as they call it. Other behaviours that are common in these circles are smoking marijuana and the use of entheogens, expressions of love and affection through hugs, kisses and touch, story telling and sharing mythological narratives. Participants wear colourful fashion (and some wear minimal clothing), do meditations and yoga, and share organic food and beverages. I have found that the drumming circles are a friendly and accepting environment.

I have also witnessed a case where a certain participant was making unusual sounds of horns, cars and etc. through his mouth. Initially, after the person joined the circle, he was received with suspicion due to the funny and atypical noises he produced. But after a few minutes, he was accepted and treated as one of the crowd. The person was not a regular participant in these circles, but a traveller from England who stayed for a short time at the Temple. Because he was “new” it took a period of time for the other participants in the music circle to adjust to the different kinds of sounds he was making. This case is an example of the friendly accepting environment of the drumming circles.

The music and drumming circles rituals are personal or individual presentations, but the performance is collective. Informants described to me some of the personal attributes they sense and attach to these circles as: ecstatic, thrills, excitement,

¹² See Fig. 6.

hilarious, delirium, adrenaline-fuelled exhilaration, trance and etc. Participants also describe that they share these sensations and views; they describe a similar atmosphere which they view as a collective sphere of communion. Participants describe that during the ritual (the drumming) they “give something” from themselves to “everyone”, to the “family”. Participants told me that they feel lifted or elevated by fellow participants in the drumming circle, they said these feelings were on “spiritual levels” because they felt the “energy” of others, and other descriptions which relates to the uncanny. Another participant told me that drumming circles for him is an unusual sensation.

This cultural occurrence, the assembly of people who describe collective sensations of connectedness and of togetherness, seems to be similar to the ideas of communion or collectiveness explained by Turner (1969). This idea was demonstrated by Foltz (2006) as she discusses how a community is formed through a drumming circle, and Olaveson (2004) described the designation of a community in the Rave scene. Likewise, the sharing of mutual sensations and experiences creates a bond between the participants in the drumming circle in the Rainbow Temple, and helps develop the sentiments of a corporate body.¹³

The content in these rituals at the Rainbow Temple contain manifestations of their ideology, including aspects of individual and collective transformation or renewal. I have noticed that most of the personal aspirations, wishes and hopes of the participants aim for the renewal of societal qualities, moral and values. Informants and participants state that they wish to change the moral priorities in society, and in the whole world. For example, to change war to peace, instead of hatred and anger they suggested love and acceptance; instead of accumulating wealth people should share what they possess. Through their behaviours and manifestations in these circles, participants articulate their thoughts, emotions and hopes that the world outside the drumming circle will be affected and transformed, and that some qualities practiced within the circle will affect the reality outside this circle. In other words, participants

¹³ I will expand on this analysis in chapter three and four.

wish to transmit the reality of the drumming circles in the Rainbow Temple to the rest of the world.

The drumming circle is an event within a larger social arena of the full moon raves. It is likely that full moon raves will have drumming or music circles. This ritual, much like in the drumming circle, is a congregation of people who gather to celebrate various themes that concern Rainbow ideology such as practices of spirituality and alternative lifestyle. Manifestations of their ideology and their beliefs in freedom, love, harmony, acceptance, tolerance etc, are expressed through dancing, singing, chanting and other common behaviours similar to the behaviours I described during the drumming or music circles. According to participants and my own view, the full moon raves are a symbolic product of the alternative lifestyle and ideology.

Other rituals that I wish to acknowledge are everyday activities. Some of the casual, everyday activities at the Rainbow Temple are interesting to look at because they symbolically manifest ideological motifs, and are a significant foundation from which to observe aspects of identity. For example, when dwellers work at the gardens, they describe this activity as a healing process in which they can integrate themselves “with mother nature”. Working in the garden is perceived by participants as a remedy. Informants told me that they see gardening as “spiritual matter” and a form of “meditation”. The gardening also has symbolic economic meanings for participants. Participants often described gardening as ideological manifestation, and used the term “sustainability” and “keeping it organic and healthy”. I believe that it will take more than the organic products from the Temple gardens to feed the Temple dwellers, thus the gardening is more of a symbolic behaviour of ideological motifs. I suggest seeing this ritual as a symbolic “spiritual gardening”, although there are still material aspects to this activity.

Similar to the spiritual gardening, there are other casual activities which manifest symbolic alternative meanings to behaviours. Such activities in the Temple’s environment include building a wooden stage, digging a tunnel, preparing a meal and daily maintenance of the place. Each activity is given a particular explanation by participants, but I find an ideological motif which links these activities into a coherent sequence. Spiritual explanations are a feature which reappears in everyday activity

and so do other motifs of their ideology such as sharing (in the sense of economic contribution and also a shared spiritual experience among participants). These ideological motifs are reminiscent of manifestations commonly used in Rainbow Family gatherings, and ascribe the Temple with meanings of a “gathering”. It is also the recognition of the Temple by the international Rainbow Tribe (outside the Rainbow Region), that links the Temple to the concept of a “Rainbow gathering”. In this thesis, I describe everyday activities as spiritual rituals because practitioners ascribe significance and communicate spiritual meanings to them than their material or instrumental function.

2.7 Relationship between the Rainbow Temple and the international Rainbow Tribe

The Rainbow Family are an international affiliation of individuals who share common goals and interests and collectively identify themselves as a “family” or a “tribe”. People who participate in Rainbow Family activities identify themselves as Rainbow people, attend and participate in periodic gatherings, rituals and ceremonies, and share collective identity symbols.¹⁴ People in Rainbow gatherings manifest freedom, harmony and love through dancing, singing, celebrating, sharing and creation of art. These people also advocate diverse ideology of non-violence, equality, egalitarianism and ecologism (St. John 2006, p.87).¹⁵ The Rainbow Tribe, according to the limited academic studies available, is analysed in the context of revitalization movements and utopianisms (Niman 1997) or as descendants of Indigenous Peoples (McGaa 1992; Ruz Buenfil 1991) and alternative hippie-culture in popular literature. The first Rainbow gathering was in Colorado, North America in 1972 and following Rainbow gatherings took place all over the world and were held by local Rainbow Family groups. The people who participate in Rainbow gatherings draw their inspiration from a diversity of sources such as indigenous peoples (for example Native American and Australian Aboriginal folklore) counter-culture politics and music festivals, New Age spirituality, aspects of philosophies that originated in Asia (Buddhism for instance) and egalitarian communities (such as the Hutterites and the Israeli Kibbutz). The Rainbow Family, constituting Rainbow culture, claim to have no formal organisation

¹⁴ See Fig. 7.

¹⁵ See St. John for discussion on the concept of “ecological identity” (2006, p.193-194).

or hierarchy, and its structure has been described by Niman (1997, p.31 and p.115) as “intentional community” placed in the context of revitalization movements.

The initial intent of building the Rainbow Temple, according to Guy, had nothing to do with the Rainbow Tribe, but the Temple evolved to become recognized as a persistent gathering place for the Rainbow Tribe:

Rainbow gatherings are something else they started in the States in northern U.S.A. and are by-products of the 60's and the 70's and the magnificent musicians. I wasn't aware of any Rainbow gatherings until many years after I begun to build the Temple...[in] 1996 the first world gathering happen in Australia out in a community in Tenterfield called Om-Shalom... I started to build my Temple in 1981 and have the idea to build it in 1979, so I think I go back a little bit further

(Guy, Field notes, April 2008)

The Rainbow Temple's association with the Rainbow Tribe has evolved through the years and took a turn after the world Rainbow gathering that was held in Tenterfield, N.S.W Australia, in 1996. Gatherers were invited to continue their “performance” in the Rainbow Temple. Some reports say thousands of people responded. Over the years, an informal bond was formed between the Rainbow Temple and the Rainbow Family, due to parallels in their collective identity systems (such as the same symbolic behaviours) or maintenance of mechanisms of collective identity (such as the attribution of the same cultural appropriations or application of the same set of cultural meanings), forming a cohesive cultural alliance.¹⁶ Both demonstrate a low level of alignment with dominant cultural or religious patterns and social institutions of their society. However, the Rainbow Tribe plays a dominant (though not conventional) socio-cultural role in the reality of the Rainbow Temple, permeating aligned elements and typical cultural patterns of behaviours associated with Rainbow culture. The Rainbow Temple differs from Rainbow Family gatherings largely because it consistently over the years, despite struggling with politics of authority and

¹⁶ I refer to collective identity systems as discussed and analysed in Spicer (1971) and in Casitle (1981). I will expand on these ideas in chapter three, and in chapter four.

existence, offers a space or a place in which symbols and practices of Rainbow culture exists continuously with high level of intensity and effervescence.

The Rainbow Temple offers insight into the ways Rainbow culture and ideology have been localised into the alternative scene in Australian. For nearly four decades the Temple has served as a repository for the beliefs and behaviours of a colourful community of Rainbow people and Temple dwellers from around the world. Like any cultural entity the Rainbow Temple has evolved and changed over time, but it has maintained its core identity, hence, the Rainbow Temple not only serves as a mappable centre for the Rainbow Tribe, or by extension, for Rainbow culture, but also provides insight to cultural activities taking place in a specific field, place and space.

For me the Rainbow Temple offers a unique insight where pluralistic approach towards different spiritualities and behaviours manifested by its constituents, is implemented. The colourful structure of the Rainbow Temple, its location in the heart of the Rainbow Region together with the surrounding flora and fauna of the Australian rainforest, has persisted through the years to become a distinctive structure that symbolizes the bonding between colourful ideologies with social existence.

In the next chapter, the Literature Review, I will explore and investigate relevant studies from academic fields such as anthropology and sociology, studies on new religions and I will also investigate popular literature. I use these studies as a basis to look into the Rainbow Temple and explain the cultural occurrences that takes place there. Understanding this culture provides a reflection on the ontology of the Rainbow Temple, and on Rainbow culture. This ethnography will shed light on previously unrecorded cultural events and add to the growing studies in this field.

Chapter three: Literature Review

There are no available academic studies on the Rainbow Temple and only a few academic accounts mention the Rainbow Tribe, Rainbow Gatherings or Rainbow Ideology. Neither popular and nor academic sources have made an examination of Rainbow culture, or of the Rainbow Temple, a gap I intend to fill. The absence of a scholarly theoretical framework for studying aspects of Rainbow culture and identity have allowed me to attempt to construct a useful, inclusive working definition of this social group. I have compiled the above definition (chapter two, section 2.7) of the Rainbow Family from the limited descriptions and explanations available, and from my own experience. Thus, I confront the terms “Rainbow Temple” and “Rainbow culture” with relevant studies from the fields of sociology and anthropology, and studies that analyse models of new religions. I have examined several avenues of investigation into this phenomenon called the Rainbow Temple (and by extension, Rainbow culture), in order to cover greater scope of understandings. The structure of the literature review for this MA thesis was also inspired by the work of Schafer (2005). While exploring various theoretical frameworks, I came across illuminating accounts, not all of which can be extensively approached in this Master’s Thesis.

I will start with a short review of theories of ethnography and methods of qualitative research. I will describe and acknowledge some of the complexities which arise during the fieldwork. This will be followed by a review of theories of revitalization, cases of millenarian movements (including “cargo cults”) and utopian ways of thinking. I found these theories significant and valuable for understanding some of the behaviours at the Rainbow Temple. I will then look at instances of situational social assemblies and how these construct senses or ideas of communion among participants. I also find studies on new religious movements relevant because they look at the cultural appropriations of symbols, imagery, spirituality and mythology borrowed from various sources and the way they can reflect on the cultural identity of the people and of the place. Such techniques of appropriation also appear in literature on the New Age movement. I will discuss the syncretic (and emblematic) nature of ideas which are linked with this movement, and the problems scholars encounter while defining this phenomena.

3.1 Ethnography

The following accounts are in addition to studies on methods of ethnography I have mentioned in the Introduction section (Denzin 2007, 2008; Atkinson 1992; Silverman 2006; Blaikie 2000; Brettell 1993; Marcus 1986). Geertz (1973, pp.3-30) writes that a *thick description* of the different behaviours in and out of the group's social action provide the essential context for understanding and interpreting the culture of the group. Without understanding the context for the particular behaviour, the researcher cannot fully comprehend the capacity of meanings within the culture of the group. The methodology of writing a thick description, for example, of the complex behaviours, interactions and ritual within and outside the group, enables the researcher to understand and interpret the culture s/he studies, though never with complete success. Every cultural system is guided by symbolism, or by symbolic action; thus, conceptions, ideologies and belief systems are expressed in a symbolic behaviour which gives meanings to the people of that particular culture and organize their world view (Geertz 1973). The role of the ethnographer or the anthropologist is to interpret and understand the capacity of meanings inherent to the symbolic acts of the culture. Understanding and interpreting the local culture was also evident in the work of anthropologist Mary Douglas (1966) where she proposed to view symbolic behaviour as constructive and as forms of maintenance of the identity of the group, distinguished from other cultural behaviours.

Another approach which stems from the methodology of interpreting symbolic behaviours, discusses the influence of the researcher and hers/his location in the ethnographic text. The capacities of meanings, of the symbolic cultural behaviours, are in a constant dialogue with the subjective observer, and the ethnographic text is a result of this dialogue (Blee and Billings 1986, pp.443-462). In this sense, I also acknowledge the notion articulated by Kelly's work (2004, p.3) in which the process of fieldwork has a prominent role in understanding the "field". Within the particular local culture, the researcher should take in consideration the existence of wider powerful forces which influence the capacity of meanings of the culture; this is considered to be a post-colonial way to look at and understand interpretive ethnographic data collected from the "field" as the final written text. The valuable product and the emergence of illuminating moments stem from awkward and

sometimes challenging situations while in the “field”. However, these are still subjective interpretations.

This approach, which looks at the ethnographic data as a combination of interpretations of both the observer and the local knowledge, is referred to as a hermeneutical approach to ethnographic data (Blee and Billings 1986). A more flexible approach to looking at ethnographic data discusses ideas of discursive flows over time and space, of meta-narratives and locality of the culture, which organize the ethnographic view (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003).

Ethnographic research and fieldwork, particularly participant observation, is a productive technique, but also a source for discomfort and awkwardness. The concept of participant observation is a methodology which requires the researcher to use hers/his personal social skills during interactions and communications with the subjects of the study. Successful field work is perceived to be enhanced by and an indicator of a good “rapport” between the researcher and the participants (Sluka 2007, pp.121-122; Hume & Mulcock 2004, p.xviii). In order to comprehend and understand the culture that the researcher study, one needs to engage and construct intimate personal relationship with the participants so they can feel “safe” and “comfortable” and the researcher can have the “insider’s point of view” (Hume & Mulcock 2004, p.xi). Building trust, commitment, and confidence between the researcher and the participants is not an easy task and has its complexities, especially when the “field” can be a contrasting realm from where the researcher comes, but it is an essential product of a valuable fieldwork. In contrast to developing good rapport, the practice of ethnography also “assumes the importance of maintaining enough intellectual distance to ensure that researchers are able to undertake a critical analysis of the events in which they are participating” (Hume & Mulcock 2004, p.xi). The ethnographer is both an insider to the culture and an outsider, and as such she/he confronts uncomfortable and contradictory situations.

Ethnographic research and participant observation also entails complex and uncomfortable situations. On the one hand, the researcher constructs a valuable intimate rapport with participants of the study, while on the other hand she/he should maintain an intellectual distance. This is an awkward position for the researcher. By

keeping distance or a step back, from relationships and interactions with participants in the field, the ethnographer can identify and reflect on the nature of the culture he is “part” of (Hume & Mulcock 2004, p.xii). This awkwardness, for the ethnographer persona, is also apparent in an internal conflict in which the researcher desire to act upon personal values and the professional behaviour are in constant negotiations. However, this awkwardness can be productive, and as Hume and Mulcock (2004, pp.xvii-xviii) argue, “these internal conflicts can lead to powerful and unexpected insights”. Within this framework, liable and responsible ethnography emerges.

I also wish to draw attention to the complexities of conducting ethnography in “fields” which predominately associate with the notion of “New Age”. In terms of ethnographic research, the discourse on the “New Age” is broad and this “field” is contested, even to a degree of what Hume and Mulcock (2004, p.xxvi) refers to as “discourses of disdain”. I found similar narratives addressed by colleagues and academics to ‘my’ “New Age” field. During ‘my’ “New Age” fieldwork, this discourse was enhanced by confronting alternative “realities” or paradigms to which I was sometimes disorientated, but later in the research it was proved to be a productive experience for the critical analysis.

3.2 Revitalization, millenarian movements and ideas of utopianism

I found studies on ideas of revitalization and studies on aspects of community useful to understand cultural occurrences in the Rainbow Temple. Niman's (1997) ethnographic account on the Rainbow Family in North America, *People of the Rainbow; A Nomadic Utopia*, is perhaps the only expanded academic report published in the theme. In his book, Niman (1997, p.31 and p.115) places the Rainbow Family gatherings in North America in context with revitalization movements, utopianism and intentional communities. The Rainbow Family gatherings in North America are committed to principles of non-violence and non-hierarchical egalitarianism, and they gather “to pray for world peace and to demonstrate the viability of a cooperative utopian community living in harmony with the earth” (Niman 1991, p.vii). Similar commitments and ideas were mentioned to me by informants on the nature of the Rainbow Temple and of the ideology it represents for them.

Ideas of utopianism were linked with the Rainbow Family gatherings in North America (Niman 1997, p.202), and I believe that these ideas are relevant to the study of the Rainbow Temple culture situated in Australia. Utopianism is about a movement or a process (rather than Utopia as a “better state” which is conceptualized as static), where manifestations and cultivation of alternative ideological possibilities are developed (Fournier 2002, p.192). In this process, critical thinking (both implicit and explicit) of the prevailing social arrangements is negotiated, while imaginatively transcending the dominant reality in the surrounding environment, despite current material limitations (Reedy 2002, p.170). Niman (1997, p.202) describes the Rainbow Family as “growing and evolving contemporary movement... an idealistic utopian movement with a vision of a world driven by love and cooperation, free of violence and competition”. Niman (1997, pp.205-207) also makes a comparison between other American communal utopian experiences (for example the Farm, the Amana community¹⁷ and Twin Oaks) and the phenomenon of the Rainbow Family in North America. Niman (1997, pp.209-211) points out that the Farm¹⁸ is an example of a source of inspiration for people at the Rainbow gatherings; and the evolution of utopian thinking into the gatherings. Another example for utopian inspiration among participants in the Rainbow Family gatherings is the community of Twin Oaks.¹⁹

However, the participants in Rainbow gatherings also experiencing conflicts and contradiction, and according to Niman (1997, p.114) it is the way in which the Rainbow Family “deals with these contradictions, that provides insight into the difficulties of maintaining a non-hierarchical, non-violent, non-sectarian spiritual and political community”. During my fieldwork at the Rainbow Temple I have witnessed, more than once, situations where conflicts between participants were negotiated and measures taken to settle the conflicts and lower the level of tension between participants.

It seems to me that Niman (1997) tries to locate the Rainbow Family in North America in a larger context of the North American utopian communities, because

¹⁷ See also Brumann (2000).

¹⁸ The Farm is an intentional community in Tennessee, U.S.A. The community is based on principles of non-violence, environmentalism and communitarianism.

¹⁹ See also Kanter (1972, p.23).

participants in gatherings come from these utopian communities and bring along their utopian way of thinking. The difference between the Rainbow Family and utopian communities is that the Rainbow gatherings are situational and practiced in a limited time frame, and new members are not being filtered (or initiated) as strictly as the permanent utopian communities. Niman writes on the nature of revitalization and utopianism at Rainbow gatherings in North America that:

The self-described purpose of its [the Rainbow Tribe] gatherings are both to further the cause of world peace by prayer and to create a peaceful and cohesive non-hierarchical society that can serve as a model for re-forming "Babylon", the industrialised world.

(Niman 1997, pp.31-32)

During my fieldwork at the Rainbow Temple I found similar narratives described by informants, and similar manifestations of ideology. Participants in the Rainbow Temple engage in constant discourse about theoretical and tangible ideological transformation, and about aspirations for the transformation of society.

Theories discussing ideas of revitalization in both traditional and contemporary cultural groups seem to be an interesting and relevant avenue of investigation. Revitalization movements are defined by Wallace (1956, p.265) as a "deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture". Wallace constructed his theory from studies of indigenous peoples (preliterate and homogeneous), with particular attention to the Iroquois revitalization movement.²⁰ In his theoretical model, Wallace (1956) writes that attempts are made by the group to create a better satisfying culture because of dissatisfaction, desperation and disappointment from the prevalent cultural system, a system that constructs "stresses". Changes in the individual sphere, followed by a process of collective cultural change, aim to reduce those levels of stresses (Wallace 1956, p.267). These changes involve images of the self, society and culture, and when this

²⁰ The Iroquois is a collective name for five Native American Nations.

effort to change and reduce levels of stress becomes a “collaboration of a number of persons, such an effort is called a revitalization movement” (ibid. p.267).

I believe that revitalization is useful framework to understand processes which lay under the surface in the Rainbow Temple. Wallace’s (1956, pp.268-275) model is a generic structure of the revitalization process which consists of four intrinsic stages or periods. The first stage is the *Steady State* where there is a status quo, meaning a balanced stress in the “organism analogy” (as Wallace describes it on p.265) persists with harmonious stability between participants in the movement and the dominant society. The second stage is *The Period of Increased Individual Stress*, in which the individual has reached to a point where he does not consent, and is dissatisfied with the prevalent system, and an alternative way must be considered. The third stage is *The Period of Cultural Distortion*, in which regressive responses (e.g alcoholism, passiveness or ambivalence) exhibit increasing incidents that allow for innovative patterns to display, or for a new culture to inhabit. The final stage is *The Period of Revitalization* where new cultural behaviours are implemented in praxis. There are also “six major tasks”, as Wallace (1956, pp.270-275) stated, for revitalization to occur among religious movements (in which he believes that most of the revitalization movements are). These are: Mazeway Reformulation, Communication, Organization, Adaption, Cultural Transformation and Routinization.

It is important to note that the revitalization model is a rather broad model, and the fluctuation of a culture is more complex. The transition phases, between the stages of the cultural behaviour, are multifaceted than described in Wallac’s model, and participants do not precisely and easily changes forms of their behaviour. The shifts between stages of a culture and the behavioural evolution of participants are complex because they require developing personal qualities such as devotions, intentions, willingness, and a total submission, and these require both time and space. Culture is a dynamic and flexible entity that evolves inconsistently between stages of transformation. However, in this thesis, I acknowledge this theoretical model as a framework, and use its generic structure to look at some of the religious behaviours and the cultural processes in the Rainbow Temple.

The term “revitalization movement” is a collective description, according to Wallace (1956, pp.264-281), because this model applies to orientated cases commonly labelled as “Nativistic Movements”, “Cargo Cults”, “Utopian Community”, “Charismatic Movements” and others. Kehoe (1989) studied the *Ghost Dance* religious movement²¹ and understands this movement within the framework of Wallace’s model of religious revitalization. Kehoe (1989) applies all four periods suggested by Wallace’s (1956) theoretical model to the case of the *Ghost Dance* performed by Native Americans. In addition, Wallace’s model of revitalization movements, according to Harkin (2004, p.xvi) is a useful way to view political religious movements (he calls it a meta-discourse) and this also includes discourses of cult participants. I believe that this theoretical model is a useful frame work to understand strategies and techniques of ideas on cultural transformation or religious behaviours found in different cults or groups, in particular, at the Rainbow Temple.

I found studies on millenarian movements (including “cargo cults”) relevant avenues of investigation for this study because they attempt to achieve their goals, instrumentally and spiritually, through magic and religious rituals and practices. Trompf (1990 p.13) writes that millenarian groups and “cargo cults” have some shared features (see also Lindstrom 1993, p.185). Trompf writes that millenarian beliefs:

cover the collective espousal of belief in some dramatic, unsurpassable set of events in the worlds future, while the phrase millenarian movements has more specific application to groups of people very much on ‘tips of their toes’ in expectation of such an occurrence

(Trompf 1990, p.1)

Trompf is also suggesting Talmon’s²² definition of millenarian movements; “they are those religious movements which expect imminent, total, ultimate this worldly

²¹ The *Ghost Dance* is a religious movement incorporated into numerous Native American belief systems. The traditional ritual used in the *Ghost Dance*, the circle dance, has been used by many Native Americans since prehistoric times (Kehoe 1989).

²² See Talmon (1962 and 1966) for further discussion.

collective salvation". Trompf (1990, p.39) analyses groups which are linked with ideas of millenarianism as "types of collective expectation when the imminent coming of an utterly transformed cosmic order is linked with the arrival of a radically different range of material goods", and on the nature of the cargo he says: "the concept of cargo implies a totality of material, organizational and spiritual value welfare, collectively desired as a replacement for current inadequacy, and project into the imminent future as a coming "salvation,,".²³

The term "cargo cult" is highly contested in anthropological discourse. While in contemporary anthropology, this discourse focuses on the explanations regarding culturally specific orientation and value systems, in the discipline of religious studies, the term "cargo cult" is used in the context of obtaining salvation (Jebens 2004, p.3). Jebens (2004, p.5) notes that the use of the term "cargo cult", often reflects the researcher's culture as well as the culture being researched, and ideas about cargo, its categorization and classification are linked with colonial contexts and "western" way of thinking. While I want to acknowledge the limitations of the term "cargo cult," I believe that an enhanced understanding of the phenomenon of "cargo ideology" (Leavitt 2004, pp. 185-186) emerges from the personal narratives told by the individual actors during my fieldwork in the Rainbow Temple.

Ideas of transformations in the cosmic order are often heard in the Rainbow Temple environment and are relevant avenues of investigation, especially in light of the spiritual means used for the process of transformation (and the connection of spiritual meanings to the cargo). I believe that the culture in the Rainbow Temple attempt to provide a replacement for current inadequacies in the surrounding environment by the redistribution of material wealth (the cargo) which is borrowed from other sources. In this particular sense, the cargo is connected with religious symbols; imageries, statues, flags, photos, paintings, and other tangible decorations which reappear in the Rainbow Temple and commonly attached with spiritual meanings. I also use this term to describe theoretical possessions or virtues which are linked with the arrival of such cargo in the Rainbow Temple (i.e. synchronicity).

²³ See also Strelan (1977).

The arrival of such goods (the cargo) is understood as a somewhat spiritual or supernatural trajectory which has found itself “synchronized” with the group. Aspirations among such groups are of a new social order which can be articulated by instrumental means (the arrival of the goods for example) and by spiritual, supernatural ways in the ritualistic process. Rituals are essential for understanding the culture of the Rainbow Temple.

Ritual is a set of symbolic acts, especially if the acts communicate meanings rather than functioning for a practical or instrumental purpose (Wuthnow 1987; De Coppet 1991). Wuthnow (1987, p.14) uses the term *dramaturgic* to describe and emphasize the capacity of rituals, ideologies, and other symbolic acts that dramatize the nature of social relations. While Durkheim (1915) uses this term to look at aspects of dramatization of the self, Wuthnow (1987, p.351) uses *dramaturgic* characters to look at the culture in general.

Like Durkheim, Goffman (1967, 1973) uses *dramaturgic* explanations to analyse aspects of the individual. However, rituals seem to serve a wider social arena than the rite itself, because they provide a reflection of the whole nature of the culture (and its constituents) that practices a certain ritual. Wuthnow (1987, p.15) suggests that ritual “serves as a prototype of other symbol systems, such as ideology, that also dramatize features of moral order”. Ideology is conceptualized as a set of symbols that communicate something about moral obligations, and uncertainties in the moral order within the culture may lead to a growth of ideological movements. Ritual is the moral basis or expression of ideology, and provides a sort of incubation for practitioners to communicate, develop sentiments and to attach deep meanings, individually and collectively. The significance of the ritual lays in the communication of meanings attached to such practice. Marriage, for example, is a ritual which invokes deep emotions, expresses beliefs about the nature and value of marriage, communicates to the others (the rest of society) about the new social relations, and gains social consent (Wuthnow 1987). Ritual functions as a reflection on the wider social arena and of the particular culture, where negotiations and creation or re-formation of identity are facilitated.

Crain and Huges-Freeland (1988, pp.1-3) discuss ritualism and the way it is represented in the anthropological discourse and the multivalent function of rituals. An interactive identity exists through the ritualistic process that is modified and renewed progressively, mostly with regard to the dialectical relationship between the individual and the collective. These ritualistic processes, and the reciprocated experience of the individual and the collective, form the social performance (Crain and Huges-Freeland 1988, pp.7-9).

Ideas of a revitalization process caused or instigated by magic, spiritual or “otherworldly” rituals and practices are intriguing because they reflect on the whole nature of a society. Magic rituals and magic thinking are common among Native Americans and Indigenous Peoples in general: forms of nonscientific explanations and causal reasoning often include such ideas as the ability of the mind to affect the physical world, and change reality (Lepowski 2004). Ideas of magic rituals and magical ways of thinking about the world conjoin with psychological analysis (a field beyond the scope of this MA thesis). Evans-Pritchard (1937) describes (among other cases) an instance among the Azande of a collapsing roof in which the people give magical and supernatural explanations to these occurrences. The collapsing roof on people’s heads can be explained in scientific ways (bad materials used for building the roof, for example), but other aspects such as the time of the event or the consequence are given spiritual, magic or non-scientific explanations. The magical thinking is embodied in the indigenous persons, the believers, and is an inseparable, integral part of the person’s realities.

Such is the case with the Ghost Dance movement where they perform the “circle dance”, in which not only aspects of the ritual itself are expected to change, but more significantly some aspects of society (Kehoe 1989). The circle dance was later given the name Prophet Dance²⁴ and was studied by Mooney (1973) who saw this ritual as a combination of social and psychological processes. Lepowski (2004, pp.1-3) says that ritual violence or war magic, symbolic or corporeal, is a key element in the revitalisation and in the oppositional process among the group. Lepowski (2004)

²⁴ See Spier (1927 and 1935).

claims that cargo cults not only appropriate western commodities by magical means, but also attach symbolic prophecies of utopianism to these rituals.

In the process of appropriation, western commodities receive a contemporary relevant context and place within a local ground. In this process, cultural properties (rituals and commodities) manifest symbolic meanings of opposition to the hegemonic surroundings,²⁵ and demonstrate resistance. Cultural resistance is linked with anti-colonial meaning, and revitalization among movements is the accumulation of strategies used for “cultural transformation”, executed by the process of opposition and ideas of resistance (Lepowski 2004, p.2). These strategies include various forms of resistance and transformation and are similar to what Sahlins (1993, p.21) referred to as “indignation of modernity”. This is a description of millenarian movements or cults and their strategies of cultural rearrangements through oppositional forms. The magical violence ritual applied by “cargo cults” or other movements is a ritual including prayer to spirits or other supernatural beings, which “intend to subvert the will of another” (Lepowski 2004, p.2). The subversion of another’s will is a cognitive process in which prophecies and messages are used as a weapon, a concept which is embodied in the practitioner. Embodiment of such a concept comes to effect when deep emotions or sentiments construct meaningfulness among persons. Malinowski (1925, pp.30-31) uses magical ritual as an example of how indigenous people (as practitioners of these rituals) attach deep emotional meanings to rituals such as hatred, anger, love, frustration, anxieties, danger – all are meaningful expressions. When these meaningful expressions are performed collectively, they are not only conceived to be more effective or valuable, but also function as a mechanism which brings participants together, constructing a sense of communion among them.

With this discernment in mind, I look at strategies and studies which show how situational social assemblies and rituals construct a strong sense of communion. I find this theme relevant to the study of the Rainbow Temple (and Rainbow culture) because during my fieldwork I have noticed that participants often shared their collective experience and perceptions of cooperation. Turner’s (1969) work on social

²⁵ A concept Castile (1981, p. xxvii –xx) refers to as “dominant controller”, I will address this term in section 3.3 with regard to the concept of the *opposition process*.

structure is often useful to analyse communal structures, especially concepts such as *Liminality* and *Communitas*. Liminality is a term which describes an entity in a condition, situation or classification that evades time and space. Turner (1969, p.95) describes liminal entities as “are neither here or there; they are betwixt and between positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial”. Attributes of liminal entities are expressed by a mixture of symbols, and through rituals demonstrate their obedience, passiveness and lack of involvement. Liminal entities have no status, property or position in a kinship system which “may distinguish them from their fellow neophytes or initiands” (Turner 1969, p.95). This distinction, in the ritualistic process, actually encourages senses of cooperation and communion among liminal entities, because they share the experiences, thrills and the consequences of the initiation (during and after the ritualistic process).

A certain sense of communion arises in the liminal period between equal individuals who share a total submission to the ritual process and its conductors. Turner (1969, pp.94-97) suggests to see this communion as *communitas* which describes society “as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to general authority of the ritual elders”. *Communitas* is distinguished from the mere “area of common living” and from a society as a structured system of “politico-legal-economic positions” because it provides a unique experience of social bond (Turner 1969, p.96). *Communitas* can also be described as “a direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities, a style of personal interaction...it has something ‘magical’ about it” (Turner 1982, pp.47-48). Turner (1969, pp.131-165) also provides a useful typology of *communitas* and liminality: spontaneous or existential *communitas*, normative *communitas* and ideological *communitas*. This typology is useful to look at various contemporary cases and assists with familiarity of the nature of social assemblies (especially in context of religious rituals) and social relationships.

Trompf (1990, p.10) mentions ideas of a new *communitas*, in a case where “The intensity of effervescence of those moments (during the ritual) in which the movement (the cult) first issued its challenge and hopes can then be reflected upon – in the early build up of tradition – as the turning point in a new and preferable

direction, and the point making possible a new *communitas*” (see also Williams 1976, p.385).

3.3 Identity and Community

Contemporary case studies which relate to Turner’s ideas on social structure are relevant to the study and understanding of the social processes in the Rainbow Temple. I look at instances of situational social assemblies such as raves and dance floors, where participants perform similar patterns of behaviour in rituals to those exhibits by participants at the Rainbow Temple. In both cases, similar techniques and strategies are used to maintain cultural identity. Olaveson (2004) uses Turner’s *communitas* to describe a sense of “connectedness” and interrelations among participants in rave dance rituals.²⁶ In these rituals participants describe feelings of unity, togetherness and love while performing the rave ritual, an experience described by Olaveson (2004, p.87) as “an intense sensation of interpersonal and sometimes universal connection between participants.”

Taramacchi (2004, 2006) describes three instances of dance rituals from different cultures where *entheogens*²⁷ are used to illustrate and stimulate (and perhaps instigate) a sense of communion (of *communitas*) among participants. In these rituals, collective sensations are demonstrated and “elements appear to orient the participants...toward a similar functional goal – renewed and intensified group identification at an immediate level” (Taramacchi 2004, p.139). In such social assembly, the ecstatic phase of the numinous in the ritual, with or without the use of *entheogens*, is shared by participants who describe collective sensations. In these parties or dance raves participants “incorporate multiple trance techniques” to achieve the functional goal through the dance ritual, thus producing a “definite product”; a spontaneous *communitas* (Taramacchi 2004, p.140).

²⁶ See similar discussion in Hutson (1999, 2000) and St John (2001).

²⁷ Taramacchi (2004, 2006) writes on the spiritual explorations instigated by *entheogens* – substances that purportedly facilitate experiences of divinity (2006, p.91). These substances are attached with meanings of sacredness and religiosity. Taramacchi also distinguishes between *entheogens* and *psyconouts*, a term which commonly refers to trippers (2006, p.92-93).

Ideas of *communitas* can also be seen in many other social arenas, and analysed on different levels. Drumming circles, for example, were described by Foltz (2006, p.132) as “a community activity that creates a spiritual bond among its practitioners”. Drumming circles bring a diversity of people from different circumstances and contrasting backgrounds into a particular social assembly where participants share similar sensations and attach collective meanings. This allows participants to sense that something greater than the individual “self” is contemplated, some kind of a larger entity is formed, and they are part of it. As Foltz describes:

Drumming levels out differences, engenders altered states of consciousness, and bring people together in abandoned play, where participants feel as though they are part of a single entity engaged in a unique creative experience that can never be repeated. Thus drumming is a form of spirituality wherein participants can heal the self, create community, and even transform society through their re-enchantment of the secular world

(Foltz 2006, p.134)

Drumming circles provides a healing ritual for participants where they feel transcendence and become “connected to the whole of humanity” as they say. These practitioners also form *communitas* (Foltz 2006, p.140). Toennis (1988) referred to ideas of communion as *gemeinschaft*, as a close intimate social relationship, like those which can be found in a family. Participants in such rituals form a theoretical communion where they share strong meanings similar to those found in a close community (Weber 1947).

Strategies in the field of social anthropology for understanding theoretical meanings of community, in terms of collective identity, including collective identity systems, symbols and mechanisms are helpful for observing various behaviours of the Rainbow Temple community (Castile, 1981; Erasmus 1981; Rigby, 1974; Spicer, 1971 and 1980). Spicer (1971) compares ten different peoples to arrive at identity symbol generalization and use concepts such as *oppositional process*, *sphere of participation*, *enclavement* and *peoples* to analyse his study. Erasmus (1981) suggests adding the concept of *Indoctrination of the young*. Considering different concepts of

collective identity symbols, or “Spicer’s key concepts” as Erasmus (1981, p.193) calls them, especially the oppositional process, are useful to analyse aspects of identity and cultural persistency. Spicer (1971) used comparative analysis of peoples widely scattered around the world to arrive at identity symbol generalizations, while Erasmus (1981, pp.192-211) uses this theoretical analysis to compare intentional and traditional communities. Both agree that the concept of oppositional process is critical to maintain a set of collective identity symbols, and I found this concept to be relevant framework to look at the various behaviours at the Rainbow Temple.

Different strategies in the study of identity systems are a useful analytical tool. It is not only characteristics or “popular notions”, as Castile (1981, pp.xvii – xviii) calls them, of ethnicity (De Vos 1975), pluralism (Van Den Berghe 1973, p.961), homeland (Adams 1981, pp.3-26), language or unchanging culture (history), that determined the identity and cultural persistency of peoples, but also a “continuity of collective identity based on common understanding concerning the meaning of a set of symbols” (Spicer 1980, p.347). As with all adapting cultural entities, the symbols may change “as long as continuity is maintained in the symbol system sufficient to define a collective identity separate from that of surrounding peoples, enduring occurs” (Castile, 1981 p.xviii). That is, a specific mechanism is necessary to identify and maintain the boundaries between the people and the “others”, to segregate the group from the “outside” world. The social boundaries are negotiated in an area Pratt (2008, pp.52-54, 134-135, 156) called “contact zone”, a place where distinctive cultural elements are facilitated, and where the practitioners can encounter the “other” while maintaining their identity. This mechanism of opposition symbolizes continuous conflict between the people (as subordinate group) and the surrounding state institutions (as a dominant controller) and is referred as the “oppositional process” (Spicer 1971, p.797). Different degrees of opposition can be critical for the cultural persistency of the social group: too much opposition can cause an extreme action and result in the extinction of the group, while too little opposition can enable the dominant society to swallow to subordinate group (Castile 1981, pp. xxvii –xx).

The opposition process is a theoretical process that systematically identifies a continued conflict between a certain cultural group and the surrounding dominant controllers, in contrasting socio-cultural environments (Spicer 1971, p.797).

Conceivably, this process is a reciprocated experience in which the dominant controllers (mostly referring to the surrounding state apparatus, organizations with political power and influences such as governmental departments or local councils) and the subordinate group engage in a dialectical relationship.

Hegemonic surrounding or mainstream society refers to the larger central cultural forms. Niman (1997, p. 31-32) calls it the industrialised world which also symbolizes and is linked with “Babylon”²⁸. Niman (1997, pp.205-207) claims that the Rainbow people sees the culture in the gatherings as opposite to the conventional culture in Babylon, because gatherings are “free of violence and competition”. Spicer (1971, p.797) refers to the dominant hegemonic cultural surrounding and describes it as the “state apparatus or state institutions”, that is: organizations with political power, government and councils. Taylor (1981, p.2 and p.32) writes that the “back to the land movement” symbolizes discontent with unemployment and capitalist urban lifestyle which can be frequently observed in the wider Australian society. According to Guy, “mainstream” represents aggression and disrespect, and he also refers to mainstream as a capitalist and non-cooperative environment. Another informant said (section 4.1) that society represents conflict and struggles, and described the ambience outside the Rainbow Temple as “different”.

Spicer (1971, p.797) used the opposition process to analyse persistent (cultural) identity systems and saw these as “a product of this process”, but Spicer (1971, p.798) also noted that not necessarily every oppositional process resulted in the persistence of cultural systems. Conflict arises over issues of incorporation and assimilation of the subordinate group into the larger dominant controller. Examples of this process include warfare, military conflict, the political integration of weak parties and the assimilation of small-scale subculture groups into larger central cultural forms. The opposition process is a useful working definition with which to analyse and realize processes of cultural resistance or adaptation that reflects on and construct a group’s identity. In order to maintain such a system Spicer (1971, p.798) employs three

²⁸ A slang word that is commonly used in hippie-culture discourse and by the Rainbow people to describe mainstream society as a capitalist, material lifestyle. Babylon is analogous to social and economical disorder, and to greed and hedonism.

central internal characteristics and maintenance processes 1) a set of identity symbols; 2) The sphere of participation and sentiments associated with these symbols; 3) The institutionalized social relations. Nevertheless, there are varied mechanisms and structures which are useful to maintain such process such as voluntary withdrawal from the dominant society, or certain rituals (Castile 1981, p.xix).

Identity symbols, as a set of particular customs and beliefs constituting a way of life, respond (with flexibility) to any changes in the environment. These responses are part of the oppositional process that allows the people to adapt or maintain assimilation with particular identity symbols, thereby becoming meaningful and functional. The fluidity of identity symbols means that they can respond to changes in the environment and can also be articulated beyond communities (beyond the communal sphere) into the situational sphere, where all share and understand the symbol identity system (Erasmus 1981, p.194). Spicer (1971, p.798) analyses three areas, which he calls sphere of participation, where common understanding is necessary to maintain identity systems which include communication through language, political organization and sharing moral values. The last “internal characteristic” which is helpful for maintaining identity systems is the institutional organization or the institutional means. This characteristic is a bit obscure and “requires more study” because there are “no common features of local grouping and government” (Spicer 1971, p.799). Collective action, senses of communion and collective attributes (symbolic or corporeal) are useful strategies to maintain identity system, and I use these strategies to look at instances of situational social assemblies.

Other avenues I have explored while looking at ideas of community, were concepts of intentional community, communes and ideas of communitarian and of anarchism. Being formed deliberately out of the counter-culture circumstances the Rainbow Family in North America, according to Niman (1997, p.31) is an “intentional group” whose members purposefully gather to enact a supposedly shared ideology and as an intentional group, the Rainbow Family has “an explicit program that rationalized and justifies perpetuating itself” (ibid., p.115). Notions of alternative communities evolved over time (mostly with academic research) and can be conceptualize as intentional communities, because of the somewhat negative connotation that the word “alternative” had (the term “alternative” implies that something else - better - than

what normally exists, should replace or transform because it is not satisfying enough). According to Metcalf,²⁹ it is not only that strong intentions and an absolute commitment exist in a community, but also the absence of the idea to leave, which form the intentionality. This is a relevant notion and reminiscent of utopian thinking, because the intentions, and the deliberate efforts of members of a group to form a community are essential criteria in defining the communal sphere, and “in the case of intentional communities the oppositional process has a strong counter-culture locus” (Erasmus 1981, p.194). Opposing prevalent social behaviours is a notion which also implies of the negative connotation alternatives have. Similar ideas of intentionality and community were analysed by Kanter (1972) as *commitment* in the dialectical process of relationship between the individual and the community, and by Schutz (1967) as *in order to* motives.

I also find Rigby’s framework useful for understanding the individual’s pattern of social behaviours that relate to ideas of communitarians:

A satisfactory explanation of any individual’s pattern of social action would seem to require an enquiry into these three areas: 1) the actors own definition of his project or goal-to-be-achieved; 2) the actors own definition of his past experiences and states of being which have led him to the formation of his particular project; 3) those ‘objective’ factors which the scientific observer hypothesizes as being of significance in any casual explanation of the actor’s choice of plan of action, but which are not necessarily seen as significant by the actual actor concerned.

(Rigby 1974, p.177)

In other words, in order to have sufficient understanding, the researcher (the observer) should focus on the intentions and motives of the participants, their background and circumstances, and objective attributes lying under the phenomenon’s surface.

²⁹ I met Dr. Bill Metcalf in April 2008.

The distinction between law and anarchy is useful in analysing intentional and traditional societies (Erasmus 1981; Ritter 1980). Anarchy is described as a distinctive political philosophy that rejects the legitimacy of external government or state and seeks to establish different conditions; de-centralized and self-regulated society (Reedy 2002, p.178). Anarchy relies on social mechanisms such as traditional, pre-legal and small group kind, meaning, mechanism that aim to gain control over members through informal sanctions; “order is maintained by the social controls of intimates; ridicule admonishment, ostracism, and excommunication” (Erasmus 1981, pp.193-194). Law, on the other hand, is a formal control employed by the state. When the group disassociate themselves from law and rely on their own social controls; they are anarchic.

Another concept I find interesting is the imagined community. The imagined community is a concept coined by Benedict Anderson (1983) which places ideas of a nation in the context of a socially constructed community. That is to say, the imagination of such community is by the people who perceive themselves as part of a concept of communion. The primary assertion is that it is important to consider the concept of imagined community when consuming cultural properties (such as media products) as every product is attached with meanings and imaginations of belonging to a community by people who are involved. The attachment of collective sentiments to cultural or religious properties (symbolic or corporeal) seems to be relevant in the study of the Rainbow Temple, and by extension, to Rainbow culture.

3.4 Identity and new religions

To some extent, I suspect that aspects of identity, as constructed and maintained in the Rainbow Temple's community are based on common ideology, beliefs and practices of liturgy. I believe that cases where cultural appropriations of symbols, imagery, spirituality and mythology are borrowed from various sources will provide a reflection on the cultural identity of the people and of the place. Theoretical models in the study of new religions, including definitions of alternative religions (Bromley 2004; Robbins 2005) and studies which analyse the use of mythology (Tumminia and Kirkpatrick 2004), assist in understanding religious innovations of these cultural appropriations. Robbins (2005, pp.105-108) suggests a distinction between “new” and “alternative” religion. Alternative religion “should be applied to ‘misaligned’ groups

in tension with their socio-cultural environment” a process which he analyses in terms of “internal intrinsic properties” and “external, relational quality”, while new refers to groups that are actually “organizationally and chronologically new”. Both alternative and new can be misaligned with the dominant socio-cultural patterns. Bromley (2004, pp.93-94), on the other hand, argues that term “new” should refer to the group’s relation with the dominant institutions and symbolic patterns, and “alternative” is a sectarian religious group with low level of alignment with dominant socio-cultural patterns. Barker (2004), using a sociological chronological perspective to the study of new religious movements, suggests to see “new” as a significant quality associated with other significant properties such as charismatic leadership or a movement’s susceptibility. Clarke (2006, p.ix) writes that the “newness” should also refer to past practices and beliefs.

The notion that new religious movements are misaligned with dominant and central religious properties is consent. Melton (2004, p.73) writes that:

new religious movements disagree significantly with the dominant accepted religious beliefs\practices in any given cultural setting and/or engage in one or more of a range of activities unacceptable to religious and/or secular authorities, such as violence, illegal behaviour, high pressure proselytism, unconventional sexual contacts, or minority medical practices.

(Melton 2004, p.73)

Attributes leading to a definition of a new religion include different patterns of behaviour, belief system, establishment of ideology, which are misaligned with the dominant religious environment. These attributes should be negotiated and compared with relevant religious landscape, particularly with relation to the traditional religious dominancy from which the “new” group or ideology stem (Melton 2004; Bromley 2004). I find this to be useful looking at religious behaviours at the Rainbow Temple, because the Australian society provided a fertile environment for new agendas, ideas and new religious movements (NRMs) to grow and evolve (Richardson 2004; Bouma 1999). These circumstances were described by Richardson (2004, p.203) as “the

situation with most NRM's has been remarkably peaceful in Australia...[the local society] become more tolerant, pluralistic to religious and ethnic differences”.

According to Clark (2006, pp.vii-xii), the basis for religious innovation in contemporary religious environment is an individualistic search of the self, even if this search occurs in a communal sphere. Individuals borrowing religious properties and inventing meanings which suit contemporary local environment and logic, utilize them, manipulatively, for their own exploration of their individual self. Clark describes this idea as:

Inner-directed spirituality, much of which is based on the premise that the self is the source of the supernatural. This kind of spirituality takes different forms and includes the use of various techniques such as the physical exercises of t'ai chi and yoga, which are designed to enable the practitioner to access and release the spiritual force that rests within the deepest layers of the self and apply it to the existential and emotional, and even material, areas of life.

(Clark 2006, p.vii)

This notion of inner-directed spirituality is primarily concerned with the idea that self-transformation will induce a greater social transformation. This is reminiscent of millenarian ideas of transforming the social and cosmic order, and with the arrival or the innovative use of “new” religious properties (Trompf 1990, p.39). In addition, the notion of inner-directed spirituality is promoted and advocated by key figures in such an environment. I think that behind the notion that each individual holds the key for individual-collective metamorphosis lie concepts of charismatic authority and leadership that give back wind and inspiration to this notion.

The discourse which links studies of new religions and aspects of religious innovations are the authoritarian traits. This discourse places charisma and authority as a property of leadership which plays a prominent role in new religious groups and enables practitioners to elucidate the practicalities of their religious behaviours. Many elder people I met in the Rainbow Temple, and the surrounding environment, have had some experience in an ashram somewhere in Southeast Asia, including Guy – the

founder of the Rainbow Temple. According to the informants, they experienced not only “new” communal behaviours in the ashram, but also the influential “charismatic personality of the guru” which shaped their way of thinking at the world.

One of these influential figures was Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (a.k.a Osho). Osho often appears in the discourse in Rainbow gatherings or activities (including the Rainbow Temple), and his ideas are often mentioned by the Rainbow people. Palmer (1988, p.119) describes Osho as a guru with a “considerable personal charm” with “a certain dramatic flair”, whose “contradictory demands on its [institutional] members” ultimately, dis-established the movement he founded. Palmer (1988, p.135) explains that Osho was a charismatic performer but weak on taking institutional responsibility. Contrary to Palmer, Urban (1996, p.161) sees a linear cohesive logic between Osho’s charisma and his institutional organization and says that “not only can charismatic authority be combined with a complex organization, but it can also be transformed into a commodity”. Osho used this authority to influence and inspire his disciples. Some of his former devotees have built ashrams and retreats around the Rainbow Region that imitate the original ashram in Poona, India. An example is the Samaya retreat³⁰ near Rosebank, an Ashram that manifests Bhagwan’s philosophy, established by his disciples who stayed in the ashram in Poona in the 1970s.

I believe that charisma and leadership are relevant avenues of investigation for understanding the cultural and religious properties in the Rainbow Temple, and help to explain some of the cultural occurrences and religious innovation at the Temple. Weber defines charisma as:

A certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader

(Weber 1947, p.10)

³⁰ I will expand on this in chapter four, section 4.1.

It is important to note that the qualities of the individual are actually a projection by the disciples or followers. In other words, the leader does not necessarily have to possess such personal qualities, but is viewed as one who possesses these traits. I believe that theories on charismatic leadership are useful for understanding the engagement of the Temple's adherents with the Temple's ideology, and with Guy, the founder of the Temple. Informants often remarked that Guy had impressive physiological, demagogic and spiritual characteristics, and they saw him as an inspirational figure. In other words, Temple dwellers believed that Guy is a charismatic leader in the Weberian sense. Stalker (2008, p.21) writes that such traits attached to a leader allow the leaders to "forge new religious communities, often because of their entertaining personas", a description I find resonant with the Temple's leadership.

Charismatic leadership also employs or develops narratives, story telling and mythology that influence followers (or adherents). Thus mythology plays a prominent role and is pertinent to the group's identity. The group can borrow an inspiration or a myth but still invent their own mythological narratives and "leaders become symbolic, mythological images that hold groups together" (Tumminia and Kirkpatrick 2004, p.371). Mythological narratives borrowed from indigenous peoples and Asia have a substantial role in constructing reality among members of a group, especially when the group has a strong spiritual orientation. According to Tumminia and Kirkpatrick, core aspects of mythology in NRMs are:

sacred narratives that usually include venerated characters whose actions lead to the present state of spiritual affairs that must be addressed through the group's action. The myths are embedded in and part of the emergent social processes found in day to day interaction within a group. Some myth remains fixed, while others, according to the nature of their group, function as key interpretive procedures of fluid improvised nature

(Tumminia and Kirkpatrick 2004, p.360)

The myth has an integral part in a group's social action on a regular basis, and flexible capacity to communicate relevant meanings to the group. There is an interaction between the mythological narrative and the group's action that determine their set of beliefs and explain or justify their (the practitioners) existence. This is a reciprocated experience between the community of adherents (and the tangible realm) and the spiritual realm, which creates "magic-religious stories that organize reality for their practitioners" (Tumminia and Kirkpatrick 2004, p.361).

Honoko (1984) suggested four definitional criteria to look at the concept of myth: 1) myths are transmitted in narrative form. 2) Myths convey informational content 3) myths function as models of worldviews 4) myths occur in context, usually associated with ritual re-enchantments. I find this framework relevant for understanding the capacity of meanings among participants in the Rainbow Temple. This process of myth-religious stories provides the practitioners with instruction or guidance "on proper conduct" and supplies them with meanings of existence and other aspects of life, for example death: "what" to feel and "how" to behave. Moreover, myths decide "what is good and what is evil while also defining the use of personal power or one's submission to the community" (Bednarowski 1989, p.366). Griffin (1995) asserts that adherents consciously use mythopoetic³¹ images in rituals to re-create an ethos of revision of power, authority, sexuality, or other social relations. Thus, "ritual enchantment allows believers to live the very myth they use as ideology" (Tumminia and Kirkpatrick 2004, pp.369-370). In other words, the myth becomes "real" for the practitioner because it is embodied within them, regardless of a certain instrumental or tangible reality around them. When people describe metaphysical encounters or a reincarnation trajectory and symbolically use them in rituals, ceremonies and in their daily routines, they genuinely and logically live this reality as they perceive it to be.

The mythology of the Rainbow Warriors (or Warriors of the Rainbow) appears both in Native American discourse and in the Rainbow Family gatherings. Ruz Buenfil (1991, p.20) says that similar prophecies are common throughout tribes in North, Central and South America, of a group of people that form "a cultural blending of traditions in the creation of a new society and a new world view, called the Rainbow

³¹ Relating to, involving, or engaged in the production of myths.

Warriors”. According to the myth, the aim of these Rainbow Warriors, people from all over the world, all races and colours, is to spread “the message of a new world of justice and peace, of freedom and good, all over the earth” (Ruz buenfil 1991, p.25). According to Niman (1997, pp.133-135), a book called *Warriors of the Rainbow: Strange and Prophetic Dreams of the Indian Peoples*³² sparked a major interest and inspiration among participants in Rainbow Family gatherings, but the book also ignited a debate between authors on authentication of the mythology and its sources. Evidently, the myth of the Rainbow Warriors was adapted by the Rainbow Family and is used as the “ultimate romantic vision” (Niman 1997, p.134). In addition, the myth legitimates participants in Rainbow gatherings to borrow cultural properties, for example, tepees, fashion, central fire, social circles, and infrastructure (Niman 1997, p.132).

Another mythological narrative is the myth of the Rainbow Serpent. The myth of the Rainbow Serpent³³ though appears in different local variations in each Aboriginal peoples widespread Australia, is not confined in Australia to any particular ethnological province (or to any tribe in Australia) and possibly be practically universal (Radcliffe-Brown 1926, p.24). The myth of the Rainbow Serpent tells of a supernatural snake, or other form of a reptile shaped like a rainbow, that dwells in water holes or any water source and is associated with controlling the elements of nature, such as rain, moon, sun, wind etc, and also associated with quartz-crystal which is regarded as “substance of a great virtue”, and linked with meanings of healing and of remedy (Radcliffe-Brown 1926, p.19). According to Radcliffe-Brown (1926, p.23) the Rainbow Serpent is used by the Aborigines Peoples as “an object of ceremonies” and therefore can occupy the position of a Totem. During my fieldwork at the Rainbow Temple the myth of the Rainbow Serpent was represented in arts, crafts and paintings. Live snakes (and other animals) crawling freely around the Temple were regarded as sacred, and were “untouched”. The Rainbow Temple’s community have re-appropriated the myth of the Aboriginal Rainbow Serpent and have ritualized the serpent as a totem.

³² See Willoya and Brown (1962).

³³ The term, used by the anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown (1926), is based on shared features among Aboriginal peoples in Australia.

The mythic symbolisms are manipulated by practitioners and form a logic set of beliefs contextualized in an everyday life. This is not only a collective experience, but also a powerful formative on the individual. Tumminia and Kirkpatrick write that:

In addition to shaping an ongoing group reality, a myth guides one's interpretation of oneself, because myth symbolically articulates a person's selfhood within the context of the definitions and images the group supplies. Myth, especially in NRMs, are not entirely fixed because they often reflect the unfolding process of reality construction taking place with leaders and followers in reference to the outside world.

(Tumminia and Kirkpatrick 2004, p.371)

Rainbow people and Rainbow elders (respected, charismatic members of the Rainbow Tribe) use mythology to create interpretive worlds or narratives for adherents. They often fashion, manipulate narratives about spiritual origins, journeys or visions thus re-invent and re-create own particular mythology. Dialectical relationships between two strands of mythic philosophical spiritualities reformulate new “invented” realities, which are then lived by the practitioners.

3.5 The New Age Movement and spirituality

In the next section, I will use core motifs designated by other studies to illustrate the primary literature. Among these are descriptions of the New Age Movement including aspects of spirituality and religion. I look at descriptions of the New Age because this term is often used in the discourse at the Rainbow Temple and in Rainbow Tribe activities. In this literature review, I wish to show that there are some limitations to the definition of the New Age Movement, and that various accounts find this phenomenon limited and incomplete. In addition, I will examine accounts of common experiences of spirituality such as discussion on centralization of the “self” by Heelas (1996) or Neo-Pagans (Pike 2004).

The problem of definition has intrigued many scholars confronting the New Age Movement with (no) empirical explanations of the phenomena. Some scholars

consider the New Age Movement to be the modern transformation of ancient traditional philosophies, while others see the New Age as a collective term. Ellwood (1994, p.59) defines the New Age as an “era of harmonic convergence and upward spiritual mutations”. All the spiritual possibilities of the New Age, he claims, are as if they were “numerous treasures from the storehouse of the past”. Examples include, Hellenistic Astrology or ancient Egyptian elements that came to life in the third millennium or claims of New Age spirituality to ancient heritage. Melton and Lewis (1992, p.xi) consider the New Age as a “synthesis of many different pre-existing movements and strands of thought”. Later in their book Melton confesses that much of the literature about the New Age Movement expresses “some difficulties” with defining the Movement (ibid., p.15). Rigid definitions of the term New Age also appear in Heelas (1996, p.5 and p.173) such as “New Age as a cultural and practical resource employed in everyday life” or “interest in the self”. Contradictory to Heelas’ centralization of the “self”, York’s (1995, p.1) definition of the New Age as “an umbrella term that includes a great variety of groups and identities” is holistic. When York (1995, p.25) relates to the problematic literature on the history of the New Age he says that “the available literature is sketchy, incomplete, and sometimes biased”, thus reinforcing Melton and Lewis’s (1992) incomplete survey of the literature on New Age.

Pike (2004, p.15) claims that New Age and Neo-pagan movements both “emerged in the 1960s from the counter-culture but also drew on a long American tradition of alternative religious practice”. Ambiguously, Pike (2004, p.22) agrees with York’s definition of “an umbrella term that encompasses multiple beliefs” and later in her book Pike conforms with Ellwood’s approach and tends to view the New Age as a “heritage of beliefs continuously stem from nineteenth century spiritual traditions” and discusses influences of indigenous cultures and ancient civilizations (Pike 2004, pp.24-25). Heelas (1996, pp.41-42) writes that elements of the New Age are buried in ancient traditions but later argues that “a comprehensive account of the development of the New Age “can begin with the later nineteenth century”, and concludes with the statement that the “New Age has been around for a long time”.

These scholars have expanded the definitions of the New Age, but have not succeeded in producing empirical epistemology for the term by critically accepting its

problematic nature. It seems to me that the eclectic mix of practices, as ideological motifs, affiliated with the term New Age increase confusion and compromise among scholars in configuring determinant sociological structure or cohesive genealogy. Further more, because the term New Age represents a bricolage of interchangeable practices and values, I tend to agree with Sutcliffe's explanation that "this particular history of alternative spiritual practice has nowadays been almost entirely obscured by a preference on the part of commentators", who, on their part, conflate the term with different idioms (Sutcliffe 2003, pp.3-4). The problem with the term New Age, he continues, is in "the fact that its boundaries are highly indeterminate, its empirical history is largely unknown and its celebration of subjectivities corrodes a steady morphology" (Sutcliffe 2003, p.18). To conclude this point on the theme, Sutcliffe (2003, p.19) states that "there is no history of agreed phenomenon". However, I believe that the New Age Movement, despite its emblematic and eclectic reference, may shed light and assist in understanding various cultural and religious behaviours in the Rainbow Temple, and can provide a suitable context.

These representative explanations and definitions to the term New Age are merely satisfactory and do not engage substantial empirical methodology in order to track the roots of this phenomena. The history of the New Age is portrayed as obscured or largely unknown, and there is no significant time or space but rather a synthesis of movements and thoughts. The borders of the multivalent emblem New Age are not sketched, nor the hierarchy of its leaders or a compelling agenda, thus allowing the umbrella term to cover the range of spiritual practices from ancient Egypt Astrology to the 1960s counter-culture. In terms of applicable empirical criteria for the sociology of movements I agree that there is a "deficient in the typical features of NRMs and NSMs" (Sutcliffe 2003, p.198).

To sum up the problem of definition I accept Sutcliffe's delineation of the New Age Movement; it "lacks distinctive corporate body, a legislative mechanism, historical consciousness, organisational infrastructure, boundaries, and other indices of membership and belonging, and crucially, unambiguous self-identity and concrete

goals” (Sutcliffe 2003, p.198). Therefore, I wish to adopt Cusack’s³⁴ approach toward such a theoretical framework when studying “new” spirituality and “use a rational scholarly explanation” to describe such anomalies. The absence of such features in the literature on this phenomenon, and lack of empirical criteria analysis, distinguishes the New Age from associated academic fields.

To conclude this literature review, the absence of academic literature on the Rainbow Temple, and by extension on the Rainbow culture, have led me to investigate different avenues and fields of knowledge. In the philosophical matrix where the Rainbow Temple exists, it is hard to find a particular applicable theory, which explains why I had to look into various avenues of investigation. By crossing various streams of knowledge, based on these existing theoretical frame works, I wish to provide a valid description of the ontological experience of the Rainbow Temple culture, and perhaps to the Rainbow culture. Studies on revitalization movements, millenarianism (and “cargo cults”) and utopian ways of thinking seem to be relevant ideas, especially in light of the self descriptions of the participants themselves in the following chapter. Further, ideas of community, strategies in analysing collective identity systems and models of looking at new religions, as much as studies on New Age spirituality (which can be problematic and have their limitations due their syncretic and eclectic nature), are useful analytical tools in understanding the Rainbow Temple phenomenon. In the next chapter, I will describe how people who participate in the cultural and religious occurrences at the Rainbow Temple view their experience and describe their behaviours. I have encountered numerous participants, over the prolonged time I spent at the Rainbow Temple environment and at Rainbow Tribe activities, but not all the accounts can be voiced in this M.A. thesis.

³⁴ I met Prof. Carole Cusack in April 2008 and October 2008.

Chapter four: Context and Location

“The Temple provides a new set of doors and windows”

The Rainbow Temple means different things to different people. For some it serves as a gathering place where they can manifest their spirituality, some come and practice their alternative ideology and for others the Rainbow Temple is a sphere of reconciliation and transformation on their way “to” or “from”. In this chapter, I explore the various perspectives that people have on the Rainbow Temple, and what it means for them. I include the voices of people from within the Rainbow Tribe and the voices of people who are not familiar or affiliated with Rainbow culture. During my fieldwork I conducted semi-open discussions with people who identify with the Rainbow culture, with people who dwell in the Rainbow Temple, with neighbours and with local council figures, local newspaper and magazine editors and writers and with people from local academic institutes who study related fields. These discussions, together with my own reflection and experiences at the Rainbow Temple and other Rainbow Family activities, have enabled me to portray this ethnography of the Rainbow Temple.

4.1 Internal discourse on the Rainbow Temple

During one of my recent visits at the Rainbow Temple (April 2008) I met Takashi, a Kiwi man in his fifties who stayed at the Temple with his seventeen year old son, a student. Takashi is well experienced with Rainbow culture and has attended many Rainbow activities including the first international Rainbow gathering in Australia at Tenterfield.³⁵ Both had been living at the Temple for nearly a year, and Takashi agreed to answer some of my questions and share his views and experiences on the essence of the Rainbow Temple:

Guy calls the Rainbow Temple a non-denominational gathering ground, all of the colours blended into one; all of the belief systems, all religious thinking and dogma, a place where you can question. Totally

³⁵ The first International Rainbow gathering in Australia was held in 1996 in a place called Om-Shalom near the township of Tenterfield, N.S.W.

inspiring structure, all mixed up together (all the symbols) what can you compare it to? like the population of planet earth, that's all the different human cultures on this earth, this can be like a plate of food; one side you got the mashed potatoes, then you have the sausages and the carrots and the peas and that's all the different cultures, but a bowl of mash potatoes [by itself] isn't a meal, you got to have the whole plate, the whole banquet if you like...and that is something we celebrate in the rainbow, we are not just one nationality or one idea or one spirituality we are all of it; some Rainbow Family are nuns, doctors, lawyers and some are drug dealers and some are psychopaths...

Ron: *so how do people from the Rainbow accept that?*

Takashi: *because we recognizing that we are all people, it's not just the bowl of mashed potato, this isn't a meal, it is the diversity*

Ron: *do you think the Rainbow Temple accept everyone?*

Takashi: *yes, everyone is welcome, but some people don't fit in.*

(Takashi, field notes, April 2008)

The Rainbow Family consist of a diversity of nationalities and cultures. This diversity, according to Takashi, explains or justifies the Rainbow ideology of the acceptance and the embracing of a variety of people. There is also an analogy between the diverse colours of the Rainbow and diversity of the backgrounds and colours of humanity. Being familiar with both the Rainbow Temple and various Rainbow gatherings, Takashi distinguishes between the two:

what makes the Rainbow Temple different from Rainbow gatherings is that Rainbow gatherings are never meant to be permanent. The Rainbow Temple has a core focaliser, a core person which holds the energy and that's is Guy, he built this place for the Rainbow [The Rainbow Family], but he has to maintain it for them, it's a gathering ground... yeh, it's a difficult task Guy has

Ron: *do you reckon the Rainbow Family acknowledge this ?*

Takashi: *yes, generally yes... but nobody is perfect, and Guy got his ideas and maybe he is not flexible as he could be to some people's eyes but the statement that 28 years later he is still here...it has its up-times and down-times...this is his form of devotion to his ideals and spiritual*

insights, the way he feels about the world needs, and how he can help humanity, help the world grow and change, he is not making political statements, and he touches the lives of thousands and thousands of people that walked in here and for many people this is the first taste of that world...and some people adapt to it really quickly and some people want to adapt to it but then they find they are not fully aware of what keeping them away [from mainstream society and the lifestyle it represents], what keeps them separate...this is a spiritual challenge

(Takashi, field notes, April 2008)

According to Takashi, there is no difference between the Rainbow Temple and the Rainbow Family gatherings in terms of ideology or concept, except that the Rainbow Temple is a permanent continuous gathering place, while periodic Rainbow Family gatherings are situational spheres. Furthermore, Takashi does not make a distinction between the Rainbow Temple and Guy; he does not see them as separate entities. This explains why people call him “Rainbow Guy” and suggests that Guy is not just a person, but the embodiment or the reflection of Rainbow behaviour and spirit. The Rainbow Temple also provides an introductory, a window, into Rainbow ideology. The “taste” of an alternative lifestyle at the Rainbow Temple allows visitors, dwellers and passers by to consider how and where they want to live, while in the comfortable and safe environments of the Rainbow Temple.

At this stage in my conversation with Takashi we discussed the concept that the Rainbow Temple manifests, which is similar, or even identical to Rainbow culture, according to Takashi. The idea that thousands of people have walked through the Rainbow Temple and been affected by its concept has been discussed by the informant Janice (in chapter two, section 2.5). I have asked Takashi what he thinks about this idea:

Ron: *Do they [the people who ‘walk through’ the Temple] have difficulties of adopting the concept due to the economic reality here, of economic transaction? Basically, I am asking what is the different between the Rainbow Temple and backpackers. What is so unique here?*

Takashi: *it's all through word of mouth, I guess it's like I had a good time at Rainbow Temple, so what is going on their? Then they found out about it and decide to go there...by reputation*

Ron: *do they feel committed to the concept of the Temple?*

Takashi: *commitment ts something that grow on people...I don't go to all Rainbow gatherings, sometimes I just go to raves, because I work, for example, so when people come here they come for a taste, its gathering, people gather here and they also take away experience, the energy is what gathered here, it becomes of a blueprint or a model for an ideal, a part of humanity*

(Takashi, field notes, April 2008)

Many people see the Rainbow Temple as a gathering place or a centre for the Rainbow Family. However, Takashi sees the Temple as a gathering sphere for “energy”, a concept that expands the definition of the Rainbow Temple, and allows us to consider aspects of spirituality.

Takashi's analogy comparing the Rainbow Temple to a plate of food containing all the cultural ingredients, while considering the Rainbow Temple as a gathering sphere for “energy” needs clarification. Takashi explained further:

it is a radical example, it is [the Rainbow Temple] set out on the fringe, or another way of putting it is to say its an interface, it's a connection point with the heart...it shows people a new set of doors and windows which are not so available in a city environment...also a lot of people who come here are travelling so they are in a different mode [of receiving], exploring mode rather than a settling mode so they come here with curiosity and willing to soak up, so from that point of view the Temple is a good education centre or sharing experience, and its alternative to the mainstream

(Takashi, field notes, April 2008)

Takashi's ideas and perspectives are similar to those of other people at the Temple. They perceive the Temple as a focal centre for people to gather and celebrate.

Furthermore, the Temple provides a “new set of doors and windows” for people to re-view their ideas and perspectives, feed their curiosity and come up with alternative solutions to unanswered questions asked in a “city environment”, a term that Rainbow people use to mean “mainstream” culture. For the Rainbow people, the culture that the Rainbow Temple represents is “set out on the fringe”, on the borders of mainstream society’s values and morals. The sphere inhabited by the Rainbow Temple is described as an “interface,” and a “connection to the heart.” This interface, or connection point, lies somewhere between the “real” (or mainstream) world, and the “magic” realm, a notion often mentioned in discussions at the Temple.

Dor is a man in his mid-Forties who lived at the Rainbow Temple for a few years in the 1990s and has been familiar with the Temple and the Rainbow Tribe for nearly twenty years:

Through the years the Rainbow Temple had taken his own course [as alternative centre] attracted young people to Rosebank [the nearest township to the Temple], they bought property and the community evolved around the Temple, been the centre, or close to it ...

Ron: *what were they attracted for there?* [in the Rainbow Temple]

Dor: *“I think it was the carefree lifestyle, meeting people who think alike, out of the main road, it is part of Byron character and culture [Byron Bay Township], bringing the colours, the odours, from the Temple to Byron and visa-versa, Byron as an alternative place grew hand in hand with the Temple, nevertheless, the Rainbow Temple is a centre for the Rainbow community; ceremonies like birth ceremonies and sweat lodge, astrology, meditation, yoga, musical celebration gatherings, info, shelter...reminding a bit of the flower kids, multi-colours*

(Dor, field notes, April 2008)

Dor’s description reinforces the notion that the Rainbow Temple functions as a multivariant functioning sphere. Not only does the Temple serve as a gathering place for people and energy, it also serves as a centre for multi-purpose functions, and for pluralistic rituals. Ceremonies, gatherings, practices are accommodated under one roof, demonstrating the co-existence of ideas and philosophies.

The Rainbow Temple can also be placed within the context of the hippie-culture and alternative lifestyle developed and evolved around the township of Byron Bay in the 1980's and 1990's. In an article by Hardy (1997), published in The Sydney Morning Herald, the Rainbow Region, and particularly Byron Bay, is described as "Australia's most infamous hippie-filled region". It seems that the Rainbow Temple and the Rainbow Region are in ideological-spiritual conjuncture. Aspects of this ideology are described in the opening section of the article:

Chanting, Ohming and stomping are all frequent occurrences around Byron Bay. Dressing up or down in tribal costumes is optional. Nudity isn't an issue; its an expression of self. Loving is a necessity: love yourself, love others, love the trees, the birds, the sea, love it all. But don't just love it, honour it too. Honour it by ritualising it

(Hardy 1997, p. 9)

The notions that Hardy describes are similar to the ideology expressed by Rainbow Temple dwellers. That is, hippie-oriented costumes, alternative ideology and diversity of belief systems are all associated with the Rainbow Tribe, the Rainbow Region and the Rainbow Temple. As Hardy (1997, p.9) describes it: "...organic, free-thinking Rainbow Tribe has gathered to celebrate...to perform Native American tribal dance". Hardy (1997) repeats motifs of celebration, Native American costumes, and the prevalent description of free-thinking.

The Rainbow Temple also manifests its ideology with aphorisms written on colourful signs posted around the property, such as:

The Rainbow Temple Vision is that ultimately, humanity shall realise their oneness with each other, the nature kingdom, the Earth and the Universe. The Temple is built to celebrate and clarify our role in this great becoming. the idea here is to live in harmony with each other and move towards realms of creativity which allow us the full expression of our spirit as individuals and as one in life: Performance, theatre, music, dance and storytelling is the manner in which we hope

to convey the joy of self, awareness to the greater population. Thank you for being Here, Now, Om Shanti

(The “Rainbow Temple Vision” sign)

This is a self-description of the nature of the Rainbow Temple, as well as an ideology common in discourses around the Rainbow Region. Aspects of hippie-culture (spirituality, for example), diverse religious affiliations (Om Shanti, for example), inspirations from charismatic leaders (Bhagwan’s “celebration” or Gandhi’s “oneness”) and the connection to the environment (“nature kingdom”), all are represented in the Rainbow Temple Vision. Thus, the Rainbow Temple can be placed in context not only with Rainbow culture, but also with the cultural occurrences which takes place in the Rainbow Region. This connection between the Rainbow Temple, its dwellers and community, with the local community situated around Byron Shire in general (and Byron Bay in particular) has been strong since the establishment of the Temple and its early days. Having a reputation of a place of “multi-colours”, “centre for alternative activities” and “carefree”, attracts people, explorers and travellers³⁶ who affiliate with Rainbow culture.

Philip is an example of the connection between lifestyle travellers and the Rainbow Temple. He is in his mid-thirties, originally from the Philippines, and had been a dweller at the Rainbow Temple for four months (between January and April 2008) when I met him. Philip sells African drums and is a drummer himself. He heard of the Rainbow Temple while staying at a backpackers hostel in Byron Bay. Philip describes the circumstances which led him to the Rainbow Temple:

I have been to the Temple since January 2008, I heard of the Temple from the backpackers [in Byron Bay]. Very interesting place and unique community. This place allow me to observe society, everywhere you go you come across conflicts, people that are pessimist and optimist. These conflicts in society made me think that it is actually

³⁶ See Giddens (1991) for further discussion on this concept.

necessary for a change, while experiencing all these conflicts and struggles, we can run away but we cannot really escape this...the key word which I am trying to observe here is difference, the difference in individual behaviour, community behaviour. With the convenience of globalisation it is comfortable to travel and see another country, tourism, and we can exchange ideas

(Philip, field notes, April 2008)

Once again the segregation between the two spheres is emphasised. When Philip says that he is “trying to observe the difference here” he means the difference between the lifestyle at the Rainbow Temple and “mainstream society” - the prevalent lifestyle outside the Rainbow Temple. The idea of differentiation connotes ideas of separation similar to those mentioned by Takashi about the differentiation between the two spheres: mainstream society and the Rainbow Temple (or by extension Rainbow culture).

Mainstream society differs from the Rainbow Temple in its norms and morals, in interactions between people and levels of sociality (such as the intimacy between people and spiritual meanings attached to such interactions). The difference can be on several levels: the personal level, the place, and with others. Philip describes the differentiation of the social life in the community of the Rainbow Temple as follows:

Without judgment, I am trying to be more naïve and interacting with people. Sharing here for example, is not the total sharing bond, but we are still tribal in our individual instincts and this is prominent, keeping the energy to our own selves but also sharing what each and one of us wants to share, perhaps it's got to do with different phases of the moon. There are people who want to give and there are people who don't want to give, there are people who help around and there are people who don't help at all so it varies. People express their sharing in different levels. common understanding and sharing are here at the Temple: energy, cleaning, cook and wash and give a little bit and organize like giving Guy some money to keep this place sustainable...sometimes people will buy stuff for everybody, sometimes they have money or feel generous, or sometimes when people happy

they just want to give and when not very happy they don't want to give, they wish to keep the energy to themselves, and I think this is very natural, very instinctive in a way, sometimes this becomes a conflict in a way, but when I observe, the total thing is that it's all happening and people acting the way they want, decide what they want..

Ron: *so everybody can do what ever they like here?*

Philip: *Yes, but there are certain rules that Guy wants to maintain here, but apart from that its freier then be in a backpackers here you can have the initiative to do whatever you wish most of the time, and that is why I like it here as well*

(Philip, field notes, April 2008)

Each person who stays at the Rainbow Temple has a part in keeping the place sustainable and active. People play their part by performing tangible actions such as cleaning, cooking or gardening, or by symbolic cooperation: expressing “energy” and happiness. People tend to share what they have or want, including spirituality, in different ways and levels. However, even the free, encouraging and down-to-earth environment of the Rainbow Temple is still dominated by Takashi’s “core focaliser”, or as Philip says “certain rules” must be maintained. These perspectives are depictions of inter-relational formats between adherents and the leadership in the Rainbow Temple. I believe that these formats are part of a wider arena, which I label the “politics of authority”, in which political dominancy is frequently negotiated.

According to informants, these interactions, contributions and initiatives are entwined with, and construct the Rainbow Temple with, metaphors of uniqueness among adherents or explorers. This means, that the people perceive the Temple as a unique place. When I asked Philip why he finds the Rainbow Temple unique he looked at me (with blurred eyes as if to say: “Isn’t it obvious, just look around you!”), and then said:

the uniqueness of this place is about the structure of the place, its like down to earth in a way that you can feel that, you know, like you walk in a five star hotel and wearing jeans and thongs you feel uneasy, but in the Temple because it is down to earth and people are so diverse

and people come and go, so it is more tolerant to differences, I think this is necessary, it is almost like going back to the roots of compassion, and compassion is like understanding the difference you know

(Philip, field notes, April 2008)

Informants see the Rainbow Temple as a unique, sacred, spectacular, diverse and eclectic sphere, different from any other place they have ever engaged with. Their descriptions portray the Rainbow Temple as a place that is located on the fringe of society, an alternative to mainstream society, a place where people come to observe, “be”, experience and taste some of its pluralistic tolerant concepts towards communality, individuality and spirituality. The Rainbow Temple represents an exclusive reality to these people, not only because they say they cannot find this elsewhere, but also because for them it encapsulates and symbolizes the cultural behaviours that they wish to experience.

The idea that the Rainbow Temple facilitates distinctive, alternative behaviours is also evident in statements made by Fiore. Fiore is a man in his seventies, originally from Italy, who has been living in Rosebank (the local township) for nearly 30 years. Fiore, apart from being a neighbour to the Rainbow Temple, also established Samaya retreat³⁷ and considers himself part of the Rainbow Family. There are some similarities between the Rainbow Temple and Samaya retreat. When I asked Fiore about the nature of the relationship between the Rainbow Family and the Rainbow Temple, he said the following:

for me the Rainbow Family has done its time as all the phenomenon, the same as the sanyasins, there is someone who puts the seed and later on he [the phenomenon] comes up to the stars and slowly, slowly he dies up, but he [the Rainbow Family] hasn't dying yet, but the spirit of the Rainbow Family is dying, is only alive when you go to those

³⁷ Samaya was founded 1st January 1993 by Swami Fiore Amore and over the years has evolved into a small established ashram with a simple structure according to Osho's guidelines for living together (<http://www.ashraminthebush.org.au/>).

Rainbow gatherings, once a year twice a year, apart from this during the year people live their simple lives; they go to work, they married have children...most of them live in precarious situations, go through financial nightmares, children growing in dysfunctional relationship or single parents, so I could say that the spirit of the Rainbow Family is basically at the Rainbow Temple in the Shire. Even if you go to Byron or Mullumbimby or even Nimbin [townships in the Rainbow Region] you don't have the sense of the Rainbow Family, you are on your own, there is no family, no unity, you and your children, you and your problems and difficulties and that's it...but in a normal daily life I don't see any Rainbow Family, it used to be when I arrived in Byron the Rainbow Family was everywhere around cafes and shops, now only tourists. Where are the Rainbow people?

Ron: *where are they?*

Fiore: *they left; life has become so expensive because of the tourist push that the council impose on the Shire so they left up north. There are some individuals who are leading the Rainbow spirit, but as a phenomenon he disappears, to taste the Rainbow Family you have to go to the Rainbow Temple*

(Fiore, Field notes, April 2008)

According to Fiore the Rainbow Temple is an exclusive sphere where one can find or assimilate with Rainbow culture. Furthermore, the Rainbow Temple is not only one of the few spheres that represent this vanishing culture, but also plays a key role in preserving "Rainbow spirit". To some extent, the struggles of existence for people affiliated with the international Rainbow Family are similar to those the faced by the Rainbow Temple community: the loss of unity and the difficulty of maintaining Rainbow customs and values when Rainbow Family disperses, and the perennial shortage of cash associated with an alternative lifestyle.

However, despite all the challenges, the Rainbow Temple manages to maintain the "Rainbow spirit". According to informants, it is possible to experience the sensations, behaviours and lifestyle of a Rainbow gathering only once or twice each year, because these sensations disappear once the gathering is concluded. The Rainbow Temple, on the other hand, is perceived by the informants as a permanent gathering sphere which

accommodates and facilitates the sensations, behaviours and lifestyle associated with Rainbow gatherings. For these people when the Rainbow Family gatherings dispersed, the “gathering” at the Rainbow Temple persists.

Some aspects of this Rainbow spirit, according to Fiore and other informants, are inspirations and images borrowed from the philosophy of the Indian guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.³⁸ References to Bhagwan can be found not only at the Rainbow Temple, but also in Rainbow culture discourse. This philosophy has inspired and influenced many Rainbow people, including Rainbow elders, some of whom were, and still are Sanyasins (Bhagwan’s devotees). When I asked Fiore to describe the relationship between Bhagwan’s teachings and Rainbow Temple ideology and the differences between the two cultural entities (the Temple and Samaya) he replied that:

no, I don’t find any affiliations, the people who are there some were sanyasins, some may hear about, some read a book or have some experience with meditations

Ron: *but the Temple itself ?*

Fiore: *indirectly it represents one aspect of the teaching of Osho; the celebration the Zorba, this freedom of not having to obey to the law, don’t have to follow the value that society represents, people at the Temple they are free*

Ron: *this seems like a sense of anarchy*

Fiore: *well Osho was an anarchist, but not like the Russians or the Germans anarchists, Osho was a different kind of anarchist...but if you ask me, when I go there [to the Rainbow Temple] if I feel a flavour of Osho in the Temple, I will say indirectly there is; half of what Osho is teaching, the celebration because people enjoy there, people eat together and later on they play music, they smoke a joint, they dance and there are parties...so the difference between Samaya and the Rainbow Temple is more anarchist, everybody can go there and live*

³⁸ I have mentioned Bhagwan (a.k.a Osho) and his teachings as an inspiration among people in the Rainbow Temple (and by extension in Rainbow culture) in chapter two and chapter three2.

the way they feel, while in here [in Samaya] people come only if they feel

(Fiore, field notes, April 2008)

The extent to which the presence of Bhagwan's philosophy appears in the discourse of the Rainbow Temple is negotiated, but its influence on participants' histories, beliefs, symbolic behaviours and material culture is obvious to me. According to informants, the Rainbow Temple facilitates a "Zorba the Greek"³⁹ mentality in the daily discourse. According to Bhagwan's philosophy, the Zorba represents aspects of celebration, festivity and the joyfulness of life, and is used to describe the ultimate engagement with play.

Other aspects at the Temple that are reminiscent of Bhagwan's teachings can be found in the Rainbow Temple. Images, photos, books, mirrors and other materials or instruments linked with Bhagwan and the ashram in Poona are distributed in the Temple, and many conversations, debates and stories mention the guru and his teachings. In addition, various behaviours and expressions of freedom and autonomy are often mentioned by participants who link the Rainbow Temple with ideas of anarchism, an aspect that has been attached to Rainbow Family gatherings (Niman, 1996). I have asked Fiore to explain this point:

The Rainbow Temple went through different phases...I describe that place where the individual is left into himself to be there the way he likes, obviously observing certain things; is vegetarian, cause I never seen eating meat there...so, I see a beautiful place where people are welcome 99.9 percent, and they are allowed by other people and by Guy to be themselves, if you are a painter you can paint, if you are a meditator you meditate, if you play an instrument you can play, and nobody ask permission to do nothing...obviously, in every community, because we are human beings, we have a mind and personalities and we have social lives we need to set up a certain way to live

³⁹ Zorba the Greek: is an analogy used by Osho to represent motifs of celebration. See also Urban (2003).

*together...so like in the animal kingdom, we have an understanding of
how to live together*

(Fiore, field notes, April 2008)

According to this observation the individual participant in the Rainbow Temple is free to express her-(or him-) self as long as there is consideration of the larger community. There exists an environment of freedom in which a participant can freely negotiate various aspects (of spirituality, of the self, of existence, etc.) However, this description could also place the Rainbow Temple in the context of communal living and anarchy, because the community allows (or does not prevent) the individual from being himself and doing whatever one likes. Informants often made remarks that this kind of freedom is partly what distinguishes the Rainbow Temple from other alternative environments such as Samaya retreat.

A strong sense of community and of unity has evolved in the Rainbow Temple around shared activities such as playing music, the creation of art, working in the garden, singing through which a sense of togetherness and oneness arises. However, there are also conflicts and disputes, over various issues. During my stays at the Temple I have witnessed a few arguments between Temple dwellers, but I never witnessed or heard of any act of physical violence. These conflicts were soon resolved either by compromise and conciliation or in one extreme case where one of the disputants left the Temple. Conflicts and disagreements are not common at the Rainbow Temple but may arise when there is dissatisfaction with the level of dwellers' contribution to joint efforts (food, labour, etc). Disputes may occur when dwellers interfere in the private space of an individual (interrupting a meditation session), or exhibiting unwelcome behaviour such as drinking alcohol, or using "hard" drugs such as heroin or cocaine. Other offences include: sexually offensive remarks, overly loud music or damaging flora and fauna. These conflicts, and their peaceful settlement, induce a sense of communion among participants, and confronting such instances helps to bring the Temple community closer, while rejecting unwelcome behaviours.

In Rainbow Family gatherings, disputes or disagreements are resolved by utilizing techniques of egalitarianism (the council or the circle). However, in most of the cases

I have witnessed, Guy played a significant role of a mediator, and usually his word or rulings were not over-ruled. As the founder of the Temple, and a Rainbow elder, Guy holds the right to make important decisions about the community and the place. Informants and participants often talked about the way the decisions are processed in the Temple and some expressed their disapproval and discontent with the way the decisions were made. Many opposed the idea that Guy is a sole decider. In some cases, dwellers that had disagreements with Guy (but not with the Temple's concept or the rest of the community) were asked to leave the Temple. A few informants complain about the "un-Rainbow structure" of the Rainbow Temple, with its charismatic leadership, and authoritarian decision-making process, but they are in the minority.

I have also witnessed a rare case of a violent behaviour aimed at Guy from an unpredictable direction. As mentioned earlier, Aboriginal folklore is an important source of inspiration for the Temple, and dwellers show respect for Aboriginal culture, and for Aboriginal people. One day, an event was planned to take place in the Temple in which an Aboriginal film actor, a symbol and a model for his people, was invited to Temple to meet Guy. At the last minute, the Aboriginal actor had to cancel his participation in the event. One person from the crowd that gathered in the Temple to meet the actor, who was himself an Aboriginal, did not understand the reason for the absence of the film actor, and disappointed, he threatened Guy with physical violence. Guy did not retaliate and tried to calm the man down. After some unpleasant moments, the man and his crew left. This incident was explained by Guy, and other people who witnessed the incident, as "how deep these people are connected to the land", or remarks like "they [the Aboriginal peoples] hold so much anger and frustration". The violent person became a symbol for the whole Aboriginal society, and spiritual explanations were given (even to the degree of justification) for the violent behaviour.

These instances and ideas reflect on the reciprocated relationship between the individual and the community in a particular arena or sphere. This is a relationship in which the individual and the community are in constant negotiation over various daily issues. Fiore once told me that he would consider this reciprocity between a diversity of people, and the communal sphere which constructs identity. "Diversity creates

identity”, he said in one of our discussion. This diversity is more prominent at the Rainbow Temple than it is at Samaya retreat, (or other neighbouring retreats). In the next section, I will bring the voices of people who are affiliated with the Rainbow Temple, but do not necessarily identify with Rainbow culture.

4.2 External discourse on the Rainbow Temple

The Rainbow Temple has a different meaning for people who live outside of the Rainbow community. The following is a description of discussions I had with neighbours of the Rainbow Temple and with scholars who study similar themes. The neighbours are familiar with the Rainbow Temple since its early days and some are shareholders of the property, although they do not really consider themselves part of the Rainbow Family. These neighbours are supporters of alternative communities such as Multiple Occupancy (MO) and organic farms that are common around the Shire. During interviews, they described the early days of the Rainbow Temple as follows:

Early days was signing the legal documents, setting up this community as we became tenants in common, the council was another story because development [of the place] was illegal...in the mid 80s the council came, saw there was illegal dwellings and actually put a big sticker out on the post saying ‘do not proceed’ you know, and that went on for about 7 years and eventually at 1989 or 1988 the mayor of Lismore came, Guy invited the mayor here, and he was quite a cool fellow and he did a bit of a walk around and at that time everything was quite immaculate; the lawns were mown, very well managed, so when he went to council he said [the mayor] ‘I have personally inspected this property, it’s immaculate and I am very impressed, I’d really like to see it go ahead’. At the time there was a bit of a move [around the Shire] trying to prove the MO’s and the Temple was recognised as a place of public warship

Ron: by who?

Sam: by the council so they then did not put a lot of pressure on Guy about the nature of the structure...they did not hustle the Temple because they saw it basically as a place of public warship and it was also our community house

Ron: *for which community ?*

Sam: *for this community, for the share holders of this MO tenancy in common*

(Sam and Sherry, field notes, April 2008)

The recognising of the Rainbow Temple as a place of public worship legitimised its concept with the state of NSW. Having the local council recognise the unique ideology of the Rainbow Temple also legitimised the Temple dwellers, their diverse beliefs, and their communitarianism.⁴⁰ This recognition also links the Temple with Australia's "legitimate" sacred spheres, where religious rituals and behaviours are considered normal.

During the early stages of my research, people explained the establishment of the Rainbow Temple in the context of international Rainbow culture, or as a centre for alternative spiritual groups to gather. However, eventually I began to realise that the Rainbow Temple was also linked with ideas of "Multiple Occupancy," a term developed by the local council and the national government to describe the way members of alternative communities used property as a form of settlement.

The Rainbow Temple was one of many communal, agricultural and theosophical settlements established in the late 1970's and early 1980's in N.S.W Australia. These settlements were encouraged both by the local government and by the federal authorities. At a Land-Com⁴¹ seminar in 1985 it was said that: "[the R.R.T.F] is a non-profit, community based association seeking to assist and promote rural settlements". The seminar gives information on the position of a paper on "Environmental, Planning and Assessment Act, 1979". This seminar is part of a government scheme of collaboration with local Councils and Shire associations of N.S.W to establish a Multiple Occupancy pilot project in Nimbin.⁴² This information provides background on the circumstances in which the Rainbow Temple was

⁴⁰ See also Taylor (1981).

⁴¹ Land Commission of N.S.W. A Department of the local government. The Seminar was held on 19 April 1985 and was also known as R.R.T.F (Rural Resettlement Task Force) located in Nimbin, N.S.W.

⁴² Taken from: "General Information Sheet", R.R.T.F, March 1985, Rainbow Archives, 1980-1985. Mitchell Library, Sydney, Australia.

established and how similar MOs in general lived and were approached by local councils and state apparatus.

Over the years, according to informants, there have been many disagreements within and outside the immediate community about the Temple and its dwellers. Legal consent for the Temple structure was not fully attained, as Sam explains:

a bit of problems arise over these issues, over the status of the Temple and what it is, till this day

Ron: *what kind of problems?*

Sam: *you can't officially live there, its not a dwelling, you can't accommodate people although he does, and, well, there is a whole thing about what is a Temple? can someone own a Temple? can people stay in a Temple? so there is a bit of a problem of the whole concept of what it is in some of our minds, maybe not in Guy's mind, so that is going till this day very recently, now the council sending letters demanding Guy pulling down structures...so now the council is putting pressure on. In 1992 we got to the point where basically they'd OK us, just something to do in these things which was looking after fire management, getting water tanks and paying a sum of money for contribution for infrastructure...so everybody kept on going... left in a state of limbo*

(Sam and Sherry, field notes, April 2008)

The unusual structure and concept of the Rainbow Temple were not fully clear for people who are not affiliated with its ideology, or with Rainbow culture. These people did not fully understand what the Temple represented. Questions were raised regarding the concept of Temples in general: what is a Temple? Can someone own a Temple? Can people stay in a Temple? The Rainbow Temple was not the only problematic structure in this area. There were similar problems with other intentional communities and alternative settlements around the Shire during this period.

Perhaps more important than the illegality of the Rainbow Temple structure were problems between the Temple and its neighbours:

Sam: *anyway, its got to the point now where all the communities which are placed on the border of the Shire [geo-political borders] are being treated, we have finally been reached...The council is getting to the far corners of the Shire and they have been doing a whole clean up, if you like, and getting people to comply*

Ron: *so it is not just around here [at the Rainbow Temple]?*

Sam: *anywhere around the Shire, also with other places which were illegal MO's and so the pressure is been on them as well, its not just us although when the council were inspecting they said they were responding to a complaint, someone has given them information about illegal dwelling and various other things...and probably the full moon parties that Guy puts on regularly, so there is a whole history of parties here and this has been a bit of a worry for us to*

(Sam and Sherry, field notes, April 2008)

The relationship between the community in the Rainbow Temple and its neighbours has had its ups and downs: times of consent and cooperation and times of disagreement and conflicts. According to informants, conflicts arose over the history of parties, illegal dwellings and “other things”.⁴³ These conflicts were often caused by “ego”; when one person or another decided to make a point about something. Despite occasional conflicts, the local community (Fiore, and the community at Samaya, and people from the township of Rosebank) generally support the activities at the Rainbow Temple.

Like most societies, the Rainbow Temple and its neighbours are in a constant state of negotiating their relationship. Interestingly enough, during my stays at the Temple, I can hardly recall of an instance in which the community in the Temple made claims on neighbours, rather, it was normally the neighbours who made claims on the Temple's space.⁴⁴

⁴³. From methodological and ethical considerations I did not seek to stir questions with members of the Lismore Council, because this seemed to me as a direct involvement in a delicate situation that can result in awkwardness and jeopardise the rapport with informants.

⁴⁴ The most extreme instance I have witnessed, in which one of the neighbours parked his horse near the Temple and the horse defecated on the grass. This caused a major dispute between the neighbour and Guy that lasted a few minutes until both sides dispersed.

To summarize, the Rainbow Temple means different things for different people. In this chapter I have described some of the various perspectives of the Rainbow Temple community and their neighbours. I believe that the consideration of these voices is essential for understanding some of the distinctive behaviours which occur in the Rainbow Temple. During my fieldwork, I was involved in many occurrences which I wrote down as field notes and I also conducted semi-open (recorded) discussions with many people involved in the lifestyle at Rainbow Temple, only some of whom can be heard in this M.A. thesis.

According to some informants, the Temple serves as an exclusive cultural and religious entity. For them, the Temple enables a diversity of behaviours and serves many functions: social, political, economical and spiritual. Some of the functions the Rainbow Temple facilitates for these people were described as “gathering”, “center for energy”, “taste of Rainbow spirit” and as “an alternative”. For these people, the Temple is a sacred, spiritual and magical realm. They believe the Temple is segregated and differentiated from mainstream society, beliefs that I will analyse in the next chapter. The beliefs expressed by informants indicate that the Rainbow Temple facilitates a diversity of influences, such as the teachings of Bhagwan, and Aboriginal folklore. I have also described some of the relationships within the Temple’s community, with neighbours and with governmental institutions.

According to informants, the Rainbow Temple has struggled over the years with what I call a “politics of authority”. These struggles were conflicts or disputes over issues of legitimacy and authority that threatened the existence of the Temple. According to informants, the Rainbow Temple has faced (and still is facing) both domestic and external conflicts over various issues of authority, social behaviour, and the concept of the Rainbow spirit. It seems that questions of leadership at the Rainbow Temple are not negotiable, but confined to a sole decider (the Rainbow elder and founder of the Temple, Guy). For some Temple dwellers, this stands in contrast to Rainbow ideology.

Informants and participants often remark on the nature of the ideal society they wish to recreate. The definitions given by participants to the nature of the Rainbow Temple not only suggest that they differentiate the Temple from other environments, but also offer alternative ideas. In many cases participants explained to me why they are dissatisfied and discontented with their previous lifestyle which contains aggression, violence, unemployment, poverty, disrespectfulness and other qualities that contrast with the lifestyle at the Rainbow Temple. They told me they can behave freely in the Temple and do things they can not do in mainstream society. In addition, informants and participants were full of ideas how to change the flawed lifestyle in mainstream society. They often suggested during various rituals that certain behaviours the Temple facilitates should also apply in other places or situations outside the Temple. They described the future as a mystery, but they were full of ideas of what it should be like, an intriguing point I will address in the following chapter. The next chapter will critically analyse the cultural and religious behaviours of participants and the opinions of informants, including my own reflections. The analysis aims to describe the happenings and the behaviours as they are, and to offer scholarly explanations for these occurrences.

Chapter five: Discussion and Critical Analysis

In the previous chapters I have showed that the Rainbow Temple functions as a diverse cultural sphere. In this chapter I will make an analysis of this sphere, and provide insight into the complex array of behaviours found in the Rainbow Temple and exhibited by its inhabitants. I will argue that the Rainbow Temple is best described as a persisting gathering place for the local (and global) Rainbow Family. For the Rainbow Family, the Rainbow Temple symbolises a sacred sphere of “being”, where they individually and collectively “celebrate” their spirituality (in the same sense that Bhagwan treats this notion) through diverse belief systems. The Rainbow Temple is also a sphere where they can recreate manifestation of ideologies and sensations they experienced in Rainbow Family gatherings. These celebrative behaviours are influenced and inspired by a range of religious philosophies (ancient and contemporary) that have been appropriated and reinterpreted by the Rainbow People.

The Rainbow Temple attracts a diversity of people who wish to contemplate and negotiate their location in the socio-political realm, as well as their spiritual being. I claim that these people can be described as seekers. During their stay at the Rainbow Temple, these seekers participate in various rituals and ceremonies while expressing and performing a strong sense of community. In these communal spheres, people not only express their discontent and dissatisfaction with the prevalent lifestyle outside the Rainbow Temple, but also express aspirations, hopes and visions of a new, reformulated social order in the imminent future. I will explain these cultural occurrences, and suggest contextualizing the behaviours at the Rainbow Temple with similar cases. I believe that this critical analysis will shed light on aspects of identity at the Rainbow Temple.

In this chapter, I will use both critical analysis and previous studies on similar cases to explain these cultural and religious behaviours in the Rainbow Temple (Roof 1994; Turner 1967, 1969; Wallace 1956, 1966; Wuthnow 1987, 1998. and others). First, I will discuss how participants imbue the Rainbow Temple with meanings of sacredness and inviolability. Then I will identify some of the constituents, and explore

the meanings they attach to the Rainbow Temple. While on the surface, the Rainbow Temple seems to offer particular meanings to its participants, the ethnographic data suggests that the Rainbow Temple offers alternatives to participants. By a process of reinterpreting identity symbols and religious properties borrowed from other sources, participants appropriate their behaviours and symbolically wish to apply these behaviours to spheres outside the Rainbow Temple realm.

5.1 Sacred gathering place

As noted in chapters one and two, Rainbow Family gatherings are held in places with sentimental, spiritual and ecological value.⁴⁵ Moreover, the periodic gatherings represent a place or space of “sacred time”, of a certain moment. The Rainbow Family is a sort of “diaspora” that has evolved and developed from Rainbow gatherings that have taken place mainly in the U.S.A and Europe, some places in the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand. In a sense, the Rainbow Family is a situational enclave that performs in many places around the world. The application of various behaviours during Rainbow Family gatherings and activities, and the attachment of collective meanings to these behaviours, including manifestations of a shared ideology, constitutes what I call “Rainbow culture”. Rainbow culture exhibits an affinity for indigenous peoples and their cultures, eastern philosophies, counter-culture and hippie-culture, and aspects of environmentalism.

In this thesis, I claim that the Rainbow Temple offers a place for continuous cultural behaviours and persist as a gathering place for the Rainbow Family. The meanings of a spiritual, sacred time attached to Rainbow gatherings are limited both in time and space. In contrast, the Rainbow Temple provides a sphere where the sacred time exists continuously (or at least is perceived to exist continuously by the community). Within this sacred sphere, the Rainbow Family and Temple dwellers can gather consistently, and express continuous cultural behaviours.

⁴⁵ I have come to this conclusion because this is what has been manifested in various Rainbow gathering invitations, brochures, and websites and by talking to people who are dominant figures in Rainbow activities in various places around the world.

According to the Temple's original founder, Guy, he did not originally intend to build a permanent structure linked with the Rainbow Family. However, over time the Rainbow Temple became identified with Rainbow culture. Activities and behaviours that take place at Rainbow gatherings also take place at the Rainbow Temple, such as the rituals and ceremonies described in chapters two and four. People who participate in events at the Temple contemplate and engage themes that concern the Rainbow Family, such as economic and organizational structure, political hierarchy and leadership, ecologism and aspects which relate to the individual, to the self and its spiritual quests.

The experience of staying at the Rainbow Temple is similar to the experience of attending a Rainbow Family gathering, but there are important differences. The Rainbow Family gatherings are periodic and normally last for one month. Those who intend to participate have to prepare, adjust and rise to the occasion of the gathering. For Rainbow people, this trajectory of experience – a cycle in which energy and spirit are built up to be released at the periodic gathering – is attached to the concept of “sacred time”. In contrast, the Rainbow Temple offers a persistent sphere for this sacred time. Thus, while participants describe similar sensations such as freedom, love, energy, spirituality, harmony, connectedness, these sensations take place at a different pace and on a different trajectory. There are other differences between Rainbow gatherings and the Rainbow Temple, such as the quantity of participants and the facilities. The Rainbow Temple offers relatively comfortable facilities (for instance, accessibility, hot water, an organized clean kitchen, sleeping accommodation, etc.) in contrast to the Rainbow Family gatherings, which often take place in very isolated locations with fewer facilities.

The political and organizational structure at the Rainbow Temple is also different from the Rainbow Family gatherings. While at Rainbow Family gatherings aspects of political power, hierarchy, leadership and legitimacy are assigned with ideas of egalitarianism and equality, the structure at the Temple is different. According to informants, participants and my own reflection, the political structure, leadership, hierarchy, decision-making and economic structures at the Temple are determined by “one Rainbow elder”. According to informants, this structure does not match the organizational structure in the Rainbow Family gatherings or Rainbow culture.

However, informants describe the political and organizational structures at the Rainbow Temple as “egalitarian”, a concept they associate with Rainbow Family gatherings, and in Rainbow culture. Some informants occasionally remarked on this dissonance, which is the cause of most of the renegotiations, disagreements and conflicts among the community and with the Temple leadership, and sometimes results in the disengagement, disappointment and departure of some participants away from the Temple.

According to informants, the Rainbow Temple is not only a gathering place for the community of people to practice their rituals, but also “a place which holds the energy”, or a “place where magic happens”. Temple dwellers have assigned the Rainbow Temple with a set of meanings that relate to spiritual and even religious realms.

When informants state that they perceive the Temple as a focal point for energy, spirituality and magic, I see this definition as an expansion of the boundaries of the Temple beyond the simplistic concept of being a gathering place. For these people the Temple is more than a place where people pray or gather; it is a highly significant, sacred sphere, and according to one of the informants, this sphere facilitates “magic”. This sphere of sacredness is not limited to one particular belief or religion, but contains a diversity of belief systems. In other words, meanings of inviolability at the Rainbow Temple are not limited only to participants who practice a particular belief system like Buddhism or Judaism, Shamanism or Aboriginal folklore, but also encompass a colourful diversity of philosophical approaches, spiritualities and practices. This diversity is reflected in the name *Rainbow Temple*, which signifies the co-existence of cultural and religious practices and spiritualities as many (and as diverse) as the colours of the Rainbow.

Despite the apparent inclusiveness of the Rainbow Temple, some practices or qualities are excluded from entering this “sacred sphere”, such as non-vegetarian food, alcohol, violence or any act of aggression. I believe that prohibiting certain elements from entering the Temple is a filter or a mechanism used to distinguish between those participants who are happy to assimilate with the dominant culture of the Rainbow Temple and those others who refuse to assimilate and are excluded.

These limitations are an integral part of constructing the uniqueness and sacredness of the Rainbow Temple among its dwellers, because this mechanism enables to distinguish the Rainbow Temple sphere and maintain it “unpolluted” by qualities that are not welcome. In simple words, by prohibiting some aspects from entering the Temple (such as, violence and alcohol), participants attach sentiments of sacredness to this sphere, because they feel safe, comfortable, free and “at home”.

The majority of the participants feel “at home” at the Temple because it is a comfortable location where they can recreate sacred time in convenient surroundings and on their own schedule. Having defined the Rainbow Temple as a sacred time and space, I will now examine the people who construct these meanings. Who are these Temple dwellers? What are they looking for, and why do they find the Rainbow Temple a sacred sphere?

5.2 Seekers and magic: the search for spiritual experiences

In this thesis, I have argued that the majority of the people who participate in rituals and ceremonies at the Rainbow Temple and constitute its sacredness are best described as seekers.⁴⁶ The Rainbow Temple is a stationary congregation that serves not only a fixed, local group of adherents, but also a wider crowd of participants. Dwellers and participants state that they feel at home and are welcomed at the Temple because they describe a sacred sphere in which they feel comfortable intensively contemplating and negotiating questions of belonging and spirituality.

Informants at the Temple have often mentioned to me that they want to “be”, seek and explore. They also often discuss the negative aspect of the equation: the places, like the city, where they don’t want to be, or situations that they do not wish to be part of. Informants call these places and situations mainstream society or “Babylon”.⁴⁷ Temple dwellers describe themselves as not wanting to be part of the mainstream society, and state that they do not fully comprehend what it has to offer them. Often they mention conflicts or quarrels they encountered in mainstream society and their dissatisfaction with the lifestyle in the city environment. They describe experiencing

⁴⁶ See chapter two, section 2.5

⁴⁷ See chapter three, section 3.3

uncertainties, changes and doubts that made them start asking questions about “God” and “existence” or the “essence of reality”. Wuthnow (2007, p.124) writes that for seekers, these questions lead to constant negotiations and correspondence with other ideas or realities which leads them to examine alternatives. People are seeking answers and exploration of the self, because they believe it can resolve the uncertainty, or at least, to reduce the doubts or dilemmas.

Seekers search different themes in various occasions. Deleuze (1988, p.101) writes that relations with others contribute to the relations of the individual with the self. Consequently, seekers are looking for attention, salvation and a sense of belonging: they seek the profane as much as they look into religiosity, they search for practicalities and for spirituality, seekers look into traditional patterns of behaviours from the past and they seek or contemplate the future, there are no rules for the search hence the extreme sensations of freedom they feel, the sensations of carefree, sovereignty or the “abandoned play”. Furthermore, seekers tend to react to symbolic messages rather than rules, to group congregations rather than institutions, which feature substantially in spirituality of seeking (Wuthnow 1998, pp.8-9). Thus, the more they engage in the intensive theoretical act of seeking resolutions and of exploring symbolic messages, the more they attach deep meanings and intimate sentiments to the momentary experience of sacred time.

During my fieldwork at the Rainbow Temple, I noted that seekers come and go freely: they live at the Temple for limited periods of time, not because they are told to do so, but because they choose to. Informants often made remarks on the essence of the time they spent and experiences they went through, rather than the acquaintance or engagement with prevalent Rainbow ideology at the Temple. Some of the seekers had no previous experience with or knowledge of Rainbow culture, and were informed by other seekers or sojourners of spiritual and magical experiences at Rainbow Family gatherings or at the Rainbow Temple. This observation made me believe that seekers are intrigued by and looking for momentarily enchanted experiences or “journeys” (as they call it) and recreation of sacred time, than the meanings they attach to the Rainbow ideology. For example, people come to participate in particular rituals or cultural instances as drumming circles, full moon raves or other time limited experiences. Once these rituals are concluded and the assembly is dispersed, seekers

likely to resume their everyday life. This means that seekers are interested in the momentarily enchanted experiences more than the ideology behind the Rainbow culture. However, I argue that participants in these alternative spiritual assemblies are an integral part of Rainbow culture.

Seekers, through the process of participation in rituals at the Temple and the attachment to deep sentiments and personal meanings, become participants in these rituals. Seekers came to the Temple to explore new ways and are introduced to the alternative meanings of Rainbow ideology. They also find an attractive colourful ideology, which they now feel close to, and affiliate with. In this process, the sentiments they attach to the sacred sphere are enhanced, because through this process of initiation into Rainbow ideology, the sphere becomes meaningful and significant.

This observation explains the proliferation of sacred moments among participants. This observation is similar to the way Wuthnow distinguishes between the traditional spirituality of inhabiting sacred places, and the spirituality of seeking:

traditional spirituality has given way to a new spirituality of seeking – that people have been losing faith in a metaphysic that can make them feel at home in the universe and that they increasingly negotiate among competing glimpses of the sacred, seeking partial knowledge and practical wisdom

(Wuthnow 1998, p. 3)

Participants in Rainbow culture activities and rituals at the Rainbow Temple are searching for sacred moments or situations rather than sacred places, because these moments reinforce their beliefs in divinity, and in spiritual experience. According to participants, these glimpses of sacredness are ephemeral and depend on the situation in which they encountered. I believe that rituals that take place at the Rainbow Temple (digging a tunnel or spiritual gardening) actually encourage such sacred glimpses.

I found Wuthnow's characterisation of a sacred space useful to describe the experience of the seekers who find sacred moments at the Rainbow Temple:

rather than being in a place that is by definition spiritual, the sacred is found momentarily in experiences as different as mowing the lawn or viewing the full moon

(Wuthnow 1998, p.5)

Seekers attach spiritual significance to everyday activity, and this is evident in the Rainbow Temple where digging a tunnel, gardening, building a stage or even a shared meal is performed as a spiritual activity. In a radio interview,⁴⁸ Kohn describes similar characteristics to participants who engage in spiritual quests, but she calls them new believers and explains this idea;

They were intelligent, they were educated, they were aware of many other traditions, and they were curious about them. At the same time, there was a disenchantment with the proliferation of religious denominations, it was confusing, there was a lot of movement between denominations, and people felt that it was now time for them to take their salvation in their own hands and it was possible.

(Kohn 2003, ABC Radio)

During my fieldwork informants remarked on the loose ambience and the carefree environment of the Rainbow Temple. They reported that the Rainbow Temple is an optimal environment, because they have the freedom to contemplate and reflect while participating in everyday activities.⁴⁹

Kohn (2003) also implies that new believers hold the key for a change in their own hands: it is up to seekers to recreate enchanted moments. Here I use Hume and McPhillip's definition of "enchanted":

⁴⁸ ABC Radio National, Australia, 15 October 2003.

⁴⁹ See chapter four, section 4.1.

Enchantment might take various forms, but can be defined as the sensation when one experience events or circumstances that produce a sense of mysterious, the weird and uncanny.

(Hume and McPhillips, 2006, p.1)

The sense of the mysterious creates curiosity among seekers and the “enchantment” constructs the sacred time and the uncanny experience. This curiosity explains the seeker’s passion for spiritual quests not only at the Rainbow Temple, but elsewhere as well. Seekers are on a constant search to recreate spiritual experience because it may bring back the “magic” sensation of a former experience, or perhaps a revelation. Again, this idea is reminiscent of Hume and McPhillips (2006, p. 1); “re-enchantment brings back the imagination and the possibility of magic into our everyday lives”.⁵⁰

“Re-enchantment” provides an explanation for the way that seekers describe and justify their casual everyday activities, and why they attach spiritual explanations to these activities. For example, when Guy says that “digging the tunnel it’s a connection with mother earth” and “digging in mother earth is a good way to heal the soul”, he is actually justifying and sanctifying engagement in everyday activities by attaching spiritual meanings to them. Other examples of the sacralising of everyday activities are the association of playing music⁵¹ (in particular, drumming) with the process of healing, and the spiritual gardening as meditation. Roof (1994, p. 251) discusses similar notions when he describes the development of spirituality from “conventional religious routines”. Since the 1990’s, Roof writes, there has been a growing number of:

middle-age people involved in group activities, spiritual quests and new communities...congregations are familiar places where [people] find meaning and belonging, and a spiritual home.

(Roof 1994, p. 251)

⁵⁰ I believe that some behaviour at the Rainbow Temple can be explained by and are similar to ideas of re-enchantment, though I acknowledge the complexity and the limitations in using this concept.

⁵¹ See Hannan (2002) for multiple meanings attached to music at the neighbouring community to the Temple, at the village of Nimbin.

I believe that the Rainbow Temple is a spiritual home for these kind of people, especially when I consider Wuthnow's (1998, p. 8) definition for spirituality: "an assortment of activities and interpretations that reflect the past, that include new ways of understanding the past, and that envision on the horizon something distinctly different from the past."⁵²

The observation that seekers negotiate various aspects of their life in a limited "sacred time" in the Rainbow Temple, leads me to consider another aspect of this cultural occurrence. The Rainbow Temple provides seekers with a supplementary stimulus sensation of belonging in their way "to" or "from". That is, the Temple provides senses they are deprived of, restoring a sense of belonging normally supplied by the family, or other (intimate) social institutions.

The Temple also functions as a stimulating environment for seekers inbetween their "locations". This situation, of being inbetween positions, is what Turner (1969, p.95) described as a "liminal entity". Seekers corresponding to a mixture of cultural and religious symbols through rituals and ceremonies, demonstrate what Turner (1969, p.95) analysed as "obedience, passiveness and lack of involvement". Unburdened with "possessions, property or even a social role", the Rainbow Temple community, like Turner's liminal entities, attempt to evade time and space, and dwell in the interface between the "real" and the "magic" world. In simple words, the Rainbow Temple as a sphere of "sacred time" which connects two contrasting realms, and is a stimulus sphere for seekers to negotiate their "location" or existence. Thus, negotiations with or sensations of spirituality are not ephemeral in the Rainbow Temple social existence nor a mere epiphenomenon, rather an ontological reality, and such a reality according to Wuthnow (1998, p. 7) constructs identity.

There is another factor in addition to the human agency which motivates the seeking and stimulates inviolability at the Rainbow Temple. What makes the Rainbow Temple "alternative"? Why do seekers come to the Rainbow Temple and what unique

⁵² This description also explains the idea of revitalization I intend to discuss later in this chapter.

stimulus they find there? What other factors contribute to sensations of spirituality in the Rainbow Temple?

5.3 Religious behaviours and “Rainbow Spirit”

The Rainbow Temple facilitates symbolic cultural and religious properties. I argue that symbolic imageries, ideas and practices distributed around the place, are going through a process of cultural appropriation. In this process, the symbolic religious properties, which are borrowed from other sources, are being attached with particular, relevant and contemporary meanings. These properties are being reinterpreted by the Rainbow people so they can appropriate and facilitate Rainbow ideology.

The Rainbow Temple community (as with Rainbow culture) consume a diversity of symbolic religious properties, and are assigned with a large database of religious practices and ideas, but prefer not to associate formally with any particular denomination, group or idea. It is this eclectic nature of the Rainbow culture which assimilates with an idea that Guy calls the “Rainbow spirit”:

that's what I saw in 1970 [in a revelation he experienced at Big Sur California] when my spirit touched the spirit of all living beings, I realized oneness, I felt the oneness, I became the oneness and yet I was still an individual on my own journey and as individual I still have many lessons to learn but the understanding of absolute oneness permeating all beings sentient or non sentient, spirit is in every single atom and there is only the creator spirit in a multitude of representations... it's the spirit that matter are you Rainbow in spirit , and people don't have to wear cloth to be the pure spirit of the rainbow, I believe the purest spirit of rainbow is any man or any woman or any child that represent in themselves the great joy of being and share their love for life in a generous way, and here to learn, to grow, to mature and to flower, and I believe that sort of person is all over the planet in many many different races and creeds, so you don't have to wear rainbow cloth to be a rainbow person, absolutely not.

(Guy, field notes, April 2008)

It is this eclecticism, the Rainbow spirit, together with the diverse religious properties that attract a diversity of seekers to the Rainbow Temple. Because there are so many symbolic religious imageries distributed around the Rainbow Temple, it is very likely that seekers will come across a symbol or idea to assimilate or affiliate with. These symbolic religious properties are borrowed from various religious affiliations, and include Buddhist statues, Tibetan flags, Australian Aboriginal flags, the Star of David, mirrors (a symbol commonly used at Bhagwan's ashram), paintings of the Rainbow Serpent, an Australian indigenous motif, Native American images, and many more.

This diversity of religious symbols recalls Lévi-Strauss' concept of bricolage (Lévi-Strauss, 1966). Bricolage is a mode of interpreting and adapting existing materials to new circumstances or needs. While the result may be a new or reformulated myth, tool, a house, a language, or a discourse, it is important to note that Lévi-Strauss (1966) does not see bricolage as a deliberate project-oriented view, but rather as an adaptive mode of being in the world. Bricolage refers to a process, a mode of activity or being in the world, and the result, the object, text, and the outcome of this activity.

Symbolic representations borrowed from other sources are given "new" relevant interpretations, and adopt a new context that is somewhat different from their original context. Bricolage is a useful idea of understanding the process by which elements of other cultures are incorporated into the Rainbow culture at the Rainbow Temple. For example, there is no determined explanation of the original use of the symbol the Star of David, which appears in eastern cultures as well as Judaism.⁵³At the Temple, Symbols are represented and reinterpreted and given Rainbow-specific meanings.

Other examples can be the use of borrowed mythological narratives. When informants describe that they are "part of the *Dreaming*" or explain various actions, behaviours or statements "because it is the *Dreaming*" they are actually reproducing meanings from other traditions, time and context.⁵⁴They are taking the mythic narrative (the *Dreaming*, in this case) and attach contemporary context which justifies the use of the

⁵³ See Ofir (2001) for further discussion.

⁵⁴ See also Merlan (1998).

borrowed narrative. At the Temple, the *Dreaming* is assigned with a contemporary explanation, logical and coherent for Temple dwellers, and may be utilized further.⁵⁵

The reinterpretation and appropriation of traditional religious images in the Rainbow Temple is associated with New Age spirituality (see Elwood 1992, p.59; Heelas 1996, p.41; Pike 2004, pp.15-22). In the Rainbow Temple, this process is also a form of rationalization, where borrowed ideas, mythic narratives or imageries are been conceptualized in terms which to justify the belief system of the Temple community themselves. In other words, new explanations of traditional symbols are adopted to rationalize the Temple dweller's existence in this place, and create a logical meaning. Tumminia and Kirkpatrick (2004, p.361) write that the process of rationalization creates "magico-religious stories that organize reality for their practitioners", a reality which participants can affiliate with and understand very well because it make sense to them.

Another example for the notion of rationalization is the way objects are personified and animistic meanings are attached to symbolic cultural properties and to the surrounding flora and fauna by Temple dwellers (Harvey 2005). The Temple itself is sometimes attached with characters of a living entity, and concepts such as cosmic conspiracy, karma, astrological explanation, synchronicity, are used to justify everyday activity. The etymology of Rainbow Language and the application of aspects of anthropomorphism are two interesting aspects.

A distinctive specialized language is used as a mechanism for maintaining intercommunication inside the Rainbow group that distinguishes them from others. Language not only sustains internal solidarity among people in the group, but also stresses the boundaries of a group, defining their particular identity (Spicer 1971, p. 799; Castile 1981, p. xvii). The common language in the Rainbow Temple is English, despite the fact that people come from different linguistic backgrounds. Within the English language there is some rhetoric that is unique to these Rainbow People. I have observed that the tone, for instance, in a conversation between people will most likely

⁵⁵ I use this example to analyse the meanings of reinterpretations techniques, and the application of a local set of meanings to a borrowed cultural property, rather than to analyse the item itself.

be quiet and gentle. Certain English words have different meanings; the word “journey” is commonly used to mean this life, this worldly experience, and “synchronicity” is used to describe an action that was meant to happen. Rainbow people refer to each other as brothers or sisters and the Rainbow Tribe as “family”. The use of such particular vocabulary by the Rainbow people or by any people is a mechanism for social separation (Spicer 1971, p.799). While the differences between Rainbow language and the majority language are subtle, these differences are a “component of the symbol systems with which the people define their identity” (Castile 1981, p.xviii).⁵⁶

Everyday activities are attached with spiritual meanings and are featured by aspects of anthropomorphism. Informants treat the Rainbow Temple as if it was a live entity which they can communicate and relate with as if it were a person. Personal characteristics are also attached to symbolic imageries, flora and fauna and objects like the moon or the sun. When participants assigned meanings of a person to an object, and communicate with it as if it was “alive” communicative entity, and intend, act and relate to the object as if it was a subject, this process is referred as personification (or personhood) (Harvey 2005, pp.100-102). This process of personification means that the object or the cultural item that is treated as a subject becomes a meaningful object and is attached with a set of meanings that are germane and connected to the particular belief system of the person (or the group) in a way that make sense to them. Thus, when practitioners view the wooden structure of the Temple as a “sphere of magic”, “focal place for energy” or “connection point”,⁵⁷ they attribute the Temple with alive, active, animated and fluid spiritual characteristics. The meaningful objects at the Rainbow Temple function as an agency to distribute messages and reinforce belief systems among practitioners, because these reformulated cultural items (or the meaningful objects) turn into a cultural or religious sentimental and valuable property.

I am suggesting that the symbolic religious properties that re-appear at the Rainbow Temple are attached with meanings and sentiments (for example, personification) and

⁵⁶ See also Hill (1998) on the use of linguistics in different cultural spheres.

⁵⁷ See chapter four, section 4.1 and chapter two, section 2.5.

are given rational explanations that appropriate relevant local contemporary context. These rational explanations and appropriation allow the particular religious behaviours to be prominent and valid in the Temple dwellers' reality. The Rainbow Temple provides a climate where these religious behaviours make sense and can function as an agency to construct Temple dwellers' identity. This is the alternative lifestyle that the Rainbow Temple offers for people, because the Rainbow Temple has a low level of alignment with the symbolic behaviours of the dominant cultural environment, and also can be referred as a sectarian group (Wilson 2003; Broomley 2004, pp.93-94). The Rainbow Temple facilitates original inventions (for instance, the reformulated cultural properties) of a "God" or a "divine" that practitioners try to reach in a non-conventional way, in an alternative way.

5.4 Meaningful rituals: revitalization at the end of the Rainbow

Rituals at the Rainbow Temple are not a mere congregation of participants, rather a social assembly where participants demonstrate what Toennis (1988) referred as *gemeinschaft*, a close intimate social relationship, like those which can be found in a family. High levels of communicating meanings; instrumental and spiritual, mutual understanding of identity symbols and common expressions of ideology, attachment of intimate sensations and emotions, form not only individual experience, but more significantly, a collective experience.

Raves, dance parties, music circles and gatherings are examples of how "religious meaning-making activities" migrated or shifted from conventional religious arenas (Pike 2001, p.5). Wuthnow (1987, pp.99-101) suggests that ritualistic activities serve as perspectives on all social activity, specifically on the symbolic or expressive dimensions of behaviour, because ritual is the moral expression of ideology. Thus, when participants describe the sensations they experience during rituals like harmony, love, delirium and magic, they reflect on the nature of the arena they are part of, and this is another reason for the "sacred time" zone. Malinowski (1925, pp.30-31) described similar narratives with rituals of indigenous people he studied and says it is the "deep emotional meanings which attached to rituals" to create meaningful expressions. So, when participants describe aspects of healing, or other virtues, to a full moon rave ritual, they are actually expressing and attaching deeper meanings to

emphasise the significance of the full moon rave for participants, something that Wuthnow (1987, p. 14) describes as “dramaturgic.” This means that they are dramatising not only aspects of the self, of the individual, but also significant features of moral order (Goffman 1967). But, what ideological aspects do participants manifest in these rituals at the Rainbow Temple? How can these rituals be contextualised?

The complex arrays of rituals that take place at the Rainbow Temple are best understood as forms of cultural resistance. The rituals at the Rainbow Temple such as drumming or fire circles, full moon raves, parties, meditations, yoga and casual everyday activity, provide a counterpoint to existing moral priorities, lifestyle and ideology of “mainstream society” (or to the dominant cultural surrounding). During the performance of these rituals, people express their wishes, hopes and aspirations for non-violence, peace, love and harmony to prevail in society, participants hold hands, hug and touch, play music, sing songs, philosophize and tell stories, express love, harmony and sharing. Significantly, participants discuss experiences and ideas of the numinous and the uncanny. The main themes of these activities are manifestations, symbolic or corporeal, of discontent and opposition to ideas and lifestyle offered or suggested by the surrounding mainstream society, and themes (or dreams) of alternatives.

When I delve into the capacity of the meanings manifested in these rituals, I find similarities to instances described by Lepowsky (2004) as “magic rituals” and by Malinowski (1925) as “violence rituals”, as forms of cultural resistance. In these instances, millenarian movements (or “cargo cults”) intend to subvert and affect the will of the other (the opponent) and infect its ability to react. I also find Spicer’s (1971) theoretical framework of “opposition process” useful for understanding the complexity of such rituals and their meanings. For example, in the full moon raves at the Temple, symbolic and corporeal opposition to the central larger cultural forms (as appears outside of the Rainbow Temple) is demonstrated through singing, chanting, dancing and expressions of love, harmony or unification among participants, which can also proliferate such ecstatic sensations through the use of entheogenes or other stimulating substances. This notion of performing resistance through virtue is similar

to the “magical violence ritual” performed by Native American Tribes (Lepowsky 2004).

In the Rainbow Temple, as in those Native Tribes, participants believe they can subvert or reform the dominant cultural form by rituals of “love” and of “magic”. In other words, in both cases, participants use theoretical or spiritual means of cultural resistance. The ritual of full moon raves also raises conflicts with neighbours and authorities over issues of noise, alleged use of illegal substances and other activities. During my fieldwork, informants often made remarks about past conflicts between the Temple community and local authorities over officially prohibited or unaccepted activities, which I described as the “politics of authority”, a process in which the Temple’s community have negotiated elements of control and authority over their cultural properties despite threats (of having the Temple shut down and demolished, for example), made by the council or other state institutions (the surrounding dominant controllers).

These examples of resistance and conflicts reinforce authority and control among participants in the Rainbow Temple over cultural properties. Through the conflicts, process of filtering participants, rituals and “politics of authority”, identity is maintained. Furthermore, through the prophecies of resistance and religious renewal that are symbolically re-enacted in these rituals, the opposition process results in a reaction to the hegemonic social order and suggests the revitalization (and renewal) of the morals of the socio-political order outside the Rainbow Temple.

Niman (1997) noted that narratives of revitalization and utopianism were attached to Rainbow Family gatherings in North America, and I perceive similar notions at the Rainbow Temple. Participants in these rituals at the Temple attempt to reduce what Wallace (1956, pp. 265-7) called the levels of “stress” and conflicts, in the hegemonic environment of the mainstream, by creating a better and more satisfying reality. When participants arrive at the Rainbow Temple they are seeking techniques to reduce the levels of stress, which is similar to the second phase in Wallace (1956, p.269) generic revitalization model. In this stage seekers know how they feel about their lifestyle: discontent, disappointment, dissatisfaction, and they do not consent or adhere to the prevalent social system. It is also in this stage when they start searching for

alternatives, and look into other forms of behaviours. When they “come across the Temple” or participate in various rituals, they are introduced to a “new” ideology - that is, new for them. Seekers engage the localised religious properties and mythological narratives that are introduced by seniors or Rainbow people, and engage the alternative meanings of the lifestyle at the Temple. This stage is when they seriously negotiate and consider a change, this is also when the third stage in Wallace’s model can be analysed.

The third stage of the general revitalization model, *The Period of Cultural Distortion*, is when the “new” behaviours display. Participants, now introduced to alternative ideas at the Temple, become more oriented with the display of the dominant behaviours at the Temple, and increasing incidents of confusion and discontent (the “stress”) are being replaced by Rainbow oriented behaviours. The foundation for the new behaviours is laid and the Rainbow ideology becomes dominant in the lives of these participants while at the Rainbow Temple, they are adopting new techniques and deforming cultural patterns. For example, during the performance of rituals the levels of stresses are reduced. This is also when the fourth stage of the model slowly streams in. When seekers, Temple dwellers and Rainbow people join together in social assemblies to practice rituals, or in everyday activity, I argue that this can be understood as the final stage, *The Period of Revitalization*, because it suggests that the Rainbow behaviour at the Temple is now implemented in praxis, and forms of cultural resistance are in full transmission. New techniques and cultural deformation become evident in the lives of participants at the Rainbow Temple, participants loose the old stressful meanings and allow the new cultural or religious meanings to set in. These behaviours (through the rituals and everyday activity) can be understood as revitalization, because participants are convinced that by the performance of rituals at the Rainbow Temple they can put into effect their own set of belief systems (of Rainbow culture), and enforce a systematic change in the existing prevalent moral order, in the surrounding environment.

Having to represent an affinity with indigenous culture, participant in both cases; indigenous cultures and Rainbow culture, oppose the process of acculturation enforced by the “western” dominant cultural pattern, in order to maintain their identity. For example, in the Rainbow culture, participants identify with the myth of

the “Rainbow Warriors” as protectors of the earth by processes and means of theoretical resistance. I believe that this notion is reminiscent of colonial context of resistance through the establishment of anti-colonial movement and behaviours. These forms of cultural resistance are also on an ideological level, and rituals attempt to imitate those rituals originally conducted by indigenous people who confront colonial missionaries, goods and ideas.

Chapter six: Conclusion

The Rainbow Temple is a spectacular site in a sense that a complex array of cultural and religious behaviours occur. This site offers a continuous sphere for diverse cultural behaviours to inhabit. These behaviours associate predominantly with Rainbow culture. Rainbow culture is designated, constituted and constructed from the Rainbow Family gatherings and activities. The Rainbow Family (or Rainbow Tribe) is an international affiliation of individuals who share belief and identity systems with an affinity to indigenous peoples, eastern philosophies, counter-culture politics and New Age spirituality. The first Rainbow Family gathering was in Colorado in 1972 and following gatherings occur annually in places with ecological, political and spiritual meanings to them. Over the years, the Rainbow Tribe has expanded, and local Rainbow groups gather periodically in many places around the world. This thesis considers the Rainbow Temple as a multi-cultural sphere where diverse cultural and religious properties are coherent to and associate with Rainbow culture.

This thesis argues that the Rainbow Temple in Byron Shire, NSW, Australia, functions as a repository for the collective identity symbols and practices of Rainbow culture. According to participants, the Rainbow Temple facilitates similar sensations, and meanings of a place, to those experienced at the international Rainbow Family gatherings. Informants and participants recognize the Temple as a persistent gathering sphere and as a centre for Rainbow culture and they also identify the Rainbow Temple with meanings of sacredness and inviolability. During their stay at the Temple, participants reconstruct “sacred” moments they recall from Rainbow gathering or other spiritual journeys they experienced, hence attach the Temple with meanings of enchantment and of gathering. While in Rainbow Family gatherings the “sacred” spiritual experience is limited both in time and space, the Rainbow Temple facilitates a continuous sphere for “sacred” time to exist, an experience enhanced by the existing “Rainbow spirit”, the comfortable facilities and easy accessibility of the Temple.

The majority of the people who constitute Rainbow culture in the Rainbow Temple can be described as seekers. These people report that they are discontented with the existing lifestyle and social systems in the mainstream society, and who are determined to re-negotiate and contemplate aspects of the self, the profane and the

spiritual, and search for satisfying alternatives. This thesis argues that these seekers are theoretically placed into the context of a liminal entity; because they are in between socio-political “locations”. Through rituals these seekers also form a strong sense of communion. Seekers who participate in ritual and ceremonies in the Temple describe mystical and uncanny sensations sometime to the levels of an epiphany they experienced. During these rituals, practitioners describe similar sensations which exceed what Turner (1969, p. 96) called the “area of communal living”, because they collectively attach intimate and valuable meanings of a corporate body.

The argument that the Rainbow Temple is considered a religious sanctuary by participants is also supported by aspects of anthropomorphism and incorporation of symbolic religious properties. In this thesis, I have argued that symbolic cultural and religious properties are localised through the process of reinterpretation and appropriation. In this process, valuable and desirable explanations are given logic and meaning to various items, in a way that make sense to participants. The reinterpretation and appropriation is also associated with New Age spirituality, where borrowed ideas, mythic narratives and imageries receive new meanings, and as in the case of the Rainbow Temple, these symbolic properties are conceptualized as Rainbow culture. In this culture, a complexity of symbolic religious properties reformulates and co-exists.

Rituals in the Rainbow Temple are a significant reflection of the local culture. In this thesis, I have analysed that practitioners in rituals, ceremonies and everyday activities at the Rainbow Temple manifest and practice their belief and identity systems. In these rituals, participants not only reveal their discontent from the prevalent lifestyle outside the Temple, but also propose ideas of cultural transformation to society. I have argued, that in these rituals, participants communicate messages to which they show forms of cultural resistance, and aspiration to create a new world on the shambles of the old. These forms of cultural resistance are best understood in the context of revitalization because the participants aim to reduce their levels of “stresses” and dissatisfaction through the performance of theoretical (and instrumental) opposition. In this sense, the Rainbow Temple exhibits an affinity not only with Rainbow culture, but also with other revitalization movements.

Participants at the Rainbow Temple in Byron Shire form and maintain their social identity through their attendance in exclusive rituals which exhibit Rainbow culture persistently and consistently for nearly four decades. When the sacred moment at the Rainbow Temple is concluded, and the initiation is done, participants resume their everyday lives but they remain tinted with the multi-colour hues of Rainbow culture and Rainbow identity.

6.1 Ideas for further research

Alternative lifestyles and Rainbow culture will continue to intrigue academics. In this thesis, I have examined some of the symbolic behaviours that constitute a particular identity in the Rainbow Temple, but there is further research that can be done to explore this culture. In chapter five, I have examined briefly attributes of animism and ideas of anthropomorphism attached with or relate to the Rainbow Temple by the practitioners. I believe that these meaningful behaviours needs to be further investigated because they can shed more light on aspects of identity in this culture.

This thesis examined some of the personal, instrumental and spiritual meanings which participants assigned to their daily lifestyle in the Rainbow Temple. In chapter two, I have mentioned some of the everyday activities at the Rainbow Temple, and the particular meanings that participants attach to these activities. Some of these activities, for example the digging of the tunnel or the “spiritual gardening”, assigned with meanings of healing and remedy. Most of the activities in the Rainbow Temple (and in Rainbow culture) are assigned with meanings or techniques that are therapeutic. This interesting theme could be further evaluated.

This thesis argues that some religious symbols are incorporated into Rainbow culture. When I looked into the religious symbolism in the Rainbow Temple, I found these symbols are borrowed from other sources. I also found that these symbols are given “Rainbow” particular meanings, for instance, the Star of David or the full-moon. However, this thesis did not meant to investigate the full capacity of every religious symbol apparent in the Rainbow Temple. Whether these religious symbols are used with an “original” reinterpretation or “borrowed” reinterpretations could be an interesting theme to research in the future.

Finally, this thesis explored some of the exclusive rituals in the Rainbow Temple, and in Rainbow culture, including drumming and music circles. I have argued that these are not a mere epiphenomenon, rather significant events which can reflect on the whole culture. I have also described the Rainbow culture's affinity with indigenous people (such as the Aboriginal Bundjalung peoples). In chapter two, I have briefly mentioned the utilization of entheogenes in some of the rituals. Further exploration of this aspect could delineate the meanings of such behaviour in similar rituals in Rainbow culture, and the connection with entheogenic rituals in general.

Appendices

Figure 1: the Rainbow Region



(Taken from the Rainbow Temple website)

Figure 2: Map of Australia



Figure 3: The Rainbow Temple



(Photo was taken by Ron Fogel, during field work, April 2008)

Table No. one

	Temporary dwellers (up to one year)	Permanent dwellers (over one year)
Age	Mostly young of age; twenties and thirties	Mostly middle-aged; forties and on
Nationality	Mostly multi nationals; backpackers, travellers	Mostly Australians
Intensity of “seeking”	High intensity of “seeking”	Low intensity of “seeking”
Degree of Familiarity with Rainbow culture	Low level of familiarity with Rainbow culture	High level of familiarity with Rainbow culture
Intentions towards the Temple	Not necessarily intend to locate with the Temple culture	Intentionally locate themselves with the Temple culture
My interpretation	“sitting on the fence”, confused, un-decided, liminality,	Choose their location, settled, experienced

Figure 4: A shrine in the Rainbow Temple



Figure 5: (the same shrine as above)



(Photos were taken by Ron Fogel, during field work, April 2008)

Figure 6: A drumming circle



(Photo by Keith Christie, April 2008)

Figure 7: A Rainbow Tribe gathering



(Image from Internet)

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