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CHAPTER TWO

BRIEF HISTORICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND
OF THE TIMBIRA

My purpose in this chapter is to outline the history and the major social divisions of the Timbira, and to present some background for the material culture which is analyzed in the following chapters. Since Jean Lave has given the general outlines of Krikati culture and society¹, I do not intend to repeat this information here, but I will instead review the historical background and present ethnography that relate to the specific problems at hand. There is one major respect in which I disagree with the ethnographic description given by Lave, that is in the question of the distinction between the pukobyé and krikati. She chooses to call them both "Krikati", while my findings indicate that significant cultural difference still separates them.

The designation of tribal units and their boundaries is a perennial ethnographic problem. Tribal designations vary in significance and therefore must be spelled out in each case. There is intermarriage among all the Timbira (and marriage as well with some Central Ge -- the Xerente -- and Neo-Brazilians). The marriage among Timbira outside specific tribal groups, is no doubt encouraged by the linguistic and cultural intelligibility which exists to some extent among all these tribes.

¹Lave, J. C., 1967, especially her chapters 1 and 2.

I have chosen to maintain the traditional tribal designations used by Nimuendaju precisely in order to explore the significance of these boundaries in cultural terms.

distinque
Pukobyé -
Gaviões?
(4.1.25)

The Krikati, Pukobyé, Kraho, Apanyekra, Rankokamekra and Gaviões are the still extant Eastern Timbira tribes included. Also considered, are the extinct Krepubmkateye and Porecramecrans, of the Eastern Timbira division. The Apinaye, the lone representative of Western Timbira, are included as well under the term Timbira.

The other Ge -- namely, Xerente, Xavante, and several Kayapo groups -- are largely peripheral to the issues under consideration here. First of all, considerable temporal and spacial distance separates them from the Timbira, and in addition, their cotton technology is little elaborated and there are few artifacts whose primary raw material is cotton.

Some of these Ge have come into contact with the Timbira, most especially it is the Xerente who have inter-married in significant numbers into Kraho villages.¹ Kayapo groups were at one time located along the Araguaya R., but they did not survive for long after the turn of the century, and there is no observable influence on the Timbira that can be traced to them.

The Tupians, however, in northern Maranhão and Pará, to the east of the lower Tocantins R., have most certainly been in contact with the Timbira, especially where these Timbira have moved from

¹Helatti, J. 1967: 57-8.

the savanna northward into the forests. The Gaviões northwest movement of perhaps 100 years ago,¹ brought them into the closest contact with Tupian tribes with a simultaneous isolation from other Timbira, and their material culture shows the strongest modifications in the direction of Tupian forms.

The Tupian tribes adjacent to the Timbira are the Guajajara, whose contact can be directly documented, and the Urubú (Kaapor) and Tembe. The Parakanã, on the Tocantins may be included as in contact to some extent with the Gaviões.

The Guajajara are dispersed over a rather large area, and encompass cultural as well as social differences. For this reason, I have tried to indicate the local group which is referred to, where it is known. The Guajajara are commonly divided on the basis of their proximity to one of the major rivers in Maranhão: the Pindaré, Grajaú and Nearim.

The Urubú are represented largely by recent collections of Borys Malkin, who located them on the R. Gurupí. The Tembe are also located on the Gurupí, but have only occasional artifacts in collections.

The Apinaye are located in the mesopotamia between the Tocantins and the Araguaya Rivers. In the last century they have been nearest to the Tocantins, closest to the town of Tocantinópolis (formerly Boa Vista). In 1968, there were about 240 Apinaye living in two

¹Wimundaçu, C. 1946: 19-20.

villages, São José (with 155 people) and Mariazinha (with 85 people). It is Mariazinha that has the most numerous ties of kinship with both Pukobye and Krikati, particularly the latter. Travel between Mariazinha and the Krikati villages is quite common, and has meant that a number of artifacts as well as raw materials are casually exchanged between these villages. While in Mariazinha, I noted a woven cotton sling, and headband, and several twined hammocks which had been brought to Mariazinha, as well as one which had been made by an Apinaye man on the model of the Krikati ones. By contrast, the inventory of the other Apinaye village, São José, showed no such foreign artifacts. The latter village seemed to have more contact with Kraho. How long this differentiation of Apinaye villages has existed and what its affect has been on Apinaye material culture, I have no indication.

The Ramkokamekra and Apanyekra occupy separate but nearby villages off of the River Corda, a tributary of the Mearim. The Ramkokamekra are the more numerous, but with the Apanyekra they number somewhat more than the Krikati and Pukobye together. Their situation might be compared with that of the Krikati and Pukobye. Their most frequent contact is with one another, but their preference for contact with other Timbira tribes differs. The Apanyekra and Kraho, and the Apanyekra and Krikati have the closest contact. Even so, the Krikati and the Kraho are not friendly with each other.

Collections from the Apanyekra are very limited and much of the ethnographic information ambiguous. The Ramkokamekra are the best

represented of all tribes in collections of all periods. Although sometimes lumped together under the term Canella, I have tried to maintain, where possible, a separate accounting for each of these tribes.

The Kraho numbered 507 people in 1962, and are divided at present among six villages.¹ These villages are located within a larger territory which has been legally set aside for this tribe as a whole. This situation is unique among the Timbira.

Mixture of other Ge in these Kraho villages is considerable, in both variety and amount. As a matter of fact, it would seem that the number of non-Kraho marrying in greatly surpasses the number of Kraho who marry out. This may be largely attributable to the favorable position of the Kraho regarding land use. The variety of Ge tribes represented there, including Xerente, Apinaye, "Canella" (largely Apanyekra), Kengateye, and even some Krikateye (probably from earlier mixture), may also be explained in part by their central location in regard to most of the Ge.

Melatti notes, that the division of the Kraho into Makamekra and Kengateye by Nimuendju could not be confirmed or denied by his observations.

Although sizeable Kraho collections have been made, two of the villages (Aldeia do Posto and Pedra Branca, which were a single village in Nimuendaju's time) probably account for most of the

¹This account of Kraho is taken from J. C. Melatti, 1967: 53-61.

material. Some interesting differences may exist among these villages, but present data allow consideration only of Kraho as a whole.

The Gaviões exist as two remnant groups of under 80 people altogether. One group is located near Tucuruí, on the lower R. Tocantins, and the other settlement is along the bend of the same river at a place called Mãe Maria. Some hints of former cultural diversity among the surviving people, will probably remain just that, given the devastating population loss and present state of acculturation of this tribe.

The present Krikati are in two villages near the Brazilian town of Montes Altos, and the Pukobye are divided among three villages near the town of Amarantes. Both local groups are in the west central part of the state of Maranhão (see Fig. 2.1). These village clusters are separated from one another by a day and a half journey on foot, and from other Timbira tribes by distances of many days' travel at least. The Pukobye and Krikati today intermarry with one another. Intermarriage occurs between them with greater frequency than it does with any other tribe, although marriage with other Timbira is still more common than that with the more distant Ge tribes, or with the nearby Tupian groups or with Brazilians. In any case, the preference and the majority pattern is still that of endogamy of the village cluster.

The names of these tribes appear for the first time in the 19th century records, during a century which saw the Timbira tribes pacified and reduced in numbers by war and disease (Rimendaju 1946: 4).

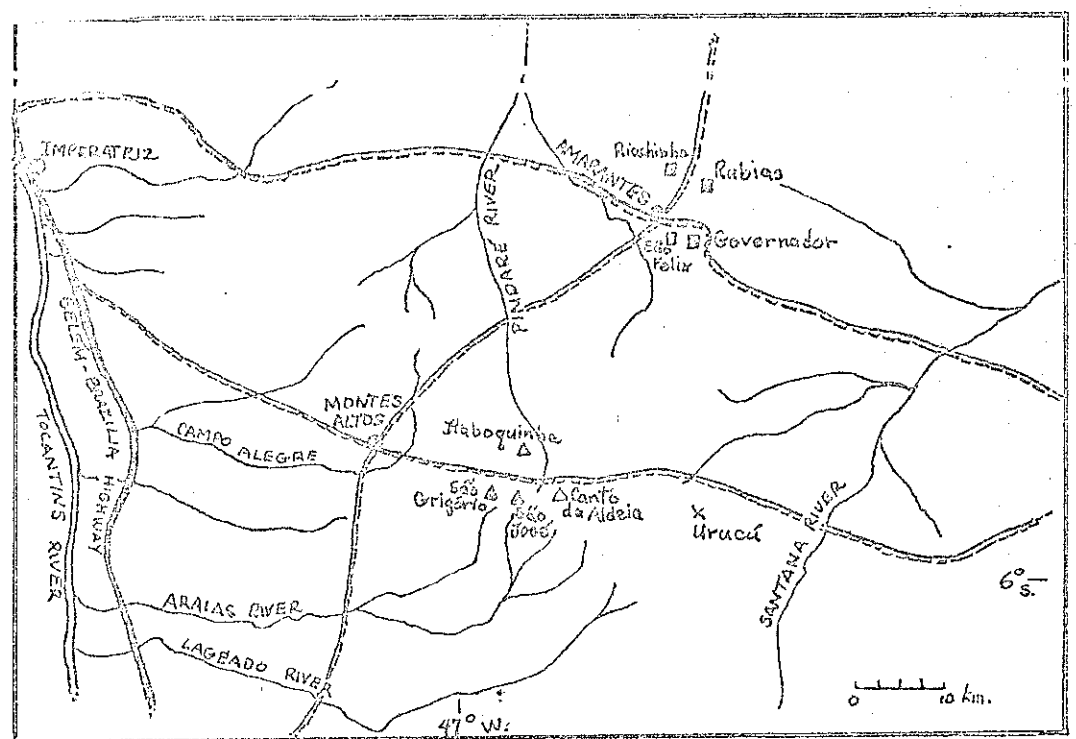
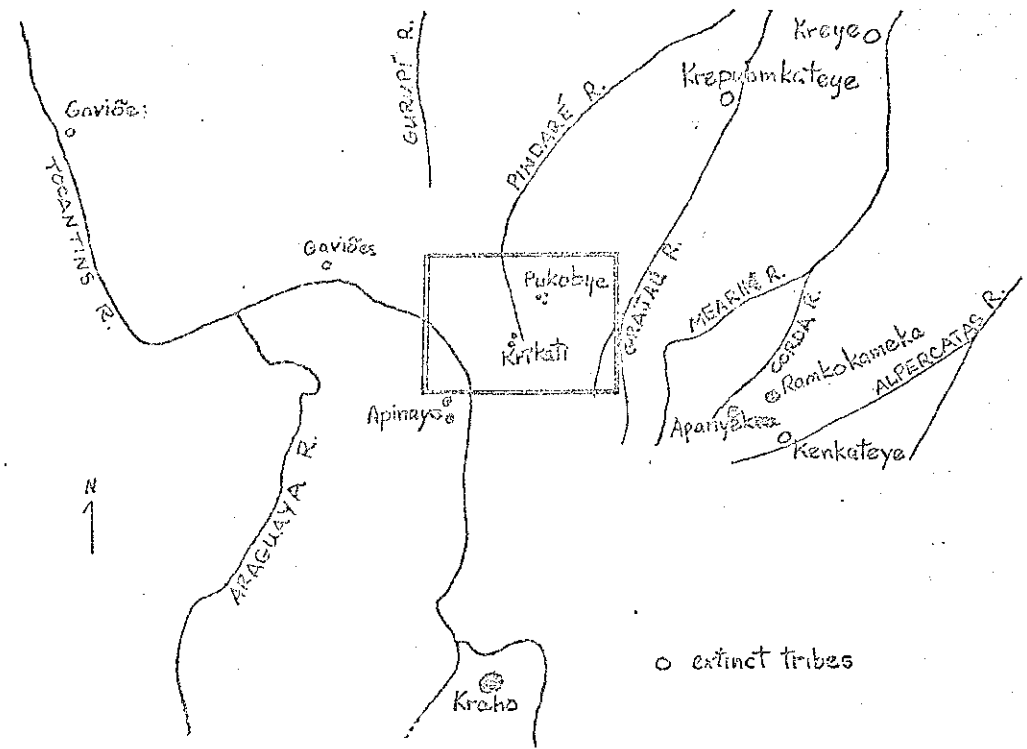


Figure 2.1 Timbira Tribes - Location in This Century
 Detail of Krikati and Pukoby Villages

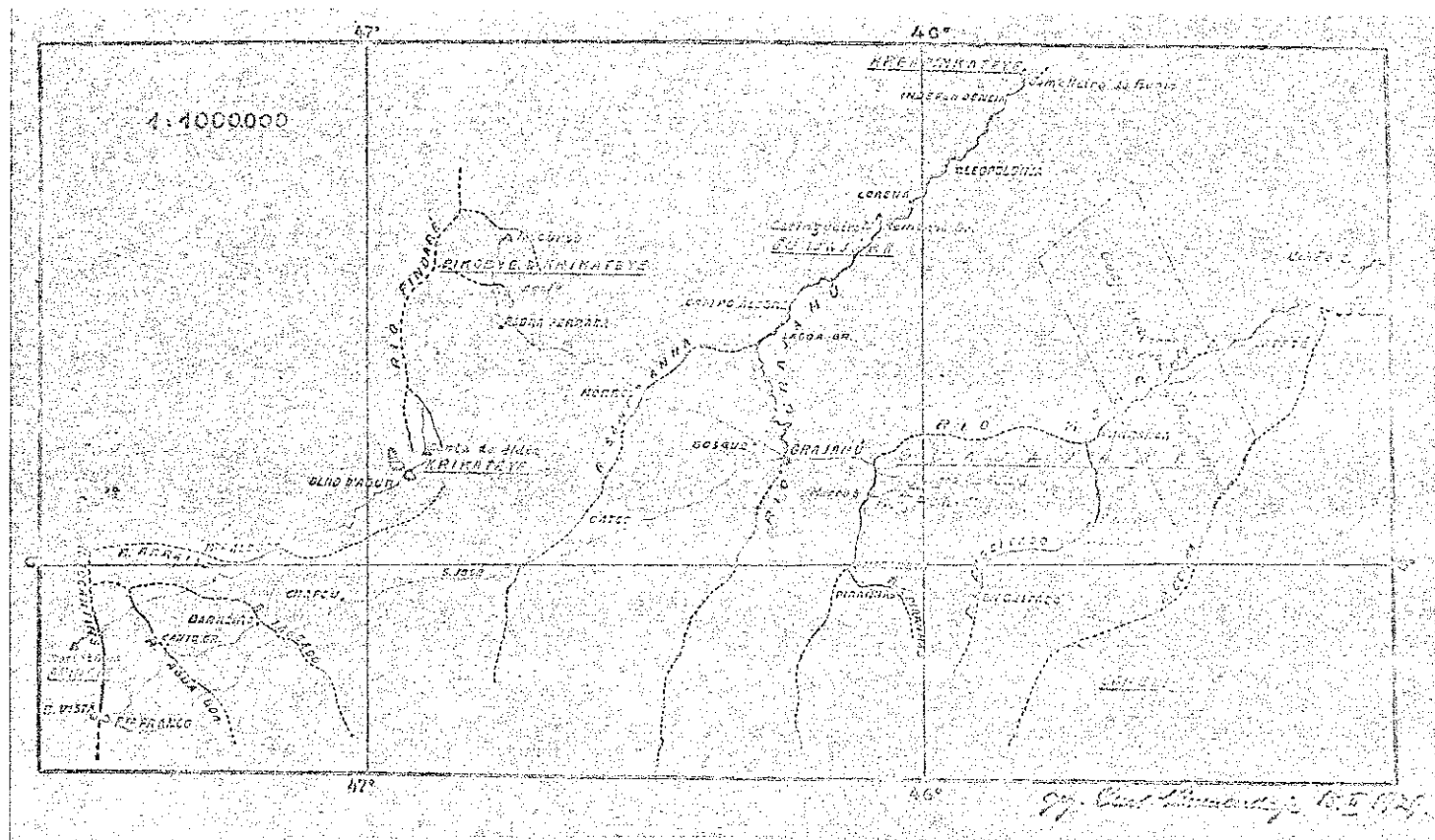


Figure 2.2 Map of Guajajara Settlements, located by Nimuendaju on or near the Rivers Mearim and Grajau; and some Timbira villages extant in 1929. (Map is from collection documentation by Nimuendaju, in HMV.)

There is little doubt that the social upheaval of this time was responsible for dislocation and mixture of remnant tribes which resulted in the redrawing of social boundaries.

The Krikati were first mentioned in 1844, at which time they were located along the Tocantins to the west of their present site. Then in 1849-54 they were mentioned by the missionary at the present site of Imperatriz. From this time to the next mention of them in 1919, when they were found in their present location at the Pindare headwaters, their whereabouts and situation were unaccounted for.

The Pukobye were first noted on the River Grajaú and its western affluent the R. Santana (or Santa Ana), in the area to the east of that which they presently occupy, at the turn of the 18th century. Although the Krikati and Pukobye histories seem to indicate a greater geographic separation than at present, Nimuendaju suggests that the early sources may have confused them and included Krikati in their accounts of Pukobye (summary from Nimuendaju 1946: 16-19).

It is possible that the Krikati and Pukobye have been close neighbors for a long time now. Krikati recount their presence at the mission station and speak of "climbing up" from the southwest to where they are now (the altitude does increase in this direction). Although now in the northeastern part of their territory, where they border on that of the Pukobye, they are still within what they consider to be their territory, which the Pukobye are not.

Difficulties in tracing the continuity of social groups back in time are common for the Ge and particularly so for the Timbira

branch of the family. Names occur once or twice in written records, and then disappear. Other names occur without identifiable precursors; and one is left the task of working out the amalgamations, separations, and extinctions of the groups. Even in cases where there is continuity in the tribal designation, there is frequently an unspecified amount of absorption of other peoples.

Let us look at the significance of tribal referents to this problem of identity. I will begin with a consideration of the distinctions which the Krikati and Pukobye make themselves.

The Krikati and Pukobye today share one set of names for themselves and for each other: the former are called Pōkateye (meaning "people of the savanna") and the latter are called Irobnkateye (meaning "people of the forest"). Nimuendaju, some forty years ago, recorded the term Pōpéykateye ("people of the true savanna") as an alternate term for the Pukobye (1946: 18). According to him, this term was used, with this referent, by several Timbira: Krikati, Krepubnkateye, and occasionally Ramkokamekra, as well as the Pukobye themselves (1946: 18; and 1909-40). This usage has obviously been modified, and was perhaps already on the way out in Nimuendaju's time, for even then the Pukobye were located within the forest zone, just to the west of the savanna area which they had occupied in earlier times.

But, in addition to this territorially based shift in terminology, the term Pukobye has also become functionally moribund, although still recognized by some older people. Although this need for

continuity in names is obviously not one which the Timbira share, I have chosen to retain the term Pukobye for the sake of continuity in the labeling of local groups. By contrast, the Krikati still use the term Krikati as their most common self designation.

Village names are another source of identification. Pukobye and Krikati occasionally use village names to refer to each other. Some of them even name people by reference to a particular village which has ceased to exist.

Finally, it should be noted that there is no term used by Krikati or Pukobye which refers to both of these groups together. It is curious that the weight of opinion from outside sources is that these are but local groups of a single tribal entity, in spite of the indigenous terminology which points up only difference. Let me indicate what these sources are.

Regional Brazilians, and probably after them Kraho and Apinaye¹, use a single term: Gaviões, to designate these local groups, with no distinction made between them. In the case of the Kraho, some old men still recognize the term Pukobye. I found no one among the Apinaye who did. Both of these groups harbor considerable fear of these "Gaviões", which, to my judgement, is not reciprocated to the same degree, on the part of the Krikati. One Kraho man said he got as far as Montes Altos to visit the Krikati, but was so afraid he never

¹Kraho information is from personal communication 12/68 from J. C. Melatti. Apinaye information is collected by myself in the field, 1968.

did go out to the village. The Apinaye do have the greater amount of contact with Krikati, with individuals from both villages visiting and marrying into the other, but this fear of the "wildness" of the Gaviões is still stronger among them.

In a publication of the Conselho Nacional de Proteção aos Índios (Malcher 1962-4: 143), settlements of both groups are lumped under the designation "Caracati" (Krikati).¹ This information comes from a survey which must have been done during the period of 1935-45, judging from the names of the villages given. Finally, Nimuendaju designated these local groups as "Krikati Pukobye" (1946: Map 1) in the wake of the mixture which he observed of Krikati with Pukobye in 1928-9. Since this occasion is the only documented instance of more than minor mixture between these groups, it is worthwhile to consider the details.

The 1919 census lists 273 Krikati and only 52 Pukobye (Nimuendaju 1946: 17, 19). Nimuendaju's visit to both of these groups ten years later provided population counts of 80 Krikati and 270 Pukobye. In the interim between these counts, the Krikati had been in protracted conflict with a local rancher and had begun to disperse from that settlement area. They abandoned the last village of Canto da Aldeia in 1930, and Nimuendaju believed them to be extinct as a group after that time (1946: 17).

The Krikati did not, in fact, disappear after that crisis.

¹This source additionally, and incorrectly, designates the term "Pukobie" as an alternate of Gavião (Malcher, 1962-4: 144).

They did disperse for a few years (some even attached themselves to Brazilian homesteads in small family groups) but by 1935, at the latest, they had united again only a few miles from Canto da Aldeia in a village called Itaboquinha. Working with life history data on the adult Krikati, I could confirm the continuity of the present population with that of the dispersed village. In these life histories it is interesting that there was no mention of even brief sojourns with the Pukobye, since we know from Nimuendaju that a substantial number did go there. On the occasion of his visit to the Pukobye in 1929,¹ Nimuendaju noted that:

the true Pukobye have dwindled to very inconsiderable numbers, the majority of the people now inhabiting Pukobye settlements being members of other tribes, notably Krikati refugees.
(1948: 19)

From the above information we must conclude that the Krikati who migrated to the Pukobye area, whatever their number, did not return. There is reason to believe, however, that the numbers were not as great as the population counts would lead us to think. Although the figures imply that some 200 persons changed from the Krikati to the Pukobye locality in ten years, other evidence makes this unlikely. First of all, the present population sizes are quite similar, and it

¹The date of Nimuendaju's visit to these groups is indicated incorrectly in his *The Eastern Timbira*, 1946. It is probably due to an error in the translation of the original manuscript from German to English. The error is on p. 17 of this book where it is said that he visited the Krikati the year after the 1919 census. This is contradicted both in his following discussion of the Pukobye (p. 19) and in the museum collections which he made of all of these tribes and which are dated in his own hand "1928-9."

is not likely that this would be the case had so many Krikati left their area and not returned. Secondly, even Nimuendaju believed the 1919 count of Pukobyé to be on the low side (1946: 19). Finally, it seems likely that by the time of Nimuendaju's visit in 1929 (by which time he had already recorded large numbers of Krikati with the Pukobyé) that Krikati had already begun to disperse locally, so that those who had done so would have been missed in his count.

The conclusions that emerge from the above discussion are that the Pukobyé did experience some increased influx of Krikati in the late 1920's but without any equivalent mixture of Pukobyé with the Krikati in their area. This formulation presents difficulty only in one regard: the Krikati today also claim to be a mixture of many tribes. They say that the real Krikati are very few, as do the Pukobyé in regard to the true Pukobyé among them. But, there is no documented mixture of other tribes with Krikati in any significant numbers. However, persons for whom there was general agreement that at least one parent had been true Krikati, were all above sixty years old. The difficulty in explaining the unaccounted for mixture could be resolved if the mixture took place during the last century, when there were no records for these tribes.

Let me now turn to some of the population data collected in 1968 which also shed light on the extent of Pukobyé and Krikati mixture in this century. These are especially important in the evaluation of the hammock material.

The data concerning population in Table 2.1 provided an

indication of the relative degrees of mixture: there are three times as many Krikati-born persons among the Pukobye as there are Pukobye-born persons among the Krikati.

In Table 2.2, the Pukobye village data are broken down by age category. Krikati-born persons in the two oldest categories are the only ones who might have come to the Pukobye area during the period of Krikati harassment before 1930. Those over fifty years might even have come as young adults, while those under fifty years must have come as children with their kin, if they were there before 1930. It is significant that the highest ratio of Krikati-born persons to Pukobye-born persons in the Pukobye area, comes from the over fifty years category. It suggests that the mixture of the two groups was greater for people of marriageable age in the 1920's and early 1930's than for persons of marriageable age any time after that (except perhaps for persons presently in their twenties). I have also included the comparable Krikati village data in Table 2.3.

In summary, we can see that these population data are consistent with the above conclusion that the most sizable influx of Krikati into Pukobye villages was during the crisis period before 1930. It is, furthermore, clear that the mixture between these tribes has gone on for at least the past two to three generations.

One might be tempted to use this ongoing mixture as evidence to support the view that the Krikati and Pukobye are really one tribe. However, this mixture continues to be numerically slight. Moreover, while some kindred feelings do exist between the tribes, they tend

Table 2.1 Summary of Krikati and Pukobye Population Data, 1968

<u>Krikati Villages:</u>	Number of houses	Total population	Persons of Pukobye birth
São José	17	158	2
São Grigório ¹	5	46	2
totals	22	204	4

<u>Pukobye Villages:</u>			Persons of Krikati birth
Governador	11	140	13
Rubias	2	30	1
Riachinho	3	26	0
totals	16	196	14

R.B. The total population figure includes Krikati or Pukobye and all other persons of other origin than that specified. In the case of the Krikati this includes 1 Apinaye and several others with one Apinaye parent, as well as the noted Pukobye; and in the case of the Pukobye this total includes a Xerente and 2 persons with one Guajajara parent.

1. This is actually no longer a village, but 5 houses now in three places all within 40 minutes walking distance of one another. Quarreling among these households is the cause of the village separation; and at this point it threatens to send one family off to live with the Apinaye where they have relatives.

Table 2.2 Age Distribution of Adult Population in Pukobye Area¹,
1968

Age Range	Year of Birth	Number of Pukobye ²	Number of Krikati ³
50+	before 1920	11	3
40-49	1920-1929	23	1
30-39	1930-1939	29	3
20-29	1940-1949	27	6
10-19	1950-1959	31	1
	Totals	121	14

¹Count is for villages of Rubias and Gobernador only

²Born in Pukobye area and living in Pukobye area

³Born in Krikati area and living in Pukobye area

Table 2.3 Age Distribution of Adult Population in Krikati Area,
1968

Age Range	Year of Birth	Number of Krikati ¹	Number of Pukobye ²
50+	before 1920	23	1
40-49	1920-1929	20	1
30-39	1930-1939	30	2
20-29	1940-1949	19	0
10-19	1950-1959	41	0
Totals		133	4

¹Born in Krikati area and living in Krikati area

²Born in Pukobye area and living in Krikati area

much more to see themselves as different. Thus, while the Krikati readily acknowledge themselves to be a mixture of many groups, they do not especially stress the Pukobye. Furthermore, during the period of harassment, there were Krikati who did not seek asylum with the Pukobye. One such old woman said that she had never even visited the Pukobye villages, out of fear of them.

The descent patterns of these two groups also function to maintain their discreteness. There is no lineal descent. Nor is there a precise rule which assigns people to a given group if they are of mixed parentage.¹ It is, rather, a combination of parentage and birthplace which provides the basis of identification. If someone of mixed parentage marries into the natal group of one of his parents the issue of his identity is essentially settled.

The significance of this pattern is that in spite of the intermarriage, there are no persons born and living in one area who hold, by virtue of some unilineal descent rule, membership in the opposite group.

The above pattern of group identification serves well for my

¹Krikati and Pukobye give both parents equal acknowledgment when their tribal origins differ. The suffix -tAmčwa~tabmčwa is added to the name of a given tribe to designate the tribal membership of a person whose parents are of different tribes. In kinship, this term designates mother's sister's daughter's child, father's brother's daughter's child, ego's sibling's child's child. For example, a child of Ronkugateye and Tugrekateye would be: Ronkugatabmčwa ne Tugrekatabmčwa.

e tAmčwa ?

purposes of classification of individuals as Pukobye or Krikati. Some classification must be made, in order to compare the products of individuals who belong to one group with those of the other. In the population tables, persons are classified as Krikati or Pukobye on the basis of birthplace, since they were all raised in the area where they were born.

This last point is crucial, for what I mean to discuss here are their learned behaviors. Although individuals may change their location, they do not erase the cultural learning that has taken place during the first fifteen years of life. Therefore, individuals who have changed tribal areas as adults (i.e., on the occasion of, or after their first marriage) are still considered to be cultural products of the group in which they were born and raised. The children of these individuals, if they were born and raised in the second area, would be considered products of that area. The influence of the foreign parents might well cause certain deviations in the behavior of their children vis-à-vis the new cultural milieu. Nevertheless, the cultural forms which the adopted group manifested in each generation would be determined in part by these added elements.

Turning now to a specific set of cultural behaviors, that of hammock making, let us see if these behaviors can be used to gauge the extent of cultural and social overlap between these Timbira groups.

The general questions being asked can be put as follows:

- 1) To what extent and by what means can we recognize and quantify cultural diversity within a single social group: and 2) To what extent can social boundaries be identified in technological boundaries?