

AGE AND SOCIAL IDENTITY AMONG THE
XAVANTE OF CENTRAL BRAZIL

A Dissertation

Submitted on the 5th Day of March 2009

To the Department of Anthropology

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

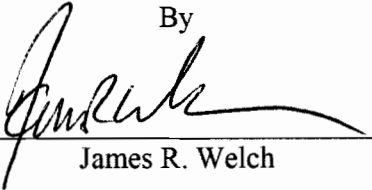
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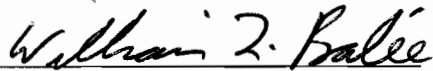
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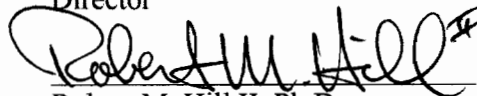
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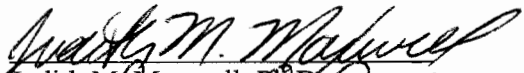

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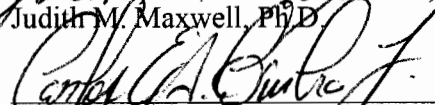
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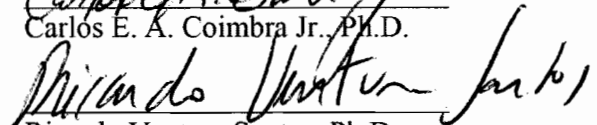

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An Abstract

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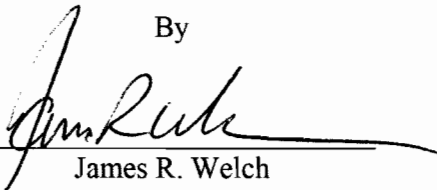
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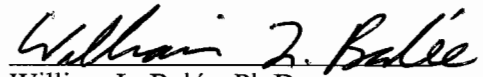
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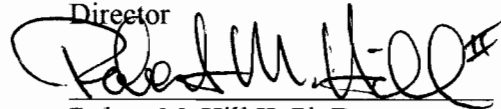
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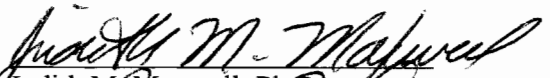

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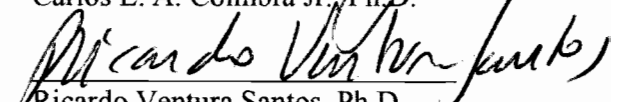

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ABSTRACT

AGE AND SOCIAL IDENTITY AMONG THE
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James R. Welch

This dissertation examines age organization as an aspect of social identity among the Xavante, an indigenous people in Central Brazil. The Gê-speaking Xavante are among Brazil's most populous indigenous peoples, with over 10,000 individuals in indigenous reserves located in Mato Grosso State. Xavante society, particularly its dual structural aspects and ceremonial expressions, factored importantly in anthropological discussions regarding social structure of Central Brazilian indigenous societies. The objective of this research was to investigate ethnographically how notions of age are implicated in the contemporary experience of daily social life. In this dissertation, simultaneously emphasizing structure and praxis, I seek to show that multiple configurations of age engage in a lively and specific manner a complex field of perceptions of sameness and otherness with important implications for other ethnographic issues of broad relevance in Xavante society. It is based on fourteen-months of fieldwork carried out in the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá community, with a total population of over 575 people. This community comprises descendants of the same population studied by David Maybury-Lewis in the 1950s and 1960s. I argue that age is a conspicuous and multifaceted feature of the social experience that attests to the mutuality and non-opposition of similarity and difference in its diverse manifestations. Thus, Xavante social organization is considered to be profoundly contingent, with age statuses and other

aspects of social identity being plural, simultaneous, and interdependent. Evidence to that effect may be found in how the social experience implicates multiple systems of age reckoning, including informal age grades, secular and spiritual age group systems, age set moieties, and genealogical seniority in conjunction with gender and other aspects of social identity. This presentation involves an ethnographic reassessment of the Xavante life cycle that takes into account both its formal and informal properties, attending to previous scholarship regarding the Xavante and other Central Brazilian and Gê societies by demonstrating that age is implicated in diverse aspects of Xavante social life, such as dual organization, notions of relatedness, and cultural traditionalism.

In loving memory of

Robert P. Welch

David W. Peri

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Prologue

Between an initial site visit in May 2004 to Pimentel Barbosa village, an indigenous Xavante community in Central Brazil also known as Etênhiritipá, and when I started research in November of that year, I had the opportunity to become acquainted with then Vice-Chief Paulo Supreteprã¹ in Rio de Janeiro. The occasion was the theatrical play *In My Dream, I Start Walking*, directed by Jean Lambert-Wild and featuring performances by Paulo and several other Xavante individuals. One evening, sitting with Jean and Paulo at a restaurant along the beach in Copacabana, I ordered a *chope*, or draft beer. No one at the table so much as raised an eyebrow, and I didn't think about that beer again for two months.

Later, back in the village, I participated in a spiritual ritual (*wai'a*). I stood in the middle of an arc of perhaps forty spiritual initiates (*wai'ãra*) that wrapped around the upper half of a circular forest clearing. Like the other initiates, I was painted and barefoot, the latter because my initiate peers told me to take off my shoes so as not to upset the spiritual guards (*dama'ai'a'wa*), members of the next spiritual rank. Five guards raised clouds of dust at the far end of the arc as they stomped their feet on the

¹ Paulo later became Chief of a different village. My references to his and other people's official leadership titles reflect their statuses at the time of my research or at the time under discussion.

ground and swung their arms at the young initiates in stylized shows of aggression. The guards worked their way down the arc toward me, repeating these intimidating gestures at each and every initiate in turn.

The youth beside me marveled, “Ooh, they’re stepping hard on those boys’ feet!” Sure enough, through the dust I could see some of the guards’ feet landing squarely and forcefully on top of the youths’ feet. He continued, “I heard the guards are angry with us today!”

Perplexed and somewhat nervous, I asked, “What did we do to deserve it?”

“I don’t know, maybe someone ate a prohibited food,” he answered enigmatically.

Still unsure what transgression was being punished and therefore whether I too was in danger, but at that moment more concerned with the approaching threat than its explanation, I mimicked my Xavante peers, trying to affect a nonchalant pose as I faced the approaching guards. I rested my weight on my right foot and set my left foot lightly to the side, offering it to be stepped on. I crossed my arms loosely and looked past the threatening guards as though they were not there. Three smaller sets of guards had already passed before this one, but without stepping on my or anyone else’s foot. Some of those guards had made such lackluster shows of aggression towards me, stomping a safe distance from my feet with relaxed, even bored demeanors, that I had not felt threatened. However, the approaching group of five guards did not give me this courtesy. My fears were realized when one of them stomped squarely on my foot not once, but repeatedly and painfully. He passed none too soon, leaving me shamed and with a throbbing tarsus. I heard the spiritual elders (*wai’a’rada*) at the far periphery of the clearing gleefully heckle me and the other initiates as we took punishment. At first, I was

overcome by pain, confusion, and hurt pride, but these feelings gradually subsided as I allowed my attention to return to the mesmerizing pulse of song coming from the closed circle of spiritual singers (*zö'ra'si'wa*) at the center of the clearing.

The following day, during a trip to the small town of Matinha, just outside the reservation, I bought a can of Coca-Cola at a roadside restaurant. Before I had the chance to put my lips to the opening, a Xavante man grabbed it from my hand, slammed it in a splash on the counter, and began stomping and swinging at me, as the spiritual guards had done during the ritual the day before. Several non-Indians watched with wide eyes and the other Xavante men erupted in uncontrolled laughter. Several moments later, the man handed the Coke back to me, put a straw in it, and sat down. Chief Suptó Buprewên Wa'iri Xavante came to my side to offer an explanation for this most unnerving episode. Initiates, he explained, are prohibited from eating certain foods until they are specifically liberated by the guards. Coca-Cola is one such food. "Okay, but why did the guards step on my foot during the spiritual ritual?" I asked. I had no idea when or how I might have violated a dietary prohibition. Suptó said he did not know because he was not a guard.

It took me several months and a lot of questioning to discover that my transgression was to have drunk that beer in Copacabana in front of the French director Jean Lambert-Wild. At that time, Jean visited the village on an annual basis and had been incorporated into the spiritual system as a guard, much as I had been incorporated as an initiate. Word that I drank a beer in front of Jean somehow got back to the guards in the village. As is appropriate in such matters, even those involving an unwitting foreigner, no one called attention to the prohibition when I ordered the beer, nor after I drank it, and yet the guards administered punishment for it at the next spiritual ritual. It was as though

lack of knowledge of the prohibition did not excuse violating it. The experience left me with the somber impression that successfully navigating these food prohibitions would be impossible and I would continue to be punished for my ignorance.

Fortunately, that did not turn out to be the case. As I gradually worked out the contours of the guards' prohibitions on the food that could be eaten by my group of spiritual initiates, I found they sounded more oppressive than they actually were. On the face of it, it would appear that initiates, such as me, should avoid an extensive list of prohibited foods until these are liberated, one by one, over the course of years. In practice, however, there are ample ways of avoiding punishment while eating what one pleased. A first clue, which I did not perceive at the time, was the less aggressive stance taken by certain guards towards me during the spiritual ritual. One of these individuals was my older adoptive Xavante brother, Eugênio. Another was a man who was mentor to members of my age set in a different, secular, age hierarchy. Both of them and a host of other guards were connected to me by a variety of social relationships that decreased their interest in punishing me. In fact, should I violate these eating restrictions, as youth frequently do in secret, they might be expected to keep my secret from other guards who lacked such reasons not to punish me. However, despite those possibilities, there were no rules that social proximity in one arena should trump social distance in another; each individual interpreted and applied the multiple social factors that bore upon his or her relationship with every other individual. In the context of spiritual ritual and dietary prohibitions, trust and distrust were constructed individually but in terms of the social coordinates that configure society.

The intersection of plural social bearings is the fabric of Xavante sociality, whereby nobody is only someone's spiritual guard, or brother, or mentor. Everyone is connected in countless ways, creating an infinitely varied field of perceptions of social proximity and distance that people draw on as they encounter one another in different moments. Contingency is a factor in all human relationships for the Xavante.

The purpose of this dissertation is to show how multiple configurations of age identity and relative age are conspicuous features of contemporary Xavante social structure with extensive implications for social behavior. I seek to show that age organization engages in a lively and specific manner a complex field of perceptions of sameness and otherness. It is a social dynamic that involves the cultural recognition of the simultaneousness and mutual constitution of hierarchy and equality, separation and integration, and individuality and collectivity. This focus attends to previous scholarship regarding the Xavante and other Central Brazilian and Gê societies that tend to diminish the relative importance of age among those societies by demonstrating that age is implicated in diverse aspects of Xavante social life, such as dual organization, notions of relatedness, and cultural traditionalism.

My primary focus is the Xavante social experience, considered broadly, as it involves both social *structure* and social *practice*. For the purposes of this dissertation, I consider structures to be the relationship morphologies that link people and contribute to their social statuses in society. That formulation loosely follows Lévi-Strauss (1963:277-323) and is similar to what Radcliffe-Brown called "structural form" (1952:9-11). I apply the notion of social structure in such a way as to anticipate that it overlaps with and engages other dimensions such as social relations, patterns of social behavior, social

roles, social values, social ideologies, and social institutions (Radcliffe-Brown 1940; Parsons 1951:24-67; Radcliffe-Brown 1952:9-11; Lévi-Strauss 1963:279). Furthermore, I consider social structure to be inextricably linked to individual experience, and therefore to such anthropological concepts as action, practice, agency, praxis, and personhood (Bourdieu 1977 [1972]:78; Giddens 1979:56; Ortner 1984; Harris 1989; Fuchs 2001). Recognition of those connections informs my approach, as I seek to apply as an ethnographic strategy the basic notion that they are dynamically interrelated. I use the social experience, considered individually and collectively, as an investigative approach to ascertaining social morphologies and as a way to evaluate how people engage and understand those morphologies. I attempt to assess the practical import of social structure vis-à-vis close scrutiny of individual action, with all of its inherent inconsistencies and contradictions. How people apply, conform to, resist, and modify paradigmatic structures indicates their social meanings and demonstrates the potential that they are simultaneously encompassing and multifarious.

It is true that Xavante ceremonialism is profoundly affective and emotional, and as it was for me, arduous. Indeed, Xavante ceremonialism is dramatic and photogenic, making it an ideal literary and audiovisual subject. It also beautifully captures some of the more overt and intriguing aspects of Xavante culture, considered externally, rendering it appealing to anthropologists. Indeed, iconic ritual performances, like the one described above, compellingly illustrate some of the formal structures of Xavante social life. Accordingly, for good reasons, many ethnographers have paid close attention to ceremonial expression in Xavante society. Maybury-Lewis painstakingly elaborated Xavante ceremonialism as evidence of that society's symbolic social structures (1967).

Regina A. P. Müller systematically catalogued ceremonial body decoration as an ethnographic window into the organization of Xavante society (1976, 1992). Aracy Lopes da Silva addressed ceremonial name transmission and formal friendship in order to critically analyze the nature of Xavante social organization (1986). Laura Graham studied Xavante ritual performances and discourse as means of constructing social identity (1995). In this dissertation, I also discuss Xavante ceremonialism, but only secondarily.

My approach derives principally from my field experience with the Xavante, in which I encountered “social structure” to be so overt and tangible, expressed abundantly in every-day speech and action, that I could not escape considering it to be a relevant factor in social reality. Among the Xavante, social structure is manifest in explicit paradigmatic perspectives regarding the conformity of normative social behavior to proper ideal patterns, which are understood emically in not so very different terms than the models of structuralist anthropologists. The Xavante themselves tend to celebrate ceremonialism as the ultimate expression of social order. However, the spiritual ritual described above throws into relief some of the complexities involved in approaching social structure through the lens of ceremonialism. Although those ritual activities and roles were explicit manifestations of highly formal social structures, the individuals who performed them did so according to their own social bearings, experiences, and interests. I choose to place much of my ethnographic attention on everyday experience rather than ceremonialism because it is an arena where the informality of life illustrates some of the more nuanced aspects of social life at the interface between social structure and practice.

I focus on a particularly complex and culturally salient aspect of that interface, age organization and social identity. In my experience, age organization is an explicit and

pervasive aspect of the Xavante social experience. In fact, as a “young” (by Xavante social convention) male researcher in a Xavante community, I sometimes felt like I was being beaten over the head with the age distinctions people drew. For the Xavante, age hierarchies are not abstractions; they are conspicuously part of how people see and interact with each other. Surely other researchers have had similar reactions, which may explain why Xavante age organization appears frequently in the literature, especially as regards its formal expressions (Maybury-Lewis 1967:105-164; Silva 1986:59-141; Graham 1995:91-102).

Considered generally, outside the Xavante context, passage through the human life cycle is accompanied by numerous physical, psychological, social, and experiential changes. Although societies recognize and implement these changes differently, notions of age are basic criteria for how social status changes during life. This is true even in otherwise egalitarian societies insofar as hierarchism by age and sex are usual means of social differentiation (Flanagan 1989:246). However, not all societies construe age groups in formal terms. In the United States, for example, an abundant set of contemporary English terms are used informally to distinguish relative age. Gender-neutral terms, which indicate age with a relatively high degree of resolution, include infant, baby, child, kid, adolescent, teen, youth, adult, old person, and elder. Gender-specific terms, which have relatively low resolution, include, for males, such terms as boy, guy, man, gentleman, and for females, girl, gal, woman, and lady. These terms are not mutually exclusive and their application is contingent on many contextual and perspectival factors. For example, a polite boy might be called a “gentleman” while irresponsible adult male behavior might prompt the comment “boys will be boys.”

Similarly, a mother might say that her adolescent daughter is a “beautiful woman” and yet call her adult daughter “my baby.” Studying the various informal ways people deploy such terms is a means of ascertaining the cultural and social meanings of age statuses.

In some societies, age hierarchies are formalized in terms of distinct age sets (cohorts) that pass through fixed age grades (ranks) (Prins 1953:10; Stewart 1977:2; Bernardi 1985:21-22). An analogy is United States university structure, in which cohorts called *classes* (e.g., “the class of 2007”) pass through a series of ranks called *years* (i.e. freshman, sophomore, junior, senior). Such cultural arrangements, called age group systems (also, age set systems and age class systems), are best known from Africa and North America (Stewart 1977:15-24), and were first recognized in South America by Curt Nimuendaju among the Gê-speaking Canela of Central Brazil (1946:98-103). Later, through the work of Maybury-Lewis, the Xavante society became an emblematic example of South American age group systems (1967). Despite that recognition, the subject received relatively subsequent little scholarly attention.

I address it here because my field experience indicated age organization to be extremely pertinent to the contemporary Xavante experience and to be an effective lens into other ethnographic issues of broad relevance in Xavante society. Although my approach engages the notions of structure and practice, as mentioned above, my research more explicitly engages the field of Gê and Central Brazilian studies, with all its theoretical diversity.

The conventional association between the Gê language family and Central Brazil partially derives from a certain geographical congruence between Gê-speaking populations, including the Xavante, and the Central Brazil region, which is dominated by

closed savannahs (*cerrado* in Portuguese) and the Brazilian Central Plateau (Figure 1) (Barbosa and Nascimento 1993:166; Dudley and Welch 2006:59). As has been thoroughly reviewed elsewhere, the body of Gê and Central Brazilian literature has strongly influenced and been influenced by anthropological structuralism and interacted with abundant other anthropological traditions (Carneiro da Cunha 1993; Gordon 1996; Coelho de Souza 2002). In the next section, I provide a brief historical overview of that literature in order to introduce some of the primary scholarly themes that situate and inform this dissertation.

1.2. Gê and Central Brazilian studies

The current formulation of the Gê language family was first proposed by Loukotka (1935), who distinguished it from the previous and more ample grouping by the same name, then also known as Tapuya (von Martius 1867:282-296; Brinton 1901:236-239; Rivet 1924; Wright 1996:335). Based on a brief vocabulary comparison, Mason (1950:287-291) formalized that distinction, renaming the larger and more inclusive grouping Macro-Gê and adjusting the member languages at both levels. Nimuendaju and Lowie first suggested that Gê-speaking and other Central Brazilian groups display a solid core of derived cultural similarities, thereby defining them as a coherent unit of anthropological study (Nimuendaju and Lowie 1937:579-580; Lowie 1941:192-193). Among the cultural features identified by those scholars as characteristic of Gê-speaking groups and which continue to be regarded as such by contemporary scholars are circular villages, log racing, exogamous moieties, uxorilocal residence, and formal name-giving

systems (Nimuendaju and Lowie 1937:579; Lowie 1941:192).² Although the specific groups included in this culture area and the names given to it varied by author (Lowie 1946a; Galvão 1960; Murdock 1974:31-32; Maybury-Lewis 1979c:3-6), it early became a basic unit of analysis in various areas of scholarship, including culture, linguistics, history, and biology. The cultural integrity of that unit became a primary assumption of Gê and Central Brazilian scholarship and remains a paradigmatic principle in the field. Recent literature has questioned that assumption based on another Lévi-Straussian assumption, that Central Brazilian societies should also share fundamental structures with other South American societies (Coelho de Souza 2002:73-74). I choose to restrict this theoretical review to the Gê and Central Brazilian literature because it most directly reflects on my particular ethnographic topic, which is Xavante age organization. A more ample comparison between my Xavante data and data from other societies in South America and elsewhere is appropriate, but I do not undertake it here.

One of the earliest concerns of Gê and Central Brazilian studies was the apparent contradiction between these societies' remarkably simple material technology and surprisingly complex social organization, which challenged previous characterizations as "marginal" hunters and gatherers (Cooper 1942b:8-11; Cooper 1942a; Schmidt 1942 [1913]; Lowie 1946a; Lévi-Strauss 1963:104-105; Maybury-Lewis 1979c:1-2). Initial attempts to reconcile this apparent paradox did not gain widespread or lasting support (Nimuendaju and Lowie 1937:579-580; Lowie 1941; Lévi-Strauss 1944; Lowie

² Although Nimuendaju (1937:579) and Lowie (1941:192) did not identify age organization as characteristic of the Gê culture area, it was a prominent topic in their discussions of specific Gê-speaking groups.

1949:333; Maybury-Lewis 1979d:301-303), but the subject remained of interest and led to new investigative approaches to address the relationship between Central Brazilian societies and the physical landscape (Bamberger 1967; Gross 1979; Flowers 1983; Posey 1985; Flowers 1994; Gugelmin 1995; Santos et al. 1997; Fisher 2000; Coimbra et al. 2002). Although much of this scholarship remains pertinent to Gê ethnology, it does not directly inform this dissertation because I do not address human ecological aspects of Xavante society. However, Terence Turner responded specifically to the question of complex social organization in combination with predominantly hunter-gatherer subsistence regimes in a manner that bears more directly on the topic of Xavante age organization. He proposed a structural Marxist model, whereby Central Brazilian modes of production and forms of sociocultural organization institutionalize and reinforce social control of youth by elders and of women by men (Turner 1979a, 1984). Turner's model is relevant because it demonstrates an intentional engagement with both symbolic and materialistic interpretations of Gê and Central Brazilian societies.

Lévi-Strauss strongly affected the course of Gê and Central Brazilian studies by reformulating the relationship between these groups originally proposed by Nimuendaju and Lowie (Nimuendaju and Lowie 1937:579-580; Lowie 1941:192-193), proposing that they comprise a single sociocultural complex and that the differences observed among them could be attributed to variations on or elaborations of a single, shared underlying structure (Lévi-Strauss 1963:130). That formulation of the cultural unity of Central Brazilian groups established new possibilities for the integrated analysis of Central Brazilian sociocultural systems, including the prevalence of age organization among them, without reference to material dimensions. Central Brazilian societies, especially

Nambiquara and Bororo, also had an important influence on Lévi-Strauss's scholarship, providing material for his initial and ongoing formulations of structuralism (e.g., Lévi-Strauss 1943, 1944, 1963). Perhaps most profoundly, they stimulated his innovative ideas regarding dual organization that continue to factor importantly into anthropological thought regarding indigenous Lowland South America (Viveiros de Castro 1998b; Coelho de Souza and Fausto 2004). Those ideas and others regarding the structural analysis of social organization, kinship, and mythology became primary points of reference for an ample body of scholarship regarding Gê and Central Brazilian sociosymbolic organization (Dudley and Welch 2006:64). They also comprise an important point of reference for this dissertation because they continue to influence anthropological representations of Xavante social organization.

Subsequent Central Brazilian scholarship remained fertile ground for Lévi-Strauss's ideas. Central Brazilian societies, with all of their sociocultural commonalities, could easily be imagined to be transformations of one another that revolved around universal themes, especially dualistic principles (Lévi-Strauss 1963:130; Maybury-Lewis 1979b:237-246). However, reconciling Lévi-Strauss's proposition of Central Brazilian unity with new ethnographic data proved to be challenging as many of the early observations regarding Central Brazilian social organization were revised and considerable heterogeneity was encountered (Viveiros de Castro 1988:236-238; 1996:187-188). Despite that difficulty, or perhaps because of it, proposing solutions to the question of what underlying structures are common to all Central Brazilian Gê groups received considerable scholarly attention. That body of literature is relevant to this dissertation because it attempts to understand the specific sociocultural morphologies that

occur in Central Brazil on their own terms and in local context (Viveiros de Castro 1996:189-191; Coelho de Souza 2002:70-73).

Lévi-Strauss's initial formulations of dual organization in Central Brazil were framed in terms of unilineal exogamous moieties linked through marital exchange (Lévi-Strauss 1943:1-3; 1969 [1949]:69-76). Although that idea was recovered later, when Vanessa Lea argued that Kayapó residential units ("Houses") are matrilineal corporate groups defined through the exchange of personal names (Lea 1992, 1993, 1995a, b), closer examination of Central Brazilian ethnographic examples with multiple moiety structures without clear rules of unilineal descent or marriage exchange suggested to him that underlying dual structures were better understood in different terms (Lévi-Strauss 1963:130-131). Specifically, he suggested that the apparent binary structures refer to groups of people but are masked by more fundamental tertiary or concentric structures that refer to the unequal relations between those groups with reference to an external point (Lévi-Strauss 1963:161). Lévi-Strauss's structural formulations of dualism served as a point of departure for much of subsequent Central Brazilian scholarship.

Lévi-Strauss's ideas unmistakably influenced David Maybury-Lewis's scholarship, but they also motivated him to dispute the justifiability of established structural theory and the nature of Central Brazilian dual organization (Maybury-Lewis 1960, 1970a, b; Sztutman 2002:455-462). In contrast to Lévi-Strauss's globalizing approach, Maybury-Lewis sought to ascertain the local dimensions of Central Brazilian social organization. He rejected the ethnographic validity of Lévi-Strauss's proposition that dual organization is fundamentally tertiary, arguing instead that dualism is an ideological strategy for pursuing social harmony that manifests itself at different social

orders, such as kinship, politics, and cosmology (Maybury-Lewis 1967:296-309; 1979d; Seeger 1989). Maybury-Lewis's model factors importantly into this dissertation because it remains the primary ethnographic reference regarding Xavante society. Through the Harvard Central Brazil Project, Maybury-Lewis stimulated prolific research by other scholars into Central Brazilian social organization (Maybury-Lewis 1979c:3-7). Although those scholars shared no single theoretical model, they were united in continuing to engage Lévi-Strauss's ideas in an effort to specify the meaning of dual organization among Central Brazilian societies. Their work also bears strongly on this dissertation because it uncovered new ethnographic data and proposed new anthropological models with potential applicability to the Xavante case.

Some such scholars sought to ascertain primary ideological structures that serve as models for dualistic thought or organization at other levels. For example, Roberto da Matta argued that the Apinayé social universe is divided between two paradigms, one based on procreative relations (substance) and one based on ceremonial relations (status), that result in the sociosymbolic separation of family from ceremonial associations, private from public domains, and village periphery (houses) from village center (plaza) (1973, 1979, 1983). Manuela Carneiro da Cunha was not part of the Harvard project, but argued in similar terms that among the Krahô, the opposition between the living and the dead is the "maximal alterity" (1978:3) and is the ideological basis of other oppositions between the self and affines, enemies, and ceremonial counterparts (1978, 1982). Other scholars similarly sought to encounter fundamental dual structures, but did so according to the functionalist logic that certain dual organizations, ideologies, or processes contribute to the maintenance of social continuity through time. For example, Jean Carter

Lave argued that Krĩkatĩ dual organizations operate in conjunction with name transmission and age sets to create a symbolic basis for the continuity of social identity through time (1967, 1972, 1975, 1977, 1979). Julio C. Melatti focused on the multiplicity of Krahô ideological dualisms as mutually negating transformations of one another that create a highly contingent social experience (1970, 1978). Joan Bamberger identified Kayapó name transmission between pairs of opposite-sex siblings as the basis of intergenerational solidarity and access to prestige (1974). Terence Turner developed a model of Kayapó society whereby interdependent dual structures at different levels of social organization institutionalize men's control over women and thereby the productive efforts of sons-in-law brought into their household by brideservice and uxorilocality (1979b, 1984, 1996). J. Christopher Crocker argued that among the Bororo, numerous asymmetrical dualities counterbalance one another for the sake of overall social solidarity (1979). Lux Vidal proposed that Kayapó age grades are an important structuring principle of social life that share a historical and functional relationship to social moiety systems (1977b, a, 1981).

Some of the themes introduced by those scholars were also employed by subsequent scholars, who sought to understand Central Brazilian societies not only in terms of structure, but also more recent anthropological discourses regarding personhood, corporality, and agency. For example, Anthony Seeger focused on how the Suyá ideological opposition between society and nature underlies other levels of perception, such as the ideological opposition between village center and periphery, and is worked out through concepts of personhood and corporality and through song (Seeger 1981, 1987; Seeger et al. 1987 [1979]). Terence Turner also directed his attention to

corporality, exploring the Kayapó body as a site of cultural production and social action (1980, 1995). Aracy Lopes da Silva argued that name transmission among the Xavante contributes to the symbolic and social construction of personhood and facilitates intergenerational social continuity in an otherwise socially fragmented society (1989). Laura Graham focused on Xavante song and speech performance as expressive practices by which individuals construct cultural and social reality (1994, 1995, 2005). William Fisher approached Kayapó social structure as a heterogeneous framework for individual gendered and feeling actors as they go about social life (Fisher 2000, 2001, 2003). Those innovative approaches are relevant to this dissertation because they demonstrate in Gê contexts the ethnographic importance of the individual.

Some of the most recent scholarship regarding Central Brazilian sociocultural organization has drawn on a relatively new Brazilian literature inspired by Lévi-Strauss's ideas, mentioned earlier, regarding concentric dualism and affinity, as well as the notion of symbolic alterity, perhaps first introduced into Brazilian ethnology by Carneiro da Cunha (1978:3). The notion of symbolic alterity, which asserts that the most important internal divisions of society are symbolic, provided an important theoretical framework for reinterpreting Lévi-Strauss's notions of dualism and affinity and applying them to diverse social phenomena (Viveiros de Castro 1996:189-190). Most influential on recent Gê and Amazonian literature is the work of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who has contributed significantly to reformulating Lévi-Strauss's propositions regarding uniquely indigenous South American forms of sociocultural organization based on the notion that social systems also entail nonhuman and supernatural entities (1998a:496). Among Viveiros de Castro's most influential proposals is that of perspectivism, whereby humans

and nonhumans view one another in reciprocal terms – each sees itself as human and the others as nonhuman (1998a:470-472). Additionally, he proposed new models for understanding the relationships that link alters as transformative, including potential affinity, whereby enemies are viewed as ideal affines (Viveiros de Castro 2001:20-26; 2002:407-418), and ontological predation, whereby killing merges alters and egos (Viveiros de Castro 2004:479-480).

Viveiros de Castro's proposals go beyond the scope of this dissertation in seeking an integrated theoretical framework for understanding the diversity of human social and cosmological systems found among South American indigenous societies. Nevertheless, they are noteworthy in the present context due to their influence on recent Gê scholarship. Marcela Coelho de Souza discusses notions of relatedness among the Timbira and other Gê groups, arguing that the highly structured and dualistic forms of social organization found in Central Brazil may be understood as fundamentally similar to rather than different from other South American societies (Coelho de Souza 2001, 2002; Coelho de Souza and Fausto 2004:112-115). Similarly, Elizabeth Ewart argues Panará dual organization conforms to Lévi-Strauss's reformulation of concentric dualism and Viveiros de Castro's notion of ontological predation such that dual organization is not oppositional but transformational with reference to external "enemy-others" (Ewart 2003:261; 2005). Cesar Gordon (2006) draws Viveiros de Castro's notion of "ontological predation" (Viveiros de Castro 2002:165) to assist his interpretation of Kayapó formulations of consumerism in contemporary economic context.

These recent contributions to Gê scholarship attest to the value of developing new theoretical foundations and engaging broader anthropological discussions and suggest the

potential value of increased cross-communication with contemporary anthropological discourses. The wider field of Lowland South American indigenous scholarship further demonstrates the merits of new investigative directions. For example, some recent scholarship asserts the notion of conviviality as a better tool than “social structure” for capturing the totality of Amazonian indigenous social thought (Overing Kaplan and Passes 2000:7-10). According to that approach, traditional anthropological formulations of kinship and social structure take a back seat to the everyday aesthetics of sociality and emotion.³ This perspective is relevant to this dissertation because my engagement with established discourses regarding Gê social structure involves examining the contours of Xavante sociality through the everyday heterogeneity of individual experience and perspective.

1.3. The Xavante of Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá community

Along the banks of the Pimentel Barbosa River (or *Riozinho* – “Little River”), a tributary to the Rio das Mortes (“River of Deaths”) that feeds the Araguaia Basin in Central Brazil, sit two adjacent semi-circular Xavante villages with a total population of over 575 people. As one approaches by dirt road from the southwest, the first village to come into view is the younger of the two. It is called Etênhiritipá by its residents, a name they say was associated with the location since before the early post-contact era, when their ancestors also lived there for some time (cf. Graham 1995:34-35). That name is also

³ Although such approaches have made precious few inroads into Gê and Central Brazilian scholarship (e.g., Fisher 2003), their relevance has been noted (Santos-Granero 2007).

claimed by the older village, located about one-half kilometer away, on the other side of a small cluster of buildings that include a municipal schoolhouse, a National Health Foundation (FUNASA) health post, and residences of support staff. There are also ruins of several former Indian Protection Service (SPI) and National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) buildings. According to elders in the second village, the name Etênhiritipá has belonged to their village since it moved to its current location in 1972 (Flowers 1983:151).

The older of the two villages is more commonly known as Pimentel Barbosa, whose namesake was killed by the Xavante during a 1941 “pacification” expedition organized by the SPI (Souza 1953:29-32). At that time, the ancestors and a few of the oldest living members of both villages were a single community residing at Arobonhipo’opá village (Silva 1992:368; Sereburã et al. 1998:113). Official peaceful contact with the Brazilian government was made near Wedezé, also called São Domingos, in 1946 (Silva 1992:368; Coimbra et al. 2002:80-81). Afterward, the community moved among several locations before arriving at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá in 1972. In fact, until very recently, the two contemporary villages remained together and shared the pride of an oral history that identified them as the original People (*a’uwê*), descendants of the “first creators” (*höimana’u’ö*), creators of non-indigenous people (*warazú*), heirs to the cultural pride of the late precontact “mother village” Sõrepré, and architects of peaceful contact with the Brazilian government (Silva 1992; Graham 1995:19-37; Coimbra et al. 2002:73-78). In 2006, escalation of internal political conflict prompted nearly half of the community to relocate to its new adjacent site (see Chapter 5). That division resulted in conflicting claims on the name Etênhiritipá

and to disagreements over their respective rights to the historical and moral authority deriving from their mutual oral history.

Both the selectively recorded oral history and rigorously documented history of the Xavante people ⁴ attest to the central role played by the progenitors of the villages that now call themselves Etênhiritipá and Pimentel Barbosa. Xavante oral histories trace a continuous trajectory of migration from the Atlantic coast to Central Brazil, across the Araguaia River, and across the Rio das Mortes, to the last unified Xavante village, Sôrepre, from which the population dispersed throughout a region that roughly corresponds with the lands they now occupy (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:27-49; Silva 1992:362; Graham 1995:27-29; Silva 1999:221-223; Leeuwenberg and Robinson 2000; Coimbra et al. 2002:49). Historical records are compatible with but cannot confirm the premise of coastal occupation by now Central Brazilian Gê-speaking groups (Lowie 1946b; Maybury-Lewis 1965:340-344; Flowers 1983:79-83). Records do corroborate much of the remainder of Xavante oral history, first attesting their presence in 1751 to the east and northeast of the Bananal Island (*Ilha do Bananal*) on the Araguaia River in what was then Goyaz Province, now Tocantins State (Chaim 1983:39-42) and their 1940s occupation of the region along the Rio das Mortes (Maybury-Lewis 1967:1-5; Silva 1992:367-368). Xavante oral histories and historical accounts similarly attest to a long history of contact with non-indigenous people and group fissionings that ultimately

⁴ Reviews of different aspects of the documentary history of the Xavante people have been done by Coimbra et al. (2002:49-94), Flowers (1983:78-145), Garfield (2001), Giaccaria and Heide (1972 [1984]:13-35), Graham (1995:19-63), Lombardi (1985), Maybury-Lewis (1965; 1967:1-30), Menezes (1982), Ravagnani (1991), Silva (1992, 1999), and Souza (1953).

splintered the Xavante population. Elders tell of contact with non-indigenous people from the time they resided on the Atlantic coast to after they arrived in Central Brazil (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:13-33; Silva 1992:362; Graham 1995:27; Sereburã et al. 1998:88-96). They also tell of their own people dividing, first from the Xerente people in Goyaz and then numerous times after political discord splintered the ancestral village Sõrepré (Flowers 1983:133-137). Similarly, scholars argue that the Xavante and Xerente people were either one people or not clearly differentiated in Goyaz until the definitive westward migration of the Xavante people over the Araguaia River in the early to mid-nineteenth century (Maybury-Lewis 1965:344-355; 1965/1966; Silva 1992:363-365; Coimbra et al. 2002:68-69). That migration may have afforded the Xavante some relief from the pressures of colonial activity, although missionary incursions continued into their new territory after the mid-nineteenth century and the region was identified for economic development as part of an idealistic agenda of national integration in the 1930s and 1940s (Silva 1992:367-368; Garfield 2001:23-32; Coimbra et al. 2002:69-78).

According to elders I spoke with at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá, the Xavante were a politically unified but nomadic people ⁵ until relatively recently. According to those oral histories, that pattern was first interrupted when the first fixed village was established at Wedezé, on the eastern margin of the Rio das Mortes. ⁶ The second fixed

⁵ Scholarly characterizations of the Xavante subsistence regime during the early contact period implies semi-nomadism, whereby part of the annual cycle was spent in fixed villages with agricultural plots and part of the year was spent on seasonal treks that facilitated hunting and gathering of wild resources (Maybury-Lewis 1967:35-61; Flowers 1983:217-262).

⁶ According to Xavante oral history, two permanent villages were constructed at the Wedezé site. The first was one, mentioned in this passage, was long before friendly

village was at a place called Sõrepré. Contemporary elders speak of Sõrepré village as the ancestral village of the Xavante people because it was their home for decades and represents the end of the era in which the Xavante people were politically united.⁷ The accounts I heard echoed oral histories from other Xavante communities, who also considered Sõrepré to be a high moment in Xavante history and a focal point of ethnic identity and pride (Silva 1992:367; Graham 1995:29-31). However, elders at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá also identified the dispersal from Sõrepré as a singular historical moment in which internal political conflict supplanted unity and their own local community became guardian of the cultural integrity Sõrepré represents (cf. Graham 1995:29-31).

According to Graham, Apõwẽ was the longtime “beloved” leader of the community that now resides at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá (1995:32-37). In contrast, Maybury-Lewis described him as a very “strong leader” who assumed power through murder and maintained it through fear (Maybury-Lewis 1967:187-189). Many of my sources in the same community over forty years later tended to agree with the latter representation. Some people described Apõwẽ as a despotic leader who ordered people to kill for him and then used them as scapegoats. That difference in representations attests to the complexity of the political history that elders say started with the dispersal from Sõrepré and continued with political divisions during Apõwẽ’s era and afterward. Since

contact was established with the Brazilian government in the 1940s. The second, which occurred after contact, was the primary Xavante field site of anthropologist Maybury-Lewis (Maybury-Lewis 1967).

⁷ Silva (1992:366) estimated that Sõrepré was occupied from the end of the twentieth century to the end of the 1920s.

the community relocated to Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá in 1972 (Flowers 1983:151), the community underwent several divisions that resulted in the establishment of new communities, including Caçula, Tanguro, and Wederã (Graham 1995:51-53; Coimbra et al. 2002:80-81).⁸ Those fissionings not only separated segments of the population but also isolated their political orientations. When Graham did her primary fieldwork in the mid-1980s, many of the residents at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá were Apöwê's descendants and supporters. However, many of those individuals left in subsequent divisions. When I arrived in 2004, the overriding perception of Apöwê had changed considerably. The most recent political conflict that led to the succession of nearly half the community and the establishment of an adjacent village further realigned those communities' political bearings, with the newer village realigning itself more closely with the formerly somewhat estranged Wederã village and the older village reaffirming ties with Caçula village.

Similar processes of division occurred among other segments of the Xavante population after their dispersal from Sörepré (Silva 1992:369-372). One of the consequences of that process was sociocultural differentiation of geographically dispersed Xavante communities. Maybury-Lewis made the important observation that as early as the 1950s and 1960s there were basic differences in language and social organization between what he termed the Eastern (Downstream) and Western (Upstream) Xavante, which he attributed to both sociocultural disjuncture and different post-contact experiences (Maybury-Lewis 1967:13-30, 75, 155-156, 161-166, 195-196, 260, 296-

⁸ Some of those communities subsequently underwent additional divisions.

297). The Eastern Xavante include the communities at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá and others that remained in the region near the ancestral Sõrepré village. The Western Xavante include those communities that moved to more distant territories to the south and west. Silva proposed another model, with three Xavante subgroups with different degrees of intercommunity contact, territorial continuity, and contact experiences (Silva 1986:31-44). Silva and other scholars characterized the communities that moved farther from the vicinity of Sõrepré as less traditional due, in part, to increased involvement with missionaries and lack of adequate natural resources (Maybury-Lewis 1967:14-30; Silva 1986:31-37; Graham 1995:36-37; Gugelmin and Santos 2001:317-318; Coimbra et al. 2002:80). Those anthropological representations echo the sense of cultural authority implicit in statements to me and others by residents of Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá that they are the true descendants of the first creators and remain the “mother” community of the Xavante people (cf. Graham 1995:29).

Those formulations contribute importantly to the context of this dissertation because it was among that limited segment of the Xavante population, with its own sociocultural realities, that I did my fieldwork. However, they also represent one narrow aspect of the complex subject of traditionalism and identity as it appears in both anthropological and Xavante discourses. For example, a recent study of the game of soccer among the Xavante attests to anthropological recognition that traditionalism and transformation are not easily separated (Vianna 2008). Similarly, my data show a great deal of polyvalence in Xavante perspectives at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá regarding their own cultural conservatism (see Chapters 2 and 3).

Although there are many dimensions to Xavante notions of cultural traditionalism, a particularly important one at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá involves perceptions of the cultural continuity of patently Xavante social arrangements and morphologies. An important example is to be found in the forms of age organization that comprise the primary subject of this dissertation, which include multiple systems of age grades, the stages of life through which all people pass during the course of a lifetime, including formal age grades that operate in conjunction with age cohorts, technically called age sets. Among the Xavante, these age systems are very complex and, in some cases, highly formalized. For example, the inauguration of new age sets occurs in alternate fashion, such that alternate age sets belong to opposite age set moieties. They are also very consciously an important part of Xavante social life and ethnic identity. Another example involves marriage, which at the Xavante at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá is often arranged between pre-adults by their parents based on a host of individual and sociological factors. One of those factors is patrilineal exogamous moiety (*poreza'ôno* and *ôwawe*) division of society, which is a basic aspect of Xavante social identity that affects marriage choices and notions of consanguineal relatedness. Others are the desirability of sororal polygyny and sibling marriage exchanges. After marriage, traditionalist notions of son-in-law obeisance and in-law respect relationships favor uxorilocal postmarital residence and speech taboos. These and other sociomorphological aspects of Xavante cultural traditionalism are an important theme throughout this dissertation.

Another important dimension to Xavante notions of cultural traditionalism is the real and perceived association between Xavante society and the *cerrado* landscape that

predominates in Central Brazil. With the exception of references in oral histories to a very early coastal occupation, the entirety of documentary and oral Xavante history indicates that Xavante lived and migrated within this distinctive landscape. Even today, after considerable migration and dislocation in the twentieth century, all Xavante communities are located in *cerrado* regions. There are currently 11 primary Xavante Indigenous Reserves located in seven contiguous tracts, Areões (Areões, Areões I, and Areões II), Maraiwatsede, Marechal Rondon, Parabubure (Chão Preto, Parabubure, and Ubawawe), Pimentel Barbosa, Sangradouro/Volta Grande, and São Marcos (Ricardo and Ricardo 2006:735-736) (Figure 2).⁹ The total Xavante population on the primary reserves was about 10,034 in 2000 (Pereira et al. in press). The two communities now residing at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhriritipá share the 328,966 hectare Pimentel Barbosa Indigenous Reserve with at least six other villages, with a total population of 1,362 in 2000 (Pereira et al. in press). The westernmost 15% of the Pimentel Barbosa Indigenous Reserve drains into the Xingu River Basin, and therefore belongs geomorphologically to the Amazon Basin, while the remainder pertains to the Araguaia River Basin, which drains into the Atlantic Ocean via the Tocantins River. Nevertheless, the entire region occupied by the Xavante today and a substantial portion of the larger *cerrado* landscape is considered part of the socio-geographic Amazon (“Legal Amazon”) (Capobianco et al. 2001:257; Dudley and Welch 2006:56-57).

The *cerrado* biome, now identified as a highly threatened “biodiversity hotspot” (Cavalcanti and Joly 2002; Silva and Bates 2002), has a highly varied and often mosaic

⁹ There are also individuals of Xavante descent at Carretão I and Carretão II Indigenous Reserves, located in Goiás State (Ricardo and Ricardo 2006:735-736:699).

vegetation with grasslands, scrublands, and tall canopy forests (Eiten 1972). It shares a great deal in common with other Amazonian landscapes both botanically and zoologically, although its ecological processes are unique due to high seasonality, low above-ground biomass, and pronounced fire adaptation (Castro and Kauffman 1998; Miranda et al. 2002). There is a high congruence between the cerrado landscape and the distribution of Gê-speaking indigenous groups during the historical period (Gross 1979:324; Barbosa and Nascimento 1993). In the case of the Xavante, that association is expressed as an explicit preference. As Maybury-Lewis observed, thick vegetation and canopy forests were considered “bad” or “ugly,” a condition that could be rectified with fire, thereby rendering those spaces appropriate for travel or cultivation (1967:32-34). The historical mobility of the Xavante throughout considerable ranges of *cerrado* landscape in Goyaz Province and, later, Mato Grosso State (Silva 1999) is especially striking because it was accomplished primarily on foot. Although there are some large and navigable rivers in the region, Xavante watercraft in the immediate precontact era in the Rio das Mortes region included only floating logs and timber rafts, but not canoes (Szaffka 1942). Contemporary Xavante discourses regarding the value of extensive foot travel for health and wellbeing demonstrate that Xavante traditionalism continues to invest its ethnic identity in the *cerrado* landscape.

A gratifying quality of the *cerrado* on the eastern flanks of the Roncador Mountains (*Serra do Roncador*), where the Pimentel Barbosa Indigenous Reserve is located, is that its often low vegetation allows many opportunities for panoramic views of the many low hills, ridges, and valleys that punctuate the landscape. The two villages at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá command impressive vistas that lend them continual visual

reference to the surrounding landscape with its abundant history, natural resources, and spiritual beings. It is also filled with other Xavante communities and an irreparably complicated intrusion of non-indigenous society, with its roads, cities, agribusiness, prisons, environmental politics, and anthropologists. Whereas in the 1970s the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá community was sandwiched in a small plot between multiple non-indigenous cattle ranches (Graham 1995:37-42; Coimbra et al. 2002:83-88), today the reserve is an island of recuperating *cerrado* vegetation flanked not only by cattle ranches but increasingly by corporate soy monoculture that threatens the region's ecological integrity (Klink and Moreira 2002; Aquino and Miranda 2008). Those encroachments are not, however, visually apparent from within the villages. What is visible is the stunning surrounding topography that bears no obvious marks of non-indigenous activities and the clean semicircular ring of houses that lines the perimeter of each village's meticulously cleared plaza.

In 2004, two years before its separation into two villages, this community resided in one village with two names. Etênhiritipá signified the physical place where the village was located. Pimentel Barbosa honored the memory of a federal employee killed in the "pacification" effort. Each name spoke to a different dimension of that community's shared deep history – the first to its near immemorial association with the Central Brazilian *cerrado* and the second to its enduring mortal relationship with Brazilian national society. At that time, within the unity of their mutual past were also the seeds of internal sociopolitical difference, some genealogically ancient and some newly forming, which ultimately resulted in the community's division. There were also innumerable formal and informal associations that by Xavante convention joined and divided different

configurations of people in different ways, in different contexts, and at different times.

Yet, then, in 2004, all of that still unified village's residents, with all of their heterogeneity, walked out the doors of their houses into the same central plaza, with its view of the same red mesa. The narrative of this dissertation takes place at the sociospatial juncture of those houses, that plaza, and the trails, gardens, forests, villages, and towns that surrounded them.

1.4. Fieldwork

In May 2004, I accompanied my colleague Carlos E. A. Coimbra, Jr. to Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá¹⁰ to discuss with the community the possibility of conducting doctoral fieldwork there regarding age organization and environmental practices. By Xavante custom, such propositions are usually made in the morning or evening men's council (*warã*) so that it might be discussed in public and a decision reached collectively. Unfortunately, I was unable to do so immediately after arriving for several reasons. On the day we arrived, neither the evening nor the following morning men's councils were held on account of a spiritual ritual (*wai'a*) being held by the men until the following morning. It was only on the third day that I was able to first meet with Chief Suptó to introduce myself and then present my research idea in the men's council. Doing so was an experience for which I was little prepared. I spoke in Portuguese, or my own broken

¹⁰ Some members of the new village, which they call Etênheritipá, object on political grounds to being included in references to Pimentel Barbosa village. For that reason, in this dissertation, I generally refer to the pre-division community as "Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá community." I use "Pimentel Barbosa village" to refer to the pre- or post- division village in historical context. I avoid using "Etênheritipá village" due to the contested claims on that name.

version of it, and Suptó translated for the others, the majority of whom were monolingual Xavante-speakers. Suptó allowed me to conclude my presentation before translating it in its entirety. Afterwards, multiple people stood to deliver their own addresses while many others chattered on simultaneously. Then the Chief and Vice-Chief of the village, Suptó and Paulo delivered particularly long speeches, and several follow-up questions were posed to me. I wondered how so many simultaneous and seemingly disparate conversations could result in a collective decision. Finally, a very elderly man, Sereburã, stood and delivered a speech of his own. Gradually, the background voices diminished somewhat, leaving just two people who continued to speak parallel to Sereburã. The three punctuated their deliveries with mutual affirmations, demonstrating that they were listening to one another as they spoke. When Sereburã sat down, the conversations ended. Suptó summarized for me that Sereburã and the elders had accepted my proposal and he, as chief, could take whatever logistical steps were necessary to formalize that authorization.

During that first trip, I camped in a tent near the health post in the cluster of service buildings adjacent to the village (the “post”). My first opportunity to visit the village was in the company of health researchers and service providers who were also visiting. I was struck by the size of the village, which then had a population of 523 individuals in 34 houses arranged in an irregular horseshoe ring. The opening of the village faced the small Pimentel Barbosa River (*Riozinho*), which could be reached by a short trail, and the red bluff less than two kilometers away. To the right side of the opening, people were unloading large poles, recently collected from the forest, digging a ring of holes in the red clay soil, and setting the poles upright into them. I was told this

construction was to replace the pre-initiate house, which had recently burned down. Its occupants were temporarily housed in a makeshift dome of black plastic tarps. In the middle of the village was a collapsed and roofless building that was filled with an enormous pile of large white sacks of rice under a black tarp. I was told that it was the year's collective harvest that would be distributed to the families to supplement their private garden production. At first, I did not interact with people extensively, perhaps due to my own timidity. Whereas elders were very outgoing, children and youth were initially reluctant to approach me until I took the initiative of saying hello or holding out my hand to shake, gestures which were invariably met with eager smiles and reciprocated graciously.

Approval of my project by the elders immediately propelled me to celebrity status. Men and women of all ages went to great trouble to include me in activities. Valdo, who later became my adoptive father, took me hunting. The pre-initiates and their mentors invited me to their now nearly-completed pre-initiate house. Antônio, who later became my adoptive grandfather, took me to work with him in his garden, some eight kilometers from the village. I was also invited to participate in a spiritual ritual (*wai'a*) like the one described at the beginning of this chapter.

On the morning of that ritual, I was invited to a forest clearing, where men were rehearsing a song. While there, Valdo, who had taken me hunting, offered to prepare my ritual ornaments. Flattered by the gesture, I readily agreed. I was then ignorant that because fathers often prepare their sons' ritual ornaments, Valdo preparing mine marked him as my adoptive father. That afternoon, after being painted and after Valdo tied special cords on my ankles and wrists and a feathered cotton necklace around my neck, I

was instructed to stand in the line of young boys and men at the upper margin of the clearing. I was again naive that joining that line marked my inclusion in the initiate spiritual grade (*wai'āra*). An hour or two later, after the initial phase of the spiritual ritual had concluded, I was selected for inclusion in a small group of eight of the eldest initiates who were charged with singing and dancing all night long. We were each handed a cane arrow with a stripe of deep red pigment at its point and a fluff of raptor down at its base. I was solemnly instructed to carry that arrow until sunrise, caring for it as though it were my infant child and never letting it touch the ground. Once again, I was ignorant that my inclusion in that group of eight at that particular phase of the ritual calendar distinguished me as an elder member (*ipredumrini*) of the initiate spiritual grade and, simultaneously, as a member of a secular age set in the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*). The significance of those statuses would remain lost on me for some time and took the greater part of the following four years to begin to unravel. Fulfilling my ritual obligations that night was a challenge. However, the companionship of the seven other novitiate young men chosen for the same task ensured my success. It also gave me my initial glimpse of what it means to share in the comradeship of age set membership.

I returned to Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá in November 2004 to begin fieldwork. With the exception of several short absences, I spent the next twelve months living in the only single-occupant house in the village, located between the houses of Valdo and then Vice-Chief Paulo. The choice to construct my house in that particular location was a political one based on my perception that Valdo and Paulo had different extended family and social networks. I reasoned that living between the two would allow me to maintain relations with both. Paulo offered me tremendous support with my research and his son

Vinícius, also a member of my age set, was a constant companion and eager assistant. Valdo's entire family incorporated me into their lives, caring for my house as an extension of theirs. His sons Denoque and Eugênio, the former of which was a member of my age set, took great pains to include me in their affairs and provide me with continuous and much appreciated companionship. Since that first year of fieldwork, I have had the good fortune to continue visiting the community in the capacities of affiliate public health researcher at the National School of Public Health, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation. I also had the luxuries of writing much of this dissertation while living in Brazil and, thanks to a relatively reliable public telephone located in the post near the village, being able to hold brief interviews directly from home. This dissertation is as much the result of those continued forms of engagement with the community, before and after it divided into two villages, as it is of the initial year of dissertation field work.

1.5. Ethics

Guidelines for research on human subjects set by the Tulane University Institutional Review Board (IRB) were followed in accordance with the protocol entitled "Xavante young adults and environmental practice at Etéñitépa" approved on September 16, 2004. Research permits were issued by the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology (MCT), directives no. 420 on August 25, 2004 and no. 604 on September 19, 2005. Permission to conduct research in the Pimentel Barbosa Indigenous Reserve was granted by the Brazilian National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), authorizations no. 65/CGEP/04 and 68/ CGEP/05.

In accordance with Xavante protocol, the aims and scope of the project were presented to community leaders and at the *warã*, a meeting of mature adult males held at dawn and dusk every day in the center of the village. In Xavante villages most decisions of public interest are made through careful deliberation and consensus-building at *warã* meetings. Although consent for the research was granted at the *warã* by the mature men on behalf of the community, individuals were allowed to decline to participate in the project in whole or in part for any reason and without prejudice. Participant confidentiality was also guaranteed and individual permission was sought for

In order to ensure participant confidentiality, individual permission was sought before making audio recordings. The importance of participant confidentiality was discussed with the community and with individuals that factor prominently in this dissertation. It was their desire that I used personal names provided that I did not anticipate doing would violate their trust, individually or collectively, or could bring harm to those individuals. Authorization to publish personal names was granted in writing from community leaders on behalf of the community.

1.6. The Problem of age and its terminology

My initial dissertation proposal was to study age organization as it relates to environmental practices. I collected ample data on that topic, but decided that the narrowed topic of age organization is more relevant at this time to the community and to anthropological discourses regarding the Xavante. Although much has been written about Xavante social organization, the complex subject of age organization in contemporary context is not well represented. Previous anthropological accounts of Xavante age

organization largely follow Maybury-Lewis's (1967:105-164) original formulation and revisions by Müller (1976:69--117) and Silva (1986:59-141). I took their conceptual models with me into the field and did not initially encounter reasons to question them. Gradually, however, through exposure to people using those terms for one another and applying them to me on a daily basis, I came to suspect they were not always used as those models indicated. In particular, I questioned the age classifications that were previously labeled "age grades" (Maybury-Lewis 1967:105-114, 149-153; Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:134-135; Silva 1986:64; Graham 1995:92-99; Coimbra et al. 2002:30). To help resolve those issues, I performed a quantitative investigation of age grade terms to associate the variety of terms in use with actual individuals to whom they may be applied.

In March 2007, after the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhriritipá community had divided into two villages, I updated my population census, which consisted of place of residence, vital statistics, and other stable personal information, such as age set and exogamous moiety. To facilitate my understanding of the applicability of age grade terms, I included an additional question regarding each individual's age grade status at that moment in time. Members of both villages were included in the census. Interviews were conducted in or near each household. One adult respondent was recruited opportunistically to answer for all members of each household. To ensure that respondents had personal knowledge of each subject individual, they were selected from among each household's members or close family. In three cases, one individual responded for two households. The total population at that time was 575 individuals residing in 44 households. I was able to apply the age grade question for 506 subject individuals from 41 households.

Three households were not included due to absence. I did not solicit more than one response but if more than one was volunteered, I noted it. Consequently, my dataset includes a total of 523 responses, which includes multiple responses for nine people. As these interviews progressed, I identified areas of interest or ambiguity for follow-up interviews.

This quantitative investigation was intended to provide a reasonably large body of examples of how age grade terms are applied to specific individuals in order to test published models of Xavante age grade sequences and suggest new directions for qualitative investigation. In other words, it was intended to provide a set of concrete examples of term use in order to facilitate a more accurate sketch of the meanings of those terms. Because I thought it probable that previous scholars had already exhaustively delineated the range of age grade terms, I did not conduct free listing exercises to define that semantic domain. The methods employed present the potential limitations of a gender bias, because most respondents were male, and reduced response variability, because a single respondent was selected for all members of each household. Also, the exercise was not designed to capture response variation. My quantitative analyses of these data are restricted to frequency distributions and mean chronological ages in order to delineate in general terms the boundaries of their usages. Despite those methodological boundaries, the census provided valuable data regarding the application of age grade terms that allowed old models to be reevaluated and new models to be proposed.

In some cases, my findings did not confirm previously published models. I found that some terms previously characterized as mutually exclusive or gender-specific in fact

had a variety of often complex relationships to one another. Some overlapped with others, some subsumed others, and some seemed to be synonymous with others. One of the most important implications of those findings is that my research did not verify some of the gender distinctions previously thought to structure the human lifecycle in fundamental ways. Those deviations from established models indicated that the set of Xavante age grade terms is, in its contemporary usage, a heterogeneous group of age categories. They also suggested the presence of entire dimensions of age organization that had not previously been elaborated in the anthropological literature. I found age identity to be highly multifaceted and contingent in ways that engage the entirety of the individual and collective social experience and are not apparent in previous accounts. In this dissertation, I use the findings of that age grade census as a basis for reevaluating the Xavante age grade system and as a springboard for addressing the broader topics of age organization and social structure.

Possible explanations for the variance between my findings and those of previous scholars are that the usages of age terms changed through time or that different Xavante communities apply them differently. Although historical or demographic variation is likely in certain cases, other differences more likely derive from differences in how we engaged the Xavante ethnographically and approached the topic theoretically. I suspect that being female facilitated Müller (1976) and Silva (1986) in recognizing some of the limits or errors related to gender in Maybury-Lewis's (1976) presentation of Xavante age organization. Similarly, my status as male and incorporation as a member of the novitiate adult age grade and initiate spiritual grade may have helped me recognize other aspects of those age systems that had not previously been rigorously explored. Also, my opportunity

to return to the villages at different stages of data analysis allowed me to become familiar with anthropological age organization theory that had not been previously referenced in ethnographic literature regarding the Xavante.

For example, it seems to me that the term “age grade” has been used somewhat loosely in the Xavante literature, consistent with what Bernardi (1985:2) calls “informal age grades,” the approximate age classifications most societies use to distinguish various culturally recognized stages of the life cycle. This usage follows Radcliffe-Brown’s early definition of age grades as the “recognized divisions of the life of an individual as he passes from infancy to old age...” (1929:21), although he also made a point of noting that in some societies a special relationship exists between age sets and age grades. In such societies, membership in age grades is unambiguously demarcated and members of age sets move from one age grade to another simultaneously. Stewart calls these “graded age-group systems” (Stewart 1977:2), but I prefer “age group systems.” Bernardi makes the important distinction that formal age grades but not informal age grades are “institutionalized in relationship with age classes” (Bernardi 1985:2). It does not appear that this distinction was previously recognized by scholars who worked with the Xavante. That oversight may have resulted in a degree of ethnographic imprecision regarding Xavante age organization.

My continued work with the villages at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá also allowed me to seek continual feedback from community members regarding my findings and interpretations. I was able to fill in some gaps in my data, resolve some inconsistencies, and solicit reactions to some of my hypotheses. The feedback process also allowed me to discuss in detail the interests of the community with regard to my

publication. I endeavor to address issues that they see value in publishing and avoid subjects that they consider private. I submit this work in the hope that I have effectively balanced those priorities and maintained anthropological rigor.

1.7. Objectives and organization

This text is primarily an ethnographic endeavor. It explores age identity in the everyday Xavante experience at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá in order to situate age organization in the diverse reality of contemporary social life. I draw on my observations of people's social activities and their own representations of them while recognizing my relationship to that entirety. I strive for the most honest representation possible of what it means to the people I worked with to belong to and be seen as members of multiple age statuses. In order to accomplish that goal, I neither reject nor accept standard anthropological frameworks and representations. Rather, I appeal to anthropological models to the extent and in the manner in which they most effectively facilitate elucidation of those people's daily social experiences as I came to understand them. In some cases, Xavante perspectives are unquestionably structuralist and very compatible with certain anthropological discourses. In other cases, Xavante perspectives suggest value in questioning the terms of anthropological discourse for the sake of more accurate ethnographic representation.

The result of that effort is, in the first place, an ethnographic revision of the Xavante life cycle that takes into account both its formal and informal properties. Second, it is an analysis of how age identity articulates diversely with other systems of social difference and relatedness. Third, it is an argument for an understanding of Xavante

social organization as fundamentally plural, with age statuses and other aspects of social identity being numerous, simultaneous, interdependent, and contingent. Fourth, it is a proposal that Xavante formulations of social identity construe certain heterogeneous oppositions as mutually constituted and not contradictory. For example, sameness implies difference, unity coexists with division, equality is accompanied by inequality, and dualism emerges from hierarchy. According to that formulation, the people one construes socially as others and unequals are simultaneously and congruently also selves and equals.

In Chapter 2, I draw on both quantitative and qualitative data regarding male age grades in order to develop a new analytical model of the male life cycle. That model entails formal and informal secular age grades and formal spiritual age grades, which together comprise the male life cycle. Analysis of the secular age grades is organized sequentially from birth to advanced age. Previous ethnographic presentations of the secular age grades are summarized and evaluated. Ethnographic accounts accompany each phase of life in order to illustrate how age grade status is implicated in daily experience. Following a brief account of the spiritual age grade system, I summarize the findings of the chapter and propose a revised model of the male life cycle. A central theme in this chapter is a tension between “traditional” and “modern” social roles, as these relate to age identity, that explicitly implicates social structure as a central feature of cultural continuity.

Chapter 3 follows a similar format to Chapter 2 in order to propose a new model of the female life cycle. Like the male life cycle, it involves both formal and informal age grade systems. The formal age grade system is not unique for females; they participate in

the graded sequence described in the previous chapter according to the same criteria as males. However, the female and male informal age grade systems follow different trajectories and apply different criteria. Throughout this chapter I make reference to the male life cycle as a point of comparison, emphasizing the themes of female educational process and notions of female traditionalism.

In Chapter 4, building on the male and female life cycles presented in Chapters 2 and 3, I address age set organization in order to complete the model of male and female age group system. First, I explore how secular age sets are experienced by their members, with special attention to life in the pre-initiate house. Second, I highlight a privileged social bond arising between members of protégé age sets and mentor age sets through the pre-initiate house experience and its pervasive implications for the secular age group system. In particular, I discuss a secular age set moiety system that arises through the alternation of sequential age sets and positions individuals within a complex social fabric of sameness and difference that is simultaneously symmetrical and hierarchical. Third, I develop a formal model of the secular age group system as a basis for discussing the mutual engagement of the multiple age hierarchies presented in this dissertation. Fourth, I present the spiritual age group system, which also entails age grades, age sets, and age set moieties. Fifth, I explore how hierarchy and power gain expression through the interaction of informal age grades, the secular age group system, and the spiritual age group system.

In Chapter 5, I address leadership and process in the political arena in order to demonstrate that how people go about social life involves not only the plurality of age hierarchies already presented in previous chapters, but also a host of other configurations

of social inequality, such as those deriving from gender, kinship, and genealogy. First, I discuss exogamous moieties and heritable knowledge domains, previously known as “lineages” in the literature. Second, I propose that from the Xavante kinship terminology, which I define as bifurcate-generational, emerges another order of age hierarchy, genealogical seniority, which is crucial for an understanding of the contemporary process of political factionalism.

Chapter 6 entails an analysis of Xavante age organization in Gê and Central Brazilian context. First, I summarize the multiple dimensions of age organization discussed in the previous four chapters and compare it to age organization among other Gê and Central Brazilian groups. Second, I argue that Xavante age organization attests to the mutuality and non-opposition of similarity and difference in its diverse manifestations. Third, I evaluate the applicability of models of Gê dualism proposed by other scholars, arguing that in their Xavante formulations, opposition and hierarchy are implicated in a traditionalist cultural pedagogical strategy. Fourth, I propose that age hierarchy in its many forms and as experienced in daily life implies that Xavante social identity is profoundly contingent.

Chapter 2: The male life cycle

2.1. Introduction

The Xavante language contains a large and actively used set of age terms that mark its relevance to social identity and the social experience. At the most general level, age is apparent in certain broadly applicable and relatively nonspecific terms, such as *ĩhöibaté* (young life/body) and *ĩhöiba'rada* (old life/body). Relative age is reflected in a somewhat more specific manner in the kinship terminology, whereby some terms of reference differ according to whether the subject is younger or older than the speaker. For example, siblings of opposite genders refer to each other as either *ĩdub'rada* (older opposite-gender sibling) or *ĩno* (younger opposite-gender sibling). Age is also referenced in a highly specific manner with age set names. Among the Xavante, age sets are named cohorts that all individuals of both genders first join, often as children or adolescents, and to which they belong throughout life.¹¹ Age sets differ from other types of age hierarchies because membership in them is not transitory. An even more nuanced means of specifying age relationships is a highly contingent set of terms used to indicate the relative age set status of any two individuals. For example, before an age set has attained mature adulthood its members may call members of the next oldest age set *ĩhi'wa* (*wahi'wa* in its plural form) and may be called by them *sinhõ'ra* until achieving novitiate

¹¹ The full set of age set names and their glosses are presented in Chapter 4.

adulthood (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:159). In this example, the terms indicate both relative and absolute ages of the subject and speaker.

Another set of categories that distinguish age with varying degrees of specificity in Xavante society are age grades, stages of life through which individuals or groups of individuals pass throughout the life cycle. Although other scholars have published diverse accounts of Xavante age grades that conflict on many of their particulars, a degree of consensus has emerged with respect to their overall structure. According to the most widely accepted accounts, males (*aibö*) pass through a sequence of between four and eight discrete and consecutive age grades from birth to death. These include, variously, *a'uté* (infant), *watebreṃí* (boy), *ai'repudu* (older boy), *wapté* (adolescent), *ritei'wa* (young man), *ipredúpte* (new mature man), *iprédu* (mature man), and *ĩhi* (elder) (see Table 1) (Maybury-Lewis 1967:339; Müller 1976:73; Silva 1986:64; Graham 1995:96).¹² The same authors have also presented variations on a similar age grade sequence for females (*pi'õ*). In this chapter I address the male age grades, leaving the female age grades and the age set system¹³ for subsequent chapters.

¹² Glosses are adapted from the sources cited. I adapted spellings of native words to conform to the orthography currently in use by Xavante teachers at the Pimentel Barbosa Municipal School. It is an orthography in transition, originally developed by missionary linguists (Hall et al. 1987; Lachnitt 2003) based on the dialects spoken in their immediate vicinities and later modified through its application and transmission by literate Xavante individuals at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá. The system as it is currently applied differs from versions in use in other Xavante communities and even from previous representations in publications coordinated by members of the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá community.

¹³ Each of the terms *age set system*, *age group system*, and *age class system* has been used by age organization theorists to indicate formal systems of age sets in conjunction with age grades (e.g., Prins 1953; Stewart 1977; Bernardi 1985). In this dissertation I use *age group system* for that purpose and reserve *age set system* and *age grade system* for

Despite there being a high degree of disagreement between scholars regarding the particular sequence of male age grades and the criteria for recruitment and attrition of each, there seems to be a consensus that the male life cycle entails a single continuous sequence of discrete age grades that is distinct from a second continuous sequence of female age grades. Importantly, Maybury-Lewis described the nature of the relationship between age grades and age sets when he wrote “the passage of an age-set through the age-grades is a linear progression” (Maybury-Lewis 1967:157). That characterization, reiterated by other scholars (e.g., Silva 1986:137-138; Graham 1995:95-98), implies that membership in age grades is not only sequential but unambiguous because the passage of age sets through age grades is theoretically and ethnographically collective and explicit (Eisenstadt 1954; Bernardi 1985:4-6). In the Xavante case, passage occurs about every five years during a widely celebrated series of public age set initiation rites (*danhono*). However, inclusion in five of the seven most commonly cited male age grades is described as depending on individual developmental or subjective criteria rather than collective age set status: one becomes an *a’uté* (infant) at birth, a *watebremí* (male child) after walking, an *ai’repudu* (adolescent) sometime around 7 or 8 years of age, and an *ĩhi* (elder) sometime in later life (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:135; Silva 1986:64; Graham 1995:97). Paradoxically, neither Maybury-Lewis nor subsequent scholars questioned the basic incompatibility of those individualistic criteria and the notion that passage between age grades should be simultaneous for all members of an age set. Nor

the respective age set and age grade subsystems that comprise the age group system. Although I do not employ it here, I consider *age class system* to be synonymous with *age set system*, both referring specifically to systems of age cohorts (cf. Bernardi 1952:316-317).

was it questioned how age sets that are inaugurated for individuals approaching adolescence could pass through age grades that precede adolescence, such as infancy. Thus, it appears that subsequent scholars perpetuated Maybury-Lewis's original assumption of a neat correlation between age sets and a continuous sequence of formal age grades that spans the entire male life cycle despite their own ethnographic evidence to the contrary (e.g., Müller 1976:75; Silva 1986:66).

In this chapter, I present quantitative and qualitative evidence that the seven primary categories previously understood to be sequential and mutually exclusive male age grades do not in fact pertain to a single age grade system. Rather, they belong to two separate systems, a formal system that operates in conjunction with age sets and an informal system comprised of sometimes ambiguous and often overlapping age classifications based on developmental, individualistic, or subjective criteria. In distinguishing between the two systems, I propose a new model of the male Xavante life cycle that I submit is more faithful to ethnographic reality and more closely aligned with anthropological theory regarding age organization. In order to disentangle these two terminological systems I analyze my data regarding how people apply the categories, clarify the technical relationships between them, and discuss some of their social correlates for a robust understanding of how male age grade membership affects the individual social experience. In addition, I present data regarding a second formal age grade system, independent from the first, involving a sequence of male spiritual stages.¹⁴

¹⁴ In order to distinguish between formal age grade systems and to preserve the existing terminology in the Xavante literature, I adopt the convention that *age grade* and *age*

Important thematic conduits in this discussion are the relationship between the male life cycle and youth education and a tension between “traditional” and “modern” social roles.

I structure this discussion around a critical analysis of the traditional model of male age grades based on the result of a quantitative age grade investigation I did as part of a census update in March 2007. The objective of this investigation was to associate age grade terms with actual subject individuals for a more robust understanding of how they are used. The methods of this study are discussed in Chapter 1. The results of the age grade census and follow up interviews revealed that people apply age grade terms according to often quite different criteria than previously reported.

2.2. Pre-adulthood

2.2.1. Conception and gestation

Giaccaria and Heide reported that Xavante individuals did not reveal their ideas regarding fetal development because they were considered secrets¹⁵ (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:232). In my experience people did not readily volunteer this information but also did not consider it privileged. All individuals I interviewed, including younger and older individuals, characterized conception as a singular event involving semen from one biological father. Subsequent contributions of semen were

grade system refer to the previously mentioned secular age grade system and *spiritual grade* and *spiritual grade system* refer to the spiritual age grade system.

¹⁵ Secrets, for the Xavante, are highly valued in many social contexts and do not carry negative connotations. Secrets are shared with certain appropriate categories of individuals and withheld from others. Outsiders, including anthropologists, are often considered “others,” in this sense, and are therefore actively excluded from secret knowledge, with obvious implications for their ability to gather data.

uniformly discounted as irrelevant to the growth of fetal substance. Thus, the role of semen was limited to conception and the possibility of biological contributions by multiple fathers was explicitly denied. In contrast, the increase in fetal mass that occurs throughout gestation was attributed exclusively to maternal nourishment. Although those male and female contributions differ, the notion of bodily substance was framed in terms of a single, genderless substance, “blood” (*dawapru*). No interviewees differentiated between maternal or paternal derivations of different bodily aspects, such as blood, flesh, or bones. Furthermore, that blood was said to derive in equal parts from both mother and father. As one man told me, “Half of his body comes from the father and half from the mother, equally between the two. His eyes can look like the mother’s or the father’s. The nose can look like the mother’s or the father’s.” That formulation of conception and gestation differs substantially from some other indigenous Amazonian and Gê-speaking societies in which fetal formation is understood to occur cumulatively through multiple contributions of semen and biological paternity may be attributed to more than one man (Crocker 1990:108; Beckerman and Valentine 2002:10). Nevertheless, for different reasons, the Xavante explanation also results in greater emphasis being placed on the paternal aspect of fetal substance and allows for multiple social paternity.

Although a mother and father are thought to contribute equally to a child’s blood, the father’s blood is considered to be dominant. Thus, a child’s bodily substance is derived in equal parts from the mother and the father but the paternal half exerts greater influence over the child’s sociophysiological identity. That formulation of consanguinity has important consequences for notions of relatedness, which correspondingly exhibit both patrilineal and bilateral aspects. An overt expression of the patrilineal aspect is a

system of two exogamous moieties, called Tadpole (*poreza'ōno*) and Big Water (*ōwawe*), that are said to be invariably transmitted from father to child. As I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 5, marriage to a member of the same patrilineal moiety is considered incestuous and some people think it contaminates the blood of offspring. The mechanism by which children assume their father's and not their mother's exogamous moiety affiliation was described to me in terms of father's moiety being pulled by his dominant blood. Similar accounts were also given to explain why there is a preference to use kinship terms according to one's genealogical relationship to an individual's father or husband rather than to his mother or wife. In both cases, notions of consanguinity give priority to male blood but do not dismiss the role of female blood.

Despite the belief that no more than one man and one woman can biologically parent a child, the procreative role of neither is thought to end with an initial act of sex. Ideally, both participate in a highly intentional process that may begin before conception and may last until some three months into the pregnancy. During that time, a man may wear special painted ear plugs called *a'utézo rōmhōri* ("baby work"), often made by his father or grandfather, that are thought to encourage pregnancy and influence the trajectory of the child's physical development toward maleness or femaleness (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:63). After the woman perceives she is pregnant and communicates this to the father, he may continue to have intercourse with her while using the ear plugs in order to help complete its formation as either male or female. His continued participation in that regard is not required for a fetus to grow normally and his additional contributions of semen are not thought to contribute to fetal growth (mass). Rather, the

ear plugs are believed to determine the sex of the child if used long enough for the fetus's sex organs to develop.

My informants, young and old alike, asserted in no uncertain terms that it is not possible for a child to have multiple biological fathers and that women always know the true identity of their children's biological fathers. I suspect those beliefs have as much to do with Xavante reproductive theory, which disallows the biological importance of multiple sources of semen, as social norms, which allow extramarital sex but subject to strict social conventions.¹⁶ Nevertheless, despite denying the possibility of multiple biological fathers, as is characteristic of Amazonian formulations of partible paternity, the Xavante allow for the possibility of multiple social fathers. For example, older brothers may permit or, under certain circumstances, encourage a younger brother to have sexual relations with his own wife. In the event a child is born to the younger brother rather than to a woman's husband, it would be considered inappropriate for either man to express jealousy or deny the other as a father. For the sake of family unity and the child's self-esteem, it is thought to be incumbent on them to embrace fatherhood mutually. Some

¹⁶ Although not all individuals expressed acceptance of extramarital sex, many individuals specify that there are no social constraints on sexual relations between a woman and her husband's younger categorical siblings, provided they are consensual. In the past there were other socially sanctioned circumstances for such extramarital sex, most notably the female naming ceremony (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:221-235; Graham 1995:258). That ceremony was no longer in practice when I was in the field. Although I do not have evidence indicating whether extramarital sex was practiced outside of the female naming ceremony in the past as it is today, Nancy Flowers (personal telephone communication, November 6, 2007) suggests the possibility that informal extramarital sex is a recent accommodation to the discontinuation of the female naming ceremony.

men expressed that in the past brothers were proud of fathering each other's children and did not overtly distinguish between their respective children. As one man explained,

“In the past, brothers were completely united. There was no jealousy between them. It was as though they were the same person. They were welcome to create a child with each other's wives. The husband knew that he was not the father, but he would consider it his brother's and his own. The mother will tell him he was not the father, but he would receive this news with great honor.”

Even today, in such circumstances it is thought to be the decision of the recognized biological father in dialog with the mother and husband as to whether he will help determine the child's sex by continuing to have sexual relations with the mother while using “baby work” ear plugs. In Xavante society, polygyny is prevalent and sororal polygyny often preferred. Similarly, sororate and levirate marriages are frequent. Yet, polyandry is unheard of. Nevertheless, due to the reproductive ideal of male sibling unity, there is a tremendous degree of social and genealogical unity between male and female same-sex siblings.

The sequence of age grades previously described in the literature begins at birth. Although Maybury-Lewis made no reference to an age category equivalent to infancy, subsequent scholars identified *a'uté* as the first age grade in the life cycle of both males and females, lasting from birth to approximately one to two years of age, about the time a child begins to walk (Maybury-Lewis 1967:339; Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:135; Silva 1986:65, 133). There is some disagreement regarding the next two male age grades (*watebreimí* and *ai'repudu*), but both are described in the literature as phases of boyhood. According to Maybury-Lewis, *ai'repudu* (“not babies”) is a subcategory of *watebreimí*, the primary boyhood age grade (Maybury-Lewis 1967:41, 339). However, subsequent scholars seem to have promoted *ai'repudu* to an age grade discrete from and subsequent

to *watebremí* (e.g., Silva 1986:64-68; Graham 1995:96). According to the same sources, *watebremí* boyhood ends and *ai'repudu* boyhood begins at about seven to nine years of age. Although I have not encountered a published account of the criteria that mark the transition between the two, *ai'repudu* is consistently characterized as the last age grade before a boy becomes *wapté*. According to that model, infancy (*a'uté*) and boyhood (*watebremí* and *ai'repudu*) differ because the former applies to males and females equally while the latter applies only to males. Furthermore, the end of infancy is represented as the initial divergence of the male and female life cycles, which then chart entirely separate courses until advanced age in later life (see *ĩhi*, below). As I detail below, my data do not support that model because they show the *a'uté* category not to be discrete from *watebremí* boyhood and they attest other age grades at different stages of the life cycle that are shared by males and females.

2.2.2. Child (*a'uté*), boy (*watebremí*), and male adolescent (*ai'repudu*)

Of the 248 male individuals (subjects) in my March 2007 age grade census, 17 were identified as *a'uté* (or its diminutive form *a'uté'pré*),¹⁷ 47 as *watebremí* (or its diminutive form *watebremire*),¹⁸ and 26 as *ai'repudu*. Included in those totals are two individuals who were identified as both *a'uté* and *watebremí*. Although this last number

¹⁷ The *a'uté* category includes individuals identified with the diminutive form *a'uté'pré*, which is sometimes used to indicate an especially young infant (for example, before it is able to sit on its own) or simply to emphasize the newness or smallness of infants in general.

¹⁸ Included in the *watebremí* category are individuals identified with the diminutive form *watebremire*, which is used to indicate that a boy is especially young or small or to emphasize the youngness or smallness of boys in general.

is small, it is important because it suggests these categories may not be discrete. I treated all cases of multiple responses for a single individual as possible indicators of alternate terms, overlapping categories, subcategories, or simultaneous structures. Given the literature, summarized above, indicating that the transition between *a'uté* and *watebremit* is marked by first walking, it may be hypothesized that the frequency of the term *a'uté* is greater among children less than 10 to 14 months old, when walking first occurs in most children (WHO 2006), and the frequency of *watebremit* is greater among children older than 10 to 14 months. I chart the frequencies of those terms and *ai'repudu* by the chronological age of the subject in Figure 3.

Of 17 male individuals identified as *a'uté*, nine were between birth and 14 months of age, and eight were between 15 and 36 months. These results are consistent with the interpretation that the term *a'uté* applies to male children before they have mastered walking, but does not support the conclusion that it does so exclusively. In fact, 47% of the male *a'uté* sample was over 14 months of age, suggesting the category also applies to children after they have learned to walk (Figure 4). Also, a very high proportion of males between birth and 9 months of age were identified as *watebremit* (60%) and the anticipated increase in the proportion of *watebremit* relative to *a'uté* did not occur until after 3 years of age, well after most children learn to walk. Those results as well as the census responses identifying two male individuals as both *a'uté* and *watebremit* demonstrate that male children at the same stages of physical development can belong to both age grades. Thus, *a'uté* and *watebremit* cannot be considered discrete categories.

Ethnographic data confirm that conclusion. As my interviewees explained, male infants are both *watebremit* and *a'uté*. However, older *watebremit* are much less likely to

be called *a'uté* than younger *watebremí* and the oldest *watebremí* are only rarely referred to as *a'uté*. What then is the nature of the relationship between these overlapping age categories? In the first place, *a'uté* but not *watebremí* is said to include the fetal stage, prior to birth. Thereafter, the choice of whether to use *a'uté* or *watebremí* depends more on the speaker's intent than the developmental stage of the child. An important distinction between their usages is that *watebremí* is a gendered term – it can be used to indicate the male gender of a child. In contrast, *a'uté* is gender neutral. Also, *a'uté* may be used to emphasize the young age of a male child without reference to gender. Alternatively, one may specify that a child is male with the phrase *a'uté aibö* (male child). Thus, during the first few years after birth a boy may be called either *watebremí* or *a'uté*, with the first being most convenient to indicate male gender and the latter being most convenient to specify childhood. Similarly, the choice of terminology may vary according to an external point of reference. For example, one might call a male child *a'uté* to indicate that he is younger than other boys (*watebremí*), *watebremí* to indicate he is younger than adult males, *watebremí* to indicate his maleness relative to other children, or *aibö* (male) to indicate his maleness relative to other children and adults. Furthermore, one might choose to use *a'uté'pré*, the diminutive form of *a'uté*, to indicate that a child was born especially recently (relative to other children). Thus, the semantic relationship between these terms is contingent upon both context and perspective. Accordingly, I argue that childhood (*a'uté*) is best considered an informal age grade that is different from but overlaps substantially with boyhood (*watebremí*), also an informal grade (Bernardi 1985:2).

Although the preceding discussion demonstrates that the distinction between childhood (*a'uté*) and boyhood (*watebremi*) is more ambiguous than the established model suggests, infancy nevertheless is seen by the Xavante as very different than later boyhood. That contrast is predicated upon the cultural belief that children continue to share a very real, albeit invisible, connection to their parents for some time after birth. As Silva (1986:67-68; 1989:338-339) describes, a newborn is considered to be too fragile (“soft”) to receive a personal Xavante name; giving it a name before its body is “harder” and more resistant may cause it to become ill (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:66). My informants explain that precaution in very pragmatic terms. For example, one adult man related,

“Expectant parents will think, ‘could it really be that my child is going to be born, grow up, and become an adult?’ Their concern is about health. The child could get diarrhea, pneumonia; children are vulnerable to disease. For that reason parents avoid giving a Xavante name for the first year or two. By the time the child is one or two years old, the parents perceive that the child will live. But today we have medicines and visit doctors, so people do not worry as much. Now some people go ahead and give newborn children a Xavante name.”

The fragility of the initial months of life is also related to the notion that a newborn, like a fetus, may be physically harmed if either parent consumes certain dangerous foods or if the father kills certain game animals. As I deduce from circumstantial evidence, the connection that binds them is not metaphorical, or even, from the Xavante perspective, supernatural. It is mundane and direct, and not categorically different from the connection between a pregnant woman and her fetus. It bespeaks the Xavante couvade. Although not all parents observe these restrictions, their failure to do so is a common explanation for poor infant health or infant mortality. As one man explained, “Young people are testing it, eating whatever they want. They don’t

even perceive that they are killing their own children. Elders will ask the parents if they ate prohibited foods and tell them that they did wrong to kill their children.”

For example, before I arrived in the village a child died immediately after birth. I am not aware what medical causes were ascertained by medical personnel. However, when I arrived there was active village gossip about what the father might have done to cause its death. As rumor had it, the child had been born without complication and in perfect health. That, people said, was evidence that there was nothing wrong with the child initially. Immediately thereafter, what I understood to be several hours or days, the child died of no apparent material cause. This they took as evidence that the cause probably lay with the parents not having observed appropriate prohibitions. According to several individuals who claimed to be reporting community consensus (although I did not confirm that to be the case), the precipitating cause of death was alcohol consumption by the father. I do not know whether it was that he was thought to be a habitual drinker or to have imbibed alcohol at that particular time, but in any event, alcohol consumption by the parent of a young infant is believed to bring about immediate and severe harm, even death, to the child. There are many other examples of dietary restrictions (*dasai'pé*) based on the belief they can cause harm to an infant if consumed by either parent, some of which are listed in Table 2. Conversely, certain foods are considered especially healthful for infants if eaten, always in modest quantities, by their parents. These include deer meat (*Mazama* spp. and *Ozotocerus* spp.) and piapara fish (*Leporinus* spp.). Interestingly, the combination of parental dietary prescriptions and proscriptions were

also thought to improve the health of the parents.¹⁹

Although there is no direct correlation between the parents resumption of a standard diet after an infant attains sufficient bodily strength and its status as either child (*a'uté*) or boy (*watebremi*), the terms do imply greater degrees of dependence on and independence from parents, respectively. Older boys are afforded a tremendous degree of liberty with the expectation that they will of their own accord begin laying the educational groundwork for their own transition into adulthood. This expectation provides older individuals fodder for critically analyzing contemporary boys and it is in these critiques that I found the richest source of information about what, in the Xavante experience, distinguishes boyhood from other stages of life.

In the established model of the male life cycle, boyhood (*watebremi*) is followed by older boyhood (*ai'repudu*), although the distinction between them is nowhere clearly defined. I found a significant amount of overlap between those two age categories. In my quantitative sample, both terms were used for boys between six and ten years of age. However, use of the term *watebremi* decreased for boys older than 10 years while the frequency of the term *ai'repudu* remained high until boys reached about 13 years of age. Ethnographically, I found the term *ai'repudu* to have a very specific meaning that helps explain those findings. It is used to distinguish boys who have entered adolescence, as marked by growth spurts and deepening voices, and exhibit evidence of psychological

¹⁹ I conducted collaborative research in 2006 regarding nontransmissible diseases among the Xavante. We found evidence of rapid nutrition transition accompanied by elevated rates of fatness (Welch et al. 2009). One interviewee explained the exceptional health (lean muscle mass) of certain young parents as a result of strict adherence to parental dietary restrictions.

changes thought to accompany the passage from childhood, including increased respectfulness of others and avoidance of child play activities. Although most informants mentioned the psychological indicators before the physical ones, all confirmed that the physical changes of adolescence are what distinguish *ai'repudu* from *watebremit*. For example, one man explained that the first people to notice that a boy has become an adolescent are those closest to him, such as his father, and it is their recognition of his physical adolescence that leads to the expectation that he behave maturely. Although one individual asserted that males remain boys (*watebremit*) after becoming adolescents (*ai'repudu*), most people affirmed that the beginning of adolescence (*ai'repudu*) marks the end of both childhood (*a'uté*) and boyhood (*watebremit*). Thus, I consider the most prevalent interpretation to be that one ceases to be a boy when he becomes an adolescent.²⁰ The individualistic nature of adolescent status leads me to classify it as an informal age grade (Bernardi 1985:2).

In my experience, boys spent much of their time in and around their own houses, neighbors' houses, and with their families at garden houses. However, as many adults characterized it, boyhood also involves the freedom to roam the village and play with other children unfettered by work obligations or expectations to remain at home. As discussed in the next chapter, expectations of girls are somewhat different and impose on them a more restricted social radius. Consequently, male and female play behavior tends to diverge somewhat, even long before adolescence (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:72). Elders

²⁰ As discussed in the next section, both boyhood and male adolescence end when a boy is ritually inducted into an age set. If a boy is inducted before reaching adolescence, he skips that age grade altogether.

also expressed the expectation that child play emphasize imitating (*danhizu*) adults because they considered that to be the primary and only worthwhile means of preparing for adulthood (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:72). As Maria, an elderly grandmother, said with great sadness,

“Children have total liberty. One thing that they don’t have today is imitation. In the past, children imitated their parents. Girls and boys formed groups and imitated family hunting trips. They roasted meat, hunted animals. It was training, a real rehearsal [for adulthood]. Imitating adults, that is how we learn. They made little houses and the ‘husband’ would hunt little animals in the area behind the village. It was training for hunting. They also prepared for attacks and pretended to do [ritual] club fights. Then, they competed for best warrior by shooting arrows. Today they do not do this.”

Indeed, contemporary boyhood play must appear very different from what Maria remembered from her own childhood in the 1950s. As I can attest, children played a very different set of games than she described, many of them derived from Brazilian national play traditions or inspired by television. For example, typical games played by boys included knife throwing contests, stilt walking, kite flying, slingshot shooting, and soccer. From Maria’s perspective, these games did not adequately prepare boys for the activities she considered to be important during adulthood, namely, hunting, taking care of a family, and performing rituals. However, I also observed many other boyhood games that did conform to her standards. Boys often fashioned and played with bows and arrows, sometimes killing small lizards or birds. I saw them dance and sing in circles and with clasped hands, as adult men do. They often held pretend club fights, using their arms and fists as make-believe clubs. Sometimes they would walk throughout the village challenging any passers-by, as though on scouting missions to protect an imaginary territory.

Many other elders made similar comments to Maria's. Conceição remarked, "It was not that our mothers taught us, but that we paid attention." Similarly, Iraní described that when she was a child, "We observed, paid attention to the adults. We learned through curiosity." In each and every case, female and male elders seemed to blame contemporary children for not imitating adults in their play activities. However, upon further elaboration, I came to suspect they meant that children did not play at the adult activities they remembered playing as children, which in the case of boys included, above all, subsistence activities (for example, hunting small animals with miniature bows and arrows). However, I did observe children playing those activities, even if not as frequently or diversely as they did in the past. Furthermore, in my assessment, they did imitate adults, or at least take their cues from adults. However, the adult role models available to them tended to deemphasize these traditionalist activities in favor of different activities of greater relevance to contemporary Xavante society. An obvious example is that some adults now watch television, a decidedly nontraditional pastime. A television and DVD player were installed in the house next to mine after my first year of fieldwork. Like adults, kids not only adored watching but had particular enthusiasm for kung fu movies. I was struck by changes in boyhood play after the television was installed. For the first time, I observed daily child play involving kicking, long stick fighting, and toy gun shooting. One way of interpreting this behavior is that children continued imitating adults, just as before, which in this case involved watching television at the expense of some of the other more traditional activities Maria had mentioned. As a result, they incorporated and emphasized new cultural themes in their play activities.

Whereas play is considered to be one of the most distinguishing features of boyhood, adolescence carries the connotation of imminent induction into the pre-initiate house (*hō*), a separate structure located at the margin of the village that serves as primary residence for members of the pre-initiate age grade (*wapté*) for a period up to about four years prior to their initiation in adulthood. In anticipation of their symbolic isolation from the village, boys who show the physical signs of adolescence are considered too old to roam about the village and play with children. Thus, use of the term *ai'repudu* tends to coincide with parents' decision to send a child to the pre-adolescent house if they did not already do so. At the time I conducted the age grade census, the previous inhabitants of the pre-initiate house (*hō'wa*) had already been initiated into novitiate adulthood and had therefore left the pre-initiate house, but the next group of pre-initiate coresidents had not yet been inducted. Consequently, there was a large group of boys whose parents anticipated sending them to the pre-initiate house in the very near future and were actively involved in the laborious process of preparing the handspun cotton materials required for the pre-initiate induction rites (*wapté rōiwĩhã*).

In my observation, male adolescence is characterized by the same degree of liberty as boyhood. However, there is a clear tendency for adolescents to distance themselves from their previous social circles of younger children as they increasingly align themselves with their future age set. For example, I noted that adolescents often played in and around the evening men's council (*warã*), a social space that children otherwise tend to avoid. On one particular evening not long before a new group of young adolescents was to be inducted into the pre-initiate house, there was an ample turnout of

younger initiated men who would soon become these boys' mentors.²¹ They sat on stools in a little cluster at the periphery of the main circle of mature men, playing checker-like games in the soil rather than participating in the older men's discussion. With them were several of their mentors and a group of about eight male adolescents. According to my interpretation of this situation, the reason those particular men and adolescents chose to socialize at the periphery of the meeting was they shared a special bond deriving from their intimate association as members of three age sets connected through bonds of real or anticipated mentorship.

2.2.3. Reevaluation of male childhood age grades

Summarizing the findings and interpretations presented in this section, boyhood (*watebremi*) is a major gendered age grade, lasting from birth to the appearance of physical signs of adolescence, including increased growth and deepening of the voice. It overlaps with childhood (*a'uté*), which includes females and lasts from the fetal stage to physical adolescence. Most people view the beginning of adolescence (*ai'repudu*) as coinciding with the end of childhood (*a'uté*) and boyhood (*watebremi*). In contrast, the established model of Xavante age grades presents all three of those categories as neatly sequential and discrete. That representation is problematic not only because childhood and boyhood are not discrete, but also because it fails to distinguish between the individualistic and subjective natures of the criteria that distinguish them from the formal criteria that mark inclusion in certain other age grades.

²¹ Pre-initiates are mentored by members of the youngest age set in the mature adult age grade (*iprédu*). They are designated by the term *danhohui'wa*.

Stewart (1977:2) specifies that a person may not occupy two formal age grades at the same time because age grades are discrete ranks that members of age sets pass through according to public and collective criteria, leaving no doubt about which one a person belongs to at any given time. Thus, it is only with formal age grades that inclusion is necessarily discrete and sequential. Furthermore, Stewart (1977:133) adopts the convention that any stages of life that precede age set inauguration are not formal age grades. Said another way, individuals may not occupy formal age grades until they do so as members of age sets. I adopt Stewart's convention because it effectively highlights the difference between formal and informal age grades in a manner that can be applied consistently to all Xavante age hierarchies for both males and females.

The Xavante categories child (*a'uté*), boy (*watebremi*), and adolescent (*ai'repudu*) are based on individualistic and subjective criteria, such as conception, birth, and physical adolescence. They also apply to individuals before they join age sets. Furthermore, the same individuals may be considered both children and boys at the same time. Accordingly, they do not meet Stewart's definition of formal age grades. In contrast, informal age grades "have only approximate and indicative value" because they are not "institutionalized in relationship with age classes" (Bernardi 1985:2). Thus, child, boy, and adolescent are informal age grades rather than formal age grades that exclusively define male childhood before inclusion in age sets and the formal age grade system they define.

2.3. Pre-initiate (*wapté*)

2.3.1. Introduction and findings

In the previous section, I argued that childhood (*a'uté*), boyhood (*watebremit*), and male adolescence (*ai'repudu*) are informal age grades of a different order than formal age grades that operate with age sets. Whereas those three terms are defined individualistic and subjective criteria, formal age grades are defined collectively for members of age sets. In this section, I discuss the next sequential age grade in the established model, arguing that it is the first of a series of formal age grades that encompass the remainder of male life cycle. Whereas the application of informal age grade terms is expected to be somewhat ambiguous and indiscrete, formal age grades, by virtue of their institutionalization by age sets, are expected to exhibit unambiguousness and discreteness.

The term *wapté* is translated elsewhere as “adolescent” (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:150), “bachelor” (Maybury-Lewis 1967:105-114; Graham 1995:96), and “pre-initiate” (Graham 1995:97). In my sample of 248 responses regarding males, not a single subject was identified as *wapté*. This notable lack of responses employing the term *wapté* is an important demonstration of its unambiguousness and discreteness. According to my ethnographic observations and interviews, the term *wapté* is used systematically for males from the moment they are ritually inducted in staggered fashion into the pre-initiate house (*hō*) to their collective ceremonial initiation into adulthood. The age grade census was done in March 2007, about seven months after the previous pre-initiate age set was ritually initiated into novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*) and before another group of boys (*watebremit*) and adolescents (*ai'repudu*) were ritually inducted into the pre-initiate

house (*hö*) and thereby assumed *wapté* status. Thus, it was common knowledge that no individuals occupied the *wapté* age grade when the census was conducted. Based on that characterization, I adopt Graham's translation of the age grade term *wapté* as "pre-initiate."

2.3.2. Reevaluation of the pre-initiate age grade

The distinction I make between the informality of childhood (*a'uté*), boyhood (*watebreml*), and adolescence (*ai'repudu*) and the formality of pre-initiation (*wapté*) is not only theoretical but also reflects the explicit emic recognition that membership in pre-initiation is predicated on participation in public rites of passage, independent of one's gender or stage of personal development.²² For males, pre-initiation begins when a group of boys and male adolescents is publically inducted into the pre-initiate house. For males and females, progression between subsequent formal age grades occurs simultaneously at the conclusion of the age set initiation rites. The decision to schedule those rituals is made in the men's council because of their importance to the entire community as a whole. Thus, knowledge of people's passage between formal age grades is a decidedly public affair.²³

Maybury-Lewis distinguished between that inauguration ceremony, in which boys are assigned to an age set and thereby become pre-initiates, and subsequent induction

²² Participation in this context is defined as participation as an age set, not necessarily as an individual. Thus, an individual who cannot participate personally nevertheless is promoted to the next age grade with his or her age set.

²³ However, Graham (1995:100-101) makes the fascinating argument that the Xavante life cycle, considered in its totality, also includes postmortem immortality.

rites (*wapté rōiwĩhã*) that mark their entrance into the pre-initiate house (Maybury-Lewis 1967:135-137). Although I found both types of ceremonies to exist, my data contradict some of the structural implications of his account. According to my sources, the age set inauguration ceremony (*deza 'hi 'hōri*) involves both boys and girls who are thereby all assigned to a coed age set. During that ceremony the new members of the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei 'wa*) ceremonially cut the hair of the young boys and girls who are to form the new age set. There is a special and somewhat competitive dynamic between those two age sets, which is entailed in their temporary adoption of special terms for one another. Until the next ritual cycle, some five years later, members of the older age set call members of the younger age set *sinhō 'ra* and the younger call the older *wahi 'wa*.²⁴ For boys, assignment to the age set is considered provisory and parents may later choose to advance or delay them by one age set as they see fit. That difference derives from a correspondence for males between age set membership and residence in the pre-initiate house, both of which are finalized only during a series of pre-initiate induction rites held over the course of approximately five subsequent years. For females, who do not reside in the pre-initiate house, age set assignment during the inauguration ceremony is considered final. Furthermore, because females do not participate in the pre-initiate induction rites, they do not become members of the pre-initiate age grade. Thus, the age set inauguration ceremony is not accompanied by a change in age grade status for either males or females. In the case of males, they remain boys and adolescents according to their personal

²⁴ Some individuals, including siblings, may continue to use those terms into later life.

development until they are inducted into the pre-adolescent house and thereby become pre-initiates.

As Maybury-Lewis accurately explains, “It is the mature men who authorize the group of initiates to enter the bachelors’ hut and thus ‘enter’ the age-set system” (Maybury-Lewis 1967:157). One of the factors in their decision is said to be the number of adolescents in the village, since they are considered too old to be “walking around with children.” However, assignment of an individual child to a group of inductees is primarily the business of his parents. When I asked mothers and fathers when their sons would enter the pre-initiate house, they often consulted one another before answering. Sometimes they disagreed initially, but as often than not, if a child was larger than a toddler, they came to an immediate agreement. Often, however, I found those determinations were later modified as they took into consideration a variety of factors that could not be anticipated. Most parents identified age and size as the primary factors in their decisions as to when their sons would be inducted in the pre-initiate house. However, most people denied that the physical onset of adolescence or the psychological maturity that tends to accompany adolescence was a major factor, since boys may be inducted as either preadolescents (*watebremi*) or adolescents (*ai’repudu*). As one man commented, a father may surprise a preadolescent son by sending him to the pre-initiate house at a very young age, before he wants to go. Similarly, a father who desires for his son to be an age set leader might hold him back so that he meet the prerequisite of being among the oldest members of his age set. Nevertheless, in most cases, adolescents tended to be included in the next scheduled group of inductees. Also factored into such decisions is the number of children of similar ages in an extended family, since having too many

children in the same age set concentrates the burden of ritual preparations. Furthermore, consideration is given to the distribution of siblings between age sets, since it is considered desirable for brothers or sisters to compete against each other in log races between adjacent age sets (*uiwede*).

I also found evidence of agency on the part of children, who also have a say in when they will go live in pre-initiate house. There were several cases of boys who were ritually inducted in 2004 but chose not to live there for some time afterwards. One of my younger adoptive brothers, Dedé, was among them. Unlike most Xavante children I spent time with, Dedé often played alone or with somewhat younger children. He liked to hunt small animals with bows and traps of his own craftsmanship, usually in the orchard and fields immediately behind his family's house. After being ritually inducted into the pre-initiate house, Dedé simply did not go. His father lightheartedly told me that there was nothing more to be done; he had already told Dedé repeatedly to go sleep there but to no avail. I took this to mean that ultimately it was Dedé's decision whether to take up residence there. As I explain below, boys are inducted incrementally over a period of several years. In Dedé's case, there was another induction rite two years later. Although he did not repeat the rituals, it was about that time that he made the personal decision to begin sleeping in the pre-initiate house with his age set peers. From that time on, he appeared inseparable from them. Although Dedé's initial choice to stay at home did not alter his status as a pre-initiate (*wapté*), it did delay when he would assume full status as a pre-initiate coresident (*hö'wa*).

Silva (1986:80) and Giaccaria and Heide (1972 [1984]:167, 189) mention another term, *heroi'wa*, a transitional stage that separates pre-initiation from young adulthood, the

next age grade in the established model. Although the term is not included in the established model, it would appear from their description to be a brief and discrete category in the male age grade sequence. As they were described to me, *heroi'wa* (“almost initiated”) and another term, *watei'wa* (“who is in the water”), are roughly synonymous and indicate a ceremonial stage lasting several months during the final stretch of an elaborate and prolonged sequence of rites leading up to their passage into manhood (*danhono*) (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:115-137; Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:162-194; Giaccaria 2000:25-77). The entire sequence of initiation rites that concluded in August 2006 lasted 15 months.²⁵ Several especially important events occur during the liminal *heroi'wa* and *watei'wa* phase. The first is an endurance exercise lasting several weeks, in which the boys enter the river for considerable intervals throughout the day and night while leaping and splashing the surface. By all reports it is an exhausting process that both tests and promotes physical and emotional strength. The second is an ear-piercing ceremony that inscribes onto the male body one's movement toward adulthood, a process that is not completed until membership in novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*) is marked with a ceremonial foot race (*sa'uri*) and coresidence in the pre-initiate house is thereby concluded. The terms *heroi'wa* and *watei'wa* were said to indicate the expectant process of becoming a novitiate adult and, in that sense, serve to distinguish the approach of adulthood from the passing of pre-initiation.

No individuals in my quantitative sample were identified as *heroi'wa*, presumably because the age set initiation rites were not in progress at the time. I did, however, visit

²⁵ The first event in the 2005-2006 initiation ritual cycle was a collective hunting expedition sponsored by pre-initiates' mentors.

the village in July that year, after the boys had their ears pierced and before the initiation rites were concluded. At that time I received mixed responses to my inquiries regarding the status of these boys. Some used the term *wapté* while others made a point of specifying they were no longer *wapté*, having already become *heroi'wa*. This ambiguity suggests that these are not discrete terms, as Giaccaria and Heide (1972 [1984]:167, 189) implied. I infer from those usages that *wapté* is the more inclusive of the two terms, being used for boys as long as they reside in the pre-initiate house. In contrast, *heroi'wa* and *watei'wa* are more restrictive, being applicable to pre-initiates optionally and only during the transitional rites mentioned above.²⁶

2.3.3. The pre-initiate coresident experience

In the published literature, the often repeated observation is that Xavante boys spend five years in the pre-initiate house (e.g., Maybury-Lewis 1967:111; Coimbra et al. 2002:29). My data suggest it is more accurate to say that about every five years another age set leaves the pre-initiate house (is initiated into adulthood) but their members variously reside there from as little as a few days to about four years (cf. Graham 1995:93). The first time I visited the village, in May 2004, 18 boys resided in the pre-initiate house. They were the first of their age set to enter the pre-initiate age grade, having been ritually inducted in August 2002, one year after the previous group was

²⁶ According to my informants, there is no clear-cut processional or semantic distinction between *watei'wa* and *heroi'wa*, as has been suggested elsewhere (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:164-167). According to that source, boys (*wapté*) become *watei'wa* at the moment they enter the river and then become *heroi'wa* at the moment their ears are pierced.

initiated into novitiate adulthood and left the pre-initiate house. Consequently, they were to be the only members of their age set to spend a full four years in coresidence.

Members of this first group were called *ĩrõ'rada* (“first penis sheath”), meaning they were the first to assume pre-initiate coresident status, which historically involved adopting the practice of wearing a penis sheath, the only precontact article of adult male clothing (Maybury-Lewis 1967:106-107). Like all members of the first group of an age set to be inducted into the pre-initiate house, the boys living in the pre-initiate house during my first visit were considered the age set’s eldest members. It would be from among their ranks that age set leaders were chosen and adults would look to set examples for their younger age set peers.

In November, 2004, I witnessed the induction rites of a second group of 11 boys, including my younger adoptive brother Dedé, into the pre-initiate house. Members of his group were called *dawawa'ĩrõ* (“middle penis sheath”) because they were the second of three staggered groups to enter the pre-initiate house. These rites lasted three days and involved a busy schedule of club fights (*oi'o*), wrestling matches (*wa'i*), and log races (*uiwede*), leading up to a final presentation of the new inductees in the central plaza. Unlike Dedé, most members of this newly inducted group immediately began sleeping in the pre-initiate house with their older age set mates. Dedé, on the other hand, remained at home, temporarily forfeiting his coresident status until March, 2006, when the final group of ten *ĩrõ'te* (“last penis sheath”) joined their age set in the pre-initiate house. Although Dedé’s delay did not formally alter his status as a member of the second induction group, it did create some confusion as to his status, as evidenced by some older men who identified him as a member of the third group.

All three of the staggered induction groups graduated together from the pre-initiate house in August 2006, at the same time that a new group of boys (*watebremi*) and male adolescents (*ai'repudu*), along with their female age set mates, were ritually identified for inclusion in the next age set. By that time, the first induction group had lived together for four years, whereas the second group had been with them for about two years, and the third group for only five months.

The length of time pre-adolescents occupy the pre-initiate house varies greatly. One important reason is that, according to my informants, a new pre-initiate house is never constructed immediately after the previous group completes its initiation into adulthood. This differs from Maybury-Lewis's historical account, according to which a new group of pre-initiates takes up immediate residence in the pre-initiate house even though, paradoxically, they are not yet formally inducted into it (Maybury-Lewis 1967:137). The full sequence of initiation rites that usher pre-initiates into adulthood were concluded in August 2006. That happened to occur when the community was preparing to divide into two villages for internal political reasons. By the time I conducted the age grade census in March 2007, seven months after the close of the previous initiation ceremonies, the two political factions had moved to separate but adjacent village sites where they would build separate pre-initiate houses for the next initiation cycle. At that time, one village was already in the process of constructing a new pre-initiate house while the other village anticipating doing so in late 2008. Although I initially presumed that those delays were anomalous and attributable to the upheaval of political division, interviewees uniformly asserted that they were standard practice. Many people, including elders, observed that delays of one to two years, even three, were quite

usual. They attributed those delays to the considerable burden of fabricating hand-spun cotton string used in the many ceremonial ornaments and outfits used in both the preceding age set initiation rites and the subsequent pre-initiate induction rites. The decision of when to induct a first group of boys into a new pre-initiate house was said to be made in the men's council based on, among the other factors mentioned earlier, the various families' progress in manufacturing that thread. Each extended family's progress depended on numerous factors including garden yields, trade opportunities, and number of participants. Once adequate progress had been made by the families involved, the first induction rites could be scheduled. It happened that I conducted the age grade census during this preparation time.

Another reason for the variable lengths of time boys occupy the pre-initiate house is they are inducted in a staggered fashion, as described above. According to interviewees, an age set may be inducted in as few as two to as many as five groups, depending on the number of boys and other scheduling issues. If they enter in three groups, they are called *ĩrõ'rada*, *dawawa'ĩrõ*, and *ĩrõ'te*, as described above. If they enter in just two groups, they are called *ĩrõ'rada* and *ĩrõ'te* (*dawawa'ĩrõ* is omitted). Should a fourth group be inducted, which is not very usual but happened in 2006, it is called *hödawa'ö'ha*. Sometimes, at the very last minute, a boy's parents will decide to append a son to an age set before it leaves the pre-initiate house so that he is initiated into novitiate adulthood with them. In this event, he will be called *ubranhowaha*, which indicates that he was inducted alone immediately preceding the age set initiation rites into adulthood. Such boys reside in the pre-initiate house for very short periods of time.

Such staggered entrance into the pre-initiate house produces a perception of contrasting relative age within a single age grade, not strictly in terms of numerical years, but much more so in terms of development and maturity. This is because the longer a boy spends in the pre-initiate house, the longer he will be involved in the business of becoming an adult, which is his primary objective while there. In my experience, the perception of age contrast between the three staggered induction groups was also most pronounced between the first (*ĩrõ'rada*) and the two subsequent groups (*dawawa'ĩrõ* and *ĩrõ'te*). As one novitiate man who had been in his age set's first induction group said about one of his age set mates in the third induction group who was chronologically only eight months his junior, "he's really young!" He had other age set mates that he did not consider as young who were in fact as much as five years his junior. In addition, when I asked people to identify specific individuals' induction groups, it was common for them to first say *ĩrõ'te* (third group) and then specify (or correct themselves) *dawawa'ĩrõ* (second group). I took this to indicate that people often consider the second and third induction groups more similar to one another than to the first group. My observation regarding Xavante perspectives of relative age within the pre-initiate age grade contrasts with the mean chronological ages of members of the three induction groups at the time of their initiation into novitiate adulthood in 2006. Those data attest greater differences between the first and third groups and between the second and third groups than between the first and second groups (see Figure 5), highlighting the difference between social age and chronological age among pre-initiate boys.

A final reason pre-initiate boys spend variable amounts of time in the pre-initiate house is that graduation from the pre-initiate house is not automatic because it requires

the permission of elders. By rule of thumb, graduation from the pre-initiate house occurs every five years, but in fact it requires that older mature adults determine they are satisfactorily prepared for adulthood. Other scholars have commented on the tremendous synchronicity in pre-initiate house cycles throughout widely dispersed and autonomous Xavante communities (Maybury-Lewis 1967:155). While this is generally true, not all communities follow the same calendar. During my fieldwork, the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá community and a nearby smaller village that split from it in 1990, Wederã, were said to be one year behind all other Xavante communities, meaning that they held age set initiation rites in 2006 while the others did so in 2005. Historically speaking, it is not considered uncommon for certain communities to advance an age set from the pre-initiate age grade after three, four, or even six years, instead of the usual five years. Reasons are said to be varied, but might include external factors (for example, external conflicts or politics) or internal factors (for example, village movements or internal politics). In addition, elders may consider holding pre-initiates back a year should they have concerns about their readiness for adulthood. For example, one evening in May 2005, the older mature men decided that the village would hold a spiritual ritual (*wai'a*) the following afternoon. However, the next morning, the pre-initiates' mentors instead held separate ceremonial activities in conjunction with their pre-initiate protégés. To the elders this was a grave example of disrespect and led them to discuss delaying or even permanently cancelling the initiation rites tentatively scheduled for 2006. A delay of one year would result in a six-year interval between initiation rites. As it turned out, in response to the elders' disapproval, the mentors and their protégés went on their best

behavior for some time and the elders ultimately allowed the initiation rites to continue on schedule.

Mentors (*danhohui'wa*) are members of the second anterior (older) age set to have resided in the pre-initiate house before its current occupants and it is under their guidance that pre-initiates are said to be engaged in the process of becoming adults. From the Xavante perspective, this is the only correct configuration for educating adolescent males not only because mentors are thought to have already learned everything necessary in order to teach them but also because the mentor-protégé relationship is the foundation for much of adult sociality. In other words, mentors are both capable of and specifically indicated for the job. The social relationship between mentors and their protégés (*hō'wa nōri*) is an essential part of the age set system both experientially and structurally and is intimately wrapped up with how pre-initiates learn to become adults.

Some adults say that entering the pre-initiate house marks the end of children's life of total liberty and their first encounter with the expectations of adult life. This is not to say that they are involved in adult life. To the contrary, they are specifically insulated from it, having no business in politics, for example. Giaccaria and Heide characterize pre-initiates as ignorant of the fundamental secrets of Xavante adulthood (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:114), although I would qualify that statement because in certain exceptional cases of political conflict, as I witnessed from 2005 to 2007, it is impossible to shelter them from the political process. That said, it is true that adults expect that pre-initiates do not concern themselves with adult affairs, but rather focus on their own business of becoming adults.

Although induction into the pre-initiate house is a public and collective event, being a pre-initiate coresident is seen as a process of personal transformation as much as of collective transformation. As one mature adult told me, living in the pre-initiate house is about learning to think like an adult by “opening your mind” (*darã si sãmra dahã*). The boys are encouraged to behave themselves, which includes keeping quiet, remaining with their group, minding the group’s and nobody else’s business, and through this behavioral conformity transforming themselves into conscientious adult individuals. Other scholars justifiably approach the pre-initiate house experience as a fundamentally collective affair. For example, Maybury-Lewis emphasized the “corporate solidarity” involved in being pre-initiates (1967:108). Similarly, Laura Graham (1995:97) frames the pre-initiate age grade as the apex of group identity in the male life cycle, after which collectivity gradually gives way to the fragmenting forces of adult political interests. Although I agree with their assessments, I choose to emphasize another truth, that the Xavante morality of collectivity encompasses a strong philosophy of individuality, even during the formative pre-initiate house experience. Pre-initiate education is based equally on the premise that group unity facilitates individual learning as on the assumption that the group is characterized by internal difference. On the one hand, pre-initiates share a single age identity, occupy the same residence, undergo similar educational experiences, and collaborate as a team. On the other hand, they belong to several incremental age subcategories, come from different homes, pertain to different patrilineal moieties, are divided into pairs of formal friends and individual mentorship relationships, occupy unequal positions in an internal age set leadership hierarchy, and have variable individual competencies and personal characteristics. The coresident educational experience builds

on both age set collectivity and difference to produce socially competent adult members of society.

2.3.4. Traditionalism and pre-initiation

The pre-initiate age grade is emblematic of male notions of traditionalism specifically because it is widely recognized by men to be the primary socially orienting event in their lives and the lives of all men, past and present. Novitiate men, mature men, elder men, and male ancestors alike are thought to share the experience of having left their natal households to join an age set of peers under the affectionate guidance of their mentors. It is that shared experience more than any other that gives Xavante men a sense of historical continuity. Every male member of every generation can be identified by where and when he was a pre-initiate. In the past, as in the present, pre-initiate houses were thought to have been positioned in the same physical places relative to the village for each successive age set, regardless of how long ago or where the village was located. Pre-initiates of all ages are thought to have been inducted into the pre-initiate house through the same rites of passage and to have been held to the same program of personal development while there. In this sense, the pre-initiate age grade symbolizes tradition and historical continuity more specifically than any other age grade, including that of elders. I once asked a group of pre-initiate protégés and their mentors how their experience in the pre-initiate house differed from what they heard about the historical eras of their elders and ancestors. They unanimously agreed that absolutely nothing had changed with the minor exception that their elders wore only penis sheaths (*ĩrô*), not clothes, when they lived in pre-initiate coresidence. Further, the pre-initiates insisted that they too would like

to use penis sheaths rather than clothes and would not be bothered by the cold because they were just as resilient as their elders were at their age.

In many contexts, elders also assert the historical continuity of the pre-initiate experience. They found great pride in the continuation of this cultural practice, which they see as key to the community's cultural integrity. They viewed it not only as what transforms boys into men, but also what makes them Xavante. It is among their most valued features of their culture and what they believe distinguishes them from non-indigenous peoples and, just as importantly, what distinguishes them from other less authentic indigenous peoples, which the Xavante describe as having become "white" (*warazú*). The concept is nothing if not pregnant with ethnicity. It makes not only men from boys, but more specifically, Xavante men from Xavante boys. Thus, Xavante elders often tend to agree with the pre-initiates in saying that the coresident experience is the same today as it was before.

At other times, elders are likely to express a different perspective. They complain abundantly that pre-initiates do nothing more than sleep and wait for food, that the mentors do not properly groom their hair or wear traditional neckties when they sing at night, and that the coresident experience is overall much weaker than it used to be. Sadly, every elder male I asked expressed doubts as to whether future pre-initiates would learn much of true value. One male elder surrendered hope, saying "it's all over, there's nothing left."

These two contrasting perspectives represent different yet equal truths, two aspects of the same phenomenon. On the one hand, pre-initiate education is seen as continuing in the same format since time immemorial, thus serving as a strong symbol of

historical continuity. On the other hand, it is viewed as having been diluted through historic contact with non-indigenous people, such that it now lacks the rigor and content necessary to transform children into satisfactory adults. One reading of this apparent contradiction is in terms of audience, whereby elders tended to positively emphasize historical continuity for the benefit of outsiders. Indeed, they did so with me uniformly for the first months of my research until I gained a more subtle and sympathetic awareness of village affairs. Conversely, they sometimes reserved their negative views regarding the failures of pre-initiate education for internal discussions, since no one likes to air his dirty laundry in public. Another, perhaps more significant reading of this apparent contradiction better reconciles it vis-à-vis the Xavante logic of traditionalism.

In my observation, elders had a cherished inclination to disparage youth. It seemed to be one of the privileges of advanced age. They criticized young males for any number of deficiencies, many of which they framed in terms of cultural deterioration. Thus, contemporary mentors were thought to set bad examples for their protégés, who were seen as grossly inferior to their historical counterparts. These criticisms were diverse and incessant. For example, elders complained that youth do not pluck their eyebrows, forget to oil their hair, are so lazy that they sleep all day, and, above all, want nothing more than to become “white.” Such ridicule is important not only because it illustrates elders’ notions of traditionalism and change in the formative pre-initiate experience, but also because it intervenes in the behavior and values of maturing young males. It is my contention that these forms of ridicule implicitly differentiate infallible educational structures from the errant people involved in them.

When elders ridiculed youth they often did so jokingly, making it difficult to ascertain whether their disappointment in today's young males was genuine. At other times they do so during long harangues (*dawaparipesi*, "his lecture") in decidedly graver tones. Pre-initiates and their mentors seemed to believe these criticisms, often agreeing with elders that they are sloppy, lazy, and nontraditional. However, historical evidence suggests that some of elders' criticisms were unjustified because historical youth were no less guilty of those changes than contemporary ones. For example, my Xavante brother Eugênio, a mentor to the pre-initiates at the time, told me that he was embarrassed by the decrepit condition of the pre-initiate house, with trash on the floor and decaying thatch on the roof, because in his opinion the elders would never have allowed such a state of disorder when they were coresidents and mentors. Yet, it seems they did exactly that. Maybury-Lewis (1967:110) wrote that in 1958, when several of the community's contemporary elders were pre-initiates, "...their mats are usually the most tattered and filthy of any in the village. ...the bachelors' hut is an uncomfortable place to live. It is badly covered, so that the sun scorched its inmates by day and the moon keeps them awake at night, and it is frequently infested with insects." Thus, historical pre-initiates and their mentors appear to have maintained the pre-initiate house in as bedraggled a state as their contemporary counterparts.

In a similar example, the typical complaint by elders that pre-initiates do nothing more than wait for food to be delivered is strikingly similar to Maybury-Lewis's observation not long after the contact era that pre-initiate coresidents "have few obligations and no responsibilities. Their families provide them with a certain amount of food, and whenever they are hungry they are able to send a messenger to one of the

households to bring back more” (1967:110). It would seem that the pre-initiates in 1958 were not so different from today – neither did very much more than wait around for food to be delivered.

These examples demonstrate that in some cases, whether or not they are aware of it, elders criticized youth for behavior that was in fact little worse than that of youth in the past, including their own. In all likelihood those elders heard much the same sort of critical banter from their elders when they were young. In this regard, I would submit that elders’ claims that today’s youth are inferior to youth in the past are not as important as the ridicule behavior itself, which is how proper elders encourage youth to do what is right and good. With mentors being specifically indicated for looking after pre-initiates, elders are largely excluded from the process of youth education. For example, it would be inappropriate for elders to take the initiative of involving themselves overtly in pre-initiate education (e.g., go to the pre-initiate house to teach them something) without being asked to do so by the mentors. Furthermore, the Xavante morality of age stratification favors indirect influence over direct subordination, restricting elders’ ability to dictate the behavior of protégés and their mentors. Accordingly, elders often ridiculed younger males not necessarily because they do not measure up but because it is a culturally appropriate way to encourage social compliance among younger males. In this sense, criticism is an expression of traditionalist optimism that youth can and will be properly prepared for adulthood. Furthermore, it is good evidence not of culture change, as the elders themselves claimed, but of historical continuity in the hierarchical relationship between elders and younger males.

Although elders' usual critical banter with pre-initiates and mentors may be more about the exchange than the criticism, there were also abundant examples in which their ridicule involved genuine blame for personal failure. For example, elders frequently expressed dismay that youth seem uninterested in and incompetent at a variety of traditional subsistence activities. These charges differ from those discussed above because they are not contradicted by historical fact. From the mid-1970s to the present the Xavante at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhriritipá have faced a near total overhaul of subsistence regime as geographical circumscription led to the abandonment of trekking activity, intensive rice agriculture was promoted by the Brazilian government as a development strategy, and inextricable involvement in the market economy. Although elders continue to value traditional hunting, gathering, and handicraft production skills, younger individuals have less opportunity and less reason to learn them. To elders, the resulting lack of youth competence in these areas indicates an overall diminishing of Xavante culture. Importantly, elders generally blame what they saw as cultural decline on the young males involved, characterizing it pessimistically as the failure of mentors to teach (*dasi'sanho*, "to teach, to set an example") and their protégés to learn (*rowaihú*, "to learn, to understand").

As I have shown, elders' ridicule of the inadequacies of contemporary pre-initiates and their mentors encompasses two different stances towards traditionalism and youth. On the one hand, it may be lighthearted banter that speaks in optimistic terms to the maintenance of the traditional relationships thought to make for effective education. On the other hand, it may critically blame younger males for bringing about grave loss of traditional behaviors by negligently failing to learn. Those two stances highlight a

distinction whereby the educational relationships that produce systemic continuity, such as that between mentors and the pre-initiates they oversee, or between elders and the young males they ridicule, are seen as inherently flawless, whereas the young males involved in those relationships are thought to be dismayingly subject to failure.

Accordingly, the coresident experience is associated with the successful maintenance of traditional education regardless of the progressive failures that elders perceive are occurring.

When elders speak about the pre-initiate house and the age set system elaborated by it, what I call the structures of pre-initiate education, they uncompromisingly assert that they are perfectly part of “our traditions” (*wahöimanazé*) and are therefore inherently irreproachable.²⁷ In other words, the system is not diminished, but the young males involved in it are. This distinction between *wahöimanazé* traditions themselves, including the traditional social relationships that perpetuate them, and the young individuals involved in the process, who might be motivated to uphold traditionalist values through public ridicule, helps make sense of the problem posed above, whereby elders make seemingly contradictory statements about the integrity of the contemporary pre-initiate experience. Insofar as they are examples of *wahöimanazé* traditions, the pre-initiate

²⁷ Laura Graham mentions that the notion of *wahöimanazé*, glossed by the Xavante with the Portuguese words *tradição* (“tradition”) and *cultura* (“culture”), denotes “the Xavante way of life, traditions... [, embracing] everything that contemporary Xavante associate with their forebears” (Graham 2005:629). My informants confirm that interpretation, attributing to it such diverse aspects of life as religious beliefs, haircut styles, architectural techniques, food preparation techniques, and defecation locales. Yet, in my research, I found that most often the term *wahöimanazé* is used for ritual activities and formally conceived aspects of social life rather than other more mundane aspects of traditional life, such as subsistence practices (Welch 2005).

house and the status of being a pre-initiate under the tutelage of mentors are emblematic of successful education and traditionalist ideals. However, to the extent the pre-initiate house is a collection of fallible young individuals, it is a constant reminder of the inevitability of culture change.²⁸

This distinction between the infallible structures and relationships of pre-initiate education and the fallible males involved in them is illustrated by how pre-initiates are taught to hunt. Elders were no less merciless in their criticisms of youth hunting than they were about other subjects. According to them, pre-initiates show pathetically little interest in hunting and thus are inept hunters for their age. They may have a point since most living elders claim to have killed their first major game animals while children or pre-initiates, whereas not a single contemporary pre-initiate had done so.²⁹ However, in my immediate assessment, it was more likely due to pre-initiates having relatively little opportunity to learn the technical aspects of hunting.

Regarding circumstances in the 1950s, Maybury-Lewis observed, “Older men accompany [pre-initiates] on the hunt and teach them how to track and kill the various game animals on which the Shavante rely” (1967:111). In contrast, in May 2004, I asked a group of about 15 pre-initiates, who at that time had been in coresidence for two years, who had accompanied adults hunting. Not a single one had. In fact, the first time that most of them ever had gone on a hunt was May 2005, just one year before graduating

²⁸ Maybury-Lewis made a similar point when he observed that Gê peoples tend to see their social institutions as timeless and impervious to change at the same time that they struggle to protect them from disappearing (Maybury-Lewis 1988:124; Seeger 1989:113).

²⁹ Of 11 elder males, three report killing their first large game animal as boys, four as pre-initiates, three as novitiate adults, and one as mature adults.

from the pre-initiate house. On that hunt I was surprised to see that most pre-initiates were assigned to stay behind at the base camp in order to collect firewood and tend to the roasting fires. On the few occasions I did see pre-initiates accompany adults during the actual activity of hunting, they were not allowed to carry weapons and, above all, were expected to assist senior males by portaging their game back to camp or to the village.

At the time, I saw those constraints as limitations on their ability to practice hunting. However, quite to the contrary, elders asserted those constraints as the proper and effective procedure for teaching youth to hunt, regardless of how tardy in the process they might be. According to those elders, the first steps in learning to hunt involve learning responsibility and discipline by submitting oneself to authority. In the case of pre-initiates, that means obeying one's mentors; in the case of the mentors it means obeying the elders. Thus, the elders expect of the mentors that the pre-initiates will properly behave themselves by quietly and obediently accompanying the hunters and doing for them supportive tasks such as making camp and carrying game. These expectations emphasize the educational importance of behavioral conformity according to the position pre-initiates occupy in the social hierarchy of society. That is the bedrock of pre-initiate education. Once it is accomplished, the rest of the learning process is thought to fall into place according to the expectation that young males learn by voluntarily imitating adults. For example, as boys accompany hunters they will gradually learn the landscape in order to not get lost, and learn self sufficiency skills such as making camp, cooking food, and later, butchering game. Only later should they be given license to carry weapons, attempt to kill game, or go hunting without the guidance of an adult.

2.4. Novitiate adult (*ritei'wa*)

2.4.1. Introduction

An interesting feature of the pre-initiate age grade is that it is always occupied by no more than one age set at any given time. This is not a necessary condition of formal age grades since it is also possible for many multiple age sets occupy a single age grade. However, in the Xavante system, only one age set at a time occupies the pre-initiate age grade because its inauguration simultaneously marks the advancement of the preceding age set to the next age grade. That is also the case for the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*). Thus, during the approximately five-yearly age set initiation rites, each new age set is inaugurated, the former pre-initiate age set is promoted into novitiate adulthood, and the former novitiate adult age set passes into mature adulthood (*iprédu*).

The results of the age grade census show that all of the 33 male individuals identified as *ritei'wa* belonged to the same age set, meaning they had been coresidents together as pre-initiates and subsequently participated in the initiation rites together. No members of that age set were called by other age terms and no one outside that age set was called *ritei'wa*. That perfect congruence between age grade and age set identity is explained by the circumstances of novitiate adult recruitment and attrition. Completing the final event in the long sequence of initiation rites, a running race (*daza'uri'wa*), is said to designate the simultaneous passage of all male members of the pre-initiate age grade and all female members of their age set (who did not belong to the pre-initiate age grade) into novitiate adulthood. Thus, pre-initiate coresidence ends and the newly designated novitiate men return to live in their natal households. They remain novitiate adults for about five years until the next set of initiation rites designate as novitiate adults

a new set of former pre-initiates and the former novitiate adults become mature adults (*iprédu*). Thus, the novitiate adult age grade is clearly and collectively demarcated for members of a single age set at any given time.

Despite occupying adjacent positions in the age grade sequence, or because of it, the pre-initiate and novitiate adult age grades are much more the social and symbolic antitheses of one another than either is of more distant grades. That contrast is abundantly obvious in how the rest of society regards them in terms of traditionalist values. As I discussed in the previous section, pre-initiates very much embody traditionalist values by virtue of the coresident experience, even though at times they may be judged negatively for their individual tendencies to fail traditionalist expectations of their behavior. In contrast, novitiate men are much more uniformly maligned for abandoning traditional values. Nevertheless, having come to know the young men in the novitiate adult age grade better than I did members of any other age group, I gained ample respect for how they too embody traditionalism at the same time they grapple with other sometimes conflicting possibilities.

Soon after I arrived in the field, I became aware that the community considered me a member of the novitiate adult age grade. I was not told so explicitly, but rather came to recognize it gradually as numerous people in various contexts indicated that my age set was someplace or doing something. For example, the first time I participated in a log race (*uiwede*), Valdo, my adoptive father in the village, instructed me to join his son Denoque and the rest of our age set in the center of the village plaza to paint ourselves for a ceremony. I am not sure why, at 35 years of age, I was not assigned to the mature adult age grade or, as a newcomer to Xavante society, I was not assigned to the formative pre-

initiate age grade, but perhaps it was because I expressed to village leaders my anthropological interest in young adult perspectives. In any event, as I mentioned above, the Xavante reckon age in relative terms, and a person's chronological age is not the most important factor in determining one's place in the age set system. Virtually no one seemed to take notice of my chronological age.

With time, I came to recognize that there was a certain expectation on the part of the community that novitiate men stick together as a group and that I participate with them in certain activities. Similarly, my novitiate adult age set peers made a gracious effort to include me in their activities and offer their assistance with my endeavors. They invited me to sing with them at night, accompany them on excursions into the forest, and secretly engage in various antics. I found some of our adventures together challenging and others to be unmitigated fun, but all of them brought us together as peers. Some of them became my closest friends in the community, sharing with me their personal concerns and relying on me to keep their business secret from the rest of the community and the public. Keeping secrets for various categories of individuals, including one's peers, allies, and family members is an important and positive value in Xavante society. Perhaps more than anything else, learning and keeping their secrets made me part of their group. Much of my understanding of Xavante society is colored by their perspectives.

My identity as a male member of the novitiate adult age grade was also extremely important in how I fit socially into the community. Even though I remained an outsider and, despite my best efforts, could never fully operate as a member of my age grade, I found myself deeply embedded in the matrix of Xavante sociality, and my particular orientation within it was closely related to my identity as a novitiate adult. In some

respects being a novitiate adult limited my access to certain people and perspectives.

However, it also gave me wonderful access to male novitiate adult life, often neglected in anthropological literature, and the ability to use their experiences as a vantage point for understanding the dynamics of age differentiation.

2.4.2. The novitiate manhood experience

Novitiate adult men are expected to comport themselves according to many of the standards they learned in the pre-initiate house, including to avoid being seen or heard in public unless performing rituals for the benefit of the community. Returning home as a novitiate adult after up to five years of pre-initiate coresidence does not demand major behavioral changes, but it does cast them in very different social positions relative to the rest of the adult community. As pre-initiates, they may have been at the bottom of the formal age hierarchy, but they were very much one of the community's primary focal points. The daily, seasonal, and annual rhythms of the entire village revolved substantially around the pre-initiate house and its occupants. New novitiate men, in contrast, are largely marginal, being relegated to what is arguably a more socially isolating stage of the male life cycle than the symbolic seclusion of pre-initiation.³⁰ They are excluded from the pre-initiate house, not yet involved in marriage and parenthood (this happens for many young men during their final years as novitiate adults), and still largely external to village political affairs. Such isolation also affords them ample liberty to pursue other interests as long they do not draw too much attention to themselves. By

³⁰ For a fascinating exception to that pattern, see Graham (1995:227-236).

popular reputation, those interests usually involve being lazy, making mischief, and wanting to become “white” (*warazú*). Interestingly, novitiate men often do not disagree with such characterizations. Thus, whereas the pre-initiation age grade is emblematic of historical continuity through its involvement in the quintessentially traditional coresident educational process, novitiate manhood largely symbolized its converse, historical change.

During those years as novitiate adults, male age set peers remain extremely cohesive despite living apart. They continue meeting regularly to go on excursions into the forest, sing, play sports, and just to hang out. They remain each other’s primary peers and comrades. Nevertheless, being dislodged from the pre-initiate house and dispersed into natal households fragments the group and leads them gradually to turn their attentions elsewhere. As other scholars have suggested, this shift does represent a relative decline in age set cohesion (Maybury-Lewis 1967:108; Graham 1995:97). It also represents the beginning of their inclusion in other collectivities that will become more important later in life. While at home, a novitiate adult man may become more aware of what it means to share in his father’s secret knowledge ownerships, gradually assuming them as an important part of his own individual identity. He may become an active listener in his father’s political affairs and come to recognize the importance of lending his father political support. Being an initiated novitiate adult living in one’s father’s household is an important opportunity for a young man to learn what it means to be his father’s son before leaving it permanently to begin life as a married man, a son-in-law, and a father.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of being a novitiate adult, both from their own perspective and from that of members of other age grades, is they are now considered sexually mature. As pre-initiates, boys frequently talked about females but were prohibited from engaging in sexual activity. As one boy told me, the worst part of being a pre-initiate was not being allowed to talk to girls. However, as newly initiated adults, novitiate men may for the first time have culturally sanctioned sexual relations. It is also during that age grade that many men first visit and then marry a first wife. As might be expected, novitiate men at this stage have a keen interest in females and sex, to which they dedicate a great portion of their attention (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:83). I sometimes encountered them secretly discussing the physical merits of their own or others' future (anticipated) spouses, joking about who was the greater womanizer (*u'ri'ro* – one who engages in intercourse frequently), or perusing pornographic magazines acquired in town. More than once they took advantage of the license that my status as a researcher gave to visit female spaces by ogling over Xavante women in my photograph collection. Above all, however, they were fascinated with their own future first wives, whether they still be strangers or already intimate partners. Furthermore, the entire adult population took great interest in the progress of these relationships.

Maybury-Lewis described a collective marriage ceremony at the conclusion of the approximately five-yearly age set initiation rites, immediately before pre-initiates become novitiate adults (Maybury-Lewis 1967:78-81). According to my informants, that ceremony is better characterized as a demonstration of parents' intent for their children to marry and not, properly speaking, a marriage ceremony. This may explain his observation that recently committed youth uniformly denied they had wives. In most

cases young men do ultimately marry the girls to whom they were publicly committed. Less frequently, those commitments are not kept for a variety of reasons. For example, one of the families may move to another village, the fathers may become political rivals, the girl may be accused of improprieties,³¹ or the children themselves may object to the arrangement. In such cases, the parents of a novitiate adult man may need to scramble to arrange another wife for him. There were several cases of such negotiations going on at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá before it split into separate villages in 2006. That fission was the result of an extreme intensification of political animosity between members of rival factions and led to many anticipated marriages being cancelled and new spouses being sought. After a tentative commitment has been made between fathers of a novitiate adult man and a potential bride, and once that bride is old enough to marry, her parents will signal their interest in initiating the first active phase of their relationship by delivering a corn bread loaf to the young man's father at night. If the young man's father accepts the loaf, he thereby seals the accord.³² In most cases of which I am aware this happened during the young man's third or fourth year in the novitiate adult age grade, but for some young men it did not happen until after they were mature adults (*iprédu*)

³¹ Under usual contemporary circumstances, a father may expect that his son's first wife will be virgin (*da'ubuni*). Should he have good reason to believe she is not and the political support to make the assertion publicly, he may withdraw his son from the commitment to marry. Given that ritualized premarital intercourse was institutionalized until recent decades (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:221-235; Graham 1995:258), that expectation may be largely rooted in extrinsic historical influences.

³² It is not always the case that corn loaves are accepted. I was told about one episode in which two different girls' fathers anticipated that a father would accept their daughters as his young adult son's first bride. By coincidence, both appeared with corn loaf gifts on the same night, leading to a physical altercation and one of the two daughters being refused.

because their future spouses were too young or because their marriage plans were upset by the village fission. From that point forward the two are considered boyfriend or fiancé (*pi'õsĩwe*) and girlfriend or fiancée (*dasiwẽ*) and the young man begins visiting her by night. Also, real and categorical fathers of the bride and groom begin calling each other *wasini* as a form of interfamilial respect and commitment.³³ Graham (1995:66-74) provides a detailed account of one such young man's nighttime visits to the household she lived in. For the Xavante, nighttime visits are thought of like dating, allowing the couple to get to know each other for the first time and, gradually, facilitating his incorporation into her and her family's lives. However, the accord between parents that initiated the nighttime visits is more like an engagement in that is a statement of intention that is only broken under unusual of circumstances.

After some time, perhaps a year or so, a young couple often formally marries, thereby becoming spouses (*damro*). During my stay in the village, it seemed to me that the timing of most marriages was guided by external scheduling issues. During the dry season of 2005 (May through October) a large number of marriages were held in rapid succession. The dry season is the primary season for a particular collective hunting strategy (*du*) whereby a large area of scrubby forest vegetation is burned in order to flush out game. This technique facilitates rapidly acquiring large quantities of game meat, a prerequisite for marriage ceremonies because they involve a delivery by the groom of an abundant quantity of meat to the bride's doorstep. As people frequently say, the larger the

³³ My data regarding the term *wasini* differ from those of Maybury-Lewis (Maybury-Lewis 1967:217), who defined the term as any person who is not in ego's political faction or exogamous moiety.

quantity, the more satisfied will be the groom's mother. That particular dry season, there was an awareness in the community that it would be difficult to hold these hunts the following year when the five-yearly age set initiation rites were to be held and would demand great investments of time and resources. Thus, those competing ceremonial demands caused people to prefer holding as many weddings as possible during the previous season. Another factor motivating the busy 2005 marriage calendar was a social imperative for couples to marry before having children which encouraged a perception that it was not prudent to delay young couples' marriages for too long. According to Giaccaria and Heide, should a child be born to a novitiate adult man, his older brother is recognized as father until the actual father becomes a mature adult man (*iprédu*) (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:224). However, I did not find examples of that resolution at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá. In my experience, married men in the novitiate adult age grade were recognized as fathers to their children even though they did not yet reside with the mothers.

Even after marriage, novitiate adult men continue to live in their natal households and visit their wives only at night. This behavior conforms to the social expectation that members of their age grade remain out of sight and not be seen visiting other people's households. Even though everyone knows they visit their wives at night, they must not be caught at it. In some circumstances, that expectation can create rather comical logistical problems. For example, my novitiate adult neighbor Vinícius usually returned from visiting his wife, Bianca, at about 5:00 a.m., a good half hour before the first mature men started arriving in the morning men's council. One particular day I did not hear his usual pounding on the door of his father's house to be let back in. Nor did I see him the entire

next day. He seemed to have vanished and no one mentioned where he was. Only on the following morning at 5:00 a.m. did he reappear according to his usual schedule. As he later told me with some embarrassment, he had slept in past sunrise and therefore could not return home at all that day. Not only was he stuck away from home, but he could not leave her house even to relieve himself lest he be seen exiting her house during daylight.

The process by which novitiate adult men became committed to and eventually marry young women in the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá community was largely governed by the traditionalist expectations of parents and elders. The community was acutely aware that their marital practices differ from those of dominant Brazilian society and even of some other Xavante communities, where non-Xavante influences are said to be more evident. In this manner, novitiate adult men arguably conform closely to their elders' traditionalist ideals. Nevertheless, elders' tendency to view novitiate adult men as nonconforming in other aspects of life also applies to the subject of marriage, as illustrated by the manner in which one of my closest friends in my age set, Goiano, met with community disapproval for what elders perceived to be a lack of regard for proper social etiquette.

2.4.3. Traditionalism and novitiate manhood

Goiano and I formed a bond during my first site visit, mainly because we were among eight novitiate adult men drafted to sing and dance during a spiritual ceremony (*wai'a*) from late afternoon to midmorning the next day. Having spent two years studying in a nearby city at the grammar school level, Goiano spoke Portuguese exceptionally well. He generously kept me company all night long, even during the coldest, barest

hours before first light. Between every song, he asked me if I was alright and made small talk to help the time pass more quickly. I do not remember most of the details of our conversations, since most of them occurred while my attention was numbed by cold and lack of sleep. However, more important than what was said was the feeling of companionship that he imparted to me and which endured long after that grueling nighttime ritual. Over the course of the next two years, Goiano became someone I could trust with my secrets, just as he trusted me with his own.

Goiano had a reputation in the village for wanting to be “white” (*warazú*). This reputation derived mainly from his having lived for one year at São Marcos, a Xavante reservation held in some disesteem by residents at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá for being out of step with traditionalist values. For example, I heard people say that its residents performed rituals incorrectly, spoke an improper dialect of the Xavante language, no longer cut their hair in traditional fashion, had problems with drugs and alcohol, and even counted two homosexuals (*ponere*, in Xavante slang) among them. Goiano said he lived there in order to continue his schooling because, unlike at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá, the indigenous school at São Marcos operated more closely to national public school standards and therefore provided better educational opportunities. In some other respects Goiano agreed with the popular assessment of São Marcos as nontraditional. For example, he cited that novitiate adult men at São Marcos were allowed to wear shorts and t-shirts during evening song performances, spent more time in the city, and had greater freedom to marry spouses of their own choosing. However, contrary to popular opinion at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá, he also asserted that they were no less authentically Xavante than people from his own community. He did not

agree that they spoke a notably different dialect or had lost their culture. He also felt that at least some of the contemporary aspects of São Marcos village did not indicate the abandonment of traditionalist values, but rather, demonstrated that it is possible to improve the quality of reservation life by taking advantage of some of the beneficial things that non-Xavante society has to offer.

The choice to live at São Marcos did not come without consequences. Goiano's elders sometimes criticized him for having been corrupted by their values, citing his nontraditional haircut and keen eye for income opportunities. When he put in a bid to become a schoolteacher at the Pimentel Barbosa indigenous school, some mature adults claimed he did it for the wrong reason (money) and would not set a good example for students. When I first knew Goiano, soon after his return from São Marcos, he seemed to almost encourage such commentary by cultivating a nonconformist image, much the way American teenagers assert independent values through dress and behavior their parents deem inappropriate. I would not go so far as to call him rebellious, but some of his elders probably did. More significantly, a false rumor spread that he had secretly married a woman at São Marcos, causing enough of a commotion that his father called him home to avoid further gossip. Goiano was already promised to a preadolescent girl from Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá, and was expected not to take another spouse while waiting to marry her. Goiano resented these charges and seemed to become more sensitive to their implications the longer they persisted. At one point, I perceived certain behavioral changes that indicated he recognized the need to promote a less progressive image that would be more congruent with his own community's values, especially those of his elders.

Once again, he grew out the back of his hair in the style preferred by his elders. When I asked him about it, he joked that he had “become Xavante again,” a reference to the elders’ criticism that he had “become white” at São Marcos. Although in private Goiano continued to express some ambivalence about his community’s resistance to certain aspects of modernity, he took great care in formulating a public stance that elders would appreciate and yet did not contradict his personal values. He no longer complained about the burden of being expected to participate in communal hunts, but rather asserted that such challenges are good because they promote physical resilience. He told me that technological changes such as sanitary plumbing, televisions, and concrete houses should be considered with caution because they could bring about undesired cultural transformations. He also began leading some of his age set’s evening council meetings. On those occasions, Goiano assumed an adult speechmaking voice that I hadn’t heard him use before. It made me realize that his perspective regarding traditionalism had shifted as he increasingly sought the respect of his community. As a novitiate adult man, it would still be many years before older mature adults would afford him a respected voice in community affairs. Nevertheless, knowing that someday he could have that chance, he was already starting to give consideration to community values in addition to his own. In my experience, Goiano was unusual for his age in expressing with such clarity his thoughts about issues of traditionalism and change. I suspect he did so because his unique experience outside the community and the negative attention it brought him had forced him to evaluate his own values in relation to those of the community.

Goiano and his age set mates may have earned the reputation of being nontraditional, but that does not mean they were the most nontraditional members of the

community, at least not in any absolute sense. Like pre-initiation, which simultaneously symbolizes the maintenance and the breakdown of traditional values, novitiate manhood involves a tension between traditional and modern social roles. Although most novitiate adult men were relatively free of responsibilities, having graduated from the pre-initiate house but not yet married, this did not usually translate into a lifestyle of unmitigated freedom. Goiano's experience off the reservation was unusual in this sense, since most novitiate adult men tended to spend all day, almost every day, inside their natal households, out of sight from the rest of the village. My adoptive brother Denoque is a good example. In late 2004, two years before progressing to mature adulthood (*iprédu*), Denoque was typical in that he was unmarried (only three novitiate adult men were married at that time) and did not yet consider his future wife to be his girlfriend (*dasiwê*), which would signal the appropriate time for him to begin visiting her at night. At that time I would more often than not find him at home by day or night. If he was not home during the daytime, he was usually attending school, playing soccer, or wiling away the hours in a dilapidated truck in the middle of the village, which the older mature men had authorized for use as a meeting place by novitiate adult men. At night, he often could be found in the middle of the soccer field laying under blankets with several of his age set mates, listening to music on a portable stereo. Those few locations nearly comprised his entire social orbit.

Like pre-initiates, novitiate adult men did not *do* very much of anything. In other words, they spent much of their time engaged in pastimes. Notable exceptions to that pattern were married novitiate adult men who already sought to respond to the expectation that young husbands bring their wives meat and help their fathers-in-law

clear gardens. However, as compared to pre-initiates, novitiate adult men passed the time in relative social isolation, being largely restricted to home rather than enjoying the collective social atmosphere of the pre-initiate house. Accordingly, with the exception of those few novitiate adult men who moved to the city to study, most had little opportunity to involve themselves in external social spheres. Their lives centered squarely on home and family despite their reputation among older adults as the least traditional segment of the community. In my case, doing ethnographic research required that I visit and interact with all members of the community. Doing so required that I walk through the village openly and in violation of normative male novitiate adult behavior. This did not go unnoticed and some people explicitly discouraged it by teasing me or shunning me when I went calling.

To the extent that the novitiate adult men did convene as a group, I found them to be much more interested in fulfilling traditionalist aspects of their social status than the elders gave them credit for. For example, when elders called on them as an age set to help with rice harvests, most were usually willing to do so.³⁴ Also, one of the trademarks of traditionalism for novitiate men was holding their own evening men's council (*warã*) in conjunction with a round of singing around the village. That entailed singing once at their reserved spot in the village center and then working their way around the village from one side to the other, stopping to sing and dance in front of various houses along the way. As a member of the novitiate adult age grade, I came to appreciate how these young men grapple with their and their elders' expectations that they maintain this tradition.

³⁴ Nimuendaju and Lowie (1938:64) similarly reported that among the Canella young age sets were often conscribed to assist with harvests.

By all accounts, novitiate adult men were sometimes inclined to not show up in adequate numbers to hold the evening council meeting, to show up poorly groomed, and to shun elders' requests that they also sing at midnight. Those failings incurred abundant accusations by elders that they were lazy, as might be expected given the elderly Xavante predilection for berating youth. However, elder men's descriptions of singing practices in the past suggest novitiate adult men were not the only ones to fail in those obligations. According to them, early evening singing by novitiate adult men was just the first in a series of nighttime singing by various age groups, including those very elder men. They recalled that after the novitiate adult men sang at dusk, there was a usual sequence of singing that lasted throughout the night until dawn and involved pre-initiates and their mentors, novitiate adult men (again), and mature adult men. The singing was said to only end in the early morning as the mature men began their morning council meeting. Elders recall there were rarely more than several nighttime hours with no singing and blame the discontinuation of that tradition on, above all, novitiate adult men. Notably, during my entire period of fieldwork I heard pre-initiates and their mentors sing with much less frequency than novitiate adult men and never once heard the mature adult men sing before their morning meeting. How did the elders justify criticizing young men for not meeting traditional obligations while they did so even less? When asked about this, one elder brushed the question aside, saying that he does not get up to sing during the night because he is old and tired.

I suspect that elders sold short novitiate adult men's efforts to uphold their singing responsibilities in the usual optimistic spirit of critical banter that is meant to encourage conformity. Not only did novitiate adult men sing more often than any other age grade,

but they also held their evening council meeting on a regular basis when there were no scheduling conflicts with school or other required activities. Whether or not they sang, novitiate adult men gathered on the soccer field nightly, armed with candles, blankets, and a portable stereo playing homemade tape recordings of Xavante singing. Often as not, several of them stayed the entire night, only vacating the field in the early morning as the mature men started their council meeting. That format was admittedly a recent innovation and probably elders would have preferred that novitiate adult men conduct their council meeting while properly seated in a circle on woven mats. However, from my perspective, the young men succeeded in continuing the very practices that traditionalist values dictated by modifying them in minor ways to give them continued relevance and appeal. Despite their elders' disapproval, novitiate adult men were, from my perspective, more successful than any other age group, including the elders themselves, at continuing the routine of nighttime singing.

2.5. Mature adult (*iprédu*) and elder (*ihi*)

2.5.1. Introduction and results

For most young men, becoming a novitiate adult marks a major social reorientation from the collectivity of living among age set peers in the pre-initiate house back to the privacy of family life. As novitiate adult men now living at home, they maintain the collective age set spirit through evening meetings, secret song rehearsals, collective excursions into the forest, and a host of other group engagements that punctuate their usual pattern of wiling away the hours and days at home. With time, their attentions turn towards their future spouses and in-laws in anticipation of the next major

shift in their social lives. According to the standard model of Xavante age grades, that shift is passage into mature manhood (*iprédu*).

According to one version of that model, mature manhood begins when novitiate adults participate in the sequence of age set initiation rites that simultaneously mark the passage of pre-initiates into the novitiate adult age grade and the inauguration of a new age set (Maybury-Lewis 1967:156-157). There is another variation of the established model that distinguished an intermediate age grade (*ipredúpte*, new mature adult, or *danhohui'wa*, mentor), occupying an intermediate position between young manhood (*ritei'wa*) and mature manhood (*iprédu*) (Müller 1976:73-74; Silva 1986:64-65; Graham 1995:96). That age grade is described as corresponding precisely with the third most recently inaugurated age set, that is, the age set serving as mentors to the pre-initiates. Like pre-initiation and novitiate adulthood, it is an age grade postulated to be occupied by only one age set at any given time. According to that account, young mature adulthood (*ipredúpte*) is distinct from and precedes mature adulthood (*iprédu*). In all versions of the standard model, the final age grade in the male life cycle is advanced adulthood (*ĩhi*).

Of the 91 males in the age grade census belonging to age sets older than the one occupying the novitiate adult age grade, 73 were called *iprédu* and 18 were called *ĩhi*. None were identified as *ipredúpte*. Of the 73 *iprédu*, 26 were in the third most recently inaugurated age set, 15 in the fourth, 14 in the fifth, 10 in the sixth, 5 in the seventh, 2 in the eighth, and 1 in the ninth.³⁵ No males in the first or second or after the ninth most

³⁵ Although each of these age sets are named, in this chapter I identify them numerically in the order of their initiation into mature adulthood in order to convey their sequential aspect. Discussion of their names is found in Chapter 4.

recently inaugurated age sets were identified as *iprédu*. Of the 18 *ĩhi* (or its diminutive form *ĩhire*) in the male sample, 3 were in the seventh most recently inaugurated age set, 7 were in the eighth, 5 in the ninth, 0 in the tenth, 1 in the eleventh, and 2 in the twelfth.

2.5.2. Reevaluation of male adulthood age grades

These findings reveal several important features of the three terms *iprédu*, *ipredúpte*, and *ĩhi*. First, all members of the second most recently inaugurated age set were called *ritei'wa* and no individuals younger than the third most recently inaugurated age set were identified as *iprédu*. Thus, mature adulthood is discrete from and immediately follows novitiate adulthood. Second, there is significant overlap in the age sets of individuals identified as *iprédu* mature adults and *ĩhi* elders, demonstrating that these are not discrete categories. Third, the term *ipredúpte* was not in use as an age grade term at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá during my fieldwork there.

According to my informants, entrance into the mature adult age grade is by virtue of an age set's collective participation in the age set initiation rites and not in any way contingent on individual development or merit. As I mentioned above, those rites may be delayed should the elders deem the current set of pre-initiates not ready to proceed to the next age grade, novitiate adulthood. However, once the decision is made for pre-initiates to be initiated, advancement of novitiate adults is automatic by virtue of their position in the age set hierarchy. Their seniority makes them inherently meritorious of the next age grade. Thus, recruitment into the mature adult age grade is unambiguous and happens simultaneously for all members of an age set, consistent with the characteristics of formal age grades that operate in conjunction with age sets.

The transition between the mature adult and elder age grades is not so clearly demarcated. In the 2007 sample there was an overlap of three age grades (responses for the seventh, eighth, and ninth most recently inaugurated age sets included both *iprédu* and *īhi*), ruling out the possibility that mature adulthood is discrete from advanced age on the basis of age set membership. Although the data include no members of the tenth through twelfth age sets identified as *iprédu*, the total number of responses in that range was just three due to the small number of living individuals. According to interviewees, the term *iprédu* encompasses individuals who are also called *īhi*. For example, all mature men who participate in men's council meetings are called *iprédu*, and that group's eldest members are also called *īhi*. Conversely, not all of the individuals from the seventh through ninth age sets who were identified as *iprédu* may also be called *īhi*. For example, as a member of the seventh most recently inaugurated age set, Chief Suptó was a mature man but did not consider himself and is not considered by others to be an elder. Thus, in my evaluation, *iprédu* is a formal age grade occupied by multiple age sets from the time their participation in the age set initiation rites terminates their status as novitiate adults until death, and thus comprises the entire span of mature adulthood, including elder status. On the other hand, *īhi* is an informal age grade that might be considered a subset of or to share an overlapping domain with mature adulthood.

Maybury-Lewis (1967:157) indicated that elder status corresponds with the eldest four living age sets. Silva (1986:135) plausibly suggested that one becomes an elder when one has grown grandchildren. Graham wrote that one becomes an elder by the time he "has many grandchildren and several age sets have joined the ranks of fully mature men" (1995:97) and mentions that elders no longer participate in certain religious

ceremonies (1995:176). However, my data show there is no precise relationship between elder status and age set identity, maturity of grandchildren, number of grandchildren, or participation in spiritual ceremonies. My interviews revealed that elder male status for males corresponds with the graying or loss of one's hair. As Eduardo laughingly said "I am *ĩhi* because I'm already balding." A few younger individuals also reported that it also has to do with whether his skin looks "old." Also, some individuals mentioned a metaphorical usage, whereby men may be called *ĩhi* once they start attending the men's council or have young grandchildren. However, in those cases, people were careful to specify that they are not considered elders in the literal sense but only metaphorically in that they are no longer children.

Use of the categories *ipredũpte* and *danhohui'wa* were not attested in my sample. Each has been characterized as an age set corresponding exactly with the most recent age set to have completed novitiate adulthood and not yet to have reached mature adulthood, which is also the age set that mentors pre-initiates (Müller 1976:73; Silva 1986:64-65; Graham 1995:96). Accordingly, it would be expected that respondents would have consistently used the terms *ipredũpte* or *danhohui'wa* for the 26 male members of the third most recently inaugurated age set in my sample. However, all of the individuals belonging to that age set were identified as *iprédu*, suggesting that neither term was used to identify that stage of the male life cycle. The term *ipredũpte* derives from *iprédu ité*, literally "young mature adult" (see Spaolonse 2006:47). My sources, some of whom were alive when fieldwork for those published accounts was completed, defined the term *ipredũpte* as "young animal" or "new growth." Several people indicated it could be used for people, but as a very nonspecific way of indicating post-adolescence and young

adulthood. They did not understand it to have any direct correlation with the age grade system. Those sources also confirmed that there is no other specific term for the preliminary stage of mature adulthood; it is considered a terminologically undifferentiated part of mature adulthood (*iprédu*). Furthermore, they affirmed that the term *danhohui'wa* indicates members of the age set currently mentoring pre-initiates but denied that it is somehow distinct from mature adulthood. Although each age set serves as mentors to the pre-initiates during their term as the youngest age set in the mature adult age grade, the term *danhohui'wa* refers only to the social role of being a mentor and does not specifically indicate a stage in the life cycle. Several speakers provided alternative descriptive phrases that might be used to indicate that stage as distinct from later mature adulthood, but each did so in reference to the men's council: *dasinã ã'ubu'mrô'té* (young already participating), *ĩzasú'nchori* (last group to arrive), and *wanhimi warãmhã* (group that always participates in the men's council). It is unclear whether the differences between my findings and those of Graham, Müller, and Silva are the result of ethnographic error, historical change, or regional variation.³⁶

In summary, I found a single formal mature adult age grade (*iprédu*) was used for males belonging to all age sets after novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*) and until death. I also found one informal elder age grade (*ĩhi*) was used for older (graying or balding) male members of the mature adult age grade. Recruitment into the mature adult age grade follows the same pattern as for pre-initiation and novitiate adulthood, being triggered

³⁶ I found ample evidence of lexical differences between the Xavante language spoken at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá community and that represented in dictionaries based on research at other reservations (Hall et al. 1987; Lachnitt 2003).

simultaneously for all members of an age set by its public participation in the approximately five-yearly age set initiation rites. The three formal age grades pre-initiation (*wapté*), novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*), and mature adulthood (*iprédu*) comprise the entire formal age grade sequence, which begins with one's induction into the pre-initiate house and lasts the duration of life.

2.5.3. The adult male experience

Because the mature adult age grade encompasses many age sets and lasts the greater portion of adult life, it does not engage perceptions of traditionalism as specifically as pre-initiation and novitiate manhood. The youngest mature adult men, not much older than novitiate adults and now acting as mentors to the pre-initiates, are often accused by older individuals of nontraditional failings in their own endeavors and in their roles as mentors. However, they also may be credited with striving to assume, if not actually assuming, many of the positive responsibilities of husbands, sons-in-law, and fathers, such as clearing gardens and hunting. Middle aged men, some of whom went to school in large cities and now fill official community leadership positions, were largely impervious to accusations of incompetence in traditional matters, although older age sets enjoyed even greater respect as traditionalists and for their competencies in traditional matters. In my experience, among males, virtually unassailable respect was reserved only for members of the most senior living age set.

Mature adulthood differs from earlier stages in the male life cycle in many respects, but there are perhaps two aspects that most transform the experience of its newest members. The first involves a pattern of uxori-local post-marital residence,

whereby many young mature men take up residence in their wives' households. The second is their inclusion in the dawn and dusk men's council meetings. Those two correlates of mature adult status bring about a wholesale change in young men's social positions relative to the rest of society. The first makes them junior in-laws and, potentially, future heads of household in new residential hierarchies. The second sets them at the periphery of a political arena in which they may one day become senior members. Thus, achieving mature adult status in the formal age grade system positions them as seniors relative to much of society also relegates them to junior status in new domestic settings and in the political arena. It also gives them new opportunities to deepen and widen their social networks and thereby gradually transition out of the subordinate roles that have hitherto characterized their social position in the community.

Many novitiate adult men marry before they become mature adult men. In July 2006, about one year before the current novitiate adult age set participated in the age set initiation rites and thereby became mature men, 11 novitiate men were already married, 13 were visiting their future wives by night and were anticipated to marry soon, and seven were not yet dating. For most of the novitiate men who had already married, becoming mature men involved immediately moving from their natal households to their wives' households. For those who had yet to marry, becoming mature men meant that they would move in with their wives as soon as they married. This pattern of uxorilocal residence was followed in most but not all cases of first marriage. Most of the exceptions I encountered involved intervillage unions in which the new wife left her home and village to live with her husband's family. Several fathers of these husbands told me their sons did not move in with their wives because "she lived too far away," "he did not want

to go,” and “his mother wants to be able to see her grandchild.” I suspect that one reason uxori-local residence was practiced more consistently in intravillage marriages was that having adult sons living in the same village and participating in the same men’s council contributes considerably to their father’s political support networks. Were a son, whose political allegiances ultimately remain with his father, to move to another village, the father would lose the benefits of his ongoing political support. In most cases, however, recent mature men move in with their wives’ families because, according to Xavante cultural norms, it is there that a man first establishes his own nuclear family, performs the masculine duty of providing for his father-in-law, and eventually, through that service, earns the esteem of his in-laws and the authority to assume senior status in that household with the eventual death of his father-in-law.

Adjusting to life in one’s wife’s household can be a difficult process. Graham (1995:66-74) discusses just how restrictive for a young husband can be the early stages of marriage, when the young man and his wife’s family do not yet know each other well and are first faced with reconciling their potentially disparate political allegiances. In deference to this potential for conflict and to his subordinate position in her household, social protocol demands that he remain silent, avoid calling attention to himself, and never to speak directly to his parents-in-law. Furthermore, I observed that fathers-in-law may place high expectations on their new sons-in-law to provide for the household, as might be expected since they often lose their own sons through uxori-local residence (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:99). At this early phase of mature adulthood, a man’s status as son-in-law defines a new relationship of social subordination that he now adds to some of the other subordination relationships that have thus far characterized his life, such as being

protégé to his age set mentors and being son and grandson to his patrifilial relatives. Only gradually will those junior statuses gradually be augmented or replaced by senior statuses as he becomes a mentor, a father, and a head of household.

A man's presence in his father-in-law's home may become more comfortable for everyone as the new marriage stabilizes, he and his new family grow familiar with one another, and political trust grows through alignment of interests or respectful avoidance of conflict. Although conflict may arise and not all young mature men remain living with their fathers-in-law, in many cases they successfully integrate into their marital households. However, as long as one's father's household remains intact, a young mature man remains its privileged nonresident member and, arguably, remains a guest in his marital (residential) household for some time. I often encountered younger married mature men passing the midday heat, eating meals, or watching television in their father's houses. As one father told me, his married sons will always have the traditional right freely to eat food prepared at his natal household.

Marriage usually subjects a young man to the subordinate role of son-in-law in his wife's household, but it also can make him a father and thereby provide him with the opportunity to establish his own domain of influence within his father-in-law's home. As Maybury-Lewis (1967:99) accurately describes, a young male child probably perceives the subordinate position of his father relative to his maternal uncles and grandfather. As he grows older, he may become strongly politically identified with his father and be relied upon by his father as a political ally. Assuming a young mature man continues to live in his father-in-law's household, he and his sons will remain for some time a subordinate bloc within the household. Eventually, however, they may assume

dominance through the father-in-law's death. Alternatively, they may establish their own domain by moving out while the father-in-law is still living. This pattern of generational alternation between dominant patrifilial blocks within households has been described as a defining feature of home life with important ramifications in the political sphere (Maybury-Lewis 1967:98-100).

Once a mature man becomes head of household, he has largely shed the subordinate roles of youth. Even if his father and father-in-law are still living, he is now considered an independent adult with his own realm of primary responsibility. Although he may maintain an especially intimate relationship with his living age set mentors, only rarely is he subject to their oversight. His father-in-law may still consider himself deserving of support and respect, but no longer directly overshadows his affairs. With that relative social autonomy, a mature man is faced with a reversal of roles that both extends and potentially politicizes his domestic domain. His adult sons may move out to live with their new wives and his sons-in-law may move in, creating the possibility of a generational gap in domestic male political fidelity. Concretely, sons-in-law may report to their fathers what they see and hear in their marital households. Despite the potential for conflict these arrangements introduce, they also carry the opportunity for sons-in-law and fathers-in-law to earn each other's devotion and unite their interests, thereby deepening their mutual spheres of influence at home and throughout the village. That process links the domestic and political spheres.

The transition mature men undergo from subordinate sons-in-law to dominant fathers-in-law is paralleled by a process whereby they gradually pass from relative political silence to assuming voices of leadership in the community. The primary political

forum is the men's council (*warã* – “village center, meeting place”) usually held every dawn and evening. As mentioned above, novitiate adult men may also hold council meetings. They do so to one side of the centrally located mature men's council, facing the former site of their own pre-initiate house. However, as I experienced it, their council meeting was often brief, being used as an opportunity to coordinate their age set activities and set out on an evening round of singing. It was at the mature men's council that topics of interest to the entire community were discussed, deliberated, and decided. Being a mature man is synonymous with license to participate in this council meeting, but the nature of that participation changes substantially over the course of one's tenure. Whereas young mature men remain relatively mute at its periphery, older men at the center tend to dominate the orchestra of voices and thereby direct the course of its consensus. Although women are categorically excluded from the men's council, husbands and wives often discuss what transpires there.

Men's council meetings are highly conventionalized in ways that favor seniority and influence within an egalitarian ethic of consensus. Men carrying benches, chairs, and mats approach the meeting in ones and twos from the directions of their respective houses. They usually take the same places every morning and evening, sitting or lying on their backs in an irregular open circle that seems to recapitulate the village itself. Graham (1995:147) described the seating arrangement as deriving from the progressive and fixed placement of new members between individuals from the next senior age set and belonging to the opposite exogamous moiety (see Chapter 5). As older members die or leave the village, gaps and inconsistencies accumulate. As new members are introduced, order is reestablished. In addition, it is my observation that most men occupy positions

around the council circle that roughly correspond to the positions of their houses in the village, such that residential neighbors tend to sit near one another. Furthermore, men sit at different distances from the focal point of the meeting, where during chilly dry season meetings an open fire often burns. Elders occupy an inner tier closest to the center and younger men cluster in several small groups at the periphery. Intermediately aged men tend to disperse themselves between the two. That spatial pattern reflects the leadership within the council because the oldest men at the center tend to be the strongest, most vocal leaders while younger men around the periphery tend to say less and defer to their elders.³⁷

Explaining what makes for successful leaders, Graham describes something of a positive feedback loop whereby speaking in the men's council facilitates oratory eloquence, producing greater esteem, leading to factional support, thereby encouraging more frequent council speech giving, and ultimately lending even greater prestige (Graham 1995:150-151). Although that socialization process, as Graham calls it, is an individualized trajectory and therefore does differentiate people of similar ages, it is equally a progression of social roles that accompany the aging process. In other words, the observation that young men do not tend to speak in the council is equally the result of their lack of oratory skill and prestige as it is of the junior status that largely precludes them from enjoying those advantages. Conversely, the eldest men are afforded great prestige by virtue of their age alone. I say this because the fact of certain men enjoying

³⁷ The concentric ordering of communal meetings, with elder-leaders in the center and junior members at the periphery is a typical feature of societies with age group systems (Bernardi 1985). It may not be characteristic of men's council meeting in all Xavante villages.

more esteem as orators than others does not generally upset the customary council hierarchy whereby younger men tend to defer to even the most silent and nonpolitical of elders (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:147). While elders sit closest to the council center and stand to give opening and closing speeches, the youngest mature men rarely give formal speeches. The elders hold court at the center, tending the parameters of discussion and facilitating consensus. They open and close discussion. They determine when consensus has been reached and what its verdict is. They are the executives of the council but in an implementation of age-based seniority that simultaneously gives presumptive voice to the entire set of mature men and thereby reinforces consensus as an ideal.

According to Graham's account, council speech tends to deemphasize individualism and thereby minimize discord (Graham 1995:145-167). A notable feature of such speech in her account and in my observation is that multiple individuals may stand to give speeches at the same time and many of those who are not standing add their own voices to a decentralized cacophony of chatter that threatens to drown out even the speech givers' voices. As Graham writes, "This blending of voices signifies the fact that as an individual, [the leader who initiates a discussion] has no special power or authority to sway the decision-making process" (1995:151). This plurality of voices is further enhanced because men do not only speak on their own behalf, but may also voice the positions of their political allies, expressing thoughts and opinions previously worked out in private (Graham 1995:154). Rarely the sole author of his words, a speaker must heed not only the social hierarchy of the council but also other hierarchies derived from his domestic status as son, father, son-in-law, or father-in-law.

I found this interrelationship between home life and political life especially apparent in the discursive dynamics of the village's two official leaders at that time, Chief Suptó and Vice-Chief Paulo, who were members of rival factions and in-laws to one another through their children. As fathers who had arranged for their children to marry, Suptó and Paulo respectfully avoided each other both in and out of the political arena. They did this out of respect for one another as their children's fathers-in-law and because they knew that disrespecting one another in public would negatively reflect on them. Although they both had reason to make speeches in the men's council, they avoided speaking against one another. Often, Paulo's absence in the council gave Suptó license to speak. Nevertheless, Paulo maintained a strong voice in the council by occasionally speaking in Suptó's absence or by expressing his positions through political allies who were not restricted from speaking against him. Thus, the responsibilities of being leaders in the political sphere and the constraints of being relatives through marriage affected their political engagement tactics.

Most mature men remain subordinate to someone for the greater portion of the male life cycle and therefore continue to be subject to certain political and social constraints. However, those limitations tend to diminish with advanced age and the seniority that accompanies elder status in the men's council and at home. For example, Sereburã was one of the three oldest living men in the community, having been initiated into mature adulthood around 1948 (inferred from Maybury-Lewis 1967:164). Despite his age, he remained structurally subordinate to certain other members of the community. For example, one of his age set peers, Darú, was inducted into the pre-initiate house before him and remained his age set senior. Also, one of his father's brother's wives

(*ĩnawapté*) remained his genealogical senior. Nevertheless, in most other respects, he was considered senior to all other individuals in the community other than members of his own age set. Additionally, unlike his age set peers, Sereburã was popularly considered to be the community's greatest orator and definitive authority on traditional matters. For the first two years of my research, until the 2006 village division, Sereburã's leadership authority went unchallenged and it seemed he alone was afforded the right to determine when discussion had begun, when it was over, and what had been decided. On most nights Sereburã signaled the end of the council by standing to deliver the final speech and thereby claim for himself the final word. The community afforded him this important leadership position based not only on his senior age status but also because of his recognized capacity to fairly monitor public opinion and build consensus. Accordingly, I came to rely on Sereburã's word as the word of the community.

For males, becoming elders represents a final transition beyond the abundant subordinate social roles that accompany the greater part of the male life cycle. Whereas much of mature adulthood involves constraints on behavior relative to one's age seniors in diverse arenas, it is as elders that men are afforded the greatest social autonomy and influence as heads of households, extended family founders, and political leaders. However, being free of the constraints of most forms of social subordination does not imply freedom from accountability. It is precisely because of their right to lead that elders are expected to answer to the will of the community with some degree of impartiality and equity. Theirs is the right to make decisions but only insofar as those decisions do not contradict community consensus. Politically successful elders heed a lifetime of enculturation as subordinate protégés, housebound novitiate adult sons, and respectful

young sons-in-law by recognizing the value of strategically subjugating one's own desires to those of the community.

2.6. The male spiritual hierarchy

The introductory chapter to this dissertation opened with an episode from a spiritual ritual (*wai'a*) that occurred early during my stay in the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá community. I participated in the first such ritual during my initial site visit, just a few days after my study had been approved in the men's council. I took the invitation to participate as symbolic expression of admittance into the community and as a tangible gesture of good faith. In the first place, it demonstrated their willingness to incorporate me into their lives, which in the case of spiritual participation involved a great deal more than the invitation itself. It required that people manufacture ritual adornments for me, paint me, guide me, accompany me, and otherwise constantly attend to my ignorance of the process. In the second place, it signaled the community was ready to take a first step in trusting me with sensitive material, since spiritual content is among the most closely guarded secrets in male Xavante society. As they expressed to me very clearly before I participated in that first spiritual ritual, there are certain things I would witness and learn that I was prohibited from divulging to anyone, including Xavante women and all non-Xavante. I suspect allowing me to participate was also something of a trial of my stamina to endure physical and mental challenges and capacity to protect secrets. On numerous occasions, including the spiritual ritual during my first visit, I was selected for the grueling task of carrying special spiritual arrows (*ti'ipê*) while dancing and singing from late afternoon to after sunrise the following day. From that time to the

present, I was selected for that role four times and successfully completed it to conclusion three times. On one occasion, I suffered mild anaphylaxis after being bitten by terrestrial termites and was allowed to sit out the remainder of the night after my condition had been independently verified by two spiritual guards (see below).

Secrecy is a trademark of the Xavante social experience and nowhere is it as important as in spiritual matters. Secrecy serves to guard against women and non-Xavante stealing spiritual knowledge without permission and regulates access to such knowledge by males of different spiritual ranks.³⁸ My status was somewhat complicated because being an outsider made it inappropriate for me to have access to certain privileged information but being incorporated as a participant made it acceptable for me to have some measure of access. Although I doubt I was allowed to witness or learn about anything that would cause irreparable damage should I be indiscreet with it, I went to great lengths to ascertain the boundaries of appropriate divulgence and observe them with a comfortable margin. For example, in this dissertation, I avoid discussing sensitive aspects of the beliefs involved. According to some elders that I worked with, there are examples of publications by non-Xavante that border on inappropriately revealing secrets.³⁹ They consider those authors, none of whom were professional anthropologists, and the Xavante communities that allowed them learn protected secrets, with some

³⁸ Although some scholarly interpretations of secrecy in men's societies assert that their only substantial meaning is the social exclusion of females (Gregor 1979), my reading of Xavante secrecy in male spiritual matters and age set affairs suggests a more complex situation. Xavante spiritual secrets are withheld not only from women, but also from certain classes of men. Somewhat differently, some age set secrets are withheld from women while others are withheld from certain classes of men.

³⁹ Maybury-Lewis (1967:260) also encountered discrepancies between communities in their willingness to divulge spiritual information.

disdain. For that reason, I do not cite sources that the elders I worked with interpret as inappropriate.

I may discuss freely the structure of the male spiritual hierarchy and certain portions of spiritual rituals that are not considered to be sensitive, such as the episode described in Chapter 1. The Xavante spiritual hierarchy has been largely overlooked in the scholarly literature. Most references provide inadequate ethnographic data for it to be understood in a systemic manner (for example Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:195-211). Müller (1976:128) discussed many of its core aspects, but did not consider its connections to other social contexts. There are four spiritual grades and membership in them is determined publicly by participation in a very elaborate set of spiritual initiation ceremonies that is said to be held about every 15 years (*darini*). I did not participate in those initiations and cannot corroborate personally the 15-year pattern, although my census data confirm that the mean chronological ages of members of the two most recently initiated spiritual grades differ by 14.5 years. A documentary video by Caimi Waiassé, now a member of Etênhiritipá village, shows some of the visual highlights of the last initiation ceremony, held in 2003 (Waiassé and Prodoti 2005).

Although some scholars chose to emphasize how chronological age may be involved in age group systems (for example Stewart 1977:29), other scholars emphasize that because age is socially constructed in various manners, cultural aspects of age matter more relevant than chronological aspects (Bernardi 1985:1-2). In this regard it is important to distinguish chronological and physiological age from social age, the latter of which is defined in relation to social activities (Bernardi 1985:9). Accordingly, Xavante spiritual grades may be seen to mark social age in an analogous manner to formal secular

age grades, as described above. In both cases, membership is seen as an indication of one's development and maturity, which are understood to have more to do with ceremonial status than chronological or physiological age. Interestingly, both systems involve not only formal age grades, but also age sets (cohorts) that are inaugurated in symbolic alternation that establishes social solidarity with alternate age sets and rivalry with adjacent age sets. In both systems, each new age set is formed during public ceremonies in which each of the previous age sets simultaneously advances one step in the sequence of spiritual seniority grades. In the spiritual system, age sets are unnamed but are no less explicit. Although many definitions of age sets require that they have names, there is ample ethnographic evidence of age class systems with unnamed age sets (Stewart 1977:122). Accordingly, the spiritual hierarchy is a second formal age group system that operates independently from the secular system described above. As mentioned previously, I distinguish between the two formal age group systems as secular and spiritual, although I reserve the terms *age grade* and *age set* for the secular system, and call the analogous spiritual structures by the terms *spiritual set* and *spiritual grade*. Although the spiritual hierarchy is considered elsewhere exclusively in terms of ritual activities (Müller 1976:133-147), it is my assertion that it is also one among many social factors that affect the everyday experience of social life.

Before a boy is ritually initiated into the spiritual system, he is considered a spiritual pre-initiate (*wautop'tu*). Because initiation only occurs approximately every 15 years, there is tremendous variety in the ages of uninitiated boys. In 2007, there were 59 spiritual pre-initiates that ranged in chronological age from birth to 10 years (mean 4.1). Should the next spiritual initiation rites be held 15 years after the last, in 2018, the ages of

pre-initiates will at that time range from birth to 21 years. In my experience, spiritual pre-initiates do not attend or in any way participate in spiritual rituals except as spectators, when allowed. I do not consider spiritual pre-initiation to be a formal spiritual grade because it denotes those individuals who are excluded from the spiritual system. However, that distinction is arbitrary.

Spiritual initiates (*wai'āra*) are those young males who were initiated during the most recent spiritual initiation rites and are the youngest participants in spiritual ceremonies. In 2007 there were 105 spiritual initiates, of which 38 were not yet pre-initiates in the secular age grade system, 35 were pre-initiates (*wapté*), 32 were novitiate adults (*ritei'wa*), and one was a mature adult (*iprédu*). I was incorporated into the spiritual system as an initiate along with most of my secular age set peers (then the second most recently inaugurated age set). As spiritual initiates, we were expected to attend spiritual rituals on a regular basis in order to improve our stamina as a condition for spiritual receptivity. Although spiritual rituals may be held for numerous reasons and follow several different formats, they all include an element of regimentation for initiates, such as being subjected to foot-stomping punishment, as described in Chapter 1. Furthermore, as I mentioned above, a small group of spiritual initiates are often called upon to sing and dance while carrying special arrows all night long and are dispatched outside the village for other secret activities.

As I came to understand it, being a spiritual initiate involves a gradual process of discovery, whereby information is tightly controlled and access to it carefully administered in small doses. It is much less an educational curriculum as a training regime with educational rewards. That said, the hushed voices and private locations in

which everything having to do with the spiritual rituals and spirituality were discussed prevented me from knowing very much about other people's experiences. Not only was I prevented from discussing those things with women and outsiders, but I was instructed not to mention anything about the topic with members of rival spiritual sets.

The next spiritual grade in ascending order is that of "guards" or "soldiers" (*dama'ai'a'wa*), who were initiated in the second previous spiritual initiation rites, some 30 years before. In 2007, there were 35 spiritual guards, one from the novitiate adult secular age grade and 34 from the first three age sets in the mature adult secular age grade. In the context of spiritual rituals, guards watch over the spiritual initiates as enforcers. They punish dietary transgressions with foot-stomping, as described in Chapter 1, and maintain a presence throughout the night to ensure that the small group of initiates selected to carry arrows and sing do not go to sleep, not drink coffee or alcohol, or even approach a fire for warmth during the coldest hours of the night. Indicative of their authority over initiates are the bows and arrows they carry and not infrequently use with jabbing motions against misbehaving initiates. Thus, guards, consistent with the militaristic nomenclature of their status, assume an overtly antagonistic stance towards initiates but arguably do so to encourage their spiritual betterment. Like initiates, guards are not responsible for conducting much of the spiritual ceremonies per se, but rather accompany it and direct those aspects that specifically have to do with overseeing initiates.

Actively conducting the spiritual ceremonies are "singers" (*zö'ra'si'wa*), who were initiated into the spiritual system in the third previous initiation rites and comprise the next senior spiritual grade. In 2007, there were 19 singers belonging to the third to

sixth youngest secular age sets in the mature adult age grade. No longer responsible for presiding vigilantly over spiritual initiates, singers do the core work of officiating the ceremonies. For several hours from early dawn before a spiritual ritual, singers gather in a small clearing between the village and the river. Already painted, adorned, and with palpably focused states of mind, they greet the early morning light sitting in a small circle around a smoldering fire. At their backs, planted in the ground, stand sturdy war clubs suspended with small bundles of personal items. They shake rattles vigorously, incessantly, while they untiringly repeat a song that was unveiled for this one and only occasion. Despite the impressive visual and auditory potency of their performance, it would seem that the primary work of singers is internal. They resume that work later in the afternoon and continue it as the entire progression of guards threateningly dances past the line of initiates with their feet outstretched to receive punishment. Later that afternoon and again the next morning, back in the village, the singers lead members of the younger spiritual grades in singing around the village, reinvigorating tired initiates and guards with a determined and authoritative bearing. Whereas guards administer to initiates antagonistically, singers do not publicly attend to them but are, in fact, their closest spiritual allies and private spiritual mentors.

The most senior spiritual grade is that of post-officiants (*wai'a'rada*), who were initiated into the spiritual system before the third most recent spiritual initiation rites. All post-officiants were members of the mature adult secular age grade and counted many elders (*ĩhi*) among their rank. Post-officiants had no formal role to play in spiritual rituals. As Xavante men of all ages told me, post-officiants are considered to be extraneous to spiritual activities. Their attendance is optional and their participation limited to the

sidelines. They are considered something like spiritual retirees, having left that work in the hands of well prepared younger individuals. Yet, post-officiants are not superfluous to spiritual endeavors. They remain attentive, especially to younger initiates, whom they often help groom and dress before spiritual rituals. Also, although post-officiants watch spiritual ceremonies from the sidelines, they do so vocally, heckling poor performances to motivate improvement. Such humiliation is not reserved for initiates or even guards, but may also be levied on singers should opportunity arise. Accordingly, post-officiants remain senior authorities in spiritual rituals despite being formally excluded as participants. With an initiation interval of about 15 years, the entire succession from initiate to post-officiant status may take approximately 45 years. Depending on the age at which a young male is first initiated into the spiritual hierarchy, attaining post-officiant status may occur relatively late in life.

Notions of age, seniority, authority, and responsibility are all implicated in the spiritual hierarchy. Whether one is a pre-initiate, initiate, guard, singer, or post-officiant, his level of spiritual seniority has a bearing on how he interacts with others both during spiritual rituals and in the daily social experience. That dynamic is especially apparent in the special antagonistic relationship between guards and initiates, whereby guards have the right to prohibit initiates' from eating certain common foods, most notably the meat of numerous species of game animals. Not only must guards liberate those foods for initiates before they may freely eat of them without fear of reprise, but should the guards not liberate them the prohibition does not end when one ceases to be an initiate. One 47-year old post-officiant told me he is not yet authorized to eat Marsh deer (*Blastocerus dichotomus*) and traira fish (*Hoplias* spp.). Fortunately, dietary transgressions only

apply if discovered and may be kept secret by people with whom he shares close social relationships, perhaps by virtue of kinship, coresidence, or age set membership. The interaction of the spiritual age group system with other systems of age hierarchy and social relatedness is essential for understanding how age hierarchies condition the social experience in daily life, a theme I develop further in Chapter 4.

2.7. A new model of male life cycle

In the preceding sections, I elaborated the precise usages of the conjunction of terms that were previously understood to comprise a single male age grade sequence (Maybury-Lewis 1967:339; Silva 1986:64; Graham 1995:96) and introduced a system of age grades based on spiritual seniority. My data show that the male life cycle does not involve a single sequence of age grades but rather three separate ones, each with its own properties. Formal secular age grades are sequential and discrete, with membership determined unambiguously and simultaneously for all members of secular age sets through public participation in periodic secular initiation rites. Those formal age grades form a coherent progression from pre-initiation to death. In contrast, the informal secular age grade system involves indiscrete and ambiguously defined age grades, with membership depending on individual development as well as people's perception of it. Informal age grades pertain to the earliest and latest phases of life, when males are excluded from or less active in age set activities. The spiritual age grades also comprise a formal and coherent sequence from spiritual initiation to death. They are an extremely important part of the male experience from youth to middle adulthood that is overtly shrouded in secrecy.

This new model of the male life cycle is presented in Figure 6. The formal secular age grade system involves three distinct age grades that are simultaneously occupied by individuals as members of age sets (pre-initiate, novitiate adult, and mature adult). There is precedence for this model in the theoretical work of F. H. Stewart (1977:145-146), who did not do fieldwork with the Xavante but adduced from Maybury-Lewis's (1967) writings that just three of his five age grades properly pertain to the formal age group system (cf. Bernardi 1985). Four other secular age grades (child, boy, adolescent, and elder) pertain to an informal system because they correspond with the progression of individuals and not age sets through the life cycle. Those four do not comprise a coherent sequence because they are discontinuous, have overlapping domains, and are not made explicit through ceremonial activities. Finally, the spiritual grade system entails four formal age grades (initiate, guard, singer, and post-officiant), with passage between them marked by participation in spiritual initiation rites.

The distinction between formal and informal age grades and between spiritual and secular age grades is an important one because it reveals a basic feature of Xavante age organization – it is multifaceted. In this instance, the formal and informal age grade systems operate according to different principles. The formal systems are based on the unambiguous advancement of age sets, whether they are named or unnamed, along a continuous sequence of clearly delineated and discrete age grades. The informal system applies comparatively ambiguous and individualistic criteria to variable domains of individuals. Despite their contrastive logics, the different systems of age hierarchy are interdependent. For example, a male becomes a boy by virtue of birth and an adolescent when he is observed to be experiencing certain developmental changes, both

individualistic events. However, he may cease to belong to those informal age grades not only when he is perceived to be of a certain age but more specifically when he is ritually inducted with a group of his peers into an age set and thereby becomes a member of the first formal age grade, pre-initiate. Thus, recruitment into boyhood and adolescence is individualistic but their attrition may be determined by induction into the formal age grade system. Similarly, recruitment into the elder age grade is independent from one's formal status as a mature adult. Nevertheless, membership in those two age grades overlaps and people vacate both simultaneously as they die.

The Xavante age grade system has been characterized elsewhere as a transition from greater age set collectivity, when young males are most active in ceremonial activities, to greater factionalism, as ceremonial obligations decline and men become more active in political affairs (Maybury-Lewis 1967:148; Graham 1995:97). Maybury-Lewis identified a relationship between those two dimensions whereby age sets are a cohesive force that counteracts the factionalism of descent-based political factions (Maybury-Lewis 1967:305). Although those analyses were made with good reason and do help describe age-based changes in political engagement, they incorrectly framed sociality in terms of a strict opposition between cohesion and fragmentation, with each pertaining to one or another structural aspect or temporal phase of the social experience. It is my assertion that in many contexts these principles are not contradictory and may be best understood as two sides of the same phenomenon. I believe they are better characterized as mutually constitutive and contingent on one another, each being essential to the logic and operation of the other.

The first error in characterizing one or another form of association as fundamentally unifying or dividing is that it improperly masks the mutuality of inclusion and exclusion. In order to include certain members, an association must exclude others. Also, divisions that threaten to break apart members of one collectivity ultimately affirm their memberships in other collectivities. In the case of age grades, membership joins people from different genealogical and political associations at the same time that it excludes people of different age grade ranks. Age grade contrasts serve to fragment society in no less significant ways than genealogical and political exclusivity.

The second error with a strict opposition between social unity and division is that associations are necessarily internally differentiated because they join individuals that belong to other, different associations. To the extent associations reproduce those differences internally they actualize and perpetuate them. For example, in a most intimate manner age grades unify members of different genealogical associations. At the same time, the genealogical differences between age set peers are emphasized in how age set leaders are chosen, ceremonial appointments are made, formal friends are selected, and many other aspects of being a member of an age set. Those internal differences are emphasized at exactly the stage of life that others have characterized as most characteristic of age set collectivity (Maybury-Lewis 1967:148; Graham 1995:97). Age sets attend to those genealogical divisions but doing so does not diminish the unity of age set membership.

The third error is that aging does not involve a progressive substitution of division for unity but rather involves a continuous series of substitutions of certain collectivities for others and certain dissociations for others. With each social transition, a separation

occurs that recasts one's status in the community and thereby unites him with different sets of individuals. Although there are numerous such transitions in the life cycle, my point may be illustrated with one for each of several age grades discussed in this chapter. Becoming a pre-initiate involves moving into the pre-initiate house and thus being symbolically separated from one's household and village at the same time it makes him a pre-initiate coresident and thereby joins him to his new age set peers. Being initiated as a novitiate adult involves leaving the pre-initiate house and one's coresident peers. With that separation a young man returns to his natal household where he becomes more engaged with his father's patrilineal interests and political associations. Men may marry as novitiate adults, but it is only as mature adults that they usually leave their natal households to join their fathers-in-law's households. Although that move does not imply less social involvement with one's natal household, it does constitute a residential separation that simultaneously joins men with their affines and anticipates their future status as heads of households. According to Graham, the eldest men may undergo a final transition, whereby they become increasingly disassociated from humanity as they come to identify with deceased ancestors and immortality (Graham 1995:175-206). Each of these separations prompts a man to realign himself to different associations, but it does not require that he abandon previous associations. Using the preceding examples, a male individual progressively joins an age set, his father's political network, and his in-laws. At each step he augments his associations while simultaneously multiplying the divisions between him and other members of those associations. Thus, within-group unity and between-group division coexist throughout all phases of life. Although the various associations to which individuals belong may be more or less important at different

stages of life, as Maybury-Lewis (1967:148) and Graham (1995:97) properly assert is the case with age sets and political factions, they continue to come into play in a highly contingent and personal manner throughout a man's life.

Chapter 3: The female life cycle

3.1. Introduction

Female scholars are prominent among those who have conducted ethnographic research with the Xavante. Among them are Regina A. P. Müller (1976), who wrote about body painting and visual arts, Nancy Flowers (1983), who studied human ecology and changing economic systems, Aracy Lopes da Silva (1986), who addressed naming practices and formal friendship, and Laura Graham (1995), who focused on the anthropological linguistics of men's ceremonial performances. Yet, despite these exceptional contributions by women, anthropology among the Xavante remains almost exclusively about male subjects. Of those female scholars, only Silva dedicated substantial attention to females. Furthermore, I suspect that those female scholars had similar experiences to my own, whereby men enthusiastically dominated my time and resources. Also, I found men to consider all outsiders of both genders to be male political business and to enjoy competing for their attentions. Furthermore, at least in the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá community, men tend to be more bilingual than women, making it necessary to work with them at least until such time as one developed adequate language skills (cf. Graham 1990:114). The sum effect is that most anthropological research among the Xavante, including my own, reflects greater attention to and mediation by males.

My status as a male member of the novitiate adult age grade also placed certain constraints on my ability to work with females. For example, I was lightheartedly

discouraged from visiting private households during the daytime and, despite recognizing that it was necessary for my research, some women outside of my adoptive household resisted my regular visits. Similarly, because I was expected to participate regularly in male activities such as men's council meetings, spiritual rituals, and hunting excursions, I was indirectly precluded from spending comparable amounts of time in simultaneously occupied female settings. In short, my experience as a male fieldworker led me to garnish a more detailed and personal understanding of male life than I was able to attain of female life. I consider that a necessary tradeoff and accept the limitations it introduces to this analysis. Nevertheless, I strive in this chapter to provide as robust a discussion of the female experience as possible. Consistent with my approach in the last chapter to use my situated experience as a male member of the novitiate adult age grade as a point of reference for the male life cycle, the present chapter necessarily relies on the same point of reference, which happens to be external to the female life cycle. Consequently, in this chapter, I rely more substantially on comparisons drawn between the female and male life cycles.

My primary objectives in this chapter are to clarify how the various female age grade categories are used and to discuss their implications for how the female life cycle is understood and experienced. The result of that effort is an account of female age grades that differs from other published accounts on numerous points. In most cases it is impossible to identify whether those differences are the result of historical change or ethnographic error. Accordingly, I include as much specific data as possible in order to substantiate my findings and thereby provide a basis for drawing conclusions about the veracity of historical accounts. I found the female life cycle to be technically more

complex than the male life cycle because of greater apparent ambiguity between some of its terms. Nevertheless, I found the structure of the female life cycle to be largely the same as for males. Specifically, it is also comprised of one formal and one informal secular age grade systems, with the former being based on the collective and ceremonial passage of age sets and the latter being based on individualistic and subjective criteria. I also found two main differences between the female and male life cycles. The first is that whereas the male life cycle has no informal age grades between boyhood (*watebreml*) and advanced age (*ihi*), the female life cycle has a continuous series of informal age grades spanning the entire life cycle. The second is that females do not participate in the spiritual hierarchy.

Maybury-Lewis's original version of the female life cycle correctly identified the majority of female age grades but failed to understand their operation. His model consisted of a continuous series of six female age grades from infancy to old age: girls (*ba'õno*), "not babies" (*azarudu*), "girls whose husbands brought meat" (*soimbá*), "women with children" (*a'raté*), "named women" (*adabá*), and "mature women" (*pi'õ*) (Maybury-Lewis 1967:339).⁴⁰ He reported that females participate in the male age set system, with young girls of roughly the same ages as male pre-initiates (*wapté*) being assigned to the same age set (Maybury-Lewis 1967:149). My data confirm that observation. He also asserted that the female and male age grades correspond rather exactly because female and male members of age sets advance simultaneously between analogous age grades through their mutual participation in the approximately five-yearly

⁴⁰ Spellings of native words are modified for consistency with the contemporary orthography used by the Xavante at Pimentel Barbosa community.

secular initiation rites (Maybury-Lewis 1967:150-151). Thus, *ba'õno* would be coterminous boy (*watebreml*), *azarudu* with adolescent (*ai'repudu*), *soimbá* with pre-initiate (*wapté*), *adabá* with novitiate adult (*ritei'wa*), and *pi'õ* with mature adult (*iprédu*). That model appears to be at odds with his translations of some of the female age grade terms, as he gives them. For example, he gives *soimbá* as “girls whose husbands brought meat,” *a'raté* as “women with children,” and *adabá* as “named women,” each specifying criteria unrelated to age set status (Maybury-Lewis 1967:339).

In a major revision to Maybury-Lewis's model that follows a brief correction by Müller (1976:73-74), Silva (1986:133-141) accepted his basic model of one male and one female age grade sequence but rejected his assumption that they operate synchronously and according to similar logics. According to her reformulation, males pass between age grades in the manner described by Maybury-Lewis, collectively and ritually, but females proceed along an entirely different path according to its own logic of individualistic rather than collective criteria (Silva 1986:138-139). That assertion appears to be more consistent with Maybury-Lewis's translations of female age grade terms involving individualistic criteria than his model that attributes passage between them to age set promotion, as described above. Furthermore, she reported that the female sequence is paced differently than the male sequence, with most females rapidly completing the four-grade sequence from childhood to mature womanhood while most males of similar ages have not yet been initiated into novitiate adulthood (Silva 1986:138-139; 1989:334). She attributed Maybury-Lewis's error to his having modeled the female system on the male system, which was understandable in her estimation because the Xavante themselves do

the same thing by including females “by extension” in the male age set system (Silva 1986:137).

Maybury-Lewis and Silva offered the two most thorough academic accounts of the female life cycle.⁴¹ Their versions conflict on many of the particular definitions of female age grade terms and about whether the female sequence operates according to a different logic than the male sequence. However, they agree there is one continuous sequence of female age grade terms that is distinct from the one continuous male sequence. It is in this limited sense that I consider their models to comprise a single established model of the female life cycle. The data I present in this chapter support a revision of that model.

3.2. Childhood and adolescence

3.2.1. Introduction and findings

Maybury-Lewis and Silva disagree somewhat on female infancy and childhood age grade terms, but both sources identify a single continuous female sequence that differs from the male sequence. Maybury-Lewis excluded the term *a'uté* and considered the entire span of female childhood to be entailed by the term *ba'õno* (“children [girls]”) (Maybury-Lewis 1967:150, 339). In contrast, Silva defined *a'uté* as “recently born girls (and boys) until children from one to one and a half years of age” (Silva 1986:133, my translation). She also designated female infancy (*a'uté*) and girlhood (*ba'õno*) to be mutually exclusive categories, with the transition between them occurring when a girl is

⁴¹ See also Giaccaria and Heide (1972 [1984]) for an interesting but less rigorous account.

no longer a “baby” (Silva 1986:133). Maybury-Lewis and Silva also disagreed on the relationship between the terms *ba’õno* and *azarudu*. According to Maybury-Lewis, *azarudu* may be used optionally and according to no specific criteria for older members (“not babies”) of the *ba’õno* age grade (Maybury-Lewis 1967:150). However, Silva characterized *azarudu* as a separate and subsequent age grade to *ba’õno*, with the transition between them marked by the initial development of a girl’s breasts during adolescence (Silva 1986:133, 136). According to Silva’s model, that distinction is the first important divergence of the female and male life cycles, which subsequently involve age grades based on distinct criteria and contrastive logics.

Of 271 responses for female subjects in my March 2007 age grade census, 15 individuals were identified as *a’uté* (or its diminutive form *a’uté’pré*), 92 as *ba’õno* (or its diminutive form *ba’otore*), and 32 as *azarudu*. Included in those figures are five individuals who were identified as both *a’uté* and *ba’õno* and two as both *azarudu* and *ritei’wa*. None of the *a’uté* or *ba’õno* individuals were identified as belonging to an established age set, but five of the *azarudu* sample were identified as belonging to the most recently inaugurated age set and 25 to the second most recently inaugurated.

3.2.2. Infant (*a’uté*), girl (*ba’õno*), and female adolescent (*azarudu*)

Given the suggestion that females and males share the first age grade of the life cycle, *a’uté*, but follow divergent courses thereafter (Silva 1986:64, 133-135), the relationship between *a’uté* and *watebremí*, on the one hand, and *a’uté* and *ba’õno*, on the other, may be seen as two sides of the same question. Accordingly, I sought to answer that question for females using the same methods I used for males. My approach

responds to the assertion by other authors that the *a'uté* age grade entails the first year or more of a male or female child's life until the time an infant begins to walk, at which time he or she becomes *watebremí* or *ba'õno*, respectively (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:135; Silva 1986:65, 133-135). I compared the chronological ages of females identified as *a'uté* and *ba'õno* in order to ascertain whether the age boundaries between those two categories are consistent with established stages of human development. These results are shown in Figure 7.

Of the 15 females identified as *a'uté*, 10 were between birth and 14 months of age and five were between 15 months and 7 years. These results indicate that the term *a'uté* is not reserved exclusively for female infants before learning to walk because most children do so between the ages of 10 and 14 months (WHO 2006). Those results are similar to those observed for the male *a'uté* sample although the upper age limit of seven years observed for female *a'uté* is higher than that observed for males (three years). In both cases, the term *a'uté* was applied freely to individuals whose chronological ages indicate they had already learned to walk. These results suggest that the upper boundary for *a'uté* is not as clearly defined as suggested elsewhere.

These data also fail to confirm the expectation that *a'uté* and *ba'õno* are discrete categories. Of the 92 *ba'õno* girls in the sample, eight were between 0 and 9 months of age, before the time they would be expected to have learned to walk and therefore, according to other reports (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:135; Silva 1986:65, 133-135), should not be considered *a'uté*. Figure 8 shows the relative proportion of female children between 0 and 45 months of age identified as *a'uté* and *ba'õno*. A majority of females as young as 0 to 9 months of age were identified as *ba'õno* (62%) and the

anticipated increase in the proportion of *ba'õno* relative to *a'uté* did not occur until after 18 months of age, well after first walking occurs. Those data and the observation that five individuals in the sample who were identified as both *a'uté* and *ba'õno* demonstrate that female children at the same stages of physical development can belong to both age grades. Thus, as was observed for the male categories *a'uté* and *watebremí*, the female categories *a'uté* and *ba'õno* are not discrete on the basis of first walking. That finding is consistent with my ethnographic findings, presented in Chapter 2, that the term *a'uté* refers to male and female childhood beginning during the fetal stage. It was established for males that childhood (*a'uté*) overlaps with boyhood (*watebremí*) and ends with male adolescence (*ai'repudu*) or passage into pre-initiation (*wapté*). My data for females indicate similar relationships between childhood (*a'uté*), girlhood (*ba'õno*), and female adolescence (*azarudu*), but a different relationship with the formal age grade sequence.

In the age grade census, 32 of 271 female individuals ranging from 8 to 15 years of age were identified as *azarudu*, the age category defined by Maybury-Lewis as a subcategory of *ba'õno* (1967:150) and by Silva as a separate age grade beginning with adolescence, as recognized by first enlargement of one's breasts (Silva 1986:133, 136). No instances were recorded of an individual being identified as both *ba'õno* and *azarudu*, but I did observe several instances of respondents first identifying young females as *ba'õno* and then correcting their answers to *azarudu*. Consistent with those findings and analogous to findings regarding boyhood (*watebremí*), interviewees characterized the term *ba'õno* as a gendered term for girlhood, which lasts from birth to the first visible enlargement of one's breasts, as reported by Silva (1986:133, 136). Thus, pre-adolescent girls are both *a'uté* and *ba'õno*, the former term being used most commonly to indicate

young age irrespective of gender and the latter being used to indicate the female gender of a child.

According to Maybury-Lewis's model, *azarudu* is a subcategory of *ba'ōno*, which ends with one's induction into an age set and simultaneous passage into the *soimbá* age grade. Were that version correct, it would be expected that no *azarudu* would belong to an established age set. However, my data show that five of 32 individuals identified as *azarudu* were considered members of the most recently inaugurated age set and 25 of the second most recently inaugurated. That finding is important because it attests that although females do not live in the pre-initiate house as males do, they do pertain to the same age sets. As detailed in the previous chapter, each new age set is inaugurated in a ceremony (*deza'hi'hōri*) at the end of the age set initiation rites. According to my informants and consistent with Maybury-Lewis's (1967:149-150) observations, females also participate in that ceremony and are thereby assigned to the same age sets as their male counterparts. Whereas age set membership is not confirmed for males until their later participation in pre-initiate induction rites (*wapté rōiwĩhã*), it is said to be final for females. For both females and males, participation in age set inauguration ceremonies is not accompanied by a change in age grade status. Because females do not participate in male pre-initiate induction rites, they do not become members of the pre-initiate age grade. In contrast to males, females remain children (*a'uté*), girls (*ba'ōno*), or female adolescents (*azarudu*) irrespective of age set status in the formal age grade sequence. For that reason and because they are based on individualistic criteria, these three age grades are informal. The hesitancy demonstrated when some respondents corrected their answers

from *ba'õno* to *azarudu* may be explained by adolescence being gradual and private nature and not necessarily a matter of general awareness.

My interviewees unanimously identified the end of female adolescence (*azarudu*) to be marked by her wedding ceremony (*dabasa*), in which her groom delivers a large quantity of game meat to her doorstep and subsequently she kneels on a mat in front of her house to have specially prepared necklaces ceremoniously removed from her neck. That finding is consistent with Silva's reevaluation of the female age grades (Silva 1986:134-135). Problematically, my quantitative data include five married females with no children who were identified as *azarudu*. I discussed this discrepancy with informants and was told in no uncertain terms that the term *azarudu* does not apply to married women and that my data must be incorrect. They suggested the errors may have occurred for two reasons. First, respondents may have forgotten about several recent wedding ceremonies because many were conducted in rapid succession in the months immediately preceding the census. Second, and perhaps more likely, I may have mistakenly recorded as marriages what were in fact active "dating" relationships (young women receiving their future husbands during nighttime visits prior to marriage), a phase that is often represented by close relatives as effective marriage.

3.2.3. The childhood and adolescent experience

The preceding discussion reframes the earliest phases of the female life cycle as pertaining to three primary informal categories, child (*a'uté*), girl (*ba'õno*), and adolescent girl (*azarudu*). As I proposed for male childhood (*a'uté*) and boyhood (*watebremit*), female childhood (*a'uté*) and girlhood (*ba'õno*) are overlapping domains

that account for all of pre-adolescence (and the fetal stage, in the case of *a'uté*). As described in the previous chapter, recently born infants of both sexes are thought to remain physiologically connected to their parents for some months, until it gains its own individual fortitude and the parents believe that the fragility of infant health has passed. Young girls, like boys, have relatively few restrictions on their activities. Girls and boys often play together in groups in and around their own and neighbors' houses and may take adventures to more distant locales such as the soccer field, the airstrip, the river, or the health post. However, with age, girls and boys play activities become more distinct. As boys are afforded increasing radiuses of circulation, girls are expected to remain closer at hand. That difference is evident in people's comments that boys may become well known by people less closely related to their households while girls are said to remain unknown to them until mature womanhood.

Girls, like boys, play at games that according to elders should imitate adult life and serve as a prelude to assuming adult responsibilities. As the elder woman Irani told me,

“During the first year of life, you don't know anything. But as you grow, you begin understanding. We observe, pay attention to the adults. Being curious we learn. We must not stop learning because as adults we have to look after ourselves.”

Although the expectation that children learn through play activities that imitates adult behavior is similar for females and males, the behaviors they are expected to imitate are often very different. For males, those expectations often center on play hunting, warfare, and ritual activities. For females, they emphasize play homemaking activities and assisting with real homemaking activities. Another elder female, Conceição, described that during her childhood boys played at male games like hunting animals while girls

helped their mothers collect firewood and cook food. Iraní remembered learning as a child how to care for younger children and how a wife must treat her husband. These elder women made the same complaints about female children that they made about male children – they were longer interested in imitating adults and therefore were ill-prepared to assume the responsibilities of adulthood. However, elders also express that contemporary girls, like boys, are not interested in imitating adults and therefore are learning those lessons adequately.

During my research I was less exposed to female than to male child play because my Xavante household had no *ba'õno* girls. However, I did observe that girls in other households seemed to spend a great deal of time assisting the older females of the household with diverse chores such as preparing food, collecting water, and tending infants. I did not see young boys of similar ages performing comparable duties. Even in children's play activities I found noticeable differences between girl play and boy play. For example, girls but not boys enjoyed improvising and playing in small traditional domed houses ("playing house"). Similarly, boys but not girls could often be seen playing in and around the pre-initiate house. Those distinctions and others serve to differentiate girls from boys at relatively young ages as they begin to assume some of the gendered aspects of adult sociality. Some such distinctions start very early. For example, girls tend to wear clothing at earlier ages than boys. Other distinctions begin much later in life. For example, young girls and boys play freely together, but as they get older such play becomes less acceptable.

With the approach of adolescence, gender distinctions become even more distinct. For males, late childhood (*watebremiti*) and adolescence (*ai'repudu*) involves a strong

orientation toward life in the pre-initiate house even before a boy takes up residence there. As boys are indicated by their parents to join the next group of inductees, they begin associating more with their future age set mates and mentors and play less with younger children. For females, adolescence (*azarudu*) is strongly associated with marriageability and orientation toward future married life.⁴² Unlike males, who move out of their natal households when they are inducted into the pre-initiate house, female adolescence does not involve a shift in residence, a new set of peers, or any formal changes in her duties. In fact, in those regards, a female adolescent's life continues very much as it was before. However, adolescence is accompanied by other no less dramatic changes in the female experience.

Bilingual Xavante translate the term *barana si'iné* as “to walk only at night” or “to visit only at night.” It refers to the nighttime visits young men pay their future wives. As described in the previous chapter, pre-initiate boys are committed in marriage at the end of the approximately five-yearly rites that will mark their initiation into manhood. Some years later, after a girl becomes an adolescent and often while her future husband is in the novitiate adult age grade, he begins visiting her at night in order that they become comfortable with one another and begin constructing a personal relationship. Prior to those visits, most young couples are virtually strangers to one another because pre-initiate boys and novitiate adult men have very limited freedom to approach unfamiliar households and their young female members. Accordingly, nighttime visits are an

⁴² Although other authors report that historically sexual intercourse with pre-adolescent females was not uncommon (for example Maybury-Lewis 1967:82-83), my data show that in the contemporary era, female adolescence, as marked by enlargement of the breasts, is an important indicator of sexual maturity and marriageability.

opportunity for future spouses to get to know each other in the presence of her close family before they formally marry and reside together. For that reason, many of my informants glossed the term *barana si'iné* as “dating” (*namorando* in Portuguese).

Many girls begin to receive nighttime visits by their future husbands soon after becoming adolescents, an event that is not accompanied by a change in age grade status. In some cases, young females are promised to married men, often their sisters' husbands, as second or third wives. In those cases, the future husband may already live in her house or she may move into his house while still in the adolescent age grade in order to get to know him there. When future husbands begin visiting at night, partitions (*'rini'rada*) are erected from palm fronds within the house in order to give the young couples a private space to be together. It is there, in their own homes, under the cover of darkness, and subject to social protocols that require novitiate adult men to behave with discretion that adolescent girls begin experiencing life as soon-to-be spouses. I know from the experiences of my novitiate adult adoptive brothers and friends how tumultuous those initial introductions and interactions may be. I assume they are no less so for their future wives. According to adult and elder interviewees, young men should respect their future wives by not expecting sex at first and adolescent girls are counseled by their mothers to be alert to such pressures. Nevertheless, by most accounts, contemporary young men tend not to have such patience. The result is a certain tension between young couples' sexual behavior and the traditionalist mandate that marriage precede procreation. Consequently, as I infer from circumstances I accompanied, there may not be much time between when a young man starts visiting his future wife and her pregnancy, creating a certain sense of urgency to the scheduling of weddings (*dabasa*).

There are two types of wedding ceremonies among the Xavante, “meat-basket weddings” (*dabasa ïsemere*) and “quick weddings” (*dabasa ïsere*). Both types are preceded by collective hunts in which men accumulate large quantities of game meat in order for the groom to deliver it to the front door of his bride’s household. No meat-basket weddings were held during my fieldwork, but I understand from interviews and film footage that it may involve up to several weeks of preparation. A large group of the groom’s relatives, both men and women, camp in the forest during a multiple-day hunting expedition. As the men bring back game and separate primary cuts according to traditional protocols, women roast and dry the cuts to preserve them for the anticipated wedding. Preferred game animals include tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*), peccary (*Tayassu pecari* and *Pecari tajacu*), and deer (*Blastocerus dichotomus*, *Ozotoceros bezoarticus*, *Mazama gouazoubira*, and *Mazama americana*), among others. In most cases, the hunting party remains until a satisfactory quantity of meat is accumulated, whether it takes days or weeks. At that point, the group heads back towards the village, stopping several kilometers away to make final preparations. There one of the groom’s elder relatives weaves an enormous basket from fresh buriti (*Mauritia flexuosa*) palm fronds and the groom is painted by his father with urucu (*Bixa orellana*) and charcoal pigments. With everything in order and the wedding meat (*adabasa*) loaded into the basket, the hunting party returns to the village. There, the groom, assisted by his real or classificatory brothers, runs with the basket of meat on his back, supported by a tumpline around his forehead, to the front of his bride’s house. He drops the heavy basket in a heap at her door, and walks away nonchalantly.

I did have opportunity to observe quite a few quick weddings, which differ from the one just described in that the decision to hold them was usually made on the spot after hunts producing enough game meat for a wedding gift. Collective hunts were frequently organized during the dry season, sometimes in the hope that specific couples might marry, and often yielded enormous quantities of meat. Even when a hunt was held for the sake of a specific couple's wedding, at the end of such hunts and before returning to the village men discuss the quantity of animals killed and which couples might be married with it. After some discussion, one or more couples may be chosen to marry that very day. In some cases, the decision was made for couples other than those initially intended to marry. Notably, these quick weddings involve substantially less planning and the last minute decisions involved may take both groom and bride by surprise. After deciding who is to marry, the whole carcasses are taken back to the village. There, the legs of the animals are bound and unceremoniously slung over the groom's forehead, one carcass at a time, to the maximum weight he can support. He then runs, with some help from his brothers, through the village plaza to deposit them on his bride's doorstep. At that stage, the groom's involvement in the wedding is complete.

After the groom delivers the meat, meat-basket weddings and quick weddings are substantially similar. The bride's family quickly gathers the meat and transports it to the house of one of the bride's real or categorical mother's brothers. This recipient of wedding meat is not just any mother's brother, but her ceremonial father (*danhorebzu'wa* – "cotton necklace giver"). Ceremonial parenthood is an important feature of the Xavante kinship system that factors importantly in female and male children's lives (see Chapter 5). Thus, the delivery of meat to the bride's doorstep is only momentary and serves for it

to be immediately transferred to her ceremonial father. If the meat was delivered as whole carcasses, as in the case of the quick weddings I observed, the women in the ceremonial father's household divide and roast it. Otherwise, they simply reappportion it so that it might be distributed outside of their household. Usually the next morning, representatives from all households come to collect a piece. Thus, ultimately, wedding meat is destined for the entire community. That final disposition obviates the need for large quantities of meat and what some older individuals characterize as brides' mothers' demands for ever increasing quantities of wedding meat. However, it is not only she who has an interest in there being ample meat, because the gift of wedding meat is not made by or to a single person but rather passes through a series of transactions. First the hunters obtain the meat on behalf of the groom. Then the groom delivers it to the bride's house. From there it is immediately retrieved by the bride's ceremonial father. That man's family redistributes it throughout the community. Each giver in that chain enjoys credit for an ample distribution well done.

Although the bride is out of view during the first portion of her wedding, undoubtedly she is aware of each and every step in the process as it happens. After the wedding meat is delivered and passed to her ceremonial father, it is her turn to present herself in the village plaza. She may do so late in the afternoon on the same day or the following morning. In preparation, her ceremonial father goes to her house to paint and adorn her before her appearance. My neighbor, Lisiane, was thirteen in August 2005 when her groom, Romeu, delivered to her house a large pile of game meat in a quick wedding. Lisiane's maternal uncle and ceremonial father, Valmir, went to her house before she was to appear in the plaza. He was equipped with red urucu (*Bixa orellana*)

and black charcoal pigments and a variety of cords, necklaces, and grooming paraphernalia. Slowly and meticulously he painted every inch of her upper body from the lower neck to the wrists in red and her lower legs in black. He then carefully tied special cords around her wrists and bands around her ankles. Finally, he tied and arranged a series of three separate cotton necklaces around her neck, each crafted with special objects meant to convey benefits to the wearer. He carefully knotted the ends of all cords and trimmed them to tidy lengths, making sure she looked flawless in every detail.

Throughout this whole process, Lisiane was utterly still. She fixed her eyes on the ground in front of her and made no indications of emotion, neither fear nor excitement. When her preparations were complete, her mother preceded her out the front door with a small pan-like woven mat in her hand. She set it on the ground in the plaza some 75 feet in front of the house in view of small crowds of people who had accumulated to watch, some from up close and some from afar. Almost immediately and demonstrating no hesitation, Lisiane emerged from the house, walked to the mat, and kneeled on it. She continued staring at the ground in front of her, making no indication she was aware of the people around her. From a far point in the village, a young sister of the groom⁴³ came running to her. When she arrived, she silently deposited a small bundled present on Lisiane's mat, quickly removed the three wedding necklaces from Lisiane's neck, and walked away. Lisiane remained motionless and expressionless until the transaction was complete, when she quickly rose and returned to her house. The necklace now removed, Lisiane and Romeu were officially married. Lisiane was no longer a member of the

⁴³ My data disagree with Silva's (1986:107), according to whom this role is filled by any member of the adolescent female age grade (*azaduru*).

adolescent age grade (*azarudu*) and Romeu that night was to join her not as a nighttime visitor but as a new resident.

I suspect the stoicism Lisiane displayed during her wedding belied emotions she chose not to express. Later that day, her brother speculated, “I think she was scared!” I observed many similarly expressionless brides as well as some who were overcome with giggles or mugged in embarrassment as they presented themselves in the plaza. Some tore off in a run the moment their necklaces were removed. Not only is it unusual for young females to present themselves alone in public, but doing so in marriage may also signify their formal union to men that they and their families have yet to trust fully. This may have been the case for Lisiane and Romeu, who were daughter and son of adversarial community leaders Paulo and Suptó, respectively. Although Lisiane and her family had gotten to know Romeu during his nighttime visits, no such courtship could eliminate the bare fact that she was now united to and her family was now welcoming into its home the son of a political opponent. In many cases, the potential threat of a son-in-law is negligible or fades with time as he becomes integrated into his new family. However, in other cases, suspicions remain. When the community divided in two separate villages in late 2006, Lisiane and Romeu remained together, but living in Suptó’s household against the pattern of uxorilocal marriage.

In my observation, becoming female adolescents does not bring many lifestyle changes. They generally continue living in the same household, socializing with mostly the same people, enjoying similar pastimes, and doing similar types of work. Yet, it is often accompanied by one fundamental shift – a reorientation of their social bearings in anticipation of marriage. It is as adolescents that girls first put into earnest practice the

many lessons they informally learned by imitating adults in play and work, including the exceptionally important one of how to behave towards a husband. It is not guaranteed that new couples will get along well with one another despite the gradual and mediated nature of their early exposure during the future husband's initial nighttime visits. Nevertheless, not getting married or separating because of such incompatibilities is not considered a viable option for most couples. Preferred is for the two, in consultation with their parents and immediate kin, to work out their differences and allow time for intimacy to grow between them during his nighttime visits. In Xavante society, marriage is not only an arrangement between individuals, but also between families with extensive genealogical and social networks. Cancelling or ending a marriage can have social repercussions throughout and beyond the community. As a result, female adolescence is accompanied by an imperative to get along with a future husband she may not yet know well or, worse, not particularly like. In all but the most exceptional cases, any initial hesitations are minimally followed by acceptance of marriage. In the experiences of most of my novitiate adult friends, they were followed by unconcealed affection and enthusiasm for marriage.

The decision to formally schedule a wedding ceremony is largely that of the bride and groom's parents. As my adoptive brother Eugênio told me before our brother Denoque's wedding had been scheduled, Denoque could be taken by surprise at any time by his father's decision for him to marry. Were it to be in a meat-basket wedding, Denoque would potentially have weeks of notice. Were it to be in a quick wedding, he might have just hours. However, other anecdotes suggest that young brides and grooms ultimately have the power to refuse marriage despite the potential social and political

implications for their families. Before my arrival in the village, an adolescent girl and a novitiate adult man had been promised in marriage in an arrangement that also involved a union between their novitiate adult brother and adolescent sister, respectively. The first of those relationships was proceeding smoothly, even passionately, but the second was experiencing difficulty. I heard various accounts of what happened, but the more reliable versions indicated that the bride refused the groom. According to all accounts, such an unwilling bride could not be forced to marry even though her decision could cause considerable strife in the community. There was a clear distinction between the expectation that young couples follow through with their marriage commitments and the rights afforded them to make that decision for themselves. In this case, the second couple did not marry. One of the families involved responded by moving to another village and cancelling the marriage between the first couple. According to some of the people I talked with, the right of young women to refuse marriage was a traditional one. Others say it was a recent historical change that was even more apparent on other Xavante reserves, where marriage arrangements by parents had largely been discontinued.⁴⁴

3.3. Young womanhood

3.3.1. Introduction and findings

Maybury-Lewis differed from subsequent scholars in identifying two additional female age grades before mature adulthood, *soimbá* and *adabá*. According to his version, the female term *soimbá* is analogous to the male term *wapté* (pre-initiate) because girls

⁴⁴ Nancy Flowers (personal telephone communication, November 6, 2007) recalled an example from the 1970s of a young groom who refused his arranged bride.

and boys come to be called by those terms at the same time, with the inauguration of their age set (Maybury-Lewis 1967:151).⁴⁵ Similarly, Maybury-Lewis proposed that the subsequent female age grade, *adabá*, is analogous to the male age grade *ritei'wa* (novitiate adult) because, even though the transition from *soimbá* to *adabá* “should technically” occur when a girl participates in a naming ceremony, he believed that ceremony to be largely defunct and its accompanying age grade transition to now accompany age set initiation rites (Maybury-Lewis 1967:151).⁴⁶ Maybury-Lewis also provided for the use of an alternative term, *ĩ'rare*, for *soimbá* females from the time they give birth to a first child until they become mature women (*pi'õ*). Silva provided an important critique of that account, whereby she redefined *soimbá* as synonymous with *adabá* but only used by members of a girl's nuclear family (mother, father, brothers, sisters) (Silva 1986:134-135). In turn, she redefined *adabá* as young woman after her wedding ceremony (*dabasa*) and before giving birth to a first child (Silva 1986:105-109). Finally, Silva postponed the application of the alternative term *ĩ'rare* until mature womanhood (see below) (Silva 1986:135). Notably, Silva emphasized what she characterized as the categorically different logics of the female and male life cycles by recognizing that the female age grades *soimbá* and *adabá* are not analogous to the male pre-initiation (*wapté*) and novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*) because they are based on individualistic and developmental criteria rather than age set status. Despite those

⁴⁵ Maybury-Lewis (1967:151) also reports an alternative, whereby a girl may be called *soimbá* after her wedding ceremony.

⁴⁶ Although Maybury-Lewis reported that the female naming ceremony was no longer practiced in the 1950s, Nancy Flowers observed it in the mid-1970s (personal telephone communication, October 25, 2006) and Laura Graham (1995:92, 258) reported it was last performed in 1986.

differences, both Maybury-Lewis's and Silva's versions exclude females from the male pre-initiate and novitiate adult age grades.

Of 271 female response subjects in the age grade census, none were identified as *soimbá* and 14 were identified as *adabá*. Of those 14 *adabá*, nine were members of the second most recently inaugurated age set and four were members of the third. One individual was said to belong to a younger age set that was not yet inaugurated, but she had recently moved from another community in which the age set sequence is ordered differently (Maybury-Lewis 1967:161). Of the nine belonging to the second age set, one was also identified as *ritei'wa*. All but two of the 14 *adabá* were said to be married. Of those two exceptions, one was considered almost married because her future husband visited her at night and one was said to be neither dating nor married. None of the individuals identified as *adabá* had children.

3.3.2. Childless wife (*adabá*)

At the time I conducted the age grade census, no males had been inducted into the pre-initiate house or were yet considered pre-initiates (*wapté*), even though their age set had been formally inaugurated. Had Maybury-Lewis's model of congruence between male and female age grades been correct, those circumstances should have resulted in there being no female individuals identified as *soimbá*. Similarly, only members of a single age set should have been identified as *adabá*. In agreement with his model, my data do not include any *soimbá* individuals. At variance with his model, my data attest *adabá* individuals belonging to two different age sets.

Silva's (1986:105-109) account of the term *adabá* as referring to young women after marriage and before having children is consistent with my census data in all but two cases. The first was unmarried at the unusually advanced age of 20 years. The second was also older than the other individuals identified as *adabá* (18 years) and was living with but not formally married to her future husband. Neither woman had children. In both cases, women who were not married but exhibited certain characteristics of married women (relatively advanced age and coresidence with husband) were classified as childless wives. Interviewees subsequently informed me that *adabá* was not the proper term for these individuals but could easily have been given in error due to their proximity to marriage. Accordingly, I agree with Silva that the *adabá* age grade includes married women who have not yet had any children, which, for simplicity, I refer to here as "childless wife."

Ethnographic evidence indicates that no individuals were identified as *soimbá* in my sample because that term is not an age grade in the proper sense. As mentioned above, Silva (1986:134; 1989:333) first identified Maybury-Lewis's error in defining the term *soimbá* in terms of age set status. She proposed that both *adabá* and *soimbá* indicate childless wives but the latter is only used by members of one's nuclear family. In contrast, she proposed that the term *adabá* is used for the same stage of womanhood but by people outside their nuclear families. Somewhat differently, according to my data, *soimbá* is used to address a married woman without child by specific consanguineal relatives in her first ascending generation. Thus, I submit that *soimbá* actually pertains to

an ancillary age-graded system within the vocative kinship terminology.⁴⁷ That system, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, includes the following terms in ego's first descending generation:

Males:	<i>aibö</i> (mature man)
	<i>'repudu</i> (young man)
	<i>hö'wa</i> (pre-initiate)
	<i>bödi</i> (boy)
Females:	<i>pi'ö</i> (wife with child)
	<i>soimbá</i> (childless wife)
	<i>zarudu</i> (female adolescent)
	<i>otí</i> (girl)

The male vocative terms distinguish age relative to one's status in the formal age grade system. Thus, the term *bödi* applies to boys (*watebreml*), *hö'wa* applies to pre-initiates (*wapté*), *'repudu* applies to male novitiate adults (*ritei'wa*), and *aibö* applies to male mature adults (*iprédu*). In contrast, the female vocative terms distinguish age according to one's developmental, marital, and parental status. Thus, *otí* applies to girls (*ba'öno*), *zarudu* to female adolescents (*azarudu*), *soimbá* to young married women (*adabá*, discussed below), and *pi'ö* to married women with children (*ĩrare*, discussed in

⁴⁷ As a general rule, these terms apply to members of the first descending generation that belong to ego's exogamous moiety. However, there are exceptions. For example, a male speaker rarely has social access to a MBD before the birth of her first child. Consequently, the pre-adulthood terms *otí*, *ba'öno*, and *zarudu* do not apply to that position. Also, categorical nephews and nieces in the opposite exogamous moiety (ZCh, MZDCh, FBDCh, etc.) may optionally be called *aibö* (for males) or *pi'ö* (for females), but only after they reach adulthood

the following section). The fact of these vocative kinship terms being analogous to age grade terms helps explain the scholarly confusion between them. However, there are important grammatical and semantic distinctions between them. The vocative kinship terms are only used to address specific kin while age grade terms may be used in contexts unrelated to kinship. Another way of explaining that difference is that age grade terms may be used to refer to unrelated individuals or abstract groups of individuals sharing a particular age status while the vocative terms are only used to address individuals with particular kinship relationships to the speaker.

To illustrate this point, I will use the terms *soimbá* and *adabá*. Whereas the term *soimbá* entails specific kinship ties between a speaker and a childless wife, *adabá* is used by any speaker in contexts that do not involve kinship or refers to childless wives abstractly. For example, one would refer to an unrelated young wife as *adabá* but would address a brother's daughter as *soimbá*. Thus, the difference between *soimbá* and *adabá* involves two factors: (1) whether a young wife occupies certain kinship positions relative to the speaker (usually a member of the first descending generation in the same exogamous moiety) and (2) whether the term is being used in the vocative case. Highlighting these distinctions, there are other specific kinship terms that are appropriate for married but childless kinswomen when those conditions do not apply. For example, *ĩ'ra* is the referential term for daughter and *ĩrapté* is the vocative term for sister's daughter. In contrast, those other terms happen not to specify age status as *soimbá* does. Because I conducted the age category interviews in the third person and specifically asked about age, respondents who might otherwise call a young wife *soimbá* or refer to her with other kinship terms did not do so.

In the preceding discussion I characterized the age grade *adabá* (childless wife) as pertaining to members of various age sets and as recruiting members based on their marital and parental status. Because those criteria are individualistic and do not involve age set status, it is the third informal age grade in the female life cycle, following girl (*ba'ōno*) and female adolescent (*azarudu*). According to Silva's version of the female life cycle, whereby all age grades are based on individualistic criteria and none involve age set status, there should be no formal age grades that apply to females. However, my data show that females, like males, also belong to formal age grades.

3.3.3. Novitiate adult (*ritei'wa*)

In the census, five females were identified as *ritei'wa* (novitiate adult), the same formal age grade defined by previous scholars as pertaining exclusively to males (Maybury-Lewis 1967:339; Silva 1986:137-139). All of those five individuals belonging to the second most recently inaugurated age set, following the same pattern identified for males in the previous chapter. Of those five, two were unmarried, three were married, three had no children, and two had one child each, indicating that novitiate adult age grade status is not conditioned upon a female's marital or parental status. Furthermore, four of those five females were also identified as simultaneously belonging to other age grades (two as *azarudu*, one as *adabá*, and one as *ĩ'rare*), illustrating that the novitiate adult grade overlaps with certain other female age grades. Upon further inquiry, all but one informant confirmed the applicability of the term *ritei'wa* for females. The one who disagreed asserted that the more appropriate term for females the second most recently inaugurated age set is *dahi'wa*. Subsequent interviews revealed that most individuals

consider *dahi'wa* to be synonymous with *ritei'wa* and to be equally applicable for males and females. In my experience, that term is more commonly used in a slightly modified form, *wahi'wa* (“our older people”), which also refers to male and female members of the second most recently inaugurated age grade but is only used by members of the most recently inaugurated age set (i.e., their immediate age set juniors). I infer that the general applicability of the term *dahi'wa* (“their older people”) for members of the novitiate adult age grade involves an implicit reference to their relationship with the most recently initiated age set. According to that logic, *dahi'wa* may be glossed as *ritei'wa* but literally means “the youngest age set’s immediate seniors.”

Thus, my data show that females pertain to the formal novitiate adult age grade according to the same criteria as males and irrespective of their simultaneous status vis-à-vis other informal female age grades. This finding is significant because it contradicts Silva’s insightful but incomplete reformulation of Maybury-Lewis’s model that sought to separate categorically the female and male life cycles based on their contrastive underlying logics (1986:133-141). In fact, my findings partially reaffirm Maybury-Lewis’s original model, whereby males and females belonging to the same age sets and pass through formal age grades together through their mutual participate in the approximately five-yearly age set initiation rites (1967:149-151). However, I show those formal age grades to be the same for males and females and to coexist with a series of informal female age grades, the latter conforming to the basic principles of Silva’s version of the female age grade sequence.

It is important to note that females do not pertain to the pre-initiate (*wapté*) age grade even though it is part of the same formal system as novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*).

Although I was not present, the approximately five-yearly age set initiation rites (*danhono*) were described to me to include an age set inauguration ceremony (*deza'hi'hōri*) that includes both boys and girls that were indicated by their parents for inclusion in the next age set. Participation in the age set inauguration ceremony was said to not involve a change of age grade status for members of either gender. For women, participation was said to signal final assignment to the age set but for males it was considered provisory because their ultimate assignment depends on their subsequent ritual induction into the pre-initiate house. Male participation in pre-initiate induction rites is what marks their passage into the pre-initiate age grade. Because females are not inducted into the pre-initiate house, they do not become members of the pre-initiate age grade. Later, during the next five-yearly age set initiation rites (*danhono*), those same boys and girls participate in a ceremonial foot race (*sa'uri*) that marks their mutual membership in the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*). Thus, females and males may be seen to pertain equally to the formal age grade system although males enter as pre-initiates and females enter as novitiate adults.

In her reformulation of Maybury-Lewis's model, Silva observed that females complete a rapid sequence of age grade transitions from adolescence to motherhood before their male age set peers leave the pre-initiate house and begin their relatively rapid sequence of age grade transitions leading their passage into mature adulthood (Silva 1986:138-139). To some extent, that is correct. For many females, adolescence (*azarudu*) is relatively brief because marriage and childless wife (*adabá*) age grade status follows soon thereafter. Similarly, many women do not remain childless wives for very long because marriage is closely followed by childbirth. However, I did not find the

discrepancy between male attainment of mature adulthood and female attainment of motherhood to be quite as different as Silva suggested. My data suggest that a great majority of females pass through childless wifedom (*adabá*) while they and their similarly aged male age set mates are novitiate adults (*ritei'wa*). One reason for our different findings is that her account places the beginning of mature manhood (*iprédu*) after an intermediate novitiate adult age grade (*ipredúpte*), which I did not find to be the case. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, most of my informants did not recognize the term *ipredúpte* to be a part of the human life cycle and instead considered that phase of life to be an undifferentiated part of mature adulthood (*iprédu*). Lacking that intermediate age grade, mature manhood may be understood to start some five years earlier and more in pace with Silva's characterization of female attainment of motherhood.

3.3.4. The young womanhood experience

Although the childless wife age grade (*adabá*) may be brief, it constitutes an important social transition in a woman's life. In many cases, on the day of her wedding ceremony, after having presented herself in the plaza to have her cotton necklaces removed, her husband takes up residence in her house. Generally, the two know each other relatively well by that time for his having visited her during the night for some time. As I discussed in the previous chapter, a husband's experience of leaving his natal household to take up residence in his wife's household can be a difficult one. Not only does he join it as a subordinate member under the expectation that he behave respectfully towards his in-laws but his presence introduces an unknown social element that may take

years to integrate. It may also be a challenging experience for his new wife and because the superimposition of his political and genealogical associations on hers may place contradictory demands on her allegiances. That tension has been characterized by other scholars as an acute potential for conflict between a son-in-law and a father-in-law with divergent political orientations (Maybury-Lewis 1967:98-100; Graham 1995:66-74).

The occurrence during my field research of a village division due to internal politics demonstrated some of the ways young couples and their families cope with seemingly irreconcilable discord. That split was accompanied by so deep a rift in the social fabric of the community that even some individuals joined by the strongest bonds of brotherhood and formal friendship severed contact with one another for a time. It was a political crisis that affected the social dynamics inside every household, especially those with young couples whose allegiances were split between disputant fathers. In the months leading up to the physical separation, when tensions were very high and suspicions were rampant, some young husbands living in their wives' natal households according to the pattern of uxorilocal residence faced palpable tension with their fathers-in-law as each considered the other with extreme distrust and enmity. Young wives in some such households also faced almost impossible dilemmas of fidelity as disparagement and accusations between in-laws were no more than superficially suppressed. More acutely, those couples were forced to make difficult decisions of lasting consequence as the community prepared for partial relocation. Many couples were forced to choose between living in the wife's father's village or the husband's father's village. Either decision meant one or the other would sever virtually all interaction with her or his birth family, at least for a time.

For couples who had not yet married or for married couples without children, a seemingly simple solution would be to permanently separate, each going to live in her or his own natal household, and to later remarry someone else who was perceived as less of a political threat. Indeed, after the village separated, many unmarried young couples who were already committed or even sleeping together during the grooms' nighttime visits (*barana si'iné*) had their weddings cancelled. In contrast, recently married couples tended to stay together despite clear equivocality in some of their speculations about the future. By remaining together those couples also had to face the issue of where to live.

Under typical circumstances, the normative pattern of uxorilocality creates an expectation that mothers and their adult daughters, often even grandmothers, remain in the same household while fathers and their adult sons usually live apart from one another. Thus, the residential household tends to be a locus of matrilineal continuity even though the formal reckoning of descent through exogamous moieties is patrilineal, as discussed in Chapter 2. As Maybury-Lewis (1967:98-100) accurately described, that fact results in a generational oscillation of patriarchal dominance within single households as each generation of daughters brings into the house a new set of husbands who do not belong to their father's patriline. An important aspect of that particular combination of patrilineal descent with uxorilocal residence is that matriarchal dominance within a household remains constant throughout those cycles. Arguably, multiple generations of mothers and daughters comprise the social continuity of a household through time.⁴⁸ Those matrilineages are not named or otherwise formally recognized but they are implicit in how people go

⁴⁸ See Murphy (1956) and Ramos (1978) for a discussion of another example of uxorilocality and patrilineality in Amazonia.

about family life through time. However, that typical scenario may not apply in times of social crisis.

Although it would seem that most recently married couples would have remained living in the wife's natal household after the village fission, according to the pattern of uxorilocal residence, in fact they sought a variety of living situations that conformed in varying degrees to that apparent ideal. Of five recently married couples with no children whose respective parents lived in different villages after the split, two decided to live in the wife's parents' village and three in the husband's parents' village. Although three of those couples resolved to live in the same house as one of the spouses' parents, two couples chose to establish a new household independent of either set of parents. That interesting case involved the son and daughter of a prominent member of one village, who were married to the daughter and son, respectively, of one of their father's most distrusted political enemies. Caught between two mutually acrimonious sets of parents, those two young couples built their own household in the village of one of their parents but not near his house. In that arrangement, only one of the fathers retained social access to his son and daughter in the immediate aftermath of the division, but neither were his daughter-in-law and son-in-law subject to live in a household so overtly at political odds with their father. In my judgment, these examples demonstrate an enormous degree of commitment to new marriages on the part of all four spouses, their families, and the community, even before a first child is born and very difficult political conditions.

As mentioned above, a young woman's household responsibilities do not significantly change with her new status as a married *adabá* young adult. Nevertheless, it is her commitment to fulfilling those responsibilities that earn her the approval of elders.

As for males, it is hard to distinguish the usual critical banter to which elders subject younger women from their genuine criticisms according to traditionalist values. Like young males, young females may be criticized by elder females and males for being lazy, ignorant, and indifferent to what elders consider their own higher values. They are similarly expected to maintain good grooming habits, especially as concerns their hair, demonstrate fortitude, and not involve themselves with things that do not concern them, the latter of which especially includes male political and spiritual matters. Among elder males, one point of discussion in particular seems to indicate that they judge young wives especially on their commitment to family service. Female service duties include a host of activities not ordinarily done by men, such as preparing and cooking food, cleaning house, and washing clothes, among others. However, for men, one task in particular seemed emblematic of the failures of young women to fulfill their service responsibilities, the collection of wild “potatoes” from the landscape.

According to Maybury-Lewis’s account from the 1950s and 60s, the Xavante had long practiced horticulture⁴⁹ but relied on it relatively little compared with hunting and gathering. However, although at that time meat was a highly valued food, the caloric basis of the diet was wild roots and rhizomes, mainly in the *Dioscorea* genus, collected by women (Maybury-Lewis 1967:43-47; Lima et al. 2003:42-43). Wild yams, commonly called “potatoes” (*batatas* in Portuguese), are sought and consumed much less today even though they remain highly valued both as a traditional gift item in ritual contexts and as

⁴⁹ Maybury-Lewis (1967:47) identified maize (*Zea mays*), beans (*Phaseolus* sp.), and pumpkins (*Cucurbita* sp.) as the only food crops cultivated by the Xavante prior to the contact era. Contemporary oral tradition indicates that one variety of sweet manioc (*Manihot esculenta*) was also grown.

an unusually healthy food item. According to men, husbands have the primary responsibility of hunting for game meat, another exceptionally healthy food item, and wives have the responsibility of gathering wild yams. Furthermore, they complain that while men uphold their end of the bargain by hunting, women collect wild yams insufficiently. Some men say contemporary women do not collect yams because they are lazy and it involves a great deal of work. Others say younger women do not know how to find them because older adult women fail to take their daughters out and teach them. Those comments can be interpreted in any number of ways and should not be taken at face value. Nevertheless they indicate clearly that adult males consider domestic service, especially related to food production and preparation, among the most important of traditional female activities.

Another of the most valued roles of young wives is childbearing. Children and grandchildren are not only adored by their parents and grandparents, but are highly desired in ample numbers. The desire to have many children may not be new (Maybury-Lewis 1967:63), but their success at it appears to have increased in recent years. According to detailed diachronic analyses of the Xavante population at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá, with the exception of a dramatic post-contact population crisis between 1957 and 1971, fertility increased from 8.1 in 1942 to 1956 to 10.2 from 1999 to 2004 (Flowers 1983:200-213; Coimbra et al. 2002:134-140; Souza 2008:73). One explanation for that increase is that the population at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá has benefited from improved access to pre- and post-natal healthcare through the Brazilian government's Indian health programs. However, the Xavante provide several other explanations as well.

According to elders, in the past, young women did not have children as early as they do today because men then treated them with greater respect. As Maria explained,

“From my point of view people used to be more respectful towards women. In the past, a man always respected women, even his sister, turning his back to her in deference. That was beautiful. Men learned this in the pre-initiate house. In the past, women were alerted to not be raped by men. Our mothers oriented us to take care of ourselves and we did not accept sex. Men were respectful, which is difficult to make happen. Today it is different, young men do not obey and do not have respect.”

According to her perspective, one ramification of decreased respect for women is that young men do not observe what was in the past a normative post-partum sex taboo (Flowers 1983:212-213). Additionally, according to the eldest living individuals, an interbirth interval of several years was preferred in the past. That perspective is consistent with research suggesting that in Amazonia, mobility and warfare places great demands on small indigenous populations and can lead to reduced fertility and fertility management measures (Werner 1983; Ferguson 1989). In the recent precontact era, when fertility was lower, the Xavante people were seminomadic and frequently engaged in war, a lifestyle requiring a great deal of foot mobility throughout a large territory (Maybury-Lewis 1967:53-59). For many Xavante individuals, the recent increase in offspring is a source of great satisfaction, irrespective of its causes. As one young father told me, one of the reasons he feels contemporary life in the village was better than it had been before contact with Brazilian national society was that contemporary parents had more children.

Another aspect of the female experience that tends not to remain constant after marriage is the tendency for fewer females to not attend school than do their male age set mates. When I first arrived in the field, classes for females were located in the same schoolhouse as classes for males, which was located one-half kilometer outside the village. However, as an accommodation to Xavante culture, the local Municipal Secretary

of Education allowed classes to be segregated by gender, with female sessions having female teachers. However, female participation remained disappointingly low, with only four sessions for females to nine for males, and attendance being much lower in the female sessions. In 2005 the Secretary built a schoolhouse in the center of the village in the hope that it would improve female attendance. According to the school director, Xavante men previously refused to let their daughters and wives attend because the school's location outside the village prevented them from keeping an eye on them. However, then Vice-Chief Paulo explained it differently, saying that Xavante women tended not to attend the old schoolhouse because they were shy (*têm vergonha* in Portuguese) and the centrally located women's schoolhouse was built out of respect for that cultural aspect of Xavante femininity.

3.4. Mature womanhood

3.4.1. Introduction and findings

Maybury-Lewis (1967:150) and Silva (1986:135) agreed that the primary Xavante term for "mature womanhood" is *pi'õ*. Although they agreed that mature womanhood lasts until advanced age, they disagreed on when it begins. Maybury-Lewis proposed that the female term *pi'õ* is analogous to the male term *iprédu*, implying that membership in both starts when "named women" (*adabá*), "women who have born a child" (*a'raté*), and "young men" (*ritei'wa*), members of the same age set, participate together in the age set initiation rites. Interestingly, Maybury-Lewis also mentioned that mature women (*pi'õ*) may also be called by the term for "mature men" (*iprédu*), but does not seem to conclude from that observation that females also belong to the *iprédu* age grade (Maybury-Lewis

1967:151). In contrast, Silva described mature womanhood (*pi'õ*) as beginning when a married woman gives birth to her first child and lasting the remainder of her life (Silva 1986:135). She also designated two subcategories of mature womanhood. The first, *a'raté*, was earlier defined by Maybury-Lewis as an alternative term for women who give birth to a first child before participating with men in the age set initiation rites (Maybury-Lewis 1967:152). Silva redefined *a'raté* as a subcategory of mature womanhood consisting of mothers with exactly one child (Silva 1986:135). She characterized the second, *ĩhi*, as the term used for women with “grown grandchildren” (Silva 1986:135).

Female adulthood is unquestionably the most terminologically complex segment of the Xavante life cycle for either gender and therefore the most confounding for analysis. Furthermore, its most problematic component is the term previously characterized as the primary mature female age grade – *pi'õ* (Maybury-Lewis 1967:152-153; Silva 1986:135). For the sake of clarity I begin this section with a discussion of data regarding the other mature female age grades attested in the census followed by a discussion of the term *pi'õ*.

Of 271 female subjects in the age grade census, 41 were identified as *ĩ'rare*, 37 as *ĩhi*, 19 as *pi'õ*, 14 as *iprédu*, and 2 as *ĩhöibaté*. All 41 *ĩ'rare* were members of inaugurated age sets, ranging from the second to the sixth most recently inaugurated. They were all married and had between one and nine living children. Of those 41, two were also identified as *pi'õ*, one as *ritei'wa*, and three as *iprédu*. The 37 *ĩhi* belonged to age sets ranging from the third to the eleventh most recently inaugurated age sets, the latter of which was also the eldest age set with living members. They all were or had been married and had between zero and 11 living children in the community. The 14 *iprédu*

were members of age sets ranging from the third to the seventh most recently inaugurated. They were all married and had between zero and nine living children. One individual was identified as both *īhi* and *iprédu*. The two *īhöibaté* were married females with children belonging to the third and fourth most recently inaugurated age sets.

3.4.2. Reevaluation of adulthood age grades

According to those results, *īʼrare* and *īhi* were the two most frequently used terms after adolescence (*azarudu*), and *piʼō* was a somewhat distant third. Those findings would seem to contradict the standard model characterization of *piʼō* as the singularly predominant female adult age grade. I will return to the term *piʼō* later in this section, but first will evaluate the terms *īʼrare* and *īhi* in light of the census results.

Although there was some ambiguity as to the applicability of the term *īʼrare*, especially in later life, most informants glossed it as “not virgin” or “already with a child” and affirmed that it applied from the time a women gave birth to a first child. One man explained rather eloquently, “A woman is called *īʼrare* after she has had a child. An elderly woman who already has white hair and is no longer giving birth to children is no longer *īʼrare*. But also she is because she is no longer a virgin.” I infer that *īʼrare* status does not end at any particular time, but rather that other terms become more relevant or appropriate later in life, especially after a woman has reached menopause. Consistent with that interpretation, my quantitative data show that use of the term *īʼrare* declined precisely during the phase of life when the use of *īhi* increased. *īhi*, on the other hand, continued as the only operative term for women from the sixth age set and beyond (through death). Thus, a gradual transition is observed as *īʼrare*, the predominant age

grade term during early motherhood, is replaced with *ĩhi*, the predominant term in late adulthood. Because inclusion in the *ĩ'rare* age grade was determined by one's status as a parent, an individualistic criterion, it is an informal age grade unassociated with age sets and the formal age grade system.

Interviews also revealed another term unattested in my census. According to older informants, the term *a'raté* is synonymous with *ĩ'rare* but is used very infrequently, being considered somewhat archaic. My interviews with younger individuals suggest that they recognize the term but are largely unsure of its precise meaning. One young man expressed he thought it applied to women with just one child, but not being sure, he asked his grandmother, who told him it may be used for a mother until she has had several children. Others told me variously that *a'raté* status lasts for about one year after having a first child or until one has a second child, while others considered *a'raté* to mean simply that a woman has had children. *A'raté* was previously defined by both Maybury-Lewis and Silva as pertaining to young motherhood, although both accounts characterize it as a fleeting stage terminated by the passage of one's age set to mature adulthood, in the case of Maybury-Lewis (1967:152), and the birth of one's second child, in the case of Silva (1986:135).

The term for "elder" (*ĩhi*) is gender nonspecific in much the same way that the term for infancy (*a'uté*) applies equally to females and males. However, unlike infancy, the criteria for recruitment into advanced age are different for females and males. As presented in the previous chapter, elder males pertained to multiple age sets ranging from the seventh to the twelfth most recently inaugurated. In contrast, females identified as elders belonged to the third to the twelfth age sets. Assuming male and female members

of each age set have approximately similar ages and the difference in mean ages between age sets is approximately five years, these data indicate that the youngest female elders are twenty years younger than the youngest male elders. That difference is explained in biological and semantic terms. As discussed in the previous chapter, males achieve elder status with the physical graying of the hair. Females achieve elder status with menopause. Although interviewees almost uniformly said that women become elders when they no longer can have children, one mentioned graying of the hair as a primary factor. Those accounts differ from those given by Maybury-Lewis (1967:157), which indicates that elders pertain to the eldest four living age sets, and Silva (1986:135), which suggests that females become elders after they have grown grandchildren. Because the criteria for being considered elders are individualistic, it is an informal age grade. Also, my interviewees explained the cases of very young female “elders” as a metaphorical application of the term. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are several reasons for individuals of either gender to be called elders before they are literally considered to be so. In the case of females, one may be called an elder to indicate adult status as a mother. However, that usage is universally understood to be a manner of speaking, not a means of identifying an individual’s actual age grade status.

The occurrence of the term *iprédu* in the age category sample is incongruent with the established model in analogous fashion to the term for novitiate adulthood (*ritei’wa*), discussed in the previous section. Both terms were presumed to be exclusively male age grades even though Maybury-Lewis made the apparently contradictory statements that females may be called *iprédu* to signify their maturity (Maybury-Lewis 1967:151) but they are not initiated into *iprédu* status and do not enjoy the rights that come with it

(Maybury-Lewis 1967:149). It would seem he was making a distinction between two applications of the term *iprédu*, one indicating maturity for members of both genders and another indicating formal inclusion in the mature adult age grade for males. My data, however, show that distinction to not be valid in the contemporary era. Females and males alike become mature adults by virtue of their participation as age set members in the roughly five-yearly age set initiation rites, just as female and male age set mates previously become novitiate adults by their previous mutual participation in the same rites. Thus, my data attest that female members of the third most recently inaugurated age set and above are considered mature adults (*iprédu*).

As discussed in the previous chapter, *ritei'wa* and *iprédu* are formal age grades that are separate from but not completely independent of the other informal age grades. For males, the formal age grade system is the predominant one after boyhood (*watebreml*) or adolescence (*ai'repudu*) until advanced age (*ĩhi*). Thus, boys cease to be children when they join an age set and consequently enter the formal age grade system. It is not until later in life, when their hair begins to grey, that mature men (*iprédu*) become elders (*ĩhi*). Importantly, at that point they do not cease to be mature adults, but also assume elder status. In the case of females, differently than for males, the informal age grade system based on individualistic and subjective criteria is predominant throughout the life cycle, simultaneously with the formal age grade system. As a result, from the Xavante perspective, there is a certain correlation between the informal and formal age grades for females. For example, Suptó made the observation that adolescents (*azarudu*) are never mature adults (*iprédu*). Importantly, this is not because they are structurally prevented from being so but because social norms require that adolescent females marry

well before they become mature adults. Similarly, Suptó eloquently characterized childless wives (*adabá*) as the last-born (*caçula* in Portuguese) members of the mature adult age grade (*iprédu*). Indeed, my data show that the eldest females identified as childless wives were indeed members of the youngest mature adult age set. This perception helps explain why members of older age sets who have yet to give birth to a first child tend not to be called childless wives (*adabá*) but instead are identified with alternative terms, such as mature adult (*iprédu*). Such correspondences between otherwise distinct age hierarchies are an important aspect of the Xavante notion of age seniority. They draw on a person's position in one structure to qualify his or her position in another.

Two additional observations may be made regarding the usage of the term for mature adults (*iprédu*) for females. First, it is not attested for female members of age sets older than the seventh most recently inaugurated. Based on my informants' accounts that one remains a mature adult until death, I suspect that pattern results from the term *ĩhi* conveying a greater sense of respect for elderly status than the equally applicable term *iprédu*. Second, among females in the third most recently inaugurated age set and above, those with no living children were uniformly identified as mature adults (*iprédu*) rather than elders (*ĩhi*). I question whether this pattern reflects a social preference for not calling married females without offspring by the technically appropriate term for childless wives (*adabá*) should they not bear children by that relatively late stage in life.

Before turning to the more complicated issue of the term *pi'õ*, I will discuss one additional term attested in the census for mature females, *ĩhõibaté*. That term was used for two married females with children belonging to the third and fourth most recently

inaugurated age sets. According to my sources, *ihöibaté* is a very general term for “young,” being applicable to any male or female individual from childhood through roughly the third to fifth most recently inaugurated age sets, according to the speaker’s perception. Thus, it is much less an age grade than a means of saying “not old” and drawing contrast with older individuals.

Having outlined the other age categories used for post-adolescent females, I will now turn to the term *pi’õ*. Of 271 female subjects in the age grade census, 19 were identified as *pi’õ*. Of that total, 18 individuals were members of inaugurated age sets, ranging from the second to the seventh most recently inaugurated. The other, a six year-old girl, had not yet been assigned to an age set. All of the other 18 individuals identified as *pi’õ* were married and had from one to 11 living children. Two females were identified as both *pi’õ* and *ĩ’rare*. These data alone do not provide adequate grounds for affirming or denying either Maybury-Lewis’s (1967:150-151) version of *pi’õ* as analogous to the male term *iprédu* or Silva’s (1986:135) version of *pi’õ* as lasting from the birth of a first child through death. The only responses that contradict either model were two individuals identified as *pi’õ* who did not belong to age sets corresponding with male mature adulthood (*iprédu*), in contradiction of Maybury-Lewis’s model, and one individual identified as *pi’õ* who was unmarried and had no children, in contradiction of Silva’s model. The overall pattern of my data tends to follow Silva’s model more closely than Maybury-Lewis’s for two reasons. First, 95% of individuals identified as *pi’õ* were married with children. Second, use of the term *pi’õ* decreased as individuals came to be identified as elders (*ĩhi*) rather than dropping off abruptly. However, those observations alone are insufficient to affirm her model.

In addition to those results, I found the term *pi'ō* to have a very low overall occurrence rate among women with children (17%) and similarly low occurrence rates for females in most age sets (see Table 3). Even the term *iprédu*, an age grade formerly thought to not apply to women at all, enjoyed more currency than *pi'ō* for females in most age sets. Those observations are problematic given the previous ethnographic consensus that *pi'ō* is the most prominent age grade of female mature adulthood. I propose that the observed discrepancy is the result of a semantic misunderstanding of the term *pi'ō* analogous to but more complex than the one discussed in the previous section for childless wife (*adabá* and *soimbá*).

As mentioned in the previous section, *pi'ō* pertains to an ancillary age-graded vocative kinship terminology. In that system, certain relatives call a female by the term *pi'ō* if she is married with children, *soimbá* if she is married without children, *zarudu* if she is an unmarried adolescent, and *otí* if she is a child. Thus, *pi'ō*, like *soimbá*, *zarudu*, and *otí*, denote age status much the same way proper age grade terms do. The distinction between those terms and age grades, however, is that the vocative kinship terms are only used to address certain consanguineal kin in the first descending generation whereas age grade terms may be used to refer to people and abstract groups of people in the third person and in contexts where kinship is irrelevant (See Figure 13). Thus, for example, one may refer to a married woman who has already had at least one child as *ĩ'rare* or *ĩhi* (depending on her age status) were she unrelated to the speaker, but would address her as *pi'ō* were she the speaker's brother's daughter. In the first case, the speaker would be specifying only her age status. In the second case, he would also be specifying her relationship to him. This point was clearly made by one interviewee, who, in reply to my

questions about the term *pi'õ*, said “If someone asks you if an unrelated woman has had a child yet and you respond, ‘yes, she is *pi'õ*,’ no one will understand. The idea that *pi'õ* means ‘mature adult woman’ is only because her father calls her that, but he only does so because she is his child.” Accordingly, I do not consider *pi'õ* to be primarily an age grade term, but rather a gender and a kinship term that also connotes age in certain contexts.

Delineating the applicability of the term *pi'õ* is further complicated because unlike *soimbá*, *pi'õ* is polysemous. It has the alternate and more generic meaning “female,” unrelated to kinship or age, that makes its use extremely generalized for any number of females that might also be called by specific age grade terms (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:151). Accordingly, one may refer to any female, including an infant, as *pi'õ* should the speaker wish to indicate her gender. In fact, I found this second usage as ‘female’ to be far more prevalent than the kinship usage as ‘mature adult daughter.’ Interestingly, several younger people told me that they do not approve of the kinship usage because it strikes them as disrespectful. Elders of both genders disagree with those youth, asserting that calling certain female kin by the term *pi'õ* is a respectful strategy for avoiding calling them by their personal names, which they consider a disrespectful form of address. I suspect the youth perspective derives from their perception that in Brazilian society there are negative connotations associated with addressing women with the term “woman” (*mulher*).

3.4.3. The mature womanhood experience

The preceding discussion of the terms *pi'ō*, *ĩ'rare*, and *iprédu* is largely about what technically constitutes mature womanhood. Previous literature equated that phase of life with motherhood and the term *pi'ō*, to the exclusion of other criteria and terms. My assertion, however, is that female maturity is multidimensional. Terminologically, two of most important aspects of mature womanhood are initiated status, indicated by the term *iprédu*, and motherhood, indicated with the term *ĩ'rare*. Each carries its own rights and responsibilities and each positions women differently with respect to males and females of other age categories.

By participating in the age set initiation rites, female novitiate adults (*ritei'wa*) become initiated mature adults (*iprédu*). As for men, female status as a mature adult involves the ceremonial demarcation of one's status as an initiated individual. In the case of males, that status is the primary one that marks adult maturity and therefore carries with it a host of social correlates, as discussed in the previous chapter. For males, parental status does not correspond with a change in age grade status. It differs for females, however, because female adult maturity is also marked by motherhood (*ĩ'rare*), a separate and, in most social contexts, more salient classification. Nevertheless, mature adult status (*iprédu*) is far from irrelevant for females because it delineates certain social roles in a uniform manner relative to society at large, what some other scholars have identified that as the public sphere and equated with ceremonialism and masculinity (Silva 1989:336; Graham 1994: 726).

By way of introduction to the topic of females and ceremonialism I must point out that what scholars might conceptually wish to lump together as examples of a single

complex, ceremonialism, the Xavante consider several independent and completely unrelated ritual complexes. Furthermore, conflating some of them in such a manner may be considered by the Xavante not only inaccurate but also offensive, because spiritual ceremonialism pertains to a privileged and completely different ontological order from the others. Implying that they are examples of the same thing might be considered a transgression. I learned this while working on the narration for a brief video with Paulo Supreteprã and Ricardo Ventura Santos, the Brazilian sponsor of my dissertation research (Supreteprã and Welch 2005). I inadvertently attempted to juxtapose a spiritual ritual with a wedding ceremony as two examples of Xavante ceremonial activity. I am not sure to what degree he may have been joking, but Paulo informed me that joining the names of those two ceremonies in a single sentence as I had proposed might result in him and me being dispatched with arrows during the night. On Santos's suggestion we avoided the potential offense by presenting spiritual rituals and weddings in two clearly delineated portions of the video.

In addition to that restriction on how ceremonialism may be discussed, there is little room for females in any discussion of spiritual rituals. Females are considered by males and females to be excluded from spiritual rituals as a matter of male imperative. That perception is not completely correct, historically speaking, because there is record of women being included in spiritual rituals (*wai'a*) as a disgrace for mistreating their husbands or to punish a husband who mistreats his wife (Giaccaria and Heide 1972

[1984]:215).⁵⁰ However, as a matter of principle and, as far as I can tell as a matter of practice in contemporary times, women do not pertain to spiritual ceremonialism.⁵¹ Oral history reaffirms the gravity of the prohibition against letting females in on men's spiritual knowledge. For example, an elder man named Samuel, who later became Chief of Etênhiritipá village after it split from Pimentel Barbosa village and before his untimely death in 2007, told me a story from before the contact era about a man who told a woman certain male spiritual secrets. When it was discovered what he had done, the other men killed and ate the man and raped the woman. That story is most unusual for being the only reference to cannibalism I encountered during my fieldwork, highlighting how males continue to frame the exclusion of women from male spiritual ceremonialism in the severest of terms. However, it is also important to note that Samuel asserted with pride that neither cannibalism nor group rape are now used as sanctions against such transgressions. Nevertheless, males continued to protect against female acquisition of male spiritual secrets because, as Paulo explained, "Theft of a secret not only gives its power to the thief but takes that power away from its owner." Females have their own secrets that they guard against male discovery, although I was unable to research them extensively. Perhaps most symbolic of female secrets is knowledge concerning reproduction and childbirth. Just as women respectfully avoid men's spiritual contexts, men usually remain absent at births and do not ask questions about them.

⁵⁰ My informants confirm that in the past some women were included in the *wai'a* spiritual rituals as punishment for having sex indiscriminately but say that it was discontinued long ago.

⁵¹ My suspicion is corroborated by Nancy Flower's observations between 1976 and 1996 (Personal communication, November 7, 2007).

The gender partition in spiritual ceremonial affairs was especially evident during an interview I conducted with an elderly woman, Conceição, using a mature man as translator. As a follow-up question to a discussion about her disillusionment with contemporary village life, I asked what aspects of her society make her the proudest. My intention was for the question to be as open ended as possible in order for her to answer in whatever manner she saw fit. However, before communicating the question, the translator told me the question was inappropriate because, being a woman, Conceição could not talk about men's spiritual rituals. Thinking that he had misunderstood my question to be about that particular aspect of Xavante society, I attempted to clarify that she did not have to answer about that topic unless that was what made her the proudest. He affirmed that he knew with certainty that she was proudest of men's spiritual rituals but that she was not at liberty to discuss them. I urged him to communicate the question to her anyway, so that she might make that determination. He did so in a somewhat lengthy translation. Conceição replied,

“Women do not have the right to speak about rituals. I may not even say anything about them. I do not understand rituals, not at all. What a shame that I cannot talk about them! All I know is that the men sing and dance. I only know this. As for the spiritual ritual (*wai'a*), we women cannot watch. I don't know what happens during it. The only rituals I participated in when I was younger were in imitation of the elder men when the men went hunting. Women did rituals by imitating men, but only in fun. Each age group of women ran a log race, sang. It was imitation for the sake of happiness. But, I think that the rituals the men do are good, they make us happy, lift our spirits. During the men's rituals, even though we stay in our houses, women become happy. If they stop, we will become sad. This rule is very difficult; many things are prohibited for women.”

I still do not know whether her answer indicates more the ubiquity of male spirituality as the pinnacle of Xavante society in the minds of female and male community members alike or the constraints imposed on her response by my question being posed and

mediated by a man. Yet it did demonstrate in no uncertain terms that the topic of spiritual ceremonialism is afforded little room in relation to females.

Given those constraints, it is appropriate for me to discuss female ceremonialism with regard to the following secular ceremonies: wrestling matches (*wa'i*), log races (*uiwede*), weddings (*dabasa*), and age set initiation rites (*danhono*), among others. Of those, it is participation in age set initiation rites that mark adult maturity for both females and males. Yet the nature of female participation differs substantially from male participation and therefore serves to differentiate the genders as much as it joins them in a single formal age grade system. Other than the very last phase of age set initiation rites, I am not aware of any other part of those numerous rites in which females take an active ceremonial role. In fact, the very first ceremony I witnessed in the 15-month sequence of initiation rites that culminated in August 2006 was overtly designed to exclude females in an adversarial, albeit good natured, manner.

I first heard in mid-April 2006 that the pre-initiates boys' mentors (*danhohui'wa*) were to sponsor a collective hunting trip for their protégés in May. It was an important event requiring advanced planning for several reasons. It was to be the kick-off event for the long ceremonial succession that would culminate in the pre-initiates and their female age set mates being initiated into novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*), making it an important symbol of the busy ritual calendar to follow and their approaching novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*). It was also the first organized hunt to include the entire group of pre-initiate boys (*wapté*), making it an important step in their progress toward becoming able providers of meat for their future wives. It was so important that all pre-initiates and their mentors, as well as all novitiate and mature men, planned to attend. Furthermore, village

leaders arranged at the beginning of the school year for classes to be suspended during a three-week period. Also, it was considered critical to the mission of the hunt that men keep the women completely ignorant about it, an elaborate deception requiring a great deal of planning and coordination by the entire male community.

The trip was originally scheduled to begin on a Wednesday. However, by the Monday beforehand men suspected that women had found out about their plans, so they moved the planned departure to Friday. At the Thursday morning men's council meeting (*warã*), it was decided to hold a spiritual ritual (*wai'a*) on Friday and postpone the hunting trip to Saturday. However, by Saturday they again thought the women had become aware of their plans and tried to elude them by moving the departure to Sunday. Well before the conclusion of that game, it became apparent even to me that our effort to keep our departure secret was futile. Not only was it difficult to hide the buzz of men's conversation about the trip, but men could not avoid asking their wives' assistance in preparing overnight supplies. On Saturday night, my adoptive mother asked me if I had packed my own supplies for the trip, signaling to me that the ruse was finally over and our departure could now be discussed openly with women. Surely enough, by that night men had abandoned all pretexts of deceiving them.

The intention was for all of the community's men to remain camping in the forest as long as it took to hunt adequate meat for all of the pre-initiate boys' mentors to share with their family members, including those living in some neighboring villages. However, the trip was interrupted early, on the seventh day, when we received news that Raimundo, one of the community's eldest males, had died while seeking medical treatment in Brasília. Although the hunters did not yet have as much game meat as they

would have liked for a robust redistribution, it was decided to halt the hunt and return that night for Raimundo's funeral. It was during that hastened return that we executed the second part of the ritualized deception of women.

We hiked back towards the village at about two a.m., stopping partway to make final preparations for a surprise entrance at dawn. While most of the group relaxed or napped, the mentors and several older men painted their bodies and rehearsed for the last time their choreographed ambush. Finally, perhaps an hour and a half before dawn, we proceeded again towards the village. We sneaked down the farthest river crossing, eased ourselves, one-by-one, across a fallen tree, with the youngest among us trying to control their giggles and curses. Reaching the other side, we inched up the other bank as close as we dared to the nearest houses. The painted individuals went ahead, all the way to the edge of the plaza, where they waited for the few men who remained in the village to assemble at the morning men's council. They waited a bit longer for signs that the women had awoken and begun their morning chores stoking fires, collecting water, and boiling pots of rice. Then, with calls to stop one's heart, the painted men rushed from the cover of brush and stormed the center of the village triggering a flurry of activity as startled women and children came to investigate. Those calls were the queue for the rest of us to shoulder the baskets of meat and other supplies and proceed through the village to our homes.

In that episode, not only were females excluded from the hunt as participants, but their exclusion was turned by men into an elaborate ruse that seemed to me equal parts light-hearted fun and solemn reminder of the women's limited roles in some aspects of formal mature adulthood, including certain secular ceremonies. Although that and other

gender discrepancies demonstrate that what goes on in the pre-initiate house is largely considered male prerogative, it does not mean that females are categorically excluded from the mentorship experience. I was fortunate to witness the building of two different pre-initiate houses during my research, one as a replacement after a fire and one for a subsequent group of pre-initiates that entered after my first year of fieldwork. In both cases, I noticed that the service of collecting and installing the palm thatch roofs was performed by females members of the age set whose male members were commonly referred to as mentors (*danhohui 'wa*). Upon further inquiry I discovered that in that capacity women too were called mentors (*danhohui 'wa pi 'ō* – female mentor) because it reflected the special relationship that exists between all members of their age set and that of their protégés, irrespective of sex.

Arguably, formal age grade status has somewhat less significance for females than for males because they tend to be involved in political and ceremonial activities much less than males. For example, a defining feature of male mature adult status (*iprédu*) is participation in the men's council (*warā*). It is because of women's exclusion from that political forum that Maybury-Lewis concluded females are not, properly speaking, initiated into formal mature adulthood at all (Maybury-Lewis 1967:149).

Although I argue that he was incorrect in that conclusion, his observation that the council is exclusively male applies equally today as well as it did then. Similarly, females have a much reduced role in ceremonial activities associated with age sets and age grades. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence that females do have important ceremonial roles and may execute those roles on their own terms without male oversight. Not only did I observe women rehearsing for participation in age set initiation rites and running log

races (*uiwede*) of their own and with the encouragement of their age set mates, but Graham (1990:125-127) provides a provocative example of women defiantly engaging in typically male forms of ritual singing for the sake of demonstrating their own collectivity and independence.

Being a married woman with children (*ĩ'rare*) establishes female maturity on very different social terms than does being a mature adult (*iprédu*). Whereas mature adult status formally positions women not only in relation to those who have not yet achieved that status but, arguably, it does so on male terms because it is largely males who define what it means to be a mature adult both for themselves and women. In contrast, status as a wife with children (*ĩ'rare*) positions mature women above all as mothers in relation to their own children, and therefore is not overtly mediated by males. One consequence of that difference is that being a wife with children involves a great deal more direct female authority than being a mature adult and establishes a sphere of female influence which, while not excluding males, is also not clearly dominated by them. Within the realm of family life females are neither victims nor objects of male prerogative, but active decision makers operating in collaboration with males.

Men typically refer to themselves rather than females as heads of households. I am aware of only three households that were publicly recognized by males as having female heads, two of which were considered such only temporarily after the deaths of the male heads and until their sons-in-law came to be publicly recognized as heads. Nevertheless, I did not find there to be an implication that either men or women dominate their households. In the case of married couples, men presume that wives should not take certain actions without first consulting their husbands. For example, men often consider

game that is brought into the household to be their own and reserve the right to release it to their wives for distribution. However, once released, they no longer consider the game their own and claim no right to interfere in as their wives administer it. Furthermore, women's deference to their husband's authority is often practically subsumed by mutual understanding to the effect that they do as they see fit. Thus, in pragmatic terms, men and women often have separate domains of authority within the household and tend not to intrude in one another's affairs.

In this context, I do not subscribe to the notion of a strict public versus domestic gender dichotomy along the lines originally proposed by Rosaldo (1974) for the ethnographic reason that both males and females have important stakes in exerting influence in family and household ("domestic") matters (cf. Silva 1989:336).⁵² However, it is equally true that female power is especially evident in social settings other than explicitly political forums, from which females are categorically excluded. From my observations of home life, gender relations tend to be deeply respectful and in some respects pervasively equal. In general, interactions between men and women demonstrate self accountability and mutual deference.

At one level, the social power inherent to status as a wife with children is apparent in the structural dynamic whereby multiple generations of related females tend to live together while multiple generations of males tend to disperse between households. That

⁵² I also agree with certain critiques of the public/domestic gender dichotomy on theoretical grounds. For example, Moore makes the point that the notion of "domestic" is difficult to delineate because it is tangled up with so many other complexly related concepts, including "family" and "household" (Moore 1988:54-56). Perhaps more substantially, Lamphere argues that the public and domestic sectors are not uniformly distinct (Lamphere 1974).

pattern is anticipated by cross-cultural research indicating that uxori-local residence tends to afford certain, although not particularly strong, social benefits to women (Lowie 1920; Whyte 1978:133-134; Murphy and Murphy 1985). In the case of the Xavante, uxori-locality generates continuity through time for the females of a household that affords them a great deal of social solidarity and a privileged role in the socialization of children. The special bonds of motherhood and sisterhood that often unite coresident females make them something of a social block in comparison to the more loosely related males that occupy the same household. Accordingly, they are likely to share a greater sense of unity and mutual support than those males. Furthermore, because those females tend to be daughters to the male head of household, they enjoy a certain degree of indirect authority specifically lacking for their husbands who will remain for some time in the subordinate role of son-in-law. That authority was especially apparent to me in the roles females and males play in raising children. Unlike the males of a household, related females tended to participate collectively in the raising of their children. Grandmothers were as attentive to children as their own mothers. Sisters were so involved in raising each others' children that even close male relatives at times misstated which woman was the biological mother of which children. Older daughters took on considerable responsibilities in helping to look after their younger siblings. Thus, in a very perceptible manner they operated as a parenting team with considerably more collective power in the rearing of children through time than the patrilineal male relatives of the same children. More specifically, it is within that context of implicit matrilineal solidarity that female mentoring happens and thereby brings about its own perpetuation.

Recognizing this dynamic provides a different way of understanding traditionalist values that favor female diligence in performing gender-specific work. It gives ample cause to consider the possibility that female work is as much a source of female empowerment as an example of female subordination.⁵³ Arguably, women's work provides females opportunity to establish their own domains of influence not unilaterally subject to male authority. According to the traditionalist perspective as I came to understand it, women's work is thought of in terms of and thus naturalized as being done by closely related coresident females. Furthermore, the economic contributions such groups make to their households are significant. During the late precontact and early postcontact era in the Rio das Mortes region, when the Xavante were seminomadic and relied more on foraging than horticulture, females were responsible for gathering wild yams, which at that time was the primary starchy dietary staple (Maybury-Lewis 1967:43-47). Although yams are no longer central to the daily diet, having been replaced in large part by cultivated rice, it is still women who perform a great portion of the labor involved in its production. Thus, closely related groups of females have considerable economic value for males. As Boserup (1970:50) anticipates, the high prevalence of polygyny and the importance of bride price (in the form of game meat) in Xavante society speak to the implicit value men place on females as economic producers (cf. Knaft 1997). The substantial economic contributions made by groups of related females would seem to provide motivation for protecting their integrity as coresident work teams,

⁵³ See Murphy and Murphy (1985) for a similar description of female influence among the Munduruku.

thereby helping create the very conditions described above that lead to female continuity, solidarity, and indirect power in family affairs.

At another level, the female power accompanying status as a wife with children is evident in how women behave in relation to their husbands and other familiar males. In contrast to what one might imagine for a largely patriarchal society, in many daily social contexts, Xavante women are not meek, timid, or shy. There are also social circumstances in which Xavante women may behave with “shame” or “respect” (*danhisé*). For example, they often do so in front of cameras or in the presence of strangers or certain affinal kin with whom respectful avoidance is considered appropriate. However, men also behave with timidity when social convention calls for it. Also, like men, women tend to abandon timidity after becoming familiar with strangers. Those exceptions aside, women tend to express themselves freely and may, when desired for effect, assume formidable postures in the company of other women and men. Furthermore, in my experience, many men tend to listen to women and seek their opinions. Especially as concerns parenting and household management, but also as concerns community affairs, women are decidedly active decision makers in partnership with their husbands. I frequently witnessed men defer to women’s wishes on innumerable topics as diverse as whether to pay for the commercial service of husking rice, to which age sets to assign their sons, and when the community would hold important initiation rites of passage for adolescent boys. Conversely, I came to recognize that men may represent themselves as having the power to command their wives, but, often as not, those women had substantial power to assert their own desires. These observations illustrate a pattern already described for males, whereby the greater portion of one’s life

cycle is spent subordinate to other people, but the Xavante configuration of social hierarchy predicates subordination on the principle of independence. Among wives with children, men may claim dominance in many contexts, but the form of that dominance presupposes female equality in other contexts.

Women may also have even greater social power as elders (*ĩhi*) than as wives with children. Although women achieve elder status at diverse ages in the age set system, it similarly carries the connotations of advanced age, wisdom and respectability. Not only is advanced age alone thought to make women deserving of respect, but elder women often have staggering numbers of grandchildren, both real and categorical, who adore them and indulge their often tedious stories about the past. The range of social influence commanded by such elder women is grippingly apparent at their funerals, when seemingly countless individuals from even distant villages and reservations come to mourn their passing. The social power that such women have is often less explicit than that of elder males who hold court at the men's council, but it is nonetheless apparent in the esteem with which they are regarded by large segments of society. The relatively few instances of unalienable female authority that I witnessed, such as deciding what consumer foods or goods were to be purchased with their personal pension distributions, are deceptively insignificant compared to the much more substantial indirect power that comes with old age through motherhood.

3.5. A new model of female life cycle

In this chapter, I presented recent ethnographic evidence justifying a reinterpretation of many specific female age grade terms as well as a reevaluation of the

female age grade system itself. I argued that the notion of a single female age grade system in structural opposition to a male age grade system, as advocated elsewhere in various forms (Maybury-Lewis 1967:149-153; Silva 1986:133-141), misrepresents the linguistic and ethnographic reality as I encountered it. According to my data, females participate in two age grade systems. The first is the same formal age grade system that males participate in, with age grade terms and the criteria for membership in them being applied uniformly for females and males. The second is a female informal age grade system that obeys a similarly individualistic logic as the male informal age grade system, but involves female-specific age grade terms and recruitment criteria. Although the underlying logics of the female and male informal age grade systems are not categorically different, they do differ in their particulars. Finally, females differ from males in being categorically excluded from the spiritual hierarchy.

Figure 9 shows the female life cycle including the formal and informal age grade systems. The formal system is identical to that presented for males in Chapter 2, although females only pertain to two of the three formal age grades because they do not participate in the rites of induction that install boys in the pre-initiate house and thereby in the first formal age grade – pre-initiation (*wapté*). Those two age grades are novitiate adult (*ritei'wa*) and mature adult (*iprédu*). The informal system involves a series of six age grades that indicate one's status in the life cycle based on such individualistic criteria as developmental, marital, and parental status: infant (*a'uté*), girl (*ba'ōno*), and female adolescent (*azarudu*), childless wife (*adabá*), wife with child (*ĩ'rare*), and elder (*ĩhi*). One notable point of comparison is that neither the female or male informal age grade systems comprise comprehensive and discrete sequences, but the female informal age grade

system spans the greater portion of the life cycle while the male informal system lacks terms for a substantial span between boyhood (*watebreml*) and advanced age (*ĩhi*). The only apparent exceptions to the coherence of the female informal sequence are a potential gap between status as a wife with child (*ĩrare*) and advanced age (*ĩhi*), non-discreetness between infancy (*a'uté*) and girlhood (*ba'õno*), and an overlapping of domains between infancy (*a'uté*) and advanced age (*ĩhi*), on the one hand, and the male life cycle, on the other.

As is the case for the male life cycle, the distinction between formal and informal age grades in the female life cycle illustrates how different systems of age hierarchy are mutually interdependent. For example, there is a correspondence between being a girl (*ba'õno*) and not yet being part of the formal age grade system that results from parents tending to assign their daughters to age sets around the time they begin to enter adolescence, with the consequence that females uniformly achieve status as female adolescents (*azarudu*) before achieving novitiate adult status (*ritei'wa*). Similarly, the paces of formal age grade advancement and marriage tend to conspire in such a way that childless wives (*adabá*) are the youngest female members of the mature adult age grade (*iprédu*). These associations may not be intended, but they are conscious, and establish clear and socially recognized differences between collective membership in formal age grades and individual membership in informal age grades.

The female life cycle also illustrates the illusory nature of anthropological distinctions between collectivity and differentiation, as discussed for the male life cycle. It is appealing to represent female sociality as “private,” “domestic,” and “peripheral,” in the sense of being located in the periphery of the village, because those terms all have

more to do with home life than the village center, where the men's council (*warã*) and some public events occur, and more to do with family life than political affairs (cf. Lave 1979; Da Matta 1983; Lea 1992; Ewart 2003). Xavante discourse and behavior tends to confirm that interpretation to the extent that the men's council at the center of the village is viewed as patently male and many activities involved in tending to the home are considered female responsibilities. Yet, I did not encounter any symbolic congruence between femaleness and domestic space or the village periphery because female life is understood to involve many other spaces, such as gardens and the forest, and because households are thought to pertain no less to males than to females. In the context of the present discussion, the anthropological relegation of femaleness to the uxorilocal residential sphere would not only be ethnographically misleading but would also incorrectly imply that the female life cycle involves fewer or less profound transformations in social affiliation than the male life cycle, since major male social transformations involve shifts in residence. Although I agree that the female and male experiences are different and benefit from different types of structural solidarity, both involve a continuous process of changing associations from childhood to advanced age.

As other scholars have thoroughly detailed, the uxorilocal residence pattern produces a generational cycle of male residential influence (Maybury-Lewis 1967:98-100; Graham 1995:66-74). That occurs as each successive generation of female adolescents (*azarudu*) or childless wives (*adabá*) bring new and often relatively unfamiliar male spouses into the household. Those male in-laws necessarily pertain to different patrilineal associations than their wives and fathers-in-law, often bring a host of new familial connections, and, quite possibly, have different political affiliations than the

male head of household. Although those new male in-laws will not enjoy dominance in that household for some time, their new, childless wives (*adabá*) immediately become involved in those new associations and anticipate that they will eventually come to politically define her household. In time, those husbands will either come to dominate the household or will move out to establish their own, thereby establishing domestic dominance more quickly. By that time there is little apparent distinction between the associations of a wife with child (*ĩ'rare*) and her husband, although each relates to its members in different social capacities. In some cases, women may so align themselves with their husbands' patriline and political factions that they abandon any practical claim on their own former ones. The process also continues when those women, approaching elder status (*ĩhi*), admit their daughters' husbands, with all of their new associations, into their own households. In many cases, elderly women experience another shift as they realign themselves to their sons'-in-law associations, now considered the dominant ones in the household. Thus, the female experience of moving between age grades is a continual process of changing social affiliations even though it involves a great deal more residential continuity than the male experience.

The contrast between male and female living arrangements that derives from the pattern of uxori-local residence ostensibly emphasizes residential transitions for males and household composition transformations for females. Nevertheless, that pattern is just a pattern, and many other options are available. For example, some new, childless wives (*adabá*) move into their new husbands' households after marriage. Second wives also tend take up viri-local residence if they did not already live in their husbands' households. Frequently, inter-village marriages are followed by viri-local rather than uxori-local

residence. Also, many young sons-in-law choose to live neolocally after a brief period of uxorilocal residence in arrangements that resemble brideservice. Furthermore, I found there to be a great deal of movement between households that is not predicted by the uxorilocal model. For example, I found some young couples to move between the husband's and the wife's households more than once. Some elder individuals, usually single women but also married women who no longer resided with their husbands, moved between multiple households. In such cases, individuals move residences as they see fit and not according to established rules, despite there being a clear tendency and certain expectation of uxorilocal residence. I did not find people to consider those alternative arrangements inappropriate or nontraditional. Additionally, the entire spectrum of residential variation is no less strongly influenced by kinship networks than the usual pattern of uxorilocal residence. Young couples actively choose where to live, but the options available to them derive from their position in the social landscape. Although the uxorilocal residential pattern establishes typical residential configurations, from the Xavante perspective they are less important than kinship ties. That difference is apparent in the absence of a specific Xavante term for a conjunction of coresident individuals. The term *ri* refers to the physical structure of a house but not the people the live in it. People tend to call coresident individuals by specific kinship terms (Figures 12 and 13), such as “only my children” (*ĩ'ra nōrí si*), “only my sons-in-law” (*ĩsa 'amo si*), and “only my parents-in-law” (*imapré basi*). Thus, not only are the residential configurations that women experience influenced by their age grade statuses, but their relationships to the people within them are as well.

Chapter 4: Age group systems

4.1. Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I redefined Xavante age grade terms according to their contemporary usages and explored how age grade identity is involved in daily social life. I proposed a revision to ethnographic models of the Xavante age grade system, arguing that previous interpretations oversimplified Xavante social reality by opposing the principles of collectivity and differentiation, which may be viewed more accurately as mutually constituted and non-contradictory aspects of singular phenomena. For example, just as collectivity implies differentiation, the reverse is also true. Informal and formal Xavante age grades divide the human lifecycle into phases that temporarily unite members of certain social groups, separate them from others, set them in positions of seniority relative to some individuals, and relegate them to subordinate positions relative to others. Those informal and formal systems are simultaneous and partially interdependent to the effect that age identity is complexly plural and contingent. In addition to the dynamic field of meaning co-constructed by the informal and formal age grade systems, each age grade term is accompanied by a host of interrelated social connotations, the meanings of which may vary according to any number of relational factors, such as gender, genealogical relationship, social context, and individual perspective. Age grade status is implicated in the very act of social engagement because

it necessarily occurs between individuals whose mutual social bearings are determined, in part, by relative age.

Among the Xavante, males and females pertain to largely different sequences of informal age grades, which denote, for males, the earliest and latest phases of life, and, for females, the entire life cycle. Being based on individualistic and subjective criteria, those informal age grades may be variable in their application and personal in their interpretation, but all the while provide a basis for making sense of one's gendered self in relation to the rest of society. In contrast, males and females participate on equal terms in the formal age grade system. Formal age grade terms explicitly index, through public ceremonial transitions, the collective passage of male and female members of age sets through a single age sequence of life stages. Like informal age grades, formal age grades are essential components of social identity that conditions the human experience. However, whereas informal age grades are descriptive categories applied to people on an individual basis, formal age grades correspond with explicitly delineated populations. In other words, informal age grade terms indicate types of people while formal age grades also indicate groups of people. That distinction derives from the correspondence of formal age grades with age sets, the latter being, among the Xavante, named cohorts all people join before becoming initiated adults and belong to permanently. Age sets differ from other types of age categories because membership in them is not transitory.

In this chapter, I take a closer look at age sets in order to complete my model of the Xavante age group system and expand the parameters of the discussion regarding the multiplicity and contingency of age organization. I approach the subject through the male experience, which I use as a basis for drawing comparisons with the female experience,

because that was my point of access into the age set system. As described in previous chapters, I was incorporated into the Xavante social system as a male member of a specific age set (*êṭēpá*), which then occupied the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*), as a member of the initiate spiritual grade (*wai'āra*), and as an adoptive member of a specific genealogical network. Much of my social interaction with the community was flavored by the collateral effects of assuming those social statuses, including greater access to the male experience than the female experience. I begin with a discussion of how belonging to an age set shapes the experience of male pre-initiates who coreside in symbolic isolation in the pre-initiate house (*hō*). I then highlight a privileged social bond arising between members of mentor and protégé age sets and its pervasive implications for the age group system and the human social experience. In particular, I discuss how age set moieties are perpetuated through the repetition of that relationship and positions individuals within a complex social fabric of similarity and difference that is simultaneously symmetrical and hierarchical. Third, I develop a formal model of the age group system as a framework for discussing the mutual engagement of the multiple age hierarchies presented in this thesis. Fourth, I explore how, through that system, hierarchy and power gain expression through the interaction of informal age grades, the age group system, and the spiritual system.

4.2. Secular age sets

4.2.1. Introduction

Age sets (*da'usú za'ra*) are the most specific form of age ranking for the greater part of the life cycle. They are also in many respects the most socially salient, by which I

mean that they are the most talked about in daily social life, and condition how people relate to one another in a highly conscious and nuanced manner. In my field experience, age sets were how people usually reckoned age in everyday circumstances, much as they were when Maybury-Lewis conducted research in the same community in the 1950s (Maybury-Lewis 1967:155). Although birthdates are now used for birth certificates and medical records, they are famously inaccurate by months or years and are rarely remembered. Instead, age is most often framed in terms of lifelong membership in named age sets. Everyone in society belongs to an age set, with the exception of a few individuals with severe developmental disabilities. Membership in a particular age set places each person in explicit age juxtaposition to the rest of society and operates in conjunction with other aspects of social identity, such as informal age status, gender, and kinship, as a basis for how people relate to one another socially.

In previous chapters, I referred to age sets in terms of sequence (first, second, third, etc. most recently inaugurated). However, Xavante age sets are not only delineated in terms of sequence, but they are named in a highly specific manner. A fixed repetitive sequence of eight names is applied to successive age sets. The cycle repeats every eight age sets, with the newest age set adopting the name that was last used eight age sets previously (Table 4). Despite that strictly conceived pattern, age set names are not what give age sets personal and interpersonal meaning. Rather, they take on meaning through lived experience. This is most obviously so for males, whose first direct experience of belonging to an age set comes about during an extended residence in the pre-initiate house in symbolic social seclusion from the rest of the village. This formative experience socially orients boys relative to members of their own age sets, to members of other age

sets, and to adult sociality itself. As Maybury-Lewis (1967:105) wrote, “The bachelors’ hut is therefore the cornerstone of the age-set system. It is the place where a Shavante boy first feels what it is to belong to an age-set and participates in the comradeship, cross-cutting distinctions of clan and lineage, which such membership implies.”

For females, age set affiliation takes on meaning through lived experience as well, although in a somewhat different manner. As Silva (1986:63) observed, females are affiliated with age sets “by extension” from the male system, because females belong to the same age sets as males yet do not participate in the collective age set experience of living in the pre-initiate house. Although I found that characterization substantially consistent with Xavante representations of female age set membership, I also found enthusiastic support for the notion that age sets are no less salient for females than for males. As I discussed in Chapter 3, females continue living at home while boys of similar ages live in the pre-initiate house. Nevertheless, females also come to meaningfully identify with their age sets through interaction in the social arenas that make up the female experience. From an early age, female age set mates identify socially with one another and with their male age set mates. For example, among the most marked forms of early female age set sociality is through competitive games between age sets. During log races (*uiwede*), club fights (*oi’o*), and wrestling matches (*wa’i*), male and female age set mates form solidarity blocks that root for each others’ teams with intense enthusiasm. Boys and girls share in each other’s shame of defeat and defend each other against derision by members of opposing age sets. Another explicit expression of female age set solidarity is in domestic discourse, which involves a seemingly constant exchange of

teasing remarks that reflect allegiances and rivalries deriving from age set membership, among other social dynamics.

Each new age set is inaugurated when, at the conclusion of the approximately five-yearly age set initiation rites, a ceremony is held in which the newly designated novitiate adults (*ritei'wa*) cut the back of the hair of those boys and girls that were selected for inclusion by their parents (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:135-137; Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:190-191). Theirs is the age set that the novitiate adults, their immediate age set seniors, will call *sinhõ'ra* for the coming five or so years in recognition of the asymmetrical and rivalrous relationship between them. That ceremony (*deza'hi'hõri*) not only inaugurates the new age set, but also formally marks the selected boys and girls as its lifelong members. For girls, that status is considered final. However, for boys it is considered provisional because their final membership is conditioned upon their participation in one of a series of induction rites that install them as new residents in the pre-initiate house. It is important to note that the age set inauguration ceremony does not mark a change in age grade status – neither boys nor girls enter the formal pre-initiate age grade by virtue of having been selected for inclusion in the next age set.

I began my fieldwork about two years after the first such induction rite was held for the most recently inaugurated age set. That first group was called “first penis sheath” (*ĩrõ'rada*), a reference to the discontinued practice of adopting the use of penis sheaths, the only precontact article of Xavante clothing, as newly designated pre-initiates (Maybury-Lewis 1967:106-107). Their age set name was *tirowa*, a label that would, though time, become an integral aspect of each boy's social identity. Not all Xavante agree about what the word *tirowa* means. Some say it is derived from the word for

“arrow” (*ti*), while others say it comes from the word for the parasitic arachnid “tick” (*ti’a*). Opinions on the matter do not vary randomly. Those who interpret it to mean “tick” tend to be competitive opponents of the *tirowa* age set, whereas those who offer the translation “arrow” usually consider them to be allies. Insulting word play also occurs with the other age set names as well. Most notable are adversarial interpretations of *sada’ro* as “bad breath” and *anharowa* as “shit” (see Table 4 for other age set names and their associated meanings). These jokes reflect a competitive opposition between certain age sets, which is an important factor in how people view and interact with one another.

Living in the pre-initiate house for the first time can be a difficult experience. Soon after a second group of boys, designated “middle penis sheath” (*dawawa’irõ*), was ceremoniously installed in the pre-initiate house and thereby confirmed as members of the *tirowa* age set, several of the youngest boys admitted to me that they missed their families. This was a group interview⁵⁴ and, as befits Xavante adolescent dignity, older *tirowa* age set members denied in no uncertain terms having missed their families. Some mature adults, however, recall that adjusting to life away from their families was difficult, even though the pre-initiate house is not physically far away and the boys may visit home regularly.

Despite any initial challenges in adjusting to life in the pre-initiate house, the boys soon become enfolded in a sense of age set camaraderie with lifelong implications.

Adolescent coresidence is a fraternal social milieu not only between age set peers, but

⁵⁴ Most of the questions I posed to pre-initiates were mediated by at least one of their mentors, usually my adoptive brother Eugênio. The mentors preferred that all interviews with pre-initiates be conducted in the pre-initiate house in the presence of the entire age set.

also between them and their mentors (*danhohui'wa*). Mentorship is the responsibility of an older but still relatively young age set, specifically the second previous one to have occupied the pre-initiate house. Said another way, each age set mentors not its immediate successors to the pre-initiate house but its alternate successors. For example, I was assigned to the *êtěpá* age set, which lived in the pre-initiate house immediately after the *airere* age set and immediately before the *tirowa* age set. Accordingly, the *airere* mentored the *tirowa*. One of the most striking aspects of the pre-initiate coresident (*hō'wa*) experience, as I came to know it, was the special relationship of companionship and sponsorship that developed between pre-initiates and their mentors.

4.2.2. Life in the pre-initiate house

My initial observations of life in the pre-initiate house were somewhat restricted by my affiliation with a rival age set (the one situated between its current coresidents and their mentors). I became conscious of this limitation only after having engendered some resentment on the part of my own age set mates for socializing with the residents of the pre-initiate house and their mentors. My ingress to the pre-initiate house was facilitated by my older adoptive Xavante brother, Eugênio, who was a mentor to the pre-initiates. My relationship with the boys continued in part through their indefatigable nighttime fieldtrips to my house. Just as my status as outsider/anthropologist provided me a certain liberty to violate the behavioral expectations in play at the time for my age set, such as the expectation that my novitiate adult age set mates not visit the pre-initiate house, it also gave them a consequence-free opportunity to violate their own behavioral proscriptions, which included not visiting (or getting caught visiting) other people's

houses in the village. It became commonplace for the boys to visit under the cover of darkness and after my other visitors had left. The routine was virtually the same each night. While jockeying each other for my one chair and two stools, the boys would pick through my stuff for something to eat, a gadget to play with, or an item to jokingly claim as their own. They would challenge me to wrestling matches, shine their flashlights into my eyes, try to read Portuguese language food labels, and coax me into showing them the day's photographs on my digital camera viewer. This good natured joking continued unimpeded for hours until I sent them home or simply blew out the candles and went to bed.

After the pre-initiate coresidents and I had developed rapport they invited me to spend a night in the pre-initiate house so that I might hear their nighttime singing performance. I had planned to go at 8 p.m., but most of the boys were still watching television at a neighboring household. At that time, televisions were infrequent in the village. It happened that one of the households closest to the pre-initiate house had both electricity and television. The pre-initiates went there almost nightly to peer at it from outside the narrow door on the other side of the large room (going inside would be inappropriate for pre-initiate boys who were not immediate family). The particular draw that night was a James Bond movie followed by a soccer game. I was on the verge of falling asleep in my own bed when, at 10:00 p.m., they called me to walk back to the pre-initiate house with them. Stumbling with sleepiness I followed them in the dark. They set me up at the back of the large circular thatched house with my own narrow space in the perimeter of palm sleeping mats that covered a sprinkling of dried palm leaves and bare

dirt floor. I lay with my feet toward the center and buried my head in my pillow, which I brought with me. The boys quieted down quickly and I fell asleep almost immediately.

At about midnight, a group of boys returned, from where I do not know, in a clash of banging metal as they arranged and rearranged their bicycles against the inside wall. Bicycles now in order, they took to cleaning the house and one of them started sweeping the dusty dirt floor from one end to the other. He did a very thorough job, reaching every corner except for one spot that was inopportunately occupied by a sleeping mate, Bôbo. Shrouded in a cloud of dust, with flashlight beams crisscrossing the room, the sweeper's companions attempted to move Bôbo. They managed to stir him to a sitting position, but no further, and Bôbo continued to sleep with his head slumped towards the floor. The boys did the only thing that could be done given their determination to sweep the entire floor at that very moment. They tenderly picked him up, sleeping mat and all, and carried him to the other side of the house, where he continued to sleep unaware that he had been moved. With this commotion over, and the house quiet once again, I found myself wide awake with a sinus attack due to the invasion of dust. I do not know when I finally fell asleep, but what seemed like just a few moments later, at about 4 a.m., I awoke to the sound of the boys' mentors singing some distance away in the village. At about 4:30 a.m., one of the mentors came into the pre-initiate house yielding a bright flashlight. "Wake up! Get up! It's time to sing!" He circled the room, stopping at each stubbornly sleeping body, including my own, to pull open our eyes with his thumb and shine the flashlight directly into them. My response, the same as the boys,' was to absurdly pretend to not wake up. It worked. The mentor made this round a second time and each of us in turn pretended to sleep again. Defeated, granting the boys their prerogative to disobey his

wishes, he allowed us all to continue sleeping undisturbed. I awoke in the morning not at all too early with an unknown leg draped across mine. I pulled myself out from under and watched as the others, one by one, disentangled themselves from platonic embraces as they emerged from their beds and went about their morning business.

Talk of my visit circulated in the village the next day. Chief Suptó made a point of telling me that members of my age set (*êtêpá*) were concerned that I had switched to the *tirowa* age set that hosted me in the pre-initiate house the previous night. I explained that my visit was for my research, to get a sense of pre-initiate life, and that I never intended to betray my own age set mates. He suggested that it would be a good idea to explain that to my group as soon as possible and conveyed that I should not be surprised if some of my peers were to react to my apparent betrayal by refusing to talk to me for several days. I met with my age set that night, assuring them that I was still part of their group and that any future visits to the pre-initiate house would also be strictly work related.

Based on that night in the pre-initiate house, it seemed to me that the rhythm of activity in the pre-initiate house varied surprisingly little between night and day. During the daytime a majority of pre-initiate coresidents were usually in or around the pre-initiate house relaxing, sleeping, playing games, joking around, or doing chores.

Although others have claimed that coresidents never set foot in their natal households (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:144), and my Xavante brother Eugênio claimed they only do so when they are ill, my findings are consistent with Maybury-Lewis's observation that pre-initiates often spend much of the day at home and even sleep there upon occasion (1967:109). Boys also typically leave to swim in the river, visit relatives at

their gardens, attend school classes, or accompany adults on trips to town. At any given time from one to four mentors might also be found accompanying their protégés (*hō'wa nōri*)⁵⁵ in the pre-initiate house, often laying on their backs covered with blankets pulled up over their faces until they stir. Women and children drop by the entrance to the pre-initiate house during the day to deliver food, but only enter infrequently. Upon occasion, I also saw older men visit the pre-initiate house, usually the boys' mentor's mentors, or their mentors, and so on. All of these men share a special bond derived from their own experiences as protégés and mentors in the pre-initiate house. Although I continued to visit the pre-initiate house during the daytime, I became much more conscious of how being part of a particular age set creates strong social expectations, even for adoptive members such as myself.

4.2.3. Camaraderie and mentorship

Among the most fundamental of social bonds that develop while boys live in the pre-initiate house are the ones that unite age set mates. Each cohort of boys, and especially the first staggered groups to be inducted, becomes something of a second family to one another. Upon arrival, the boys are largely unknown to one another, with the exception of those who happen to be close relatives or neighbors. Promptly, however, any initial fears or inhibitions are shed, being replaced by fraternal joviality and eventually intimate camaraderie. Coresidents (*hō'wa*) develop the kinds of friendships

⁵⁵ Although tempted to use the neologism *mentee*, I opt to call the recipients of mentors (*danhohui'wa*) attentions *protégés* (*hō'wa nōri*). It effectively captures the respect and protection that characterize their relationship.

that only occur through living together, playing together, sleeping together, and passing trials together for an extended period of time. I imagine their experience is not unlike other non-indigenous coresident youth experiences, such as summer camps, dormitories, or fraternities, except that the pre-initiate experience is especially intense. The number of coresident boys is small. In the case of the *tirowa* age set that I knew, it started at just 18 boys and grew to 39 over the course of several years. The living quarters are close, with the entire age set occupying a single-room structure with no partitions of any kind. Much of what they did for up to four years, from the most mundane of activities to the most defining of formative experiences, was as an always inclusive group.

The social collectivity of the pre-initiate house is both comprised of and parsed by a special bond that links pairs of boys in a most intimate formulation of companionship. Before boys are inaugurated into the pre-initiate house, their fathers select one or two formal friends (*i'amo*) for each that will be their closest comrades at least until their initiation into adulthood, when they may select an additional formal friend. In all cases, formal friends belong to opposite patrilineal moieties, which lends them an aspect of balance and reciprocity, as well as symbolically differentiating them into actors and coadjutants (see Chapter 5). These boys are not only close mates in the formal or ceremonial sense, as described by Maybury-Lewis (1967:108), but also in daily life. They hold hands during ceremonial singing, often sleep next to one another, share food with one another, and generally spend a great deal of time in one another's company. It is a relationship of uninhibited jocularly and social interdependence. Although Silva indicates that the familiarity of pre-initiate formal friendships are systematically transformed into more distant relations of affinity as boys reach adulthood and marry

(Silva 1986:216), my data show that those first formal friendships may be also maintained for a lifetime should the individuals involved choose to do so.

Not to be overshadowed by its communality, the fraternal milieu of the pre-initiate house is also the social environment that enables boys to come into their own as individuals. Previously known outside of their own families as children in the generic (*a'uté*, *watebreimí*, or *ai'repudu*), pre-initiate coresidents bestow on one another nicknames as each boy becomes known for his unique personality, quirks, capabilities, and shortcomings. The informality of these names is marked by the frequent use of ironic Portuguese language words, not proper Xavante names. For example, the boy who did not wake up to let his mates sweep the floor was called Bôbo (goofy) and another was called Pone'êre (fag).⁵⁶ During my last visit to the village, I was consulted for the proper pronunciation of the English word "skinny," which was then test driven as a pre-initiate nickname. Beyond the social realm of age set peers and mentors, pre-initiate boys come to be known in their own right by the community as a whole as they increasingly involve themselves public community events. Through singing performances, club fights, wrestling matches, and soccer games, each boy is placed in public view and thereby becomes known for who he is. As Chief Suptó told me, "ceremonial contests are how we get to know what each boy is made of, what are his strengths and weaknesses."

Another, more explicit, manner in which pre-initiate individuality is recognized is through a series of age set leadership positions which are bestowed upon some coresident

⁵⁶ *Pone'êre* is the Xavante word for a smaller species of deer (*Mazama gouazoubira*). In Brazilian Portuguese slang, "deer" (*veado*) is a derogatory term for homosexual (i.e. fag). In a linguistic loan translation, contemporary Xavante slang applies the Portuguese meaning to the Xavante word, giving *pone'êre* for "fag."

peers, but not all, according to certain personal and genealogical characteristics. A first example of pre-initiate age set leadership occurs early in the coresident experience, when several of the oldest (first to be inducted) boys are selected by mature men with certain heritable knowledge prerogatives (see Chapter 5) to have their ears pierced years before the rest of their age set peers do so as part of the age set initiation rites that mark their passage to the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*). These boys, called *aihö'oboni*, comprise a formal class of age set seniors for the remainder of their term as pre-initiates. They are considered elder representatives of their age set and are given the responsibilities of repeating their mentors' lessons in order to reinforce them among younger age set members, speaking for their group, and intervening when their age set peers act inappropriately according to the norms of pre-initiate behavior. The *tirowa* age set, which occupied the pre-initiate house when I began research, had three such *aihö'oboni* leaders.

Another example of age set leaders, selected by elders as both the eldest and strongest of their age set, is *ĩmurĩ'rada*. They do not have a formally differentiated social role, but assume a somewhat informal status as senior members of the age set and leaders of ceremonial processions and competitions. Whereas the senior status of *aihö'oboni* and *ĩmurĩ'rada* leaders endures only while they remain in the pre-initiate house, two other ceremonial designations within an age set distinguish individuals for the remainder of their lives. The individuals who fill the first of these, *pahöri'wa*, are designated by certain mature adult men (*iprédu*) within the Tadpole patrilineal moiety (*poreza'õno*) and with certain heritable ownership prerogatives (*pahöri'wa'tede'wa*, in this case), usually from among their own descendents. Two such *pahöri'wa* leaders are

selected from among the eldest (earliest inducted) pre-initiates, reflecting the elders' positive evaluation of their commitment to singing and competing in log races, as well as their physical strength and beauty (face, body shape, and musculature). The second, *tebe*, are similarly selected from among the ranks of certain heritable owners (*tepé'tede'wa*, in this case) in the other exogamous moiety, Big Water (*ōwawe*). Both *pahōri'wa* and *tebe* leaders, four in total, are pierced soon before the rest of their age set mates and expected to conduct themselves at all times in an exemplary manner. They hold honored ceremonial roles in the age set initiation rites that mark their own passage into manhood, and, thereafter, as adults, retain permanent usage of the honorary titles *pahōri'wa* and *tebe* instead of personal names.⁵⁷

In addition to the intimate bonds that develop between age set peers while living in the pre-initiate house, profound social relationships also develop between the boys and their mentors. The term *danhohui'wa* refers to all members of an age set that mentors another age set, irrespective of any other more specific bonds that may exist between them. Another term, *danimiwanho* (in the first person, *īnimiwanho*) refers to an individual boy's personal mentor, chosen from among his age set mentors by his father, and who gives him special attention, care, and guidance (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:159; Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:179; Silva 1986:205-214). Contrary to my own cultural expectations that mentoring relationships would be more about proctorship and tutelage, I found the relationship between mentors (*danhohui'wa* and *danimiwanho*)

⁵⁷ Maybury-Lewis (1967:191) wrote that age set leaders are not formal or named but are chosen from among the chief's sons or factional allies and later come to be community political leaders.

and their protégés (*hō 'wa nōri* and *hō 'wa*) to be much more about intimate comradeship and sponsorship, what Silva characterizes as another type of formal friendship⁵⁸ (Silva 1986: 204-214), albeit, in this case, an unequal one. Those feelings are bound up in the term *wanhimnhōhu*, often used reciprocally between protégés and mentors after the younger of the two has married and had children.

Mentors sometimes lectured the boys on the do's and don'ts of responsible behavior, but they did so in such a way that it came across as advice rather than demand. A mentor might expound upon the virtues of keeping quiet, minding one's own business, keeping the pre-initiate house tidy, not making a commotion when playing, not wandering from the group, and not responding to women's calls, the latter being of particular importance. However, such guidance was not accompanied by a threat of policing or punishment and the boys knew this. A mentor's presence was not met with observable deference and did not necessarily produce good behavior. In fact, the quality of the relationships between them was notably horizontal despite their inherently asymmetrical positions in the age set system. In practice, mentors were extremely permissive and seemed to care more about their collective, meaning the mentors' and their protégés,' reputation in the village. Mentors and protégés are equally subject to community disapproval, and together they try to put on a good show. Conversely, mentors are equally liable to slip up or slack off, even though they are held to a higher

⁵⁸ Formal friends are a typical Gê idea that has been elaborated extensively for the Xavante and other groups (e.g., Carneiro da Cunha 1978; Lave 1979; Silva 1986; Crocker 1990). Referring to Xavante mentoring relationships, Silva draws a parallel between the usual notion of ritually established formal friendships between two individuals and what she characterizes as a similar type of social relationship established between individual mentors and protégés.

standard than the boys. Both mentors and protégés are bound to one another as comrades, and mentors do not make it their work to be the bosses of their protégés.

At the heart of this relationship is trust – to share, to lend a hand, to keep a secret. Until they marry and have children of their own, young males are expected to be providers to their mentors. In the pre-initiate house, boys share with their mentors the food their families send them. Later, when my age set had joined the mature adult age grade (*iprédu*) and served as mentors to a subsequent set of pre-initiates, I was afforded the same right that all mentors have to eat in the pre-initiate house. In the event a young age set goes hunting or fishing, which is much more common in the years immediately preceding and following their graduation from the pre-initiate house, it is expected that the protégés give a substantial portion of the yield to their mentors. Mentors, for their part, offer guidance, interest, and confidence. Often, individual mentors (*danimiwanho*) will bring their specific protégés (*hō'wa*) gifts of food, accompany them to the river to take a bath, and instruct them on how to prepare their body to become strong. Such gestures imply mutual solidarity and allegiance between mentors and protégés.

I found pre-initiate coresidents to be left alone rarely because their mentors took turns away from their own families to look after them. When mentors perceived a need, they threw themselves into any project on behalf of their protégés. For example, after my first two weeks in the village I sought to construct my own house along the perimeter of the village. Some wrangling, foot-dragging, and back-turning occurred over who would help me, perhaps because I did not offer clear and adequate payment for the service. In the end, my adoptive brother Eugênio volunteered the services of his protégés. They started early in the day, carrying loads of poles and delivering prepared buriti palm

(*Mauritia flexuosa*) straps. After a few short hours of work and long before the job was done, the boys' interest in the project waned and their numbers diminished until just two of the boys' mentors, Eugênio and Adalton, remained with me. When even Eugênio had given up on the project, Adalton remained, never thinking of calling the others back, and excusing them with "the boys don't know how to do it right anyway." Notably, he assumed this responsibility as his own not because anyone asked him to but, I suspect, because he considered his protégés' responsibilities and reputation to be his own.

The allegiance between mentors and protégés is nowhere as apparent as in the code of secrecy between them. The two are, in all senses of the phrase, on the same side. I opened this dissertation with a description of a spiritual ritual (*wai'a*) in which certain of the spiritual guards (*dama'ai'a'wa*) behaved more aggressively toward me than others. Some of those guards were my age set's mentors, who, I came to understand later, would rarely if ever stomp on their protégés' feet or reveal to the other guards if I had broken a dietary taboo, the usual reason for such punitive measures. Our mentors were on our side and would therefore protect our secrets. To be on one's side has both literal and figurative meanings that I will elucidate later in this chapter. In the present context of the pre-initiate house experience, it is important to understand it in terms of the fraternal bond between mentors and protégés. Importantly, they share each other's abundant secrets, many of them pertaining to ritual activities. They share a presumption that when in the company of age set mates and mentors, self-expression and reasonable rule-breaking is allowed. Absent are the teacher-student tensions inherent in the Western educational model. Absent are the constraints implied by other configurations of hierarchy or

authority. In the case of Xavante mentorship, age asymmetry is not entangled with regulation. Mentors and protégés indulge one another and keep it to themselves.

Perhaps the most cherished public symbol of the bonds between mentors and protégés is their joint singing performances. Graham explores in rich detail how group songs (*danhõ're*) publicize the special relationship between protégés and their mentors (Graham 1994:729; 1995:116-128). She highlights the collective nature of these performances, arguing that whereas song acquisition is a highly personal creative endeavor, song performance emphasizes group unity and diminishes individuality. Mentors teach song repertoires to their protégés, thereby teaching them appropriate song forms and performance techniques, so that they may subsequently compose and perform songs on their own and, in turn, teach their own protégés to sing. According to Graham, songs are initially owned by individuals but through their performance ownership is transferred to the age set collectively and the songs come to be associated with their protégés, mentors, and the entire ensuing sequence of alternate age sets (Graham 1995:114, 127).

My data agree with Graham's thesis in terms of the public representation of songs, and add another dimension, by which song performance simultaneously and pseudoprivately enhances the recognition of individuality. To the Xavante, songs are always acquired through dreams. Although in general novitiate adult (*ritei'wa*) males are thought to dream songs more prolifically than men of other ages (Graham 1995:116-117), some novitiate adult males dream less than others (or, in the case of this recently arrived anthropologist, not at all). The need for members of a young age set to generate abundant songs is acute, because songs are only performed publicly once and the occasions to do

so are frequent. According to one of my peers, he and several others were unable to dream at all. In their cases, the most prolific dreamers in our age set gave them songs to perform as their own. However, those songs continued to belong to their true dreamers even though that knowledge was restricted to our own age set, our mentors, our mentor's mentors, and so on.

Because I had not dreamed a song, one of the more prolific dreamers in my age set gave me a song. Hidden in the forest outside the village, he and I rehearsed the song together until I was capable of singing it on my own, and then we practiced it as an age set. Overriding my objections, my peers insisted that I lead the song, singing alone and in a loud voice before the others joined in. The true dreamer of the song joined in with the others after me, thereby giving me the privileged public status as dreamer of the song. Before we returned to the village to perform my borrowed song in public, my age set mates instructed me not to reveal community members outside our age set (and by extension our mentors, their mentors, and so on) that I was not the true dreamer of that song. I was to say to everyone else who asked that I dreamed the song on my own and I taught it to my age set mates. When I questioned the plausibility of our lie, they agreed that no one would actually believe it, but insisted that I must pretend nevertheless to avoid a negative review. For the sake of my own and our group's reputation, we would maintain a stubborn facade of secrecy. While Graham (1995:114, 127) is correct that through their performance songs tend to become associated with age sets collectively, I would amend that assessment to recognize that dreamers of songs are singled out through their lead performances and that one's status as true dreamer of a song is never

relinquished among members of one's mentorship lineage. In public and in secret, songs remain at once an emblem of individual competency and group solidarity.

The close bonds between mentors and protégés continue long after the boys leave the pre-initiate house. I experienced this as a member of the most recent age set to have graduated from the pre-initiate house (*êṭěpá*). Without fail, several of our mentors (belonging to the *hötörã* age set) accompanied us every time we left the village as a group to fish, hunt, sing, or collect materials in the forest. On one such excursion to the other side of the reservation to collect the inner bark of a special tree to make ceremonial ankle bands, we were joined by four of our mentors who led us to the collecting location, organized the harvesting of some additional secret ritual materials, and oversaw a song rehearsal. Being the most ignorant of our group and yet expected to perform the same basic roles as my age set peers, I was in need of special attention. One of my mentors, Josimar, noticed this and made a point of keeping tabs on me. He showed me how to identify the proper tree, demonstrated how to cut a young sapling, strip it of its bark, clean the sinuous inner bark of its crisp outer bark, and wrap it into a neat bundle for carrying. He didn't force this lesson on me, but asked if I wanted to learn. He showed me once, then discreetly watched from nearby as I did it on my own several times. Once he was satisfied I was on the right track, he drifted farther away without a word. I found this an unimposing but thoughtful guidance style typical of mentors and their Xavante protégés. To me it signaled a special attitude of respect, responsibility, and intimacy.

Similarly, in certain ritual contexts, mentors continue to guide their protégés long after the latter have graduated from the pre-initiate age grade. For example, in May, 2005, at the beginning of a large multi-day hunt, we were accompanied by Ronaldo, one of our

age set mentors, into the forest to rehearse a song repertoire. He took the opportunity to lecture us in his own gentle manner, softly encouraging us to behave ourselves during the hunt, keep quiet, do our share of the camp chores, obey the wishes of elders, and not gossip about anyone. Finally, he said he did not want to hear later from members of other age sets that we had behaved poorly. In another instance, our age set went in secret to a location in the forest for a dance rehearsal. In this instance, were we accompanied by five of our mentors, two of our mentors' mentors (from the *sada'ro* age set), and one of their mentors (from the *nozö'u* age set). Thus, four alternate age sets united by a continual series of mentor-protégé bonds were present and involved in ensuring that the youngest among them give a flawless performance. During the rehearsal we were directly instructed by our mentors, but on several occasions they consulted with or were corrected by their mentors. The eldest man present, a member of the *nozö'u* age set, looked on from a cool spot in the shade of a tree but did not find it necessary to give direct input. This sort of participatory oversight by members of multiple same-side age sets was typical of ritual contexts and not uncommon in some secular contexts. It illustrates that the special relationship between mentors and protégés transcends the pre-initiate house experience, continuing throughout life and leading to a sense of unity among members of a continuous series alternate age sets.

Other scholars have correctly noted that age sets tend to act less cohesively later in life, as family and political concerns take priority (Maybury-Lewis 1967:147; Graham 1995:97). Nevertheless, the bonds between age set mates last a lifetime. I became acutely aware that this was the case in the aftermath of a sad episode in which Raimundo, a member of the oldest age set with living members at Pimentel Barbosa village

(*airere'rada*), died at a hospital in the capital, Brasília. According to the Xavante, officials at the National Health Foundation (FUNASA) failed to inform them in a timely manner of his death, performed unacceptable postmortem procedures on his body without permission, and delayed transport of his body to the community. From a medical and institutional perspective, these actions (if true) may have been justified or at worst attributable to failures of communication. However, the Xavante saw them as gross violations of their moral rights. When the body was finally delivered and inspected, and the funeral rites were complete, the remaining four members of Raimundo's age set, including both men and women, met to assess the offense and determine a course of action. I was not present for that meeting, but was told that under such grave circumstances and as Raimundo's only surviving age set mates this was their right and responsibility. Subsequently, the affair became the business of the entire community.⁵⁹

4.3. Secular age set moieties

4.3.1. Our side and the other side

Because the close relationship between mentors and their protégés continues after residence in the pre-initiate house, every second group of pre-initiate coresidents joins a chain of mentors and protégés connected through intimate bonds of friendship and

⁵⁹ Funerary duties were performed by male and female members of the opposite exogamous moiety from the deceased. Those responsibilities included digging the grave, transporting and lowering the body, and refilling the grave afterwards. It also included the difficult chore of blocking suicidal attempts by grieving relatives to throw themselves into the open grave. Payment for completion of funerary services, in the form of handmade and commercial goods, was made in public immediately after the burial by close bilateral relatives of the deceased.

respect. Although the relationships between members of more distant age sets are not as intimate as between mentors and their own protégés, all members of such a mentorship line share a morality of loyalty irrespective of their relative ages. They are all on the same side and designate each other “our age set side” or “people on our age set side” (*waza’runiwĩmhã*). They also commonly call each other by a series of terms that generically indicate same-sidedness (us, as opposed to them), and may be used for members of one’s age set side, or any number of other associations. Examples are “our side” (*waniwĩmhã*) and “people on our side” (*wahöibaniwĩmhã*).⁶⁰ Although Maybury-Lewis (1967:159) and Müller (1976:177) acknowledged the same-side/other-side opposition created through alternating bonds between pre-initiate protégés and their mentors, they did not communicate how important it is both structurally and in the Xavante experience. As Maybury-Lewis wrote, “A special relationship exists between these two age-sets, for it is always the junior age-set of the mature men’s grade which sponsors the education... [and] initiation... of the [pre-initiates]. Alternate age-sets are linked by an especially close tie, which is to some extent expressed by opposition to their intermediaries” (Maybury-Lewis 1967:112). Some ten years later, Maybury-Lewis came to characterize that opposition as a moiety system, although he did not develop the idea further and maintained a theoretical assertion that the age set system (including age set

⁶⁰ The first of these four terms is central to Maybury-Lewis’s (1967:169) model of Xavante cognitive dualism. He claimed it had the specific connotation of exogamous moiety membership, and extended symbolically to other associations, including factions, close kin, and lineage members. Graham provides a different orthographic representation for what appears to be the same word (*wañiwĩmhö*) and the gloss “bachelors’ hut of our side” (Graham 1995:93). My informants disagreed with that interpretation because, in their opinion, it makes no specific reference to the pre-adolescent house (*hö*).

moieties) is subordinated by the exogamous moiety system (Maybury-Lewis 1979b:236).

In my experience, members of all same-side age sets share a deep sense of identity, an interest in one another's affairs, and a presumption of secrecy in certain domains.

Accordingly, any adult member in this sequence of age sets has the right to visit the pre-initiate house and involve himself in the affairs of its pre-initiate coresidents, although members of the single age designated as mentors (*danhohui'wa*) do so most actively.

Similarly, in certain contexts, any member of this chain may lend a hand to the pre-initiate coresidents to ensure their success and by extension, the success and good reputation of their side.

If the members of this chain of every second age set consider themselves to be on the same side, who do they consider to be on the other side? The other side, their rivals and disconfidants, consists of the alternate chain of age sets, also spanning the range from youth to elders, but offset by one step. Members of the first side call these rivals "the other age set side" or "people on the other age set side" (*hō'amoniwĩmhã*). They may also call those people by a series of terms that indicate other sidedness in a generic sense, such as "their side" (*ōniwĩmhã*) and "people on their side" (*ōhōhōibaniwĩmhã*). In other words, adjacent age sets belong to opposite sides or agamous moieties and alternate age sets belong to the same side or agamous moiety. During my initial fieldwork, the youngest age set in the moiety opposite to the occupants of the pre-initiate house was my own, *êtěpá*, which resided there immediately before them, from 1996 to 2001. The rest of our side consisted of our mentors (our seniors by two age sets), their mentors, their mentors' mentors, etc. Together we formed a single group of mutual interest and concern, keeping one another's secrets from members of the other moiety. Members of my side shared a

sense of identity and mutuality derived above all from the intimate social bonds formed in the pre-initiate house, both as protégés and, later, as mentors to the next set of protégés. Thus, I would qualify Silva's characterization of mentors as "the executors of concern for society-at-large" (my translation, Silva 1986:206). As a group, mentors are aligned with one side and one side only, making them the executors of concern for half of society.

My age set mates did not like it when I spent the night in the pre-initiate house because its residents and their mentors were in the other age set moiety. I was, in a sense, fraternizing with the enemy. Given the perspective that the other side could not be trusted, since trust was reserved for our own, my associating with the other side called into doubt my loyalty. Would I keep my side's secrets? Might I start helping the other side and not my own? This potential was especially acute because I was not only associating with the other side, but with my age set's two biggest rivals, the age set that immediately preceded us in the pre-initiate house (the *airere* age set) and that which immediately followed us (the *tirowa* age set). Whereas my age set's relationship to those on our own side was permissive and trustful, its relationship to those two particular opposing age sets was especially tense and suspicious. The *airere* were charged with policing my age set's behavior and we had the right to punish the *tirowa* for their transgressions. In the spiritual ritual (*wai'a*) episode in the introduction to this dissertation, members of the *airere* age set were the ones most likely to stomp on my feet.

4.3.2. Age set rivalry

Pre-initiate coresidents are held to ideals of behavioral conformity that they do not always fulfill, at least not in private. According to village lore, the young coresidents occasionally commit the most egregious trespass possible and do so not alone but in groups: they have sexual relations with females (for other similar accounts, see Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:160-161; Silva 1986:213-214). Of all the behavioral proscriptions for coresidents, sex is among the most offensive and contradicts a boy's very status as pre-initiate. A boy who has had sex is no longer a boy; he is a man. If a boy is discovered to have had sex, it is the right of the next oldest age set in the opposite age set moiety, those occupying the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*) and who he calls "my elder" (*ĩhi'wa*), to take that boy from the pre-initiate house, pierce his ears with a panther (*Puma concolor*) leg bone awl, and send him in disgrace back to his father's house prematurely to live as a novitiate adult. During my fieldwork, it was my age set, *êtěpá*, that had the right to punish such transgressions by pre-adolescents, whom we called "junior" (*sinhō'ra*). I was told that had a large group of boys been discovered to have had sex, our age set would have removed the entire *tirowa* age set from the pre-initiate house and had their ears unceremoniously pierced. This would end their age set's term in the pre-initiate house, depriving them not only of the pre-initiate coresident experience, but also the much celebrated cycle of initiation ceremonies leading up to their passage to novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*). It would be a disgrace not only to the coresidents themselves, but also to their mentors, and, by implication, their entire age set moiety. Even though no one in my age set knew of an actual example of such serious misbehavior by pre-initiate coresidents having transpired, everyone considered it to be a real possibility, thus creating

an expectation that our age set remain vigilant of them and that they maintain a sense of distrust of us. A similarly antagonistic relationship existed between my *êtêpá* age set and our immediate elders, the *airere*, who were similarly charged with policing us. Feelings of rivalry extend along the chain of mentors and protégés on each side, creating an oppositional stance between them. Among the Xavante, this opposition is obvious, even inescapable. However, as I will endeavor to show, it is not uniform. People engage it in diverse ways in different circumstances and with different people.

Not all examples of the antagonistic stance between adjacent age sets are so grave. In fact, in most day-to-day interaction, members of adjacent age sets, and by extension, members of opposite age set moieties, enjoy provoking each other in much more lighthearted ways. As Silva (1986:213) noted, adjacent age set members often jokingly demean one another, attributing to them the opposite of virile qualities: cowardice, weakness, powerlessness, slowness, clumsiness, etc. For example, one damp afternoon in March, 2005, I accompanied Jorge as he videotaped members of his family harvesting rice with scythes. Some of this footage was included in a short documentary filmed and directed by Xavante individuals for an exhibition at the Museu do Índio in Rio de Janeiro for National Indian Day (Supreteprã and Welch 2005). In one clip, Adriana worked in the middle of a large rice field with her back to the camera, stooping to chop a handful of stalks from the ground, and then standing as she cut and arranged them for drying. Responding to her husband, who had just proclaimed that men are hard workers and women are lazy, Adriana objected, “Women work too! The women in *my* age group [*anharowa*] work hard with scythes and harvest a lot of rice. We’re not like those [lazy] men and women from other age groups.” She made the last comment for the benefit of

her husband, who was in the older adjacent age set, *sada'ro*. Such banter is a usual form of social engagement between affines in domestic settings. It is both playful and rivalrous, and in this sense it entails both the logics of alternate age set and affinal opposition.

Intergenerational age set rivalries may also blend good-natured humiliation with social lessons. Then Vice-Chief Paulo told me the following story about his son, Vinícius, a member of the *êtêpá* age set. In 2003, Vinícius had recently graduated from the pre-initiate house and was living at home as a member of the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*). As a novitiate adult male, he was expected to not wander around the village and not to spend too much time in the company of members of the other age set moiety, especially older ones. However, Vinícius was outgoing by nature and comfortable in adult company. Aroldo, Valdo, Josias, and Samuel, five generations his senior and in the opposite age set moiety, decided that Vinícius spent altogether too much time in adult company and should be discouraged from it. One day while out on a hunt they killed a giant anteater (*Tamandua tetradactyla*). Seizing the opportunity, they cut out its tongue, which in this species is tremendously long for fetching ants and termites from their mounds, and took it back to the village. In an organized assault in full view of the village, they caught Vinícius, stripped him of his clothes, and pinned him to the ground on his back with his legs spread. While one man held the extended anteater tongue as a ruler, another stretched Vinícius's penis against it, as Paulo said, to shame him by "seeing which was longer." Vinícius learned that hanging out in the company of older members of the other age set moiety had consequences, and although he was free to continue

should he be willing to endure them, he perceived it was in his best interest to keep a safe distance away.

Other popular age set pranks designed to teach younger individuals in the other age set moiety to mind their own business involves rubbing white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu pecari*) urine on the victim's legs or making him smell dried peccary feces. In addition to being grotesque and effective tools for public humiliation, each is believed to promote valued skills in the victim. Peccary urine applied to the legs is thought to make one a tireless runner while smelling peccary feces is believed to improve one's ability to detect their scent, which is useful for hunting. Thus, in more ways than one, such age set jokes are intended to leverage the adversarial social relationship of moiety opposition for the sake of stimulating the positive development of youth.

Similarly good natured age set rivalry was sometimes directed at me when I visited households in the village. From my firsts visits to Ciça's house I felt unwelcome. I did not at first understand her diatribes, often delivered in a loud voice as she hit me on the back of my head with a fist. Her husband, José Paulo, offered partial translations, usually along the lines of "you have the head of a tapir," "you never give me any gifts," and "you are on the other side." The first of these comments made sense to me, at least in its literal sense, although I wasn't sure whether she meant my head was ugly, large, or that my nose was long. The second also made sense, but only in that my limited resources made it impossible for me to satisfy everyone's desires for my goods. The third comment made no sense at all, since at the time I didn't know what "side" she was talking about. These uncomfortable encounters escalated over the course of several months, and after having lent my head as a depository for handfuls of her steaming wet rice, my back as a

target for her well-aimed watermelon rinds, and my food as sacrifices to her theatric thievery, I went to her husband, José Paulo, to sort out whatever might be the source of our conflict. “It’s a joke!” he exclaimed. “It’s her prerogative to tease you because she’s on the other side. Just ignore it because the more you react the more she will do it.” As it turns out, Ciça was a member of the *anharowa* age set, three generations my senior, and therefore in the other age set moiety, in the sense developed above. As a member of an older age set on the other side, especially as a female, it was her right to teach me a lesson – novitiate adult males (my age grade) should stay at home, out of sight, and not be out visiting households during the daytime. Thus misbehaving and belonging to a rival age set, I deserved her insults and attacks. I only came to enjoy visiting her house after I learned to take her public humiliation in stride, to not expect her friendship, and to be generous once in a while. The same strategy worked with other older women in the other age set moiety who also adored teasing me, most notably Iolanda, nine age sets my senior, whose preferred prank was dousing me with liquids, splashing me with hot rice water or, if convenient, holding a urinating infant over my head.

Age set rivalry is nowhere as obvious as in certain competitive games. Log races (*uiwede*) are an elegant example of the strong oppositional aesthetic of age set moieties. Like most Gê-speaking groups in Central Brazil, the Xavante enthusiastically compete with one another in relay races in which heavy log sections, which in the case of the Xavante are cut from buriti (*Mauritia flexuosa*) palm trunks and are said to weigh up to 80 kilos, are shouldered by runners in short sprints along a four-kilometer path. Men’s and, less frequently, women’s races are held throughout the rainy season and on certain other auspicious occasions. These races are billed as competitions between two specific

age sets, the age set occupying the novitiate adult age grade and their immediate seniors, the age set serving as mentors to the pre-initiate coresidents. At the time of my initial fieldwork those were the *êtěpá*, my age set, and the *airere*. Late any particular rainy season evening, but usually on Fridays and Saturdays due to the constraints imposed on younger men by the formal school week, the *êtěpá* were likely to announce that a race would be held the following afternoon. Under the cover of late night darkness, from the *êtěpá* meeting place in middle of the village plaza, would suddenly erupt a series of high pitched calls that served as notice to the entire village that the *airere* had been challenged to a race. The following day the village would buzz with anticipation as members of many age sets, not just the two headlining the event, cut and shaped the logs, painted themselves red and black, and retold of their past victories and losses. In the hot afternoon sun, the *airere* and *êtěpá* age sets made conspicuous exits from the village, walking single file in dignified flourishes through the plaza and down the road to the west. They were followed by a busy migration of members of other age sets, from boys to older men, some on foot, others on bicycle, and a few in trucks and on motorcycles. This crowd included spectators but the majority would also run in the race in support of their sides' age set. Thus, the *airere* had the help of their protégés, their mentors, as well as any other older men in their age set moiety who chose to participate. The *êtěpá* also had the help of their mentors and other men on their side. So, in theory, any inherent advantage that would otherwise favor the older and stronger of the two primary age sets was cancelled out. In effect, these were races not between age sets but between age set moieties, whereby the two primary competing age sets carried the contest's greater burden, but all same-side members were their comrades, sharing in their responsibilities

and their successes or defeats. The primary age sets' reputations depended on contributions by their entire side and vice-versa. An age set's win was a win for the whole moiety, and a loss was the whole moiety's loss.⁶¹

The races started at a distant point on a mostly flat road and ended in the village. Each team's lead runners were always from the two primary rival age sets (*êtěpá* and *airere*), often certain age set leaders (*ĩmurĩ'rada*), and preferably two brothers or close cousins (classificatory brothers). Races started with a mob of attending team members on all sides of the lead runners, keeping pace on foot, bicycle, and motorcycle. Runners carried the log about one hundred meters or so before its burden became too great and a teammate moved in to transfer it to his own shoulders. Heaving the log between runners can be tricky, since the first passes it over his own head from his own left shoulder onto the left shoulder of the next runner. I tried taking the log on several occasions and learned that the trick is to brace for its impact by flexing every muscle in your body and running with as little upper body movement as possible. Otherwise, I found the pounding of the log against my head overwhelmingly dizzying. Towards the end of the race, runners often became utterly exhausted and the pace could slow to barely walking speed. At this point, any assistance was most welcome, and older men and novice runners (or anthropologists) often came to their assistance by carrying the log for short intervals. Surprisingly, and this is an important point, at this crucial part of the race, help was occasionally given to the trailing team by opposing team members, those members of the opposite age set

⁶¹ Maybury-Lewis (1989:102-103) wrote that these races were not really about who wins because the ideal was for the two teams to arrive in the village simultaneously. In my experience, the Xavante very much think of log races (*uiwede*) as contests to win and if possible will leave their opponents as far behind as possible.

moiety that I previously described as adversaries and disconfidants. People sometimes broke from the “rule” of same-side vs. other-side opposition to lend a helping hand to those in need, whether it be for the sake friendship, kinship, or something else. In one case, an opposite moiety team member named Jamiro helped my side, which was at the bitter end of a losing race. After the race he explained, “Anyone can help either team. You can do what you want.” In Jamiro’s case, he lent his assistance not to help his opponents win, which was not a possibility at that late stage in the race, but to ease the load for severely exhausted runners who were not only his competitive adversaries in that context but also his friends, relatives, and associates in other contexts. Thus, the structural opposition between age set moieties is only one factor among many that affect how individuals navigate the fabric of Xavante sociality. Other important factors that I discuss in this dissertation are age grades, ceremonial grades, gender, exogamous moieties, kinship, genealogy, and politics.

Notably absent from the preceding discussions is mention of the female experience because they do not spend time in an adolescent girls’ house or participate in the greater part of age set affairs. However, as I mentioned in Chapter 3, they do participate in the same age set system on equal terms with males and therefore share in its sense of group unity, our-side allegiance, and other-side rivalry. Parents assign their daughters to the same sequence of eight cycling age sets as their sons. They do so according to how they perceive their children’s age relative to one another and to other parents’ children with the goal of placing similarly aged boys and girls in the same age set. As in the case of boys, parents have the flexibility to accommodate such particulars as an individual girl’s stage of physical or emotional development and her age proximity

to other young family members. Whereas for males, assignment to an age set entails coresidence in the pre-initiate house, for girls it entails assumption of a modest set of new ceremonial roles associated and a realignment of social status within the household and relative to the community. As mentioned previously, female members of age sets become passionate advocates for their male age set peers, defenders of their age set moiety's competence, and critics of their age set opponents' fallibilities. As new members of the mature adult (*iprédu*) age grade, females also have roles as mentors (*danhohui'wa*), such as tending to phases of the construction of the pre-adolescent house. As elder women, age set identity motivates the good-natured harassment of opposite-side male youth. Arguably, as Silva (1986:63) noted, the age set system is relatively less pronounced for females than for males, especially during youth. Nevertheless, for females as well as males, age cohort identity is a prominent aspect of identity throughout life.

4.4. A geometry of secular age

4.4.1. Sides and cycles

When people talk about age set moieties, they invoke a pervasive social distinction accompanied by a host of symbolic oppositional implications. The notion of sides, however, also refers to something more tangible. About every five years, when a new pre-initiate house is constructed for the boys in the youngest age set, it is physically relocated to the opposite side of the village (Figure 10). With the location of the pre-initiate house alternating from one side to the other side with every age set, all age sets in the same age set moiety occupy the pre-initiate house when it is, literally, on the same side of the village (cf. Graham 1995:93). Thus, when people say “our side”

(*waza 'runiwĩmhã*) and “the other side” (*hõ 'amoniwĩmhã*), they refer not only to the figurative opposition between the two age set moieties, but also, and more specifically, to the physical position of the pre-initiate house, a spatial reference that is wrapped up in their very social identities. When people in the village talk about this side or that side, often doing so with a vague wave of the hand to indicate the nearer or farther side of the village, they invoke this spatial reference and its social correlates.⁶²

From this arrangement emerge the beginnings of a sort of spatial geometry of age set sociality. The Xavante designate the two age set moieties, both literally and figuratively, as “left side” (*danhimi 'e*) and “right side” (*danhimire*), based upon the physical location of the pre-initiate house during its alternate occupations by age sets of each moiety (Figure 10). As I mentioned briefly above, age sets are named according to a predetermined cyclical sequence of eight names. The order of those names is *tirowa*, *êtẽpá*, *airere*, *hõtörã*, *anharowa*, *sada 'ro*, *abare 'u*, and *nozõ 'u*.⁶³ Although the names are applied in sequence, they alternate between the age sets residing on the left side and right side, such that four age set names perpetually pertain to each side. Thus, age sets inaugurated into the pre-initiate house on the right side are, in perpetual sequence, *tirowa*, *airere*, *anharowa*, and *abare 'u*. The four age sets that cycle on the left side are, in turn, *êtẽpá*, *hõtörã*, *sada 'ro*, and *nozõ 'u*. After about 40 years (five years for each of eight age

⁶² Xavante semi-circular villages are usually oriented with the open side facing an adjacent river, which is the community's primary source of water. Thus, there is no correlation between the cardinal directions and village orientation or the position of the pre-initiate house (*hõ*).

⁶³ The order for some upriver Xavante communities, which is somewhat different, is *tirowa*, *hõtörã*, *airere*, *sada 'ro*, *anharowa*, *nozõ 'u*, *abare 'u*, and *êtẽpá* (Maybury-Lewis 1967:338).

sets), the names repeat. The union of the symbolic and spatial opposition between left and right with the cyclical sequence of eight age set names generates a complex set of social relationships that are simultaneously synchronic, diachronic, symmetrical, and hierarchical in ways that bear importantly on how people engage one another in daily social life.

Although age set names repeat, age set identity does not. The younger of two age sets carrying the same name is not a continuation or reincarnation of the elder. Carrying the same age set name does not imply more than a passing sense of unity, which is overshadowed by the important link between them as members of the same age set moiety. Consequently there is a need to distinguish between senior and junior age sets that carry the same name. That is accomplished by appending the suffix - *'rada* (“first” or “old”) to the age set names such that the members of the age set currently called *tirowa 'rada* occupied the pre-initiate house eight cycles or four decades before the younger *tirowa* age set. During my fieldwork, four age sets with living members carried the - *'rada* designation: *tirowa 'rada*, *êtêpá 'rada*, *airere 'rada*, and *anharowa 'rada*. Each of the four age set names on the left and right side are perceptually situated within a never-ending chain of relative age set age and paired through mentors and protégés in a continuous sequence of camaraderie and familiarity.

This repetition of age set names lends the two age set moieties a sense of corporate perpetuity, in the sense given by Radcliffe-Brown (1935), following Maine (1931:181). According to their formulations, the notion of corporateness implies both organizational perpetuity and continuity of rights and duties over persons or things. Some scholars place near exclusive emphasis on possession of real property as a criterion of

corporateness (e.g., Verdon and Jorion 1981). That interpretation is not consistent with Radcliffe-Brown's formulation of "perpetual corporate succession," considered independently from his application of the idea to the specific case of unilinear descent groups, which emphasized rights over persons (Fortes 1955:21-22):

"But even in such simple societies, where inheritance of private property may be said not to exist or to be of minimal importance, there are problems of succession in the widest sense of the term. The term 'succession' will here be taken as referring to the transmission of rights in general. A right exists in, and is definable in terms of, recognized social usage. A right may be that of an individual or a collection of individuals. It may be defined as a measure of control that a person, or a collection of persons, has over the acts of some person or persons, said to be thereby made liable to the performance of a duty." (Radcliffe-Brown 1935:286)

Also,

"By an estate is here meant a collection of rights (whether over persons or things), with the implied duties, the unity of which is constituted... by the fact that they are... the rights of a defined group (the corporation) which maintains a continuity of possession" (Radcliffe-Brown 1935:288).

As suggested by Vanessa Lea (1992:147), the first application to Gê societies of that formulation of corporateness may have been by Lévi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss 1984:193), for whom "corporate group" was akin to "moral person," which implied ownership of property, which might be real property, titles, or prerogatives. In the Xavante case, the corporateness of age set moieties derives from the perpetual extension of social privilege and responsibility downwards through the alternating sequence of mentors and protégé. That privilege includes possession of a symbolic claim to place, either the right or left side of the village, rights of social control over each alternate group of pre-initiate boys, and the responsibility to sponsor same-side pre-initiates. That sense of moiety corporateness involves the association of each with four age set names, but it does not result in each age set name deriving its own sense of corporate identity. In other

words, the repetition of age set names generates corporate age set moieties but not corporate age sets.

The ordering of age sets within an age set moiety is at once synchronically hierarchical, because at any given time, each age set is either subordinate or senior to every other age set, and diachronically symmetrical, because each age set will eventually pass through the entire sequence from protégés to seniors. An analogous relationship exists between age set moieties, which also may be considered synchronically hierarchical, because at any given time each age set moiety is either allied with or estranged from the current set of pre-initiate coresidents with all of their ceremonial importance, and diachronically equal, because each age set moiety passes through those phases of alliance and estrangement in alternation.

4.4.2. Age sets and historicity

Because the Xavante consciously formulate the social geometry of age sets in terms of a spatial reality, the model I presented of left and right age set sidedness may be considered something akin to an emic formulation (for a similar observation, see Maybury-Lewis 1967:156). One particular deployment of the age set system illustrates how it serves for the Xavante as a conceptual model of sociality. Although today the Xavante use the Gregorian calendar in contemporary contexts such as certifying birthdates and marking travel plans, the primary way for reckoning historical time is not in years but rather in age set cycles. At the time of my research, age sets were the native chronometrical standard, being used to delineate absolute time from the recent past to historical eras before the direct memory of living individuals of both genders.

For example, when I asked community members when many past events occurred, such as village migrations, village divisions, or hostile encounters with non-Xavante, the most conclusive answers were provided not in terms of chronological years but of age sets and their occupancies in the pre-initiate house. For example, one such response was “1980 or 1990, maybe in the 1970s; when the *hötörã* age set was in the pre-initiate house.” In that example, the use of chronological years narrowed the event to a three-decade span, but the use of an age set name specified it to within a period of about five years. Thus, although age sets comprise a relatively coarse measure for recent events, it is extremely precise for the more distant past.

Another example serves to illustrate the employment of age set names for historical reference. When visiting unoccupied historical village sites, elders uniformly indicated when they were occupied in terms of the specific age sets that graduated from the pre-initiate house. During a visit to the site of the historical village Barreira Amarela, located above the steep banks of the Rio das Mortes (“River of Deaths”), Sereburã and Antônio, two village elders, told me that two age sets, *nozö’u* and *abare’u*, graduated from the pre-initiate house at that location. According to Maybury-Lewis, the *nozö’u* age set graduated in 1963 (Maybury-Lewis 1967:154), suggesting an occupancy from before 1963 until after 1970 (for a calendar of past age set initiations, see Coimbra et al. 2002:30).

While visiting Barreira Amarela, Antônio recalled his own residence there, with his *nozö’u* age set mates, in the pre-initiate house, situated on the left side of the village. He remembered the string of family gardens that ran downriver from the pre-initiate house along the riverbank and the log race path that exited from the back of the village

towards the northwest. After Antônio was initiated into novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*) and left the pre-initiate house, it was rebuilt on the south side of the village for the *abare'u* age set. One *abare'u* man named Wahipó was present during this conversation and Antônio mentioned his name to help me put a face to the age set sequence at this location. In doing so, his account became not only about when the village was occupied or where the gardens were located, but also about living individuals and their social relationships with one another. As Antônio described this era to me with the authority of having lived it, Marcos, a member of the *anharowa* age set, three generations Antônio's junior and in the opposite age set moiety, interjected that Antônio was lying to me because he never lived there! As befits an opposite-side rival, Marcos tried to provoke Antônio, accusing him of having left the village to do wage work for ranchers, where all he did was masturbate, only returning to the village occasionally to have sex with Xavante women. Thus, according to Marcos, Antônio could not speak with authority about what Barreira Amarela village was like during his time. In his own defense, Antônio pointed out that Marcos was not yet born at that time and did not know what he was talking about. Thus, in telling their stories, Antônio and Marcos made sense of historical chronology by framing it in a very personal manner in terms of the age set hierarchy and our-side/their-side sociality.

As an aside, while listening to the conversation between Antônio and Marcos, Kouti, a member of the *êtêpá* age set, cooked fish and without a word served it to Suptó, a member of the *sada'ro* age set, four generations his senior and in the same moiety. Kouti's dutiful behavior to an elder age set moiety member contrasts with Marcos's

playfully antagonistic stance towards an elder age set moiety opponent, highlighting the difference between other-side and same-side social relations.

Just as the Xavante use the age set system to reckon time in social terms, its geometry provides a framework for discussing the social correlates of age hierarchies. An important point in this regard is that the age set hierarchy entails two types of social relationships, a sense of rivalry and distrust with those on the other side and a sense of camaraderie and familiarity with those in the same moiety, even between those of widely separated generations. Whereas Marcos jokingly humiliated Antônio, Kouti silently provided for Suptó. Those contrastive modes of interaction between members of different age sets do not contradict the philosophy of age hierarchy, but rather are entailed by it. This is because both social modes are intrinsic to the Xavante notion of age difference. Thus, the social significance of the age hierarchy varies according to one's position within it. In this sense, age set moieties are symmetrical because members of each side share the same sort of social intimacy with members of their own side and the same sort of competitive distrust with members of the other side. The left side is not inherently different from the right side, but rather, their asymmetries are cyclical and reciprocal. As mentioned above, in any given year, one side will be associated with the pre-initiate house and its coresidents and the other side will not be. However, inevitably, some years later, that configuration will be reversed. Their difference, therefore, may be understood as historical, in that each moiety is associated with specific remembered age sets and their members, who together are linked to either left or right residence in specific villages at specific times.

Another example of the historicity of age sets may be found in the traditionalist discourse in which elders accuse younger age sets of innumerable shortcomings associated with their failure to maintain cultural continuity with the past, as discussed in Chapter 2. Reflecting the popular symbolic association between older/younger ages and traditional/nontraditional values, that discourse orders ages sets in linear sequence marked by a progressive loss of valued traditional knowledge and skills. Thus, for example, a male member of the *abare'u* age set told me that *airere'rada* males (four sets his senior) were the last to achieve exceptional spiritual power, *nōzō'u* males (one age set his senior) were the last to effectively learn to be scouts (*ĩrehĩ*) and to hunt by tracking (*abazé pra'ri*), his male *abare'u* age set peers were the last enthusiastic hunters, and his female *abare'u* age set peers were the last diligent home-keepers.

4.5. The spiritual system

Among males, the various hierarchies of age sets, age grades, and informal age grades are all juxtaposed with a distinct spiritual age hierarchy such that myriad relationships of equality or difference may exist between the same individuals. In Chapter 2, I described one aspect of the spiritual system, spiritual grades. Before being initiated into the spiritual system, a boy is a spiritual pre-initiate (*wautop'tu*) and has no involvement in spiritual affairs. About every 15 years, a new group of initiates is inducted into the system during a series of spiritual initiation ceremonies (*darini*). At that time, spiritual pre-initiates become initiates (*wai'āra*), a status they hold until the next set of spiritual initiation ceremonies. Above initiates in the spiritual hierarchy are, in sequence, guards (*dama'ai'a'wa*), and singers (*zō'ra'si'wa*), and post-officiants (*wai'a'rada*).

Members of all spiritual sets to have progressed beyond the grade of singers occupy together the final spiritual grade of post-officiants (*wai 'a 'rada*). The post-officiant grade culminates the spiritual sequence and is considered something like spiritual retirement, requiring no explicit participation and lasting until death. As previously described, the social relationships between members of different spiritual grades are not uniform. Specifically, whereas guards oversee initiates with decided antagonism, singers serve as their close spiritual mentors and allies.

The contrastive social dynamics between guards and initiates, on the one hand, and singers and initiates, on the other hand, entails a structural logic of alternation similar to that described previously for the secular age group system. As in the secular age group system, each of the spiritual grades is occupied by spiritual age sets, or spiritual sets, which are life-long associations defined at the time of one's first initiation into the spiritual system. Unlike the secular age sets, spiritual sets are unnamed. Consequently, the cyclical aspect of eight rotating secular age set names has no parallel in the spiritual system. Nevertheless, spiritual sets are explicit social groups in the same sense as secular age sets. Through the collective fifteen-yearly spiritual initiation rituals (*darini*) their members are recruited and they comprise social units for the greater part of adult life. Members of spiritual sets learn spiritual knowledge together through the mutual experience of spiritual trials and the common exercise of age-determined spiritual prerogatives.

The unity of their membership is expressed corporally through body painting and performance roles specific to their spiritual grades and socially through an explicit morality of secrecy and solidarity regarding spiritual matters. That social solidarity is also

extended to alternate spiritual sets such that every second spiritual set in the initiation sequence is linked by a sense of mutual identity and a bond of sociospiritual unity. That unity is the essence of the relationship between singers and initiates. It establishes them as spiritual companions and couples them in a pedagogical mentoring relationship whereby singers are responsible for the indulgent cultivation of initiates' spiritual capacities. They are the initiates' source of spiritual knowledge and guidance. Between them, spiritual subjects may be discussed openly, forbidden words may be voiced, and spiritual transgressions may be acknowledged. Alternate spiritual sets are friends, in that specific context, and are bound by a code of mutual duty.

Contrasting with the unity between alternate spiritual sets is a sharp sociospiritual division between adjacent spiritual sets. Whereas members of alternate sets are comrades, members of adjacent spiritual sets are adversaries. Alternate age sets are implicated in a total bifurcation of spiritual information rooted in an ethos of distrust and constraint. Operating in secrecy from one another, they maintain their own, independent, bodies of spiritual knowledge and agendas of social action. In the spiritual domain, specifically, they are bound to one another in antagonistic social postures. Embodying that dynamic are guards and initiates, who are explicitly juxtaposed to one another through their respective roles as enforcers and enforced. Guards have the explicit juridical authority to enforce upon initiates certain rules of behavior. Of greatest importance is the rule of spiritual secrecy from females and outsiders, violation of which is said to carry mortal penalties. Also principle among those rules are the food taboos mentioned in Chapter 1, whereby initiates may not eat a variety of common foods, including game meat of diverse kinds, until their guards liberate them, on by one, throughout the course of life. When

initiates are discovered by guards to break food taboos, they are publically punished by guards who stomp on their feet during spiritual rituals (*wai 'a*). Presumably, persistent failure by initiates to maintain food taboos results in the prolongation of the taboos for additional years or, sometimes, complete lifetimes. For example, one spiritual post-officiant informed me that at 47 years of age he is not yet authorized to eat marsh deer (*Blastocerus dichotomus*) and a traira fish (*Hoplias spp.*), forcing him to eat them secretly and out of sight of his former guards. That authority impresses upon younger males the necessity of behavioral obedience through ceaseless surveillance and punitive retribution. Because the threat of discovery is predicated on getting caught and alternate spiritual sets are united by a morality of mutual secrecy, the authority of older adjacent spiritual sets also transmits the value of solidarity between allied spiritual sets.

Through the alternation of spiritual sets are formed spiritual moieties with similar structural features to secular age set moieties. Alternate spiritual sets of all ages, from initiates to post-officiants, are joined in separate and opposed chains of solidarity. Members of the same spiritual moieties help one another, share with one another, and trust one another. As in the secular age set moiety system, spiritual moieties comprise corporate groups, in the sense developed earlier in the context of secular age set moieties. Although unnamed, they are perpetual and lay claim to their own distinct bodies of spiritual knowledge. The expectation of secrecy disjoins them from cross-fertilization of in-group knowledge and implies that the very maintenance of spiritual capacity depends on the collective control of information. Whereas the acquisition of spiritual capacity within each spiritual moiety involves the gradual release of information by members of elder spiritual sets to members of younger sets, the maintenance of collective

metaphysical potency depends on its total concealment from members of the opposite spiritual moiety. According to the Xavante morality of secrecy discussed previously in other contexts, the release or theft of information may result in its loss. Consequently, in the spiritual system, sharing knowledge inappropriately is dangerous.

The spiritual system entails the plurality of equality and hierarchy in much the same manner as the secular age group system. Spiritual rank involves the presumptive power of spiritual maturity according to two contrastive configurations, one collegial and one authoritative. However, in both cases, the pedagogical theory is one of capacitation. Whether through indulgent comradeship or adversarial enforcement, the universal expectation is that youth attain spiritual competence. Although in this text I do not discuss the content of Xavante spiritual knowledge, it is important to note that knowledge alone does not transmit spiritual capacity. Equally important is bodily and spiritual fortification through hardship. By enduring suffering, fatigue, and distress, one develops the strength and resolve required to attract the attentions of powerful spiritual entities and benefit from engaging them. For young Xavante males, spiritual process is painful. It demands the irresoluteness of spiritual participants, a vigorously maintained traditionalist value that is imparted through age organization.

Of all the spiritual rituals (*wai'a*) I participated in, the most memorable were when I participated in a special group of some six to eight initiates who performed the grueling task of holding sacred cane arrows (*ti'ipê*) while singing and dancing around the village during the long cold hours from dusk until after sunrise. For initiates, that ritual began in mid afternoon in a small clearing in the forest a short distance from the village, out of sight of females and children. It was there that we prepared ourselves by painting

our bodies, grooming our hair, and tying special fiber straps (*abarudu*) around our wrists and ankles. In Chapter 1, I described the first major phase of the ritual, a procession around the perimeter of the clearing during which guards stomped on the feet of initiates who had been discovered to have eaten prohibited foods. That procession illustrates the antagonistic social relationship between guards and initiates, whereby the former are charged with punitive oversight of the latter in public and private spiritual contexts.

As a member of the second most recently inaugurated age set (*êtêpá*), I was considered among the oldest of spiritual initiates and shared in some of the responsibilities that come with it. The initiate spiritual grade is subdivided into junior (*aiuterene*) and senior (*ipredumrini*) designations. That distinction is based on older men's perception of their physical maturity. At the time of my primary dissertation research, senior initiate status (*wai'āra ipredumrini*) coincided with novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*) in the secular age group system. Over the course of the 15 year term that young males occupy the initiate grade, they each, gradually and individually, pass from spiritual grade juniority to seniority. The spiritual grade of guards is also divided into junior (*aiuterene*) and senior (*ipredumrini*) designations, although in their case the designation is said to be fixed; roughly five guards are designated junior for the duration of their spiritual set's term as guards. In the case of initiates, junior or senior status implies different ceremonial responsibilities. For example, the weighty responsibility of carrying sacred cane arrows (*ti'ipê*) belongs only to senior initiates (*wai'āra ipredumrini*) who are considered sufficiently resistant and disciplined to do so without risk of failure.

In the ritual mentioned above, after the foot-stomping procession, senior initiates (*wai'āra ipredumrini*) remained in a line at the edge of the clearing while junior initiates

(*wai'āra aiuterene*) returned to the village. The singers, our allies, at the center of the clearing would look on as one of their members, holding a war club in his left hand and a rattle in the left hand, looked over the senior initiates, shifting his gaze from one of us to another and then back again, as though considering who would benefit the most from and could see through to its completion the task he was to assign. He then would raise his rattle and point it squarely at one of the senior initiates and thereby call him forward to the center of the clearing. He would do this some six to eight times, calling as many senior initiates forward and thereby drafting them to the solemn chore of singing and dancing around the village the entire night, from dusk until well after sunrise. Very occasionally an initiate refused his call. Although doing so was considered somewhat irresponsible, the seriousness of the task required that one not accept if he doubted his own resolve or capacity to complete it properly.

Such all-night spiritual rituals are held by men for the benefit of the entire community, and it is the responsibility of those few senior initiates to continue it in good form all night long. Although several spiritual post-officiants may linger around a fire in the middle of the village plaza until the middle of the night, and at least one or two spiritual guards make appearances throughout the night to ensure that the chosen initiates uphold their responsibilities, most other males retire to their homes shortly after dark and return only as sunrise approaches. The task assigned to those few senior initiates is a difficult one. Staving off sleep, enduring the cold, maintaining vocal syntax and cadence, and carrying sacred cane arrows (*ti'ipê*) throughout the entire night require extreme force of will. It is a grueling chore bemoaned by most of my age set peers. Yet, performing that chore was an essential part of their spiritual training. It was a test of their resilience, a

means of acquiring spiritual strength, and a prerequisite to advancing to the grade of spiritual guards.

The spiritual age group system comprises a separate domain from the secular age group system and is an additional dimension in the matrix of age contingencies in Xavante society. Although ideologically distinct, the spiritual group system is not isolated because it factors into all social relations by establishing interpersonal boundaries and liberties. Because solidarity or separation in the spiritual group system may or may not coincide with alliance or rivalry in the secular age group system, social modes of interaction vary between people and between contexts. Similarly, seniority or juniority in one domain may not correspond with rank in another. Furthermore, those configurations of age identity and difference coexist with abundant other forms of social identity. For example, there is an additional spiritual moiety system unrelated to age that factors into all personal and group spiritual endeavors. Although Maybury-Lewis (1967:256) speculated that assignment is for no particular criteria, my data show that when boys are initiated into the spiritual system, their fathers evaluate their physical forms. Shorter or smaller individuals are designated Wood-Owners (*wedehöri 'wa*). During spiritual rituals, their bodies are marked with a series of three vertical lines on their lower legs and they carry short wooden clubs in the crux of their arms. Taller or stronger individuals are called Rattle-Owners (*umrẽ'tede 'wa*). Their legs are marked with a series of two vertical lines and they use gourd rattles. Moiety affiliation also serves to subdivide them spatially, when they stand in separate lines, arrange themselves on opposite sides of a circle, or walk in pairs (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:195-203; Müller 1976:163-164). As Maybury-Lewis (1962:136; 1967:263-266) astutely described,

the difference between Rattle-Owners (*umrẽ'tede'wa*) and Wood-Owners (*wedehöri'wa*), respectively, is they “involve intercession with two classes of spirits, one conferring generative power (life) and the other aggressive power (death).” Rattle-owners appeal to a benevolent spirit (*danhimi'te*) that is associated with the sacred cane arrows carried by senior initiates (*ti'ipê*). Wood-Owners fight and dominate a malevolent spirit called (*simi'hö'pãri*) that is responsible for destructive winds. Although any spiritual participant may appeal to either spirit, or to another dangerous yet empowering spirit (*pi'u*), his spirit moiety affects the entire trajectory of his spiritual performance and training.

4.6. Intersections of power

The notions of “our side” versus “other side,” developed here in the contexts of the secular and spiritual agamous moiety systems, comprise just several of many dimensions of sociality that texture how people view and interact with one another. Other systems of age organization are similarly ubiquitous aspects of the Xavante experience, providing abundant means to unify certain sets of people as equals or similars and order others as unequals or dissimilars. Xavante age hierarchies, as described in this and preceding chapters, are also multiple and interrelated, such that the significance of each hierarchy and each rank within it is contingent upon the totality of any given social dynamic, including the full complement of other age-based relationships and how the individual actors involved make sense of those relationships. Within that totality, there are no absolute power relationships, as between, for example, younger or older, junior or senior, and subordinate or dominant. Nor is there any absolute equivalence between age equals. Rather, age classifications unite and differentiate individuals in multiple

conditional ways that influence their modes of engagement in diverse social settings.

Thus, it is through the simultaneous operating of multiple systems of age ranking and many other social means of evaluating social sameness and difference that social action takes place. In the remainder of this chapter, I continue to build on this geometry of Xavante sociality in order to illustrate some of the social implications of multiple age hierarchies.

Formal models of age hierarchies may account for certain aspects of how people reckon age-based seniority, but they are insufficient for capturing the complexities of how individuals negotiate multiplex age structures and the varied social dynamics implicated by them. In this and preceding chapters I broached that issue in part through ethnographic accounts of how multiple systems of age hierarchy come to be expressed through daily social interaction. I also explored some instances of how the deployment of certain age distinctions is contingent on their interaction with multiple other age structures. For example, the discussions above regarding age sets and age set moieties highlighted the contrastive meaning of seniority when two unequal age sets pertain to the same or different age set moieties. The hierarchical relationship between protégés (*hō'wa nōri*) and their mentors (*danhohui'wa*), which belong to the same age set moiety, is characterized by ceremonial sponsorship, residential comradeship, and social solidarity. In contrast, the hierarchical relationship between those same pre-initiates and their immediate age set seniors in the opposite age set moiety, novitiate adults (*ritei'wa*), is imbued with ritualized competitiveness, social antagonism, and juridical authority. In that case, it is not the fact of belonging to a junior or senior age set that has the greatest effect

on the nature of age hierarchy, but the interaction of age set seniority with age set moiety affiliation.

Maybury-Lewis wrote that the Xavante system of age differentiation is based more on perceptions of seniority than absolute age (Maybury-Lewis 1967:155). It is my contention that Xavante perceptions of seniority involve multiple frames of reference in such a manner as to incorporate the seeming structural contradictions between them in a coherently multiplex ordering of the social world. Just as age set and age set moiety affiliations mutually set up contingencies for the social meaning of hierarchy, so does the simultaneous operation of the two formal age group systems (secular and spiritual) and of those systems with other less formal systems of social ranking. In the remainder of this chapter I explore instances of such interactions in order to illustrate that age hierarchy is contingent, plural, and pervasive. Specifically, I recall my previous argument regarding unity and differentiation in asserting that for the Xavante the principles of symmetry and ranking are not antithetical, but rather mutual and interdependent.

Four examples deriving from preceding discussions of age sets may be given to illustrate the mutual constitution of hierarchy and symmetry. The first involves the conjunction of secular age sets and age set moieties. Whereas age set affiliation implies vertical hierarchy, according to the notion of age seniority, age set moiety affiliation involves a horizontal symmetry between equal halves. Despite that contrast, neither age sets nor age set moieties may be considered in isolation because each gives rise to the other. For example, in the case of the secular age group system, age set moieties come into being as new age sets are inaugurated in alternation with spatial and symbolic association with pre-initiate houses on the left and right sides of the village. Thus,

belonging to an age set necessarily entails belonging to an age set moiety; they are aspects of a single phenomenon. Accordingly, the hierarchy that characterizes age sets and the symmetry that characterizes age set moieties also are aspects of that singular phenomenon. The significance of that assessment for the experience of age sets and age set moieties is that occupying a tier in the vertical hierarchy of age set seniority necessarily implies one's alignment with half of society in reciprocal equivalence to the other half.

Belonging to both the hierarchy of age sets and the symmetry of age set moieties is an important factor in how people engage other people socially. For example, being members of the *êtěpá* age set situated my age set peers and me in an explicit chain of seniority, whereby, in certain contexts, we had greater social standing than members of our age set juniors, members of the *tirowa* age set, and less standing than members of the eleven age sets above us with living members. Nevertheless, what it meant to have higher or lower social standing relative to any particular person also depended entirely on whether we belonged to the same or opposite age set moieties, among many other social factors. Thus, for example, the many times my *êtěpá* age set went on excursions into the forest under the guise of fishing or collecting in order to secretly rehearse our songs and ceremonial routines, we did so with the collaboration of our age set moiety elders, who always knew of our activities, often provided organizational support (for example, securing access to the truck), and frequently oversaw our activities. This complicity generated a sense of unity that pervaded our otherwise unequal age relationship and bore stark contrast to the more adversarial stance assumed by members of senior age sets in

the other age set moiety. Specifically, with regard to our forest excursions, we concealed from them the details of our activities through evasion, lies, and trickery.

A second example of the mutuality of hierarchy and symmetry may be found in the temporal nature of secular age set moiety symmetry. As previously described, age set moieties are diachronically reciprocal since the physical and symbolic alternation of age sets between the left and right sides of the village guarantee each the ongoing opportunity to induct and inculcate new members in turn through occupation and management of the pre-initiate coresident (*hö'wa*) experience. However, that diachronic balance is intersected by synchronic inequality whereby, at any given point time, only one age set moiety has an age set stationed in the pre-initiate house and in the role of pre-initiate mentorship. Thus, only one age set moiety at a time assumes responsibility for a variety of age set activities that affect the entire community. For example, log races (*uiwede*) are contested implicitly between age set moieties and explicitly between the two most recent age sets to have been initiated into adulthood, which may have unequal handicaps due to the older being comprised of mostly younger and smaller individuals. In other words, the age set moiety represented by the older of the two sponsoring age sets may have an advantage. Similarly, the age set moiety affiliated with the pre-initiates is more directly involved in scheduling and preparing for a host of pre-initiate activities that have widespread implications for budgeting the balance of community endeavors, including, for example, weddings, horticultural production, hunting expeditions, travel, and formal schooling. In short, the moiety that is in charge of the pre-initiate house is also in a position of leadership with respect to countless other activities of mutual concern to the

other moiety. Thus, the diachronic structural symmetry between age set moieties coexists with a pragmatic synchronic inequality between them at any given time.

A third example of how hierarchy and equality are simultaneously involved in age reckoning is the fact of age sets emphasizing internal collectivity and homogeneity at the same time that they involve internal differentiation. As described above, age set membership involves, especially during the formative years of residence in the pre-initiate house, a certain ethos of group identity that prioritizes group cohesion in many contexts. Thus, in certain contexts, age set identity may be seen as eclipsing individual identity through modes of behavior that favor uniformity over idiosyncrasy. For example, songs, which are dreamed by individuals, are presented to the community in ways that emphasize the collectivity of the age set peers that perform them (see Graham 1995:116-128). Yet, the very age sets that prioritize group collectivity also take measures to publicly distinguish certain individuals. For example, the dreamers of songs are expected to lead their performances by age set mates by singing first, in louder voices, and, sometimes, by wearing special ceremonial regalia. Similar public recognition of individual distinctiveness is apparent in the many forms of age set leaders presented earlier. Arguably, such internal distinctions do not contradict the collectivity of age sets but rather help construct a lasting sense of solidarity and identity among their members. For example, age set elders befriend and look after age set youths. Similarly, age set leaders coordinate and take responsibility the actions of their peers.

The mutual constitution of equality and inequality is perhaps most evident in the multiple relationships that join people owing to their simultaneous participation in the several age hierarchies discussed above: informal age grades, the secular age grade

system, and the spiritual grade system. Although I treated those hierarchies separately in the preceding discussions, because they are conceptually and operationally different in many respects, they are also interdependent both in their structural relationships and in their expressions through social interaction. This plurality of hierarchical relationships is not unique to the Xavante; the same point might be made about any social network in which people share multiple relationships that bear on their interactions differently in different social contexts. Nevertheless, it is an important point in the Xavante context owing to the highly formalized and multiple nature of age organization. The various relationships that designate individuals as age equals or age unequals create complexly patterned means for negotiating the tapestry of social life.

Mature adulthood is marked in two primary ways. Formal mature adulthood is assumed when male and female members of the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*) participate in the approximately five-yearly age set initiation rites (*danhono*) and thereby become mature adults (*iprédu*). All mature adults of the same gender enjoy the same rights and privileges. As described earlier, males are no longer restricted from free movement about the village and may participate in the men's council (*warã*). Males may take up residence with their spouses according to the uxorilocal residence pattern (or, in the case of second wives who do not already live in the same house as their husbands, females may take up residence with their husbands) and thereby begin the sometimes long process of building their own nuclear families with, eventually, their own sociospatial domains. Additionally, for females, maturity also comes about in the informal age grade system when, through the birth of a first child, they achieve status as wives with children (*ĩ'rare*). Unlike mature adult status (*iprédu*), which is assumed

publicly and collectively for all members of an age set when it participates in the age set initiation rites, status as wives with children is assumed individually when females of any age set or formal age grade status give birth to a first child. The only normative prerequisite is, therefore, that they be married. Because females may marry anytime after their breasts begin to develop, which tends to be followed relatively promptly by their joining the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*), females often, but not always, become mature adults in the informal age grade system before they do in the formal age grade system. As a consequence, in practice, some females may be wives with children (*ĩ'rare*) before they become mature adults (*iprédu*), while others may be mature adults before becoming wives with children.

Such differentiated attainment of mature social statuses among females affects how they engage the rest of society. Becoming a wife with child in the informal age grade system is accompanied by the establishment of a female's own social domain within the household. With husband and child(ren), she gains social authority within that realm as wife and mother. In this sense, she becomes the equal of all other wives and mothers, each with their own domains of domestic influence, and each with the collaboration of their sisters, mothers, and other close relatives. In contrast, female mature adults in the formal age grade system assume new responsibilities outside the household. They carry their own set of ceremonial roles leading up to and including the age set initiation rites, which are unique from those of female novitiate women and younger, uninitiated females. Those charges are most elaborate for members of the youngest age set within the mature adult age grade, who, in addition to their other ceremonial roles, help construct the pre-initiate house in their capacity as mentors

(*danhohui'wa*) to the pre-initiate boys (*wapté*). Those responsibilities position them as ceremonial seniors relative to females who have not yet achieved mature adulthood (*iprédu*). Depending on whether any two women are wives with children, mature adults, or both affects whether they are equals or unequals in different social contexts.

Later in life, otherwise equal mature adult males and females may also be differentiated by their relative statuses in the informal age grade. Elders (*īhi*) are not formally recognized to be different than other mature adults. Male elders share the same explicit rights to participate in the men's council as other mature adults. Female elders (*īhi*) do not assume explicit responsibilities beyond those deriving from their family networks. Nevertheless, among mature adults, elders command special respect owing to their advanced age, authority on matters of traditionalism, command of oral history, and, in many but not all cases, esteem as leaders and spiritual authorities. Such deference is not automatic and not universally afforded to elders by virtue of that status alone, but it is symbolically associated with the elder age grade because those characteristics are thought to generally come with age. Thus, the elder status stratifies the mature adult age grade, granting to only the eldest individuals certain informal rights and privileges. Such deference is apparent in the men's council, where the eldest men hold court at the center, begin and end most discussions, and exert effective veto power over any decisions advocated by their informal age juniors. It is apparent at community distributions of goods, where the inventory to be distributed, often having been stored in the house of one of the elders, is brought to the center of the village plaza and the elder men preside over its equitable allocation to household representatives. It is apparent when elder women take command of the meat brought home by the men of their household, carefully

separating it into bundles for their own household and as gifts for their relatives living in other houses and villages. It is apparent when elders visit relatives in other households to ask for gifts of food lacking in their own households knowing that they, as elders, will be well accommodated. In those diverse social settings, the formal equality of mature adulthood is ordered by the informal seniority of eldership.

Another important set of articulations between systems of age identity involves the spiritual age group system. The decision to initiate a boy into the spiritual system and thereby assign him to a spiritual age set lies with his father and is constrained by the relative infrequency of opportunities to do so, since spiritual initiation rituals (*darini*) tend to be held about every 15 years. Accordingly, each spiritual set includes members of diverse secular age sets, which are inaugurated about every five years, according to no formal system of correspondence. Thus, the rank relations that juxtapose any two individuals in one system may be maintained or, more often, altered in the spiritual system. Rank in one system may be equalized or inverted in the other and moiety opposition in one system may be transformed into moiety solidarity in the other. In the daily social dynamic that derive from them is to be found evidence that in the Xavante social world multiplex systems of equality and difference are not contradictory. Rather, they are essential to how people understand hierarchy. That is because seemingly contradictory relationships are allowed their place and time.

At times, contrastive structural relationships between the same people are compartmentalized according to a logic of independent domains. For example, a moment of camaraderie and indulgence between an age set mentor (*danhohui'wa*) and his protégé in the pre-initiate house (*hö*) may be followed, a short time later, by a grave act of

punishment between the same two people in a spiritual ritual (*wai'a*). The two events may be seen to have nothing to do with one another, with neither intimacy nor authority compromising the other in their respective settings.

At other times, seemingly contradictory relationships in different social domains are allowed to influence one another. For example, should a spiritual guard (*dama'ai'a'wa*) discover that a spiritual initiate (*wai'ãra*), his age set mate in the secular system, ate a prohibited food, he may choose not to punish him in deference to the mutuality of age set identity. Conversely, that same spiritual initiate may refrain from eating a prohibited food in front of the spiritual guard, despite his being an age set mate, out of respect for his superior spiritual status. Secrecy, essential to the Xavante morality of age associations, is extremely useful in this respect because it may be employed to mitigate or compartmentalize age relations. Using the same example, the spiritual initiate may choose to hide his transgressions from his age set mate to avoid being punished or the spiritual guard may choose to guard as secret the age set mate's transgressions to protect him from punishment. Compartmentalization and accommodation of age relations between domains are central to their sustained practical and ideological compatibility.

Following the same principles, contrastive age status in one domain may serve to reinforce seniority or juniority of shared age status in another domain at the same time that shared status in one domain is not thought to affect the integrity of rank in another. For example, although there is no explicit coordination between the spiritual and secular age group systems, members of specific secular age sets dominate the older and younger segments of spiritual age sets. Thus, when I did my primary research, members of the *êtêpá* age set exclusively enjoyed status in the spiritual system as senior initiates (*wai'ãra*

ipredumrini) and often their spiritual activities were construed as age set activities.

Several years later, some members of the next secular age set (*tirowa*) had also become senior initiates, but they suffered from the reputation of being unpracticed and fragile. Nevertheless, that conjunction of senior initiates included members of different secular age sets, most notably adjacent, opposite-moiety age sets. Although they treated each other as rivals in secular contexts, during spiritual rituals they were joined in a project of mutual concern and a shared trial of the highest order. There they stand together, literally hand-in-hand, in equal subordination to spiritual guards, who have policing and punishment authorities over them all. Thus, age status in one domain may fragment the solidarity of age status in another at the same time that it unifies members of otherwise antithetic age sets.

At the level of individual experience, contrastive age identity in different domains can dramatically alter a person's social standing between contexts. All but one member of my secular age set (*êtêpá*) were members of the initiate spiritual grade (*wai'āra*). One individual, Kouti, was generally considered to be among our most senior members because he was in the first staggered induction group (*ĩrō'rada* – “first penis sheath”). Many members of our age set treated him with a certain degree of respect that I did not perceive in their interactions with other age set mates, with his presence seeming to serve as a cue for them to behave themselves. However, in the spiritual hierarchy, Kouti was the youngest member of the guard spiritual grade (*dama'ai'a'wa*), thus structurally positioned as our adversarial senior. During spiritual rituals (*wai'a*), he marched with the procession of guards as they punitively stomped on our feet and later kept watch over us threateningly with bow and arrows in hand to make sure we kept in line. Yet, Kouti's

adversarial role as guard was mitigated by his simultaneous role as our age set comrade and his status as the least experienced guard. We trusted that in most cases he would keep secret our food prohibition violations and would not stomp on our feet even if the other guards were doing so. During the most insufferably cold late-night hours of spiritual rituals, if no other guards were nearby, Kouti appeared not to notice our enjoying the pleasures of hot coffee and brief visits to the warming flames of the fire. Thus, Kouti's status as a spiritual guard temporarily interrupted the usual unity of our secular age set, just as his secular age set affiliation ameliorated his antagonistic stance towards spiritual initiates in the *êtěpá* age set and thereby differentiated him from the other guards. Despite those dynamics, from the perspective of those involved, the plurality of his position with regard to both his age set mates and spiritual grade members was not contradictory. In playing the role of an enforcer, Kouti did not violate the principle of secular age set collectivity, but rather reinforced it as an age set leader and a sympathetic guard. Nor did he violate the principle of spiritual grade rank, since he gained authority through his status as a guard and thereby encouraged behavioral conformity among his age set mates. I imagine that from Kouti's perspective, he encountered his respective age set mates in the secular and spiritual systems very differently because the former afforded him the respect and leadership rights of senior age status while the latter imposed on him the constraints of age juniority.

Chapter 5: Age, kinship, and politics

5.1. Introduction

The relationship between age and social power is apparent in abundant social contexts. Whether it be in daily interactions in the village and gardens, life within the pre-initiate house, excursions into the forest, or spiritual ritualism, social interaction involves various arrangements of authority, influence, privilege, and responsibility based in multiple age hierarchies and other systems of social ranking. Another social context that is especially relevant to discussions of social power is politics, which also implicates age in complex arrangements of similarity and difference. Just as multiple age hierarchies create multiplex relationships between social actors, they also do so between political actors. However, age is only one among many social factors that mutually affect the contours of political power. In this chapter, I address leadership and process in the political arena in order to demonstrate that how people go about social life involves not only the plurality of age hierarchies already presented in this dissertation, but also a host of other configurations of social inequality, such as those deriving from gender, kinship, and genealogy.

According to Maybury-Lewis (1967:190-191, 198, 201), in the past community leaders were not formally installed and had no explicit authority. Rather, chiefly designations merely recognized where power already lay, acknowledging those especially prestigious leaders whose powers of influence derived from the ability to speak for their

factions, facilitate agreement within the community, and thereby promote a sense of consensus. Becoming a chief required that one have the support of his political faction and that his political faction be dominant in the community. Chiefly status only endured as long as one retained prestige among a dominant faction and thereby maintained one's influence over public opinion. Although men competed for chieftaincy, there could be as many chiefs as there were exceptionally prestigious men who enjoyed the support of a dominant faction.

In contrast to that historical account, in 2004, there were two formally recognized leaders with the explicit authority to conduct external relations on behalf of the community. Suptó Buprewên Xavante was Chief (*dama'dö'ö'wa* in Xavante, *cacique* in Portuguese) and Paulo Supreteprã was Vice-Chief. Suptó's authority was reinforced by his additional appointments as head of the local National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) indigenous post and president of the community's nonprofit organization, Associação Xavante de Pimentel Barbosa. Both Suptó and Paulo were relatively young, well educated, fluent Portuguese speakers, and had extensive familiarity with national Brazilian society, having lived and studied in large cities (see Franca 2007). They represented a new brand of community leader that emerged after Maybury-Lewis conducted his fieldwork as a result of the relatively recent importance of interfacing with external social and political spheres.

Interviews with Suptó, Paulo, and influential elders provided important insight into how contemporary leaders understand the historical transformations in political process that occurred between Maybury-Lewis's time and the present. According to Chief Suptó, oral tradition tells that the Xavante were a politically united people for much

of history, with the influence of leadership being coordinated through the forum of the men's council (*warã*). The splintering of the Xavante people into politically autonomous subgroups, each with its own leaders, occurred when internal conflict turned segments of the population against one another during the occupation of the ancestral village Sõrepré. That event eventually led to internal conflict and the ultimate division of the Xavante population into. Then Vice-Chief Paulo also spoke of an important shift in leadership organization that occurred after Sõrepré, emphasizing the former plurality of leadership, whereby chieftainship was shared by respected elder males who built consensus in cooperation with the entire men's counsel. However, the internal conflict that began at Sõrepré precipitated authoritative forms of leadership, whereby single leaders manipulated the community and directed the benefits of their positions to their own close relatives. According to Paulo, leadership thereafter became more about individual power and much less of a cooperative process.

Suptó, Paulo, and other contemporary leaders at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhrítipá represented themselves as engaged in the work of reversing those patterns by promoting peaceful methods of dispute resolution and prioritizing the wellbeing of the whole community over personal or family interests. One way they did so was by deemphasizing the importance of their own contemporary formal leadership positions in favor of traditionalist versions of leadership based on the idea of multiple informal leaders whose status derives from a conjunction of genealogy, seniority, personal capacity, and prestige. Such informal leaders are not designated by special terms, but rather are simply recognized as mature adults (*iprédu*). That formulation led Suptó and Paulo to defer to the village elders who sat at the center of the men's council (*warã*) and commanded the

respect of the entire community. Thus, despite the recent innovation of relatively young and formally recognized leaders authorized to make decisions on behalf of the community, real power remained with influential leaders whose informal power largely followed the pattern described by Maybury-Lewis (1967:190-191, 198, 201).

Both Maybury-Lewis (1967:199) and Graham (1995:151) identify leaders as those who conventionally speak first and last in the men's council. During my research, those roles were nearly always filled by Sereburã, then one of the eldest and most respected men in the village. When Sereburã stood to open council discussion, he usually introduced subjects that had already captured the attention of the community and set into motion the task of discussing solutions. In his closing remarks, he often summarized the evening's discussions and, if appropriate, summarized the decisions that had been reached. In one sense, Sereburã seemingly spoke the mind of the community. In another, it was his word that transformed disparate voices into a unified resolution. Sereburã's methods illustrate Maybury-Lewis's (1967:196-204) and Graham's (1995:149-152) accounts of influence deriving from prestige, and prestige from the ability to facilitate collective decision-making. Sereburã's political influence in the community was at that time unchallenged, and yet his voice was not the voice of an individual. Sereburã spoke in dialogue with the community, with other senior leaders, and with his own political proximates. He spoke as a member of the mature adult age grade (*iprédu*), as an informal elder (*ĩhi*), and as a member of the senior *airere'rada* age set. He also spoke as a male, a member of the *poreza'õno* exogamous moiety, a senior owner of several heritable knowledge domains, the grandson of important historical leaders, and a real and categorical father to many younger men in the village. Sereburã's influence derived from

that robust confluence of social factors together with his own charismatic personality, practiced eloquence, lifelong leadership preparation, and willingness to defer to the collective will. The maintenance of his prestige under rapidly changing historical circumstances but according to traditionalist standards also depended on his willingness to lead alongside young bilingual individuals in new chiefly political roles.

Sereburã's example illustrates the relationship between political influence and political process and provides a point of departure for discussing the mutual importance of multiple systems for reckoning age, seniority, and rank for how power is distributed in the political arena. Symbolic of that political arena is the men's council, where Sereburã partially shed the divisive aspects of his political and social affiliations to facilitate the will of the community. The men's council is where the ideals of consensus and participation override the narrowed interests of individuals, families, and factions. It is also where those collective moralities most acutely mask abundant underlying inequalities that systematically disenfranchise certain segments of society. As Graham argued, the plurality of men's council discourse counteracts the oppositional forces of political factions (Graham 1995:149). During council meetings, numerous men speak simultaneously, expressing both agreement and disagreement, thereby submerging their own individuality to a cacophony of collectivity. However so, men's council conventions simultaneously promote power structures that prioritize maleness, seniority, and genealogical privilege.

Among the many divisive aspects of the political process, factionalism is the most widely recognized, having been a major theme in Maybury-Lewis's scholarship regarding the Xavante (1967). Indeed, factionalism is central to politics because esteemed

leaders like Sereburã earned their prestige through their endeavors as members of factions, retain such power through the continued support of their factions, and all the while assert the interests of their factions through behind-the-scenes politicking. However, factional politics is a somewhat more complex phenomenon than previously described, involving transitory alliances for limited purposes, diverse formulations of genealogical relatedness, and multiple systems of social hierarchy. Given that political dominance is accompanied by a host of other sociosymbolic prerogatives, and the inequalities of such dominance is masked by a morality of consensus politics, factionalism also permits certain segments of society to enjoy ideological hegemony. Their patrilineal associations, bilateral kin networks, and political ideologies become points of reference for the entire community, with all of its internal heterogeneity.

Periodically, when political tensions reach breaking points, the unifying forces of participatory politics fail and divisions are plainly exposed. At such moments of political breakdown, previously subordinate factions may assume more explicit political voice and community leaders may resort to opposition rather than reconciliation to resolve their differences. Ultimately, such conflicts may result in village separations, whereby subordinate factions leave to establish their own communities. This fissioning process is not recent. Xavante oral history describes a complex series of divisions and reunions since before the historical occupation of Sõrepre village, estimated to have been in the late nineteenth century (Silva 1992:366). With each such division, the collective memory of political relations gains an additional layer of complexity, providing another historical motivation, genealogical argument, or ideological justification for contemporary political prerogatives or disputes. Thus, each new political crisis involves a conjunction of recent

and historical factors that escalate the timbre of disagreement as they gain play in political discourse. When such factional conflict reaches the point of polarizing the entire community, individuals and families are forced to take sides, and social alignments within the community are overhauled.

That was my impression of the factional process as I observed it in the 2005-2006 division of Pimentel Barbosa village into two politically autonomous villages. I watched as relatives banded together in ideological opposition to segments of society they believed were guilty of contemporary and historical injustices. I listened to the stories of brothers who stopped speaking to one another and more distant relatives who claimed to have disowned each other because they were aligned with opposite sides of the factional dispute. Difficult choices were made when people took sides, discontinued friendships, and moved residences. Yet, through it all, I perceived that how people negotiated that tortuous rupture of the social environment was strongly influenced by how they fit into the fabric of Xavante sociality. They made those decisions individually and idiosyncratically, but all the while as members of age categories, kin networks, and genders. Just as Sereburã had once administered political consensus as a member of various social collectivities, each member of society navigated the terrain of political crisis as a member of multiple social bodies and statuses. In the remainder of this chapter I trace the interaction of such social factors in the political sphere by looking at configurations of political leadership, influence, and factionalism, the latter of which illustrates an additional, genealogical age hierarchy deriving from the kinship system.

5.2. Seniority and influence

5.2.1. Preludes to leadership

Although political participation may be reserved for male mature adults through their explicit inclusion in the men's council, the practice of leadership begins much earlier. As mentioned earlier, each age set is internally stratified by relative age and individualized through specific leadership positions. Those designations are made by parents and adult relatives according to a variety of criteria ranging from perceptions of relative age, kinship relations, and personal characteristics such as leadership potential, including discipline, sporting competence, physical size, and physical beauty. Being selected as age set elders or leaders is accompanied by expectations of exemplary behavior and assumption of responsibility for one's peers. Thus, even at early ages, the capacity for having differentiated social influence is associated with a conjunction of individual and genealogical factors, the majority of which are beyond a boys' own control and also underlie exceptional social personhood later in life. Furthermore, it is established at an early age that social inequality is compatible with the morality of collectivity that also accompanies group membership. Also, pre-initiate inequality prepares youth for the adult political process because it requires that youth adopt adult standards of behavior, such as subordinating individual agendas to that of the group, advocating social and cultural conformity among one's peers, and promoting the wishes of one's elders.

Once an age set reaches the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*), the process of age set leadership becomes somewhat more structured. No longer residing in the pre-initiate house, novitiate adult men hold evening council meetings (*warã*) in the village center to

the side of the mature adult men's council. Observing the aesthetic of opposite-side alternation, the position of each novitiate men's council relative to the mature adult men's council follows the location of their (now deconstructed) pre-initiate house: an age set whose pre-initiate house was on the left of the village holds its council to the left of the adult men's council, and vice versa. During their initial years as novitiates, members of an age set have few decisions to make and therefore little to discuss in their nightly council meetings. As I observed it, they usually spent that time in informal conversation followed by singing performances. After concluding my primary dissertation fieldwork some six months earlier, I returned to Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá immediately before the novitiate adults would be promoted to full mature adult status during the 5-yearly initiation rites (*danhono*). During that visit, I observed a striking difference in how the novitiate men went about their age set business. They seemed to take greater interest in organizing age set activities and had adopted a more formal format for nightly council meetings. Those discussions now mimicked the circular form and speech style of mature adult men's council meetings. One by one, young men stood in front of their peers to present their reports and opinions, while respected individuals sought through their opening and closing comments to crystallize the plurality of voices into collective decisions. Those meetings provided first opportunities for young men to practice political oration and, although they did not do so with the practiced skill of elders, they did make initial strides towards assuming the oratory conventions of adult political speech (Graham 1995).

5.2.2. Clarification of “lineages” and “clans”

As a point of clarification pertinent to the present discussion, I take issue with several ethnographic points made by Maybury-Lewis and used to construct his model of Xavante political process. According to him, Xavante “lineages” were relatively static corporate descent groups associated with one or the other of three patrilineal “clans” (Maybury-Lewis 1967:165-171). As the smallest unit of patrilineal membership, lineages formed the basis of the political system which, according to Maybury-Lewis, operated according to a symbolic equivalence between lineages, clans, and political factions (cf. Silva 1986:63). According to my contemporary data, that model requires substantial revision.

What Maybury-Lewis called patrilineal “lineages” correspond with what I call heritable knowledge ownerships with specific leadership prerogatives (see Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:121; Müller 1976:169-191; Silva 1986:177). Under their classical formulation in British Anthropology, lineages are corporate and exogamous unilineal descent groups (Fortes 1953; Fried 1957). However, Maybury-Lewis’s account of Xavante lineage names attests a certain lack of rigidity. As he wrote,

“[Lineage] names in themselves have no latent significance nor are they ordered in any specific fashion. They appear to be no more than convenient appellations that refer to some characteristic of the lineage. As a result there may be more than one conventional way of referring to a certain lineage within the community. At the same time, there is nothing to prevent different lineages from different communities from being referred to locally by the same name.” (Maybury-Lewis 1967:170)

Maybury-Lewis has been criticized elsewhere for applying the concept of lineage differently than its traditional usage (Shapiro 1971; Crocker 1974; Murphy 1979:221-222). He seems to have later recognized that technical difference when he argued that the nonconformity of Xavante lineages to lineage models is not because the Xavante lack

lineages, but because our models cast lineages in too rigid of terms (Maybury-Lewis 1979b:221-222; 1988:119). According to his position, unilineal descent should not be understood as a fixed rule but as an ideology than may operate differently according to contingencies and circumstances. Despite the appeal of that argument, his continued assertion that what he observed were in fact lineages suggests that he was unaware of certain aspects of how they operate.

Precedence for a reevaluation of Xavante “lineages” may be found in the work of Aracy Lopes da Silva and Regina A. P. Müller. Silva, whose fieldwork was completed among Xavante communities to the west, reinterpreted what Maybury-Lewis called “lineages” as prerogatives (*prerrogativas* in Portuguese), although her final conclusion closely follows his, whereby such ownerships produce patrilineages that act as social groups (Silva 1986:176-179). Müller, whose research was conducted at Areões and São Domingos villages, the latter being a predecessor to Pimentel Barbosa, described the “lineage” system in largely similar terms as I do (Müller 1976). She placed great emphasis on the mechanism of individualized transmission of secret knowledge rather than the corporateness of the patrilineal associations it may form through time. Furthermore, she questioned the structural pertinence of “lineages” to “clans,” arguing that there is in fact substantial variation in how lineage prerogatives are distributed between the clans and their members (Müller 1976:169-189). Neither author mentioned female knowledge ownerships.

Silva distinguished four categories of heritable prerogatives – nonmagical ritual functions, magical ritual functions, ornaments possession, and ornament use (Silva 1986:177). Her point that heritable ownerships are diverse is important, although her four

categories are somewhat limited and, in my opinion, not particularly revealing. From my point of view, the diversity of ownerships is important because they are not a single category of thing from the Xavante perspective. The suffix *-tede'wa* ("owner"), which marks most "lineage" names, may apply equally to weighty ceremonial functions or to common physical objects, such as a house (cf. Silva 1986:176). Although the former is distinguished from the latter because it involves secrecy and great import is placed on its intergenerational transmission, the difference is not marked linguistically. Accordingly, different ownerships may be transmitted according to different criteria (or not transmitted at all). The set of ownerships that gave rise to Maybury-Lewis's model of lineages share several common features. Most notably, they are associated with bodies of proprietary expertise, whether they be procedural, artistic, magical, or spiritual, to which male owners claim exclusive rights and reserve the right to transmit to their own sons or other designees. In some cases, they require years of paternal orientation that begins in childhood. The preference for transmitting secret knowledge from fathers to sons creates an assumption of heritability and an appearance of patrilineality. Furthermore, the owners of such knowledge are referred to by special designations indicating some basic aspect of their particular proprietary domains. However, because such designations indicate transmission of secret knowledge, and a proprietor may pass on his knowledge as he sees fit, loan it, or even have it stolen from him, they can follow other social paths of transmission as well (Müller 1976:178, 184; Silva 1986:177-178). However, other equally important types of secret knowledge have other features.

For example, secret female knowledge tends to be transmitted matrilineally between mothers and daughters. The most valued female secrets that I heard about

include matters related to pregnancy and childbirth, but also included such skills as ceramic manufacture and herbal knowledge. Women pass these secrets to their closest female associates in subsequent generations. Those usually are daughters and granddaughters, but also may include daughters-in-law. Female heritable knowledge is not considered categorically different than male knowledge, and from the Xavante perspective, is not transmitted differently – men pass knowledge to sons and women to daughters.

In conformity with Maybury-Lewis's observation of the nonexclusivity of "lineage" names, I observed heritable knowledge ownership to be nonexclusive, with many individuals claiming affiliation with more than one (Silva 1986:177-178). Also, whereas Maybury-Lewis emphasized the importance of lineages membership for the formation of groups of people, the characteristic that he thought gave them sociopolitical importance, I found the important social feature to be the transmission of secret information between individuals. Although such transmission may occur between fathers and sons, it also may not. In the case of female heritable knowledge, transmission usually occurs between mothers and daughters. Also, ownerships may be stolen or given to unrelated individuals in repayment of debts. For example, if someone saves another's life, he is owed a great debt. Prerogatives associated with heritable knowledge domain are considered very good gifts. Furthermore, with their emphasis on transmission of knowledge, the real power of heritable knowledge ownership lies with the senior living members in each line of transmission. They are often assumed to know the most, have the greatest command over that knowledge, and have certain exclusive prerogatives with regard to its deployment. Thus, contrary to Silva's findings (1986:177-179), I did not

encounter any expectation on the part of the Xavante or observe any behavior among them which would indicate that knowledge ownerships result in corporate social groups that act as politically cohesive units.

My proposition that heritable knowledge owners do not act corporately is supported by ethnographic observations during the 2005-2006 division of the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá community. In the months of political conflict leading up to the village separation, I heard numerous assertions by people on both sides of the dispute that certain individuals were no longer valid owners of their heritable knowledge. For example, during a census interview, I asked one man to confirm one of his in-laws' heritable knowledge ownerships. He informed me that they were, formerly, Peacekeepers (*wamãri'tede'wa* or *wamarĩzu'tede'wa*). However, he now denied that they remained so because they had not demonstrated fairness of judgment, a prerogative and responsibility of that specific proprietary knowledge, during the political conflict. In his opinion, they had forfeited that ownership by conducting themselves in manners contrary to its precepts. The fact that heritable knowledge ownerships were debated as a consequence of the political dispute is congruent with Maybury-Lewis's interpretation that political estrangement can justify changes in lineage membership (Maybury-Lewis 1967:170). However, in the cases I investigated, no one relinquished their claims to heritable knowledge ownerships (i.e., they did not switch "lineages" to match their political alliances). Furthermore, the substance of those accusations had less to do with genealogy and more to do with whether individuals had fulfilled the obligations associated with their knowledge prerogatives.

Another example serves to illustrate that heritable knowledge ownerships were not a basis of political organization. After the political division, Antônio was the only senior Owner of the *Tebe* Mask (*tepé'tede'wa*) in either village. His services in selecting certain age set leaders (*tebe*) from among the pre-initiates were required by both villages for the age set initiation rites of 2006. Consequently, and perhaps begrudgingly, he was allowed by his political adversaries to make those decisions for their separate village, Etênhiritipá. Were *tepé'tede'wa* a unit of political organization, and thus structurally opposed to members of the other faction/village, it seems unlikely they would have sought out its senior member to be involved in their initiation ceremonies.

Another point of clarification regarding Maybury-Lewis's structural analysis is that what he called exogamous "clans" are, in their contemporary formulation at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá, exogamous moieties. According to Maybury-Lewis's model of three Xavante clans, Face Circle (*topdató*) complicates the otherwise reciprocal exogamy between the Tadpole (*poreza'õno*) and Big Water (*õwawe*). He reconciled this problem by uniting the Face Circle and Big Water under the umbrella of an unnamed exogamous moiety. However, Face Circle is today understood within the community as the name for a graphic symbol painted on the face by Naming Ceremony Coordinators (*a'uté'manhãri'wa*)⁶⁴ (Figure 11). Until recently, Naming Ceremony Coordinators presided over the knowledge and rights involved in conducting female naming ceremonies, which was an important rite of passage in the recent historical past

⁶⁴ My Xavante informants translated *a'uté'manhãri'wa* as Women's Naming Ceremony Coordinator. I abbreviate it as "Naming Ceremony Coordinator." Possible literal translations include "baby maker" or "baby organizer."

(Maybury-Lewis 1967:310; Müller 1976:176). According to Maybury-Lewis, Naming Ceremony Coordinator was one of two lineages in the Face Circle clan (Maybury-Lewis 1967:310).

A possible explanation for the discrepancy between my findings and those of Maybury-Lewis's is that the situation has changed over time. Maybury-Lewis's account affords the Face Circle designation a great deal of ambiguity, being somewhat intermediary between an independent clan and a subgroup within the Big Water moiety (Maybury-Lewis 1967:165-171). Such ambiguous and historically inconsistent clans have been documented elsewhere in Amazonia (Kracke 1978:13; Coimbra 1989:141). Were the ambiguities he attributed to Face Circle the result of it having been at that time in a process of historical transformation, it is conceivable that the community might now understand it in terms different from those documented by Maybury-Lewis. However, all of the elder adult men I interviewed who were alive and present when Maybury-Lewis conducted his fieldwork, insisted emphatically that Face Circle was *never* a "clan" (for independent corroboration of this finding, see the personal communication by Graham in Coimbra et al. 2002:277). Furthermore, they asserted that Face Circle has no relationship to the Tadpole and Big Water moieties other than that it so happens that at Pimentel Barbosa all Naming Ceremony Coordinators are members of the Big Water exogamous moiety. Furthermore, they explicitly denied that there should necessarily be such an association between Naming Coordinators and Big Water or that there is any systematic proscription against Naming Coordinators in the Tadpole moiety marrying members of the Big Water exogamous moiety.

Agostinho, the senior Naming Ceremony Coordinator at Pimentel Barbosa village when I was in the field, provided another plausible explanation. He suggested that individuals in the village do not often discuss Naming Coordinators or their affairs, even with each other, because their knowledge is closely held and not of appropriate interest to the community at large. Accordingly, Maybury-Lewis may have encountered great reticence on the part of his informants to discuss with him the Face Circle symbol or Naming Coordinator knowledge. Corroborating Agostinho's explanation is my own experience of encountering overwhelming reluctance on the part of community members to discuss with me the subject of Face Circle. For over one year my questions were met with such conflicting and evasive answers that I nearly gave up. Other researchers have encountered similar resistance when attempting to investigate the nature of Face Circle (Müller 1976; Nancy Flowers, personal telephone communication, November 6, 2007; Vianna 2008:90). I suspect that my, and perhaps other researchers', questions regarding Face Circle were met with systematic noncooperation because of its association with female naming initiation rites, administered by Naming Ceremony Coordinators, that involved group sex between mature males and young adolescent girls and the community's acute knowledge that outsiders often disapprove of such "immoral" activities (cf. Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:235-248; Graham 1995:258). According to my sources, the girls' naming ceremony was discontinued in the early 1980s due to growing sentiment on the part of adult men that it caused girls pain and provoked jealousy among men.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Discontinuation of the Xavante female naming ceremony amidst increased jealousy

For the most part, my genealogical data, derived from my own research and integrated with those from earlier eras collected by Maybury-Lewis (1967:340-341) and Nancy Flowers (unedited data from 1976, 1990, and 1996), are consistent with both accounts. In 2006 there were three living individuals whom Maybury-Lewis had identified as Face Circle and living children of another three deceased males that he had denoted as Face Circle. In all of those cases, individuals formerly identified as (or whose fathers were identified as) Face Circle had married members of the Tadpole moiety. Furthermore, all but one living offspring of Face Circle fathers, who should, according to the rule of patrilineality, identify themselves as Face Circle, do not. Instead, they identify themselves as Big Water. That scenario could have resulted from Maybury-Lewis having identified some Big Water moiety members as Face Circle or from former Face Circle individuals having redefined themselves as Big Water.

Historical and genealogical evidence, however, supports the interpretation that Face Circle was previously misrepresented by anthropologists. In 1977, Nancy Flowers observed a man by the name of Abzú wearing the trademark Face Circle symbol on his face during a women's naming ritual (Figure 11). According to my informants and abundant published sources, central aspects of the female naming ceremonies were administered by Naming Ceremony Coordinators (Maybury-Lewis 1967:151; Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:221-234; Silva 1986:125). According to Flower's field notes, when she asked Abzú if he were Face Circle, he replied in the negative, affirming that he

between spouses has a parallel in the end of the Canela practice of extramarital sex following social and economic changes in the postcontact era (Crocker and Crocker 2004:126-129).

was Big Water and implying that he applied the Face Circle markings as a joke (Nancy Flowers, unedited field notes, July 5, 1977). Furthermore, he explicitly denied that there were Face Circle individuals present at the ceremony. According to Flower's census data, Abzú was a Sacred Powder Owner (*zusi'wa*) and in the Big Water moiety. However, my own census data show that Abzú's son, Benedito, who was alive during my fieldwork, was not only a Sacred Powder Owner, but also a Naming Ceremony Coordinator. If Maybury-Lewis's model were correct and Abzú's claim to not being affiliated with the Face Circle symbol was truthful, it would produce an inconsistency, whereby Abzú would have to have belonged to two different lineages, his own, Sacred Powder Owner, and that of his son, Naming Ceremony Coordinator, or that his son acquired his Naming Ceremony Coordinator status through some other, non-patrilineal, vehicle. However, those inconsistencies disappear if "lineage" status is nonexclusive. If Benedito received his status as a Naming Ceremony Coordinator from his father, Abzú, which is most likely considering the tendency for heritable knowledge to be passed from fathers to sons, then Abzú was probably performing his functions as a Naming Ceremony Coordinator when Flowers observed him with the Face Circle mark on his face. In that case, the only discrepancy would be that Abzú claimed to have applied the Face Circle mark as a joke during the women's naming ceremonies. Given that contemporary Xavante identify those ceremonies as the special prerogative of Naming Ceremony Coordinators that use the Face Circle symbol, that Naming Ceremony Coordinators were responsible for group sexual relations with the young girls being named, and that there is a historical pattern of concealing those activities from outsiders, it would appear likely that Abzú was not

truthful and in fact wore it in his ceremonial capacity as a Naming Ceremony Coordinator.

Interestingly, when Abzú denied that any there were any Face Circle individuals at the women's naming ceremonies attended by Flowers in 1977, he then proceeded to list for her all of the Big Water adult males who were present (Nancy Flowers, unedited field notes, July 5, 1977). Of the 12 names he provided, two were identified in Maybury-Lewis's genealogies as Face Circle (Maybury-Lewis 1967:340-341). Furthermore, if any Big Water moiety member may also be associated with Naming Ceremony Coordinator ownership and the Face Circle symbol, as I postulate was the case for Abzú, as many as 11 of those 12 individuals potentially could have been Naming Ceremony Coordinator heritable knowledge owners without contradicting Abzú's claim that there were no Face Circle individuals present.

If my Xavante sources are correct in their assertion that Face Circle was never a "clan," but rather is a graphic symbol associated with Naming Ceremony Coordinator heritable knowledge ownership, it is difficult to imagine how Maybury-Lewis's model came to be repeated by two generations of scholars. It could be an example of paradigmatic thought, whereby anthropologists misinterpreted their own data because they assumed a respected senior scholar's model was correct, or of junior scholars deferring to the representations of such senior scholars (here, Maybury-Lewis). If, on the other hand, those anthropologists accurately described a system of three clans, including the ambiguous Face Circle clan, my informants' disagreement with that model would indicate that recent historical transformation at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhrítipá has changed the system. In either event, I submit that it is essential that these social

configurations, as they occur today at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá, be accurately identified as heritable knowledge ownerships and patrilineal exogamous moieties, not “lineages” and “clans.” It also appears necessary that further research be conducted in multiple Xavante communities to confirm whether my findings at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá are consistent with contemporary representations of these configurations in other Xavante communities. Genealogy is at least as wrapped up in knowledge transmission across generations as it is in ‘biological’ transmission, if not more so.

5.2.3. Leadership and the men’s council (*warã*)

Upon reaching the mature adult age grade (*iprédu*), all males enjoy the right to participate in the men’s council (*warã*), giving the political process a presumption of collectivity. Indeed, the fact of airing an issue at the council implies that dissenters had the opportunity to speak out and that the course of action taken reflects the will of the community. However the collectivity of the council is accompanied by systems of internal stratification that differentiate the distribution of influence among its members. Three important bases for power disparities in the men’s council are relative age, exogamous moiety membership, and heritable knowledge ownership.

Just as age set membership is a most salient means of reckoning age in daily life, so it is in the men’s council. The newest participants in the council are always members of the most recent age set to have entered the mature adulthood (*iprédu*). As mentors (*danhohui’wa*) to the pre-initiates (*wapté*), they have reason to be more concerned with affairs in the pre-initiate house than with community political affairs. Congruent with that

priority, by convention members of that youngest set limit their participation in the men's council to listening and making peripheral background comments. In fact, they position themselves spatially around the periphery of the council circle and rarely, if ever, stand to make a principle address. It might be said that being a member of the youngest age set in the adult men's council is an opportunity to prepare for future leadership, just as being pre-initiates and novitiate adults gave age set leaders the opportunity to practice their political skills.

It is only as members of older age sets that mature men who have the benefit of years of observation and peripheral participation that an individual might presume to take a more principal role, standing to speak and thereby sway the decision making process. Thus, it is not incorrect to say that political influence comes with seniority in the men's council. However, so many factors influence who is considered senior and what that means to any other given person that it is a statement with limited analytical utility. Obviously, age set membership is an important factor. All other things being equal, members of older age sets are thought to deserve more respect, deference, and political influence than members of younger age sets. However, political influence also depends on one's prestige, which, as we have already seen, depends on one's genealogy, seniority within his age set, and personal merits. Thus, it is likely that an age set elder with a strong personality and recognized competitive skills will be more vocal and have more influence in the men's council than a meek individual from an older age set. This was certainly the case at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhrítipá, where members of eldest seven age sets (roughly consistent with designation as members of the elder age grade (*ĩhi*) were the most active

principal speakers.⁶⁶ However, between those senior members of the men's council, age set membership was not directly associated with inclination to speak. One of the least vocal individuals was Darú, a member of the eldest age set and thus one of the two eldest males in the village. Darú was widely respected for his extensive knowledge of the past, kind nature, and exceptional skill with handicrafts. However, Darú characterized himself as someone who prefers to work instead of speak, perhaps explaining his customary silence in the council. In contrast, Barbosa, among the most vocal of the men's council seniors, belonged to the fourth eldest age set and was therefore considerably junior to Darú. Barbosa was an extroverted man, as confident in his oratory skills as he was opinionated. In my estimation, Barbosa was likely to follow Sereburã as informal community leader despite his relative youth among senior mature men.

5.2.4. Exogamous moiety ranking

Another aspect of political influence is exogamous moiety membership, which is a pervasive social distinction with ramification throughout social life. As discussed above, moiety membership is inherited patrilineally, with children of Tadpole (*poreza'õno*) fathers being Tadpole and children of Big Water (*õwawe*) fathers being Big Water. One of the most important expressions of moiety affiliation is its role in regulating marriage, with marriage to members of one's own moiety being considered incestuous and disrespectful. Although I heard reports that other Xavante communities no longer marry according to moiety affiliation, at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá it remains a

⁶⁶ Maybury-Lewis similarly wrote that the five eldest age sets were the most active speakers in the *warã* in 1958-1962.

primary factor in spouse selection. I encountered only one intra-moiety marriage at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhriritipá and found that it was held in some disesteem by others. Nevertheless, I did not perceive that they were disrespected as individuals or treated differently than other couples. Several individuals confirmed that people did not talk about it publicly out of deference to the children, whose blood was privately thought by some people to be unclean. As mentioned in Chapter 2, moiety affiliation derives from the idea that the essence of fetal substance, blood (*dawapru*), derives equally from both mother and father, but because male blood stronger than female blood, a child gains its father's moiety identity. Moiety identity is not viewed as a matter of choice or otherwise alterable. In the example of intra-moiety marriage given above, I encountered no ambiguity as to the moiety affiliation of the children – they belonged to their father's moiety.

Additionally, I found moiety affiliation to be accompanied by a series of rights and responsibilities that directly influenced the political process. According to Paulo, then Vice-Chief of the village and a member of the Big Water moiety, “We are the servants of the Tadpole moiety. We defend them and sweep up after them.” As he explained, the Tadpole moiety has ultimate decision-making authority, with the right to appoint official leaders from among their own ranks. Under the contemporary structure of formal chieftainship, Tadpole individuals may be chiefs and Big Water individuals may be vice-chiefs.⁶⁷ Under the informal process of men's council leadership, Tadpole

⁶⁷ In 2005, then Vice-Chief Paulo told me that the Tadpole moiety leadership prerogative did not preclude the possibility of Big Water moiety members being appointed as primary chiefs (*cacique*, in Portuguese). He explained that Tadpole elders could decide to

individuals are seen as having prerogatives of facilitation and diplomacy as well as the responsibility to respect the opinions of Big Water individuals. Effectively, this configuration amounts to a hierarchical ranking of the two moieties, with Big Water in subordinate position to Tadpole.⁶⁸ Thus, other configurations of age hierarchy and seniority may be subverted by one's exogamous moiety ranking. However, that characterization may oversimplify the complex factors involved in their separation of powers.

The symbolic relationship between the Tadpole and Big Water moieties may be inferred from the mythic oral history of two formal friends (*ĩ'amo*) who, as pre-initiates (*waptê*), created many animals (Sereburã et al. 1998:38-50). As mentioned in Chapter 2, formal friends always pertain to opposite exogamous moieties in expression of an aesthetic of balance between the two. In this case, the Tadpole friend repeatedly asked his Big Water friend, "What shall we create now?" The Big Water friend always replied, "You choose!" The Tadpole friend would then choose an animal and bring it into being. In that dynamic, the power of creation was in the pair of friends, but reserved for the Tadpole friend were the roles of initiator, decider, and doer. In contrast, the Big Water friend acted as supporter, agreeer, and watcher. In contemporary political life, members of

temporarily loan that prerogative to the Big Water moiety should it be in the best interest of the community, i.e. if a Big Water individual were best qualified. Interestingly, that came to pass in 2007, when the Tadpole chief of Etênheritipá village (recently separated from Pimentel Barbosa village) died. At that time, the Tadpole elders at Etênheritipá elected Paulo, formerly Vice-Chief, as Chief. They also appointed as his Vice-Chief a younger Tadpole individual, Caimi. Presumably, when Caimi is older and has more experience as a community leader, he will be a likely candidate for the position as primary chief.

⁶⁸ Moiety ranking appears to be a common feature of Gê-speaking groups and throughout indigenous South America (Lévi-Strauss 1944).

the Big Water moiety are not nearly as bound by social convention as the mythological Big Water creator.⁶⁹ However, it is their own opinion that their proper political role is to support the Tadpole moiety in its rightful role as primary decision makers and action takers.

5.2.5. Heritable knowledge ownerships

It is difficult to differentiate between the rights and responsibilities attributed to each patrilineal moiety and those attributed to the heritable knowledge owners that belong to members of each moiety, a situation I suspect may have contributed to Maybury-Lewis's assumption of a certain hegemonic congruence between "lineages" (heritable knowledge ownerships) and "clans" (exogamous moieties). Just as people speak of the prerogatives of the patrilineal moieties Tadpole and Big Water, they also speak of the prerogatives associated with male heritable knowledge ownerships. There is a great deal of overlap between the two frames of reference. For example, the vast majority of Tadpole moiety members at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá during my research were associated with three heritable knowledge ownerships: Owners of Non-Indigenous People (*warazú'tede'wa*),⁷⁰ Peacekeepers (*wamãri'tede'wa* or *wamarĩzu'tede'wa*), and Owners of the Sun Ceremony (*pahöri'wa'tede'wa*).⁷¹ Because so few members of the Tadpole moiety did not belong to these knowledge groups, people

⁶⁹ In other settings, the social dynamics between members of the two moieties may be more aptly described as reciprocal or competitive.

⁷⁰ Xavante informants indicate that *warazú'tede'wa* status implies that one is skilled at interacting with non-indigenous people.

⁷¹ *Pahöri'wa* is also a pre-initiate ceremonial position.

often spoke of their respective rights and responsibilities as pertaining to the moiety, thus blurring the boundary between knowledge ownerships and moieties. In fact, that close alignment between the Tadpole moiety and its knowledge domains created a certain knowledge ownership hegemony, where the interests associated with those knowledge domains came to stand for the interests of the moiety.

A similar parsing of the rights and responsibilities of the Big Water moiety according to its affiliated knowledge domains may also be done, but not as neatly because the Big Water moiety is more internally diverse in that respect. Four heritable knowledge domains are frequently spoken of as belonging to the Big Water moiety and therefore similarly serve to blur the distinction between them. These are Snake Owner (*wāhi'tede'wa*), Owner of the *Tebe* Mask ⁷² (*tepé'tede'wa*), White-lipped Peccary Owner (*uhö'tede'wa*), and Naming Ceremony Coordinator (*a'uté'manhāri'wa*). Although affiliation with those four knowledge ownerships was not as pervasively distributed throughout the Big Water moiety as were the three knowledge ownerships associated with the Tadpole moiety, I did note a strong tendency for people to refer to them as prerogatives of the Big Water moiety.

Paulo's statement that his Big Water moiety is politically subordinate to the Tadpole moiety may be placed in context by examining the respective roles of the heritable knowledge ownerships conventionally associated with each of the moieties. Interestingly, some of the rights and privileges associated with the Tadpole-affiliated knowledge ownerships are especially relevant for the practice of leadership. One,

⁷² *Tebe* is also a pre-initiate ceremonial position.

warazú'tede'wa, involves proprietary knowledge regarding relations with non-indigenous people (*warazú*). Membership is thus accompanied by the responsibility to administer external relations in the post-contact era. Another, *wamãri'tede'wa* (or *wamarĩzu'tede'wa*) involves secret knowledge that gives its members clarity of vision and the ability to justly mediate conflicting interests within the community. Membership, therefore, is associated with responsibility for facilitating internal community politics with evenhandedness and neutrality. Each of those two domains of secret knowledge bears importantly on who is entrusted with leadership power. In contrast, the ownerships predominantly associated with the Big Water moiety do not involve prerogatives with similarly direct implications for political leadership. Thus, the distribution of heritable knowledge ownerships between the moieties is congruent with the cultural assumption that political leadership is mainly a Tadpole moiety prerogative.

Understanding the power inequalities between the two moieties in terms of their associations with different heritable knowledge prerogatives that lend more political power to the Tadpole moiety recasts their stratification in less absolute terms. The potential value of this approach is apparent because the ownership-moiety configurations I encountered at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá are quite different from those observed on other Xavante communities (Müller 1976:181). This approach is also a way of formulating moiety inequality in a way that recognizes the particular forms of power associated with the Big Water moiety and not the Tadpole Moiety. My interpretation derives from the nature of secret knowledge ownership and its implications for group decision-making processes. According to Giaccaria and Heide,

“All of these ‘authorities’ [ownerships] have an action that we would call particularly trusted advisors: their judgment prevails over that of men and

elders of the same group, their advice is heard with respect and put into practice; if it should happen that one of these individuals has a particularly strong and numerous family, and has particularly gifted people, such as an orator, then his influence comes to be imposed over other groups within the village.” (Giaccaria and Heide 1972 [1984]:122)

Specifically, the eldest individuals among a particular set of knowledge owners are considered senior. They are the ultimate authorities on their knowledge domains, responsible for passing their knowledge on to their next of kin before they die (else the knowledge terminate), exercising the particular prerogatives pertaining to their ownerships, and advising the community on matters they, alone, are considered qualified to advise. Knowledge ownership therefore piggybacks the political process by introducing an additional aspect of age seniority within topical domains of general community interest.

For example, should a White-lipped Peccary Owner (*uhö'tede'wa*) offer his services to the community by coordinating a collective hunt, the community would generally consider itself best served by following his advice. Such political influence, based on secret and closely held information, is not earned in the same externally demonstrated fashion as other forms of politically relevant prestige. It is a form of influence derived from knowledge that is learned and practiced outside the view of the public and therefore externally unverifiable in any direct manner. That knowledge is uncompromisingly guarded such that no White-lipped Peccary Owner would reveal the details of his practice and no respectful non-White-lipped Peccary Owner would seek to know them. Furthermore, it is a political power based in mystery because most of the presumptions about the specific nature or extent of an individuals' knowledge are based on speculation. Thus, the veil of secrecy that surrounds heritable knowledge protects it from theft, discourages challenges, and encourages exaggeration (or understatement).

The prestige deriving from senior ownership of heritable knowledge overlaps with that deriving from senior status in the spiritual hierarchy because both are involved in the acquisition of supernatural power. Just as membership in the senior spiritual grade of post-officiants (*wai'a'rada*) gives one presumptive spiritual power for having passed all of the phases and learned all of the secrets required for spiritual maturity, senior knowledge ownership gives one presumptive dominion over a valued body of secret, often magical, knowledge. It seems to me these two forms of power can reinforce each other even though there are differences between them. According to my limited understanding, exceptional spiritual power depends on one's successful access to supernatural beings (spirits and ancestors) during spiritual rituals (*wai'a*). In contrast, heritable knowledge is often relatively more concrete, entailing factual knowledge of certain objects, ingredients, or formulas with specific physical or magical properties.

For example, Xavante males wear wooden ear spools made of specific woods believed to produce desirable effects. Knowledge of some such woods is retained as heritable knowledge domains and thus only senior knowledge owners manufacture the ear plugs. I was told that one such secret wood is worn as an ear spool by men desiring sexual encounters with women because it causes women to find the wearer irresistible. Men who are not owners of that particular knowledge domain were allowed to use those ear plugs, but did so by placing orders with senior knowledge owners. I was told this particular type of ear spool was particularly sought by some young men while living in Brazilian cities. In such cases, young travelers sometimes placed orders for ear spools with the help of younger knowledge owners who had access to telephones and mail services.

Examples of heritable knowledge domains that I heard about ranged from the most mundane of technological skills to the most transmundane of supernatural practices. At one extreme was the now discontinued art of pottery, which is a female proprietary knowledge domain that came to be discontinued in recent prehistoric times. Although two owners of that knowledge remain alive, they have not yet passed it on to their daughters, granddaughters, or other appropriate members of younger generations. I was told that when pottery-making was actively practiced, these women enclosed the work area with a brush fence to ensure that non-owners could not watch. When other women desired pots, they would place requests with these women. At the other end of the spectrum was proprietary knowledge of the proper use of certain naturally occurring sacred substances that produce spiritual clarity. Although female pottery manufacture and male spiritual clarity are quite divergent skills, the principles of their ownership and transmission are largely similar.

It was not coincidental that the most powerful of heritable knowledge owners also tend to be highly respected spiritual practitioners through their participation in the spiritual hierarchy. For the Xavante, different forms of personal power are interconnected. Spiritual power and physical strength are two aspects of the same phenomenon. Similarly, magical power and spiritual power are achieved during the course of long lives, reinforcing the social prestige that otherwise accompanies advanced age, and thereby augmenting one's social standing and political influence. For example, I was told stories about a man with extraordinary spiritual powers who died during the contact era. That man could kill birds in the sky or animals in underground tunnels by pointing at them. He had the ability to do the same to his enemies, but chose not to

because he was a good man. Although his power derived from his participation in collective spiritual rituals (*wai'a*), it also derived from his own secret knowledge ownerships. However, because that man did not pass that knowledge to anyone, it died with him.

Particularly germane to the discussion of political influence is sorcery (*abzé*). If heritable knowledge is particularly vulnerable to gossip because of the secrecy that surrounds it, knowledge of sorcery is doubly so. As Silva wrote,

“Among the Xavante, magical knowledge is not the exclusive privilege of certain social groups. There are no shamans, as a specific function. Such knowledge is dispersed among the various descent groups and are maintained in secret and transmitted patrilineally, since each group maintains exclusive knowledge. There are power disputes and quarrels among the various descent groups regarding the relative efficacy of the knowledge and secrets of each.” (Silva 1986:104)

With very little concrete information regarding the sorcerous capacities of heritable knowledge owners, people seek to assess their allies and opponents through the informal channels of suspicion and innuendo. Because reputations as powerful sorcerers are earned indirectly based on covertly exercised powers, the forms of influence they facilitate in the political arena are backdoor and latent, quite the contrary of other overt forms of influence involved in public leadership. Under the best of political circumstances, when community discord is minimal, the ambiguous potentialities of sorcerers may contribute to undercurrents of respect or concern in political discourse. However, when political tensions rise and factional politics motivate people to scrutinize the social landscape, talk about sorcery amplifies. Threats stimulate sorcery accusations and those accusations lead to retaliations. Under such circumstances, the latent social power deriving from presumed ownership of sorcery knowledge becomes manifest.

I heard many sorcery accusations and threats during my fieldwork, one of which prompted village leaders to ask me to leave the village, for my own safety, until tempers calmed. In some cases, accusations followed circumstantial evidence, such as physical proximity followed by a death. In other cases, accusations were based mainly on patrilineal associations with heritable knowledge. For example, one man accused another of supernatural maleficence because his deceased father was suspected of having killed an entire village with sorcery. In another example, a man expressed fear for his life because he suspected retaliation after being accused of murder by a family known to have powerful knowledge ownerships. In those cases and others, suspicions of sorcery knowledge ownership were transformed into verbal action as people sought to discredit opponents, incite fear, and justify aggression. Although each such example involved a unique conflict dynamic between specific individuals, they all occurred within a single context of factional politics between 2005 and 2006 that culminated in the village dividing in two. For example, I heard multiple sorcery accusations attributed to members of one or the other faction for desiring to impoverish, handicap, or distress pivotal members of the other faction. Accordingly, sorcery discourse leveraged the ambiguity of heritable knowledge prestige as a strategy in political conflict, thereby transforming previously latent political powers into real forms of influence.

Political prestige and influence, whether derived from reputations as sorcerers, explicit heritable knowledge ownerships, or overt political leadership skills, are also inseparable from notions of age. All of the examples of political power discussed in this section demonstrate that senior status may be reckoned in multiple ways in diverse social contexts. In the case of heritable knowledge, status as a senior owner often overlaps with

and reinforces other forms of age seniority, with elders in one domain also having influence as seniors in other domains. However, that is not always the case, because such senior status and the reputation for having powerful command over that knowledge is achieved through the secretive process of knowledge transmission, the sensationalistic processes of gossip and rumor, and the expiration of one's predecessors, all of which may come at a relatively young age. Thus, one may achieve senior status in a particular domain despite being junior in any number of other age-based hierarchies, such as formal age grade status, informal age grade status, age set membership, age set leadership appointments, or spiritual grade membership. These all contribute to the multiple and contingent ways in which people understand their own hierarchical status and negotiate that status relative to others.

5.3. Political factionalism and notions of relatedness

In the previous section, I discussed some of the ways hierarchies of age condition how people negotiate seniority, influence, and power in the political arena. I sought to show that the political process involves not only those age hierarchies presented in previous chapters (age grades and age sets), but also other means of reckoning social seniority (political prestige and heritable knowledge seniority) and social identity (exogamous moieties and heritable knowledge ownerships). Those relationships highlight multiple ways that the social construction of authority implicates notions of relatedness. Thus, those who have and exercise political power do so through a matrix of social relationships that affect what it means to be older/younger, senior/junior, or dominant/subordinate. In this section, I focus on political factionalism in order to

demonstrate that the social meaning of age hierarchy is also deeply contingent upon notions of familial and genealogical relatedness. That idea was foreshadowed by the importance of exogamous moieties and heritable knowledge ownerships for political power. However, notions of relatedness among the Xavante also involve an intricate kinship terminology that contributes to the pervasiveness of genealogical formulations of sameness and otherness in the political process. I argue here that how people construe relatedness involves a genealogical age hierarchy that is integral to how seniority and influence find expression in factional politics.

5.3.1. Factions, moieties, and heritable knowledge

Central to Maybury-Lewis's analysis of Xavante factionalism is a symbolic congruence between heritable knowledge ownership ("lineage"), exogamous moiety ("clan"), and political faction. He proposed a fundamental cognitive opposition between two categories, "our people" (*waniwĩhã*) and "other people" (*wasi're'wa*), which he described as the logic behind the emic formulation of exogamous moiety ("clan") membership (Maybury-Lewis 1967:167). Because moiety membership is patrilineal and regulates marriage through the division of society into two exogamous halves, it is also closely related to the etic notion of consanguinity and affinity (relations with a member of one's own moiety is incest). On the other hand, factionalism, in his formulation, is a separate but related ideology to that of moiety membership. Unlike moiety membership, which is given by birth, factional affiliation is assumed through more flexible politicosocial processes that associate some people and disassociate others. Thus, in his formulation, moieties are categories of people whereas factions are groups of people.

Despite those distinctions, Maybury-Lewis proposed an important structural equivalence between moieties and factions, whereby fellow moiety members are assumed to be potential factional allies, and opposite-moiety members are assumed to be likely factional opponents (Maybury-Lewis 1967:167-168). In my opinion, the most relevant aspect of Maybury-Lewis's model is the complex and equivocal process whereby factionalism finds expression in the "we/they" moiety dichotomy. Maybury-Lewis found an essential link in the kinship terminology, whereby different terms are used for those one considers "my people" as opposed to "other people," irrespective of their genealogical relationships to ego (Maybury-Lewis 1967:169). An important point in that model is that although the us/them distinction formally indicates moiety membership, it is also construed variously according to a nested series of us-them categories in decreasing order of inclusiveness: "my people" or "my moiety" (*waniwĩhã*), "my faction" (*wasiwadi*), "my close kin" (*wasisinawa*), and "my lineage" ("*ĩ-hitebre*" for males and "*ĩ-hidibá*" for females). According to the logic of Maybury-Lewis's model, members of one's own moiety are potentially one's factional allies, one's factional allies are thought of as close kin, and one's close kin are most concretely traced through lineages. In the kinship terminology, "my people" terms are not used for one's same moiety members unless they are a member of one's political faction, that being a condition for considering them one's own people. Similarly, "my people" kin terms may, optionally, be used for members of one's faction, but are always used for one's close kin and, even more axiomatically, members of one's lineage. Lineages, then, are the most restricted formulation of "my people" and, unlike exogamous moieties, which are mere classes of people, operate in the political arena as corporate groups. Thus, political opposition

operates socially through lineages but comes to be expressed symbolically in the exogamous moiety dichotomy.

That model well accounts for the interdependence of kinship and politics, the hegemonic dominance of “lineages” and “clans” in community politics, and abundant ambiguities in how people speak about kinship associations. More specifically, it accounts adequately for the apparent overlap between kinship and political associations at different levels of integration, especially a saturation of the political process by micro- and macro-patrilineal ideologies. For those reasons, Maybury-Lewis’s model is analytically useful and should not be disregarded. However, I encountered discrepancies in Maybury-Lewis’s formulations of Xavante politico-patrilineality at several levels of analysis, leading me to conclude that certain central aspects of his model do not apply to the ethnographic setting at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá as I encountered it.

Starting at the broadest level of Maybury-Lewis’s model of sidedness, I found the term *waniwĩmhã* (my orthography), in its contemporary usage, not to mean “people of my side” in some essential sense deriving from consanguinity and political solidarity, but rather to mean “our side” in any sense of the word, including such unrelated formulations as soccer teams, hemispheres of the village, or hunting teams. It may also be used, and, according to several of my informants, is more frequently used, to indicate sidedness in terms of age set moieties, with all of their contrastive logic based on mentorship and rivalry. It is not a privileged word in Xavante social ideology, but rather one among

several terms that indicate sidedness.⁷³ Furthermore, semantically speaking, *waniwĩmhã* is not opposed by the term *wasi're'wa*, as given by Maybury-Lewis. The appropriate antonym to *waniwĩmhã* is *õniwĩmhã* (“their side”), which has the same liberty of applicability to any scenario involving sidedness. In contrast to Maybury-Lewis’s findings, my informants did not identify a specific term that indicates membership in one’s same exogamous moiety (although there are several terms for same-moiety categorical siblings that may be extended to unknown members of one’s exogamous moiety, as discussed below). However, my findings confirm the use of *wasi're'wa* (or *siré'wa*) to refer specifically to members of the opposite exogamous moiety. It may be glossed as “our colleague,” and is, according to my informants, a respectful way of referring to members of the opposite moiety because it emphasizes the reciprocal unity between them rather than emphasizing their contrasts. I also encountered another term that is specifically used to refer to members of the opposite exogamous moiety, although its application is more restricted. Many situations that call for the formal ordering of individuals in lines, circles, and pairs (e.g., ceremonial processions, song performances, political discourse, and food queues in the schoolhouse) involve a preference for exogamous moiety alternation. In other words, members of the same moiety should not, ideally, stand adjacent to one another. The term *wa'uiwada'wa* is used in such

⁷³ Two such sets of oppositional terms, with much the same semantic applicability as *waniwĩmhã* and *õniwĩmhã* are *wahõibaniwĩmhã* ‘people on our side’ and *õhõhõibaniwĩmhã* ‘people on their side.’ Also, *wasiréhã* may be used to indicate any group of three people or to refer to a person who is “with us” in any sense, whether it be as a member of the same exogamous moiety, age set moiety, team, workgroup, or any other conjunction of individuals.

circumstances to refer to people who stands adjacent to you and are therefore members of the opposite moiety.

An implication of the semantic discrepancies between my data and Maybury-Lewis's model is that sidedness terms tend not privilege moiety affiliation, political faction, or any other level of opposition encompassed by his model. The fact that some of those words may be used to indicate both exogamous moiety affiliation and political faction does not necessarily imply symbolic or structural congruence between those notions, but rather derives from the semantic nonspecificity of the terms. Furthermore, their broad semantic applicability for different configurations of sidedness suggests that the logic of the terms is not adequate argumentation for an essential and pervasive binary division of Xavante society any more than do the existence of such widely used terms as *side*, *team*, and *party* in English.

At the next level of Maybury-Lewis's model is the slightly more specific term *wasiwadi* for "my faction," which he argued involves the presumption that one's moiety members tend to be one's political allies and allows for the possibility that not all of one's political allies also belong to his exogamous moiety. I found the term *wasiwadi* to be used very infrequently and some young people did not fully understand its usage. Accordingly, some of the inconsistencies I encountered between its contemporary and historical usages, as reported by Maybury-Lewis, may reflect historical changes. According to my data, the term *wasiwadi* is today understood to mean "distant categorical sibling" or "distant member of our moiety." In order to explain this notion, it is necessary to take a brief digression into the Xavante kinship terminology.

Maybury-Lewis identified the Xavante kinship terminology as typologically Dakota/Iroquois based on his observation that MB and FZ are “uncles/aunts” and their children are all “cousins” (Maybury-Lewis 1979b:240). Accordingly, key features of the system would be that it is bifurcate and merging in G^{+1} and categorically distinguishes cross cousins from parallel cousins in G^0 .⁷⁴ However, he denied any importance to that classification, asserting that it does not facilitate an understanding of how the system functions. Rather, in his interpretation, its important feature is that it is a “two-section system,” involving a sociocentric division of society into two halves and bearing “a strong resemblance to Dumont’s Dravidian systems” (Dumont 1953; Maybury-Lewis 1967:216, 238; 1979b:241-244). That reference appears to be the first reference to typologically Dravidian kinship terminologies in South America, now recognized to be quite pervasive (Viveiros de Castro 2002:91). According to my data, he was correct in identifying the Xavante system as typologically Dravidian, but for different reasons that he proposed.

Maybury-Lewis came to the conclusion that the Xavante kinship system is typologically Dravidian based on his analytical assessment that the most fundamental structuring aspect of the Xavante kinship terminology is its categorical division of society between “people on our side” (*waniwĩmhã*), who ego refers to by one set of terms, and “people separated from us” (*wasi’re’wa*), to whom ego refers by a different and less specific set of relationship terms (Maybury-Lewis 1967:237). Paradoxically, he made that

⁷⁴ Although no skewing is apparent in the Xavante kinship system, it is documented for some other Gê kinship systems. For example, Kayapó and Xerente are reported to have patrilineal skewing (Omaha kinship type) and Krahô and Canela are reported to have matrilineal skewing (Crow kinship type) (Maybury-Lewis 1979b:240).

determination despite his own evidence (incorrect, according to my data) that there are no consanguineal-affinal terminological equations, such as MB = FZH and FZ = MBW, that would be required of a two-section” system (Maybury-Lewis 1967:226). According to his analysis, the symbolic ideology of the system is more important for understanding the functioning of the system than its technical details (Maybury-Lewis 1967:214-216). That disregard for details is evident in his presentation of the kinship terminology not in a traditional format that would allow one to specifically correlate terms with genealogical positions, but rather in a two-line matrix based on three sociocentric distinctions: generation, gender, and whether one is “on our side” (*waniwĩmhã*) or “separated from us” (*wasi’re’wa*) relative to ego (Maybury-Lewis 1967:216-217). Problematically, the latter is, as he described it, more of a political than a genealogical distinction. He justified that somewhat vague approach as follows:

“The lesson of the Xavante terminology is that no single rule is applied uniformly throughout it. Its application is always restricted, or there are exceptions to it. ...In other words, if we know that a relationship terminology is a two-section system, this tells us something important about its structure, but does not enable us to predict its details” (Maybury-Lewis 1967:238)

In deciding that apparent inconsistency and conditionality in the system’s application are less important than the system’s ideology, Maybury-Lewis presumed that none of the inconsistency and conditionality he perceived might derive from undetected principles. According to my data, the Xavante relationship terminology is extremely complex and thoroughly conditional, but nevertheless very precise. It does provide people with multiple terminological options for specific kin, but it does so in much more predictable ways than Maybury-Lewis suggested. In this section, kinship data will address the narrow subject of how the Xavante construe the notions of close categorical

siblings, distant categorical siblings, and family. I also compare those formulations to Maybury-Lewis's representation of the relationship terminology.

According to Maybury-Lewis, cross cousins are distinguished from parallel cousins, although he did not present any cross-cousins terms (1967:214-217). Thus, $(FZCh = MBCh) \neq (FBCh = MZCh)$. That relationship is predicated on the principle that ego's parallel cousins belong to his patrilineal binary section and ego's cross cousins belong to the opposite section. Thus construed, one's parallel cousins are consanguines and one's cross cousins are affines or potential affines. Maybury-Lewis also asserted that the Xavante system has no terminological equivalences between consanguines and affines ($MB \neq FZH$ and $FZ \neq MBW$) and stipulated that there is a proscription against marriage to MBCh (Maybury-Lewis 1967:238; 1979b:243). However, that evidence contradicts his own claim that the system resembles Dravidian, because consanguineal-affinal terminological equations are diagnostic of that type of system even in the absence of actual cross-cousin marriage (Dumont 1953; Eggan 1980:188). That discrepancy calls into question either Maybury-Lewis's data or his premise that the terminology resembles Dravidian two-section systems. My data, which do not agree with Maybury-Lewis's, suggest the system is typologically Dravidian but that his assessment of it as two-sectioned is not applicable to the contemporary terminology. My evidence for that conclusion includes systematic consanguineal-affinal terminological equations in conjunction with a bilateral extension of sibling terms in ego's generation.

For a terminology to be bifurcate (or bifurcate-merging) in G^{+1} , parent terms must be extended to one's parents' same-gender siblings and there must be separate terms for one's MB and FZ. That is precisely the case in the Xavante vocative terminology,

whereby F and FB are called *ĩmama*, M and MZ are *dati'ö*, and FZ and MB are *ĩtebe* and *ĩmawapté*, respectively (Figure 13). However, that pattern changes somewhat in the referential terminology, whereby F is *ĩmama*, FB is *ĩmama'amo* (“other father”), M is *ĩna*, MZ is *ĩnawapté*, FZ is *ĩtebe*, and MB is *ĩmamawapté* (Figure 12). Because the referential term for MB (*ĩmama'amo*) means “other father” it may be considered a classificatory term. In contrast, most informants did not agree that the terms for MZ (*ĩnawapté*) and MB (*ĩmamawapté*) indicate kinds of mothers or fathers, despite including those morphemes (*ĩna* and *ĩmama*, respectively). Thus, in G^{+1} of the vocative terminology, the system appears to be bifurcate-merging, but in the referential terminology it appears more complex.

Although Maybury-Lewis specifically denied the existence of the consanguineal-affinal equations $MB = FZH$ and $FZ = MBW$, I found such equations to be systematically present in both the referential and vocative terminologies (Figures 12 and 13). Although such equations may be accompanied by prescriptive cross-cousin marriage in some societies (Trautmann 1981:200-206), they are not in the Xavante system. In the Xavante case, such terminological equations reflect an explicit social preference for single-generation marriage arrangements between multiple sisters and multiple brothers, often arranged by parents as marriages between their opposite-gender children (i.e. my daughter marries your son and your daughter marries my son) or as marriages between groups of sisters and groups of brothers (i.e. my two daughters marry your two sons).⁷⁵

⁷⁵ These data do not substantiate Maybury-Lewis’s observation that marriage exchanges between sets of opposite-gender siblings (i.e., my sister marries my wife’s brother) were proscribed because they confused the hierarchical relationship called for between a man

The relationship terminology has abundant examples of consanguineal-affinal equations in ascending and descending generations and the logic of sibling marriage is a basic factor in how people ascertained appropriate relationship terms throughout their genealogies. For example, there are consanguineal-affinal equations between one's parents' same-gender siblings and their spouses (Figures 12 and 13). Thus, FB and MZH are both called *ĩmama'amo* (*ĩmama* in the vocative terminology) and MZ and FBW are both called *ĩnawapté* (*dati'õ* in the vocative terminology). It is important to note that these terminological consanguineal-affinal equations are maintained even if there are no actual marriages between sisters and brothers in a person's genealogy.

The preference for marriage exchange in G^{+1} does not extend to ego's generation. In fact, according to most of my informants, marriage is specifically proscribed for all children of one's parent's siblings, regardless of crossness. As one man told me, you cannot marry anyone you call a sibling. However, one mature man explained that marriage between first cross-cousins is not proscribed because they belong to opposite exogamous moieties. According to him, such marriages are very infrequent, but may be arranged if parents believe it to be in the best interest of the individuals and families involved. For example, siblings may wish for their children to marry to strengthen their blood or because political relations with other families are less favorable. Nevertheless, in practice such first cousin unions are rare. I found only one example of first cross cousin marriage in a sample of 253 marriages (0.4%). Thus, the logic of marriage between groups of siblings does not result in a pattern of first degree cross-cousin marriage.

and his sister's husband (Maybury-Lewis 1967:225-226). My data show that such marriages were relatively common and even preferred by some parents.

That contrast between the first ascending and ego's generations is reflected in an important aspect of the kinship terminology that was obscured by Maybury-Lewis's representation of it in strictly sectional/ideological terms and his failure to present cross-cousins terms. All of ego's bilateral categorical siblings share the same set of sibling terms regardless of crossness. Thus, in G^0 the Xavante terminology is generational, without any crossness distinction, as observed in G^{+1} . The generational aspect in G^0 is consistent with the tendency to avoid marriage with all of one's parallel and cross cousins and derives logically from the Xavante formulation of consanguinity. As discussed in Chapter 2, a child receives its substance, or blood (*dawapru*), equally from both parents, although male blood is believed to be stronger. As was previously discussed, that formulation lends consanguinity two aspects, one patrilineal and one bilateral. The patrilineal aspect is manifested most overtly in the two exogamous moieties, Tadpole (*poreza'õno*) and Big Water (*õwawe*). Although one receives his substance equally from father and mother, because father's blood is stronger, one always inherits his father's and not his mother's moiety affiliation. Marriage within a single moiety is considered incestuous and is thought by many to contaminate the blood of any children. The bilateral aspect is most explicit in the generational aspect of ego's generation in the kinship terminology, whereby all of one's parallel and cross cousins are considered categorical siblings. According to that aspect of consanguinity, your siblings and categorical siblings are consanguines irrespective of their moiety affiliations because they share the same maternal and paternal blood. Accordingly, marriage to a categorical sibling is uncommon and, for many people, undesirable.

Important differences between those two aspects of consanguinity are their relative strength and temporal aspect. Because male blood is dominant, patrilineal consanguinity is more substantial than matrilineal consanguinity. That distinction helps explain the noted ambiguity regarding the acceptability of cross-cousin marriage, whereby some but not all individuals consider it acceptable even though it is rare. Important in this context are comments by many individuals that cross-cousins are not “real” (*uptabi*) siblings despite their terminological designation as such. Interviews revealed that such individuals are considered kin, and marriage to them is often thought to be inappropriate, but they are not considered kin of the same order as parallel cousins. Such assessments follow from similar comments regarding FB and MZ, who are considered “real” parents, and MB and FZ, who are not considered “real” parents. Another consequence of the dominance of male blood is that recognition of matrilineal consanguinity diminishes with each generation. The distinction in G^0 between parallel cousins as “real” siblings and cross-cousins as something different indicates that consanguinity, while bilateral in ego’s generation, is more patrilineal than matrilineal. Similarly, the matrilineal aspect nearly vanishes in G^{+1} . According to all of my informants, opposite-moiety children of cross-cousins may marry. Interestingly, there is also evidence that bilateral consanguinity is recognized at that level despite marriage being allowed. Although some individuals identified such marriages as neither better nor worse than other marriages, others identified them as preferable for the sake of avoiding political conflict because all parties to the marriage are related. The ubiquitousness of consanguinity was also expressed by one older adult male, who told me that irrespective

of moiety affiliation or genealogical distance, “we are all related, everyone one might marry is some kind of kin.”

Based on Dole (1969:105), I would classify the Xavante vocative terminological configuration as bifurcate-generational. It also qualifies as the Mackenzie Basin type (Spier 1925:76; Asch 1993). The defining features of that type are the extension of parent terms to one’s parents’ same-gender siblings, separate terms for one’s MB and FZ, and one set of sibling terms for all of one’s bilateral cousins (MBCh, MZCh, FBCh, and FZCh). In the Xavante case, it demonstrates several important features of how people construe relatedness. In the first place, it is not a two-section system because consanguinity is extended bilaterally in ego’s generation. In the second place, it is terminologically Dravidian, although the consanguineal-affinal equations derive from a preference for single-generation marriage exchange between groups of brothers and sisters and not intergenerational exchange between sections. In the third place, consanguinity has an ego-centric (cognatic) aspect and patrilineality is not reflected terminologically in all generations. The generational set of categorical sibling terms in ego’s generation requires the existence of specific genealogical relationships between ego and alter (e.g., categorical siblings are children of one’s real parents’ siblings or grandchildren of one’s real grandparents’ siblings) and thus precludes any sociocentric categorization of individuals based on exogamous moiety affiliation. One’s same-generation categorical siblings are, in this sense, a kindred, being shared only by one’s actual siblings (MCh or FCh). The coexistence of binary and cognatic aspects in Gê kinship terminologies was anticipated by Gordon (1996:201) based on Viveiros de

Castro's (1993:165) analysis of Dravidian systems in Amazonia. In the Xavante case, their simultaneous operation has broad implications for the Xavante logic of relatedness.

An additional aspect of the kinship terminology is the pervasive and conditional role of relative age. Some examples have already been mentioned. The generational aspect described above is one example. Another example previously mentioned is found in the separate terms used for older and younger same-sex siblings (*ĩdub'ráda* and *ĩno*, respectively). Also, as described in Chapters 2 and 3, there are gendered series of kinship terms used for certain consanguineal kin in the first descending generation that mimic the male and female age grade sequences. Another example, discussed in greater detail in the next section, concerns one's mother's brother and one's father's sister. Briefly, those individuals may, potentially, assume the role of ceremonial parents. Doing so changes their terminological relationship to ego after childhood. When that happens, it also implicates terminological changes for other, immediately related kin. Other examples are to be found in the substitution of age group terms for kinship terms during certain phases of life. For example, same-sex siblings in adjacent age sets tend to not call each other by sibling terms during their youth. Rather, before an age set has attained mature adulthood, its members call all members of the next oldest age set, including siblings, *ĩhi'wa* and may be called by them *sinhõ'ra* until achieving novitiate adulthood. Similarly, the term *sinhõ'ra* is used for same-sex siblings in the next youngest age set (opposite age set moiety) while he or she is an adolescent (*ai'repudu*) or pre-initiate (*wapté*). Also, the term *wahi'wa* is used for same-sex siblings in the next oldest age set (members of the *ritei'wa* age grade; opposite age set moiety) while the speaker is an adolescent or pre-initiate. Subsequently, these individuals often resume the use of sibling the terms

ĩdub'ráda or *ĩno*. As one man explained, “These things always change. You never know what’s coming and all the terms can change.” The importance of age is also apparent in several age-specific terms that implicate simultaneously age, kinship, and friendship. For example, the term *wasirewãro* may be used for members of ego’s age set that are in ego’s moiety or that ego considers particularly intimate friends. That term says as much about group intimacy as about patrilineal relatedness. Similarly, *wasirewãyõno* may be used for members of ego’s age set who are also in ego’s moiety, socially very close to ego, or first degree cross-cousins to ego. That term also speaks to intimacy and relatedness, but construes relatedness bilaterally.

Returning to my original point of departure for this discussion of the kinship terminology, the importance of the dual configuration of consanguinity and its expression in the bifurcate-generational kinship terminology is that relatedness is not today uniformly congruent with patrilineal moiety affiliation, as proposed by Maybury-Lewis. Accordingly, there are multiple ways of referring to those individuals one considers relatives. According to my data, the term *wasiwadí*, proposed by Maybury-Lewis to mean “my faction” at the second level of his model of sidedness, is currently little used. However, elders and many adults understand it to mean “distant relatives” or “same blood.” They explicitly assert that it has no political implications whatsoever, but that it specifically refers broadly to one’s distant categorical siblings or, more generally, one’s distant same-moiety relatives. In both cases, it excludes members of the opposite moiety, even one’s cross-cousins. A more commonly used term for a similar idea is *wasisinawa siwadí*, which is understood to mean “distant categorical siblings.” According to my informants, the second lexeme in that term, *siwadí*, means “distant” and can be used with

a variety of kinship terms, such as *ĩhídiba siwadí* (“distant sister”) or *ĩmama’amo siwadí* (“distant father’s brother”). Thus, *wasisinawa siwadí* are genealogically distant.

Interestingly, the first lexeme of the term *wasisinawa siwadí* is also the term given at the next level of Maybury-Lewis’s model of Xavante sidedness. Maybury-Lewis defines *wasisanawa* as “close kin.” He was correct in the sense that *wasisanawa* are considered “close,” since it contrasts with *wasisinawa siwadí*, which specifically marks genealogical distance. He was also correct that this specific formulation of relatedness is understood to be strictly patrilineal in that it excludes all members of the opposite patrilineal moiety. However, my data do not support Maybury-Lewis’s characterization of *wasisanawa* as “kin.” According to my informants, *wasisinawa* refers only to close same-moiety categorical siblings in ego’s generation. Specifically, it indicates only one’s real siblings and first-degree parallel cousins. Other kin, whether more distant, pertaining to other generations, or belonging to the opposite patrilineal moiety, are designated with other terms. The primary difference between *wasisinawa* and *wasisinawa siwadí* is genealogical distance. Whereas *wasisinawa* are close siblings and first degree parallel cousins, *wasisinawa siwadí* are genealogically more distant parallel cousins. However, because the term *wasisinawa siwadí* emphasizes distance, it is considered impolite. As a result, people tend to avoid it in favor of other terms that emphasize closeness, lending the term *wasisinawa* the additional connotation of “friend.”

The issue of genealogical proximity is an important one for Xavante configurations of categorical siblingship. The contrast between close siblings (*wasiwadí*) and distant siblings (*wasisinawa siwadí*) is not always as rigid as people indicate it to be because it entails a degree of perception of genealogical distance, a notion rooted not

only in degrees of genealogical separation, but also based on degrees of social solidarity. All of the terms discussed in this section begin with the prefix *wa-* (“our”) and thus imply that genealogical or social closeness is gauged by a close in-group. Who might be in such an in-group varies according to social context. In the present context, one’s in-group is presumed to include children of the same parents and children of one’s parents’ real same-sex siblings. However, as mentioned above, there is some flexibility to use the term *wasisinawa* for less distant categorical siblings should the speaker wish to emphasize social proximity and friendship.

My data regarding the terms *wasisinawa* and *wasisinawa siwadi* also highlight how political distance may also be a factor in how people reckon relatedness. On this point, Maybury-Lewis and I are in agreement. In his formulation, the designation *wasisanawa* (given as “close kin”) implies genealogical closeness and serves as a model for political solidarity, such that even people who are not close kin may be classified as such should they be considered politically close allies. In other words, he considered *wasisanawa* a genealogical manifestation of political proximity. Although my data show a somewhat different meaning for the term *wasisanawa*, they also show that its application can vary according to perceptions of sociopolitical proximity. For example, my adoptive brother Eugênio contrasted Chief Suptó, whom he considered *wasisanawa* (close), to Cipassé, Chief of the nearby village Wederã, whom he considered *wasisinawa siwadi* (distant). Yet, the two shared the same genealogical relationship to Eugênio – they were both second degree parallel cousins. However, in the case of Suptó, but not Cipassé, there was another reason for Eugênio to consider him “close” to his sibling in-group. Suptó was a political ally of his father and maternal uncle. In contrast, Cipassé was

considered by his father and maternal uncle to be a political opponent. Consequently, Eugênio aligned himself socially and politically with Suptó, but not Cipassé, and seemingly reinterpreted their genealogical relationships accordingly. Although interviewees tended to say that the distinction between close siblings (*wasisanawa*) and distant siblings (*wasisinawa siwadi*) is not related to politics or residence, I suspect that those factors may affect one's perception of genealogical distance and therefore the kinship terms one chooses.

Considering the political aspect, these formulations suggest that genealogical distance may also carry the connotation of sociopolitical distance. Indeed, being considered impolite because it denotes lack of proximity, the term *wasisinawa siwadi* may also denote political unfamiliarity or lack of political solidarity. The term *wasiwadi*, while little used today, similarly indicates genealogical distance and implies a potential lack of sociopolitical solidarity. As mentioned above, the term *wasiwadi* comprises the second level of Maybury-Lewis's model of political and genealogical sidedness. My data indicating the term explicitly excludes genealogically close relatives and implies potential sociopolitical distance directly contradicts Maybury-Lewis definition as "my faction."

The final and most specific level of Maybury-Lewis's model of sidedness is the term "*ĩ-hitebre*" ("*ĩ-hidibá*" for females), which he glossed as "my lineage" (Maybury-Lewis 1967:340). That construction differs from the three preceding terms in his model because it designates only those individuals who may be directly traced to one's own patrilineal descent group and is therefore a purely genealogical category (Maybury-Lewis 1967:169). According to his formulation, such lineages have political implications because they "are the corporate groups on which the political system is based," with

factions being comprised of a dominant lineage and its supporters (Maybury-Lewis 1967:169). Thus, they are groups of individuals that operate politically as coherent units. Earlier in this chapter, I argued that the institutions Maybury-Lewis called “lineages” are in fact heritable knowledge ownerships, the essence of which is not membership in a group (whether genealogical or political), but rather proprietary rights to secret knowledge and associated prerogatives.

The difference between my interpretation and Maybury-Lewis’s is reflected semantically in the terms he gave for “my lineage,” “*ĩ-hitebre*” for males and “*ĩ-hidibá*” for females. My data show that both of those terms are kinship terms in the strictest sense, denoting not lineage members, but rather opposite-sex siblings (real and categorical). More specifically, they are two among a set of four sibling terms used for all members of one’s bilateral kin in G^0 , as given in Figures 12 and 13. Thus, *ĩhidiba* (my orthography) is used by male speakers for female siblings (real and categorical) and *ĩhiteb’re* (*ĩhitéb’ra* in the referential terminology, both my orthography) is used by female speakers for male siblings (real and categorical). Those terms contrast with the two other vocative sibling terms, *ĩdub’ráda* and *ĩno*, used by speakers of both sexes for older and younger same-sex siblings and categorical siblings, respectively. Because that conjunction of sibling terms is applied uniformly across ego’s generation, irrespective of laterality or lineality, it marks the bilateral concept of consanguinity at that genealogical level. Furthermore, none of those terms have inter-generational applicability. Therefore, in their contemporary formulations, they do not denote or connote anything resembling unilineal associations, as Maybury-Lewis proposed.

Despite a strong patrilineal orientation in terms of exogamous moiety membership and a strong patrilineal tendency in terms of heritable knowledge transmission, I discovered no social mechanism for delineating or tracing lineages, as such. Thus, my data contradict Maybury-Lewis's position that lineages (or any similar genealogical associations) are basic structural or corporate units of political organization. That conclusion and my other critiques of the contemporary applicability of Maybury-Lewis's model of political sidedness, developed above, call into question the validity of his proposition of a symbolic congruence between patrilineal formulations of relatedness at different levels and political factionalism. My observations during the 2005-2006 political division of the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá community suggest that Xavante factionalism in its contemporary formulation is a much less structured affair.

From the preceding critique of Maybury-Lewis's model of political and genealogical sidedness, two constructions of "family" emerge, one embedded in the patrilineal notion of moiety affiliation and the other based in bilateral and cognatic notions of siblingship. Those two formulations are united in another terminological representation of the notion of family, *wasi'höi'ba*. That term may refer to all of one's close same-moiety kin, regardless of distance, and to one's first degree cross-cousins. Thus, it encompasses both the extensive formulation of patrilineal consanguinity and the more restricted notion of bilateral consanguinity.

For Maybury-Lewis, only the patrilineal formulation of consanguinity is essential to the political process. However, I did not find that to be the case during the 2005-2006 division of the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá community. In the next section, I propose a different interpretation of how notions of relatedness bear upon politics based on my

observation that factional politics are strongly affected in a highly contingent manner by formulations of “family” based on notions of siblingship. Pivotal to those formulations is a morality of patrifilial loyalty that drives notions of sibling solidarity.⁷⁶ Patrilineality is essential to those constructions, but not in the manner proposed by Maybury-Lewis. Rather than involving patrilineal moieties and lineages as social groups that operate politically, it involves notions of sibling proximity based on patrifilial seniority in conjunction with the bilateral formulation of consanguinity. I call that construction genealogical seniority and propose it as an additional age hierarchy which, together with age grades, age sets, spiritual grades, and political seniority, affects the Xavante social experience in a fundamental way.

5.3.2. A village fission

In mid-2005, I began perceiving particularly strong undercurrents of political conflict at Pimentel Barbosa village. Unusually forceful complaints came from various quarters regarding individuals who used the community to earn money and did not share it appropriately. I heard various proposals to alter the leadership structure of the village and initiate new and controversial economic development projects. Meanwhile, although I was not aware of it at the time, a debate emerged regarding who would be the ceremonial ear piercer (*da'pore'zapu'u'wa*) for the group of pre-initiates to be initiated into novitiate adulthood in late 2006 (the *tirowa* age set). Established custom called for a

⁷⁶ My use of the phrase “patrifilial loyalty” is not to be confused with Meyer Fortes’s “filial piety,” which implied a sentiment with reverential overtones that tended to be extended to ancestors (Fortes 1959:18; 1961:174).

single piercer to be chosen from among owners of a specific heritable knowledge domain (*da'pore'zapu'u'wa'tede'wa*). The decision for someone to be piercer is like the decision to make them age set ceremonial leaders (*tebe* or *pahöri'wa*) in that it depends on their physical beauty and is made by the elders of the family as a group. Two individuals were being promoted for the job by their respective fathers and supporters, each claiming the right based on ancestral precedent. As an aside, that conflict illustrates my earlier point that heritable knowledge ownerships, what Maybury-Lewis called “lineages” (Maybury-Lewis 1967:169-171), are not coherent or “corporate” social groupings. As in this case, they may be genealogically distant and politically separated, and do not necessarily recognize one another as “family,” however construed. This was a private debate, being considered by senior heritable knowledge owners to be their own personal business and, by extension, the exclusive business of the Big Water exogamous moiety (*öwawe*), to which they belonged. To my knowledge, it was not a subject that was raised in the men’s council and was not debated by members of the Tadpole exogamous moiety.

Ignorant of that debate and after months of prodding by my Xavante friends and adoptive family members, I decided in July 2005 to have my ears pierced Xavante-style. I was a male member of the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*), and that status is usually inscribed on the body in a most essential manner through the piercing of one’s ears. Pierced ears, and the practice of wearing special wood spools in them, signal that one has participated in the age set initiation rites of adulthood, that one is equipped to dream songs, and that one is privy to certain secret adult knowledge. Those are among the most central correlates of male novitiate adult status and, because my ears were not pierced,

were not presumptions I enjoyed. Lacking pierced ears, I was a novitiate adult in name only, a status that was occasionally ridiculed or questioned by my age set moiety rivals. The decision to have my ears pierced involved a desire on my part to respect the wishes of my Xavante hosts and to assume more completely my status as novitiate adult.

The piercing process was simple. One Friday morning I expressed my interest to be pierced in the early morning men's council. The men responded with a loud clamor of support punctuated by laughter, a brief discussion, and instructions being made by several people for sleeping men to be called and equipment to be retrieved. My impression was of broad support for the idea and I did not perceive any disagreement as to how it would be executed. I was told later that the preference was that I be pierced by the ceremonial piercer from the previous set of age set initiation rites, when my age set (*êtêpá*) was pierced and initiated into adulthood. Unfortunately, that individual was travelling and therefore unavailable. I am not sure who specifically was involved in the decision, and I was not aware of any dissent being expressed, but it was decided that I would be pierced by one of the two contenders for the position of ceremonial ear piercer in the upcoming age set initiation rites (*danhono*). He was woken from his sleep, piercing tools were fetched from home by their guardians, and I was instructed to take off my shirt. The young piercer had never pierced before, so an elder man who was piercer many years before gave him careful instructions and oversaw the process. Sereburã, the most influential elder in the men's council, stood at my back with his hands on my shoulders and cried a mourning song (*dawawa*) (see Graham 1995:80-83) while the young piercer moistened the panther (*Puma concolor*) leg bone awl with saliva and then, for each side in turn, aligned it against my cheekbone and thrust it through my ear lobe. Temporary

wooden ear spools covered in urucu (*Bixa orellana*) salve were inserted in my freshly pierced ears. With that, the event was finished and people gradually left to go about their business for the day.

It was not until January 2006, when I returned after several months of absence, that I came to hear that the events of that morning had precipitated a grave dispute that was polarizing the community. Close kin and supporters of the candidate for the position of ear piercer who did not pierce my ears accused the other and his kin of subversively stealing the ceremonial role by having him pierce my ears without consulting them. Furthermore, they accused members of the Tadpole exogamous moiety of meddling in the business of the Big Water moiety and, more specifically, of the owners of the ear-piercer heritable knowledge domain, by facilitating that decision and participating in the piercing event that morning. Some people characterized the dispute as being internal to the Big Water moiety, essentially a longstanding dispute between two families that came to a head over the issue of who was from among their ranks would be ceremonial piercer. Other people characterized it as a dispute between factions within the Tadpole moiety over village leadership rights, with some members of the Big Water moiety using the ear piercer conflict as an excuse to precipitate that transition. Because Chief Suptó, a member of the Tadpole moiety, was a prominent leader of one faction, and then Vice-Chief Paulo, a member of the Big Water moiety, was a prominent leader of the other faction, some people also characterized it as a political dispute between Suptó's supporters and Paulo's supporters.

Between that January and July of the same year, tensions escalated to the point that an effective village split took place. Initially, the decision was made to employ two

ear piercers, one for each of the two interested kin groups and political factions. That decision motivated the two factions to hold completely separate age set initiation rites, each with its own piercer and its own contingent of ceremonial positions. Subsequently other village functions split as well. For example, two men's council meetings were held each morning and evening, the two Indigenous Health Agents attended only members of their own factions, and members of rival factions refused to sit in automobiles together. In July, I encountered several people from Paulo's faction in the local office of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) in order to inform the local agent that they were declaring themselves independent from Pimentel Barbosa village, would henceforth be known as Etênheritipá village, and would be led by Samuel Sahutuwe as Chief and Paulo Supretaprã as Vice-Chief. That stage of the separation was, perhaps, the most intense, with rampant incidents of physical altercations between members of opposition factions, accusations of politically motivated murder and sorcery, and death threats. There was no longer social space for people to remain neutral, so household members, spouses, close kin, and intimate friends went through the painful process of deciding in which village and in what household they would reside. In late 2006, Chief Samuel's new village physically moved, locating itself less than one kilometer away, where it could access shared resources, such as the village health post and schoolhouse. As I write this dissertation, circumstances have improved considerably. Although there is very little open communication between members of the two villages, each is going about its own business and pursuing its own strategy of economic development. The households and families that were ruptured by the separation are reconstituting themselves within their new social environments.

I feel a great deal of ambivalence about my role in the dispute that led to the village separation. I regret that the circumstances of my ear piercing provided reason for the long held antagonism between the two Big Water families to transform into open opposition and for the previously simmering factional division within Pimentel Barbosa village to coalesce into a fully fledged division. Even more, I lament that the ensuing events required previously united households, extended families, and age set peers to break from one another. It is with some degree of apprehension that I lay bare those facts in this dissertation, although I know I could not have anticipated them and believe that had my ear piercing not precipitated the conflict, some other event or events would have done so soon thereafter. That view is maintained by all of my Xavante contacts on both sides of the division, who express that I was an unsuspecting pawn in political affairs beyond my control. It is their opinion that factionalism and village fission is characteristic of the Xavante political process, even though some of the strategies for decision making and conflict resolution have changed in recent decades.

5.3.3. Genealogical seniority and the political enterprise

The events described above involved a totality of social phenomena. Through the experiences, opinions, decisions, and actions of the people involved, they engaged the full gamut of sociocultural beliefs and practices, with all of their internal variability. Furthermore, the experience of those events was deeply personal for those involved. Consequently, attempting to reduce them to a social model would trivialize them for me and for the people who graciously hosted me during the whole affair. My objective in this section is not to distill from those political events or the political process a limited set of

predictive or even retroactive factors. Rather, in keeping with the objectives of this dissertation, I seek to explore how hierarchical configurations of age influence the social experience. I highlight a conjunction of two social relationships, patrifilial loyalty between children and fathers and sibling solidarity that binds bilateral kin of the same generation. Those two axes of fidelity promote a highly dynamic field of social relations involving notions of genealogical seniority and patrilineal and affinal oneness in addition to the diverse and irreducible conjunction of sociocultural factors that contribute to the social experience. I argue that those two axes represent an important and emicly valued aspect of Xavante sociality – among many others – that bear fundamentally on the political enterprise.

In January 2006, when I first became aware of rising political tensions at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá, the factional division that threatened to divide the community was still largely in flux. Although key proponents on each side had vocally and unambiguously established their positions, a majority of mature adult men reserved judgment, at least publicly. According to many individuals at that time, a great deal depended on the issues. The debates, as I heard them, differed between segments of society. For some, the crucial issue was which candidate would become ceremonial ear piercer. For others, the substance of the debate centered on leadership control of Pimentel Barbosa village, and the prospects of that structure being revised to give greater political access to stakeholders from other neighboring villages.⁷⁷ For yet others, economic

⁷⁷ Federal administration of indigenous communities by the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) is coordinated locally by Indigenous Posts. The Indigenous Post at Pimentel Barbosa was headed by Chief Suptó and had administrative jurisdiction over neighboring

development ideologies were the most important issue, with some advocating that the community improve itself by expanding its involvement in eco-ethnotourism and others that the community retain its privacy and cultural integrity by avoiding such projects. Furthermore, many individuals, especially younger ones, withheld judgment in deference to their elders, who had not yet aligned themselves with one faction or the other.

By January 2006, I knew of twelve men who had openly voiced their support of either Chief Suptó's continued leadership or Vice-Chief Paulo's advocacy of change. Among those early deciders, 75% were members of the Big Water moiety, suggesting that the dispute was at that time more divisive within than between moieties. Furthermore, among Big Water moiety early deciders, 67% supported Suptó, indicating that there was not a tendency for people to support the leader in their own moiety. To my knowledge, by June 2006, all but one head of household had publicly affiliated themselves with one of the two factions, although I found there to be a great deal of uncertainty remaining among younger individuals. By that time, the factional dispute had polarized much of the community, irrespective of moiety affiliation. Of 32 heads of household who had stated their alliances, 47% were members of the Big Water moiety. Furthermore, moiety affiliation did not significantly influence political alliance, with 47% of Big Water moiety members supporting Suptó (Tadpole moiety) and 53% of Tadpole moiety members supporting Paulo (Big Water moiety).

Xavante villages. Among the many issues raised in the political debates of 2005-2006 was whether and how leaders from those communities might assume more direct involvement in administering the local Indigenous Post.

Those data, which show that moiety distribution was even between and within political factions, contradict Maybury-Lewis's thesis that moiety membership and factional affiliation are ideologically analogous (Maybury-Lewis 1967:165-171). Also, people's representations of the dispute in terms of ceremonial prerogatives within the Big Water moiety, leadership prerogatives within the Tadpole moiety, or economic development ideologies demonstrate that in its current configuration, moiety configurations of patrilineality are a significant factor in political factionalism. Furthermore, I encountered no indication that moiety affiliation created any expectation of political solidarity, although I did find that some individuals considered political estrangement sufficient justification to deny same-moiety members that dignity. Nevertheless, I did find patrilineal associations to be an important component in how people negotiated the political landscape and ultimately aligned themselves in the division of Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá community into two independent villages. However, such patrilineality was just one aspect of a more salient aspect of notions of relatedness – generational seniority – which also incorporates bilateral and cognatic notions of siblingship.

Among the most frequently invoked theories of political solidarity that I encountered in discussions about the political division of 2005-2006 was “family,” construed in those contexts as close same-moiety siblings (*wasisinawa*) or close bilateral kin (*wasi'hōi'ba*). For example, formal and informal leaders on both sides of the dispute frequently threatened that they had numerically and tactically strong kin in other Xavante villages who were keeping close tabs on the political situation at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá and would, if necessary, come to their aid as reinforcements. Such

references to close siblings in other villages were especially evident after the physical separation of the two villages, when concern was focused on administrative control of shared resources, such as the FUNAI Indigenous Post, the schoolhouse, and the health post. Both sides were operating under the assumption that the larger of the two villages would gain the bureaucratic upper hand in managing those facilities. By March 2007, a number of close kin from neighboring villages had already established residence at Pimentel Barbosa and Etênhiritipá villages, and I heard abundant discussion of other close kin who were on call to do the same should it be necessary to tip the population balance between them.

Internally, notions of family solidarity between close same-moiety siblings (*wasisinawa*) and close bilateral kin (*wasi'höi'ba*) were also central to how individuals, married couples, and extended family households aligned themselves politically and, ultimately, to where they opted to reside after the village separation. Both of those notions of family are based on the principle that first degree cousins are, potentially, children of one's own classificatory parents. I classified the Xavante vocative relationship terminology as bifurcate-generational, which refers to the extension of parent terms to one's parents' same-gender siblings, the use of different terms for one's parents' opposite-gender siblings, and the use of a single set of sibling terms for all members of one's own generation (Figure 13). Although the differentiation of one's parents' same-gender siblings from opposite-gender siblings might otherwise indicate that one's cross-cousins are categorically differentiated from one's parallel cousins, that is not entirely so for the Xavante. As indicated by the use of sibling terms for all of one's bilateral cousins according to the bilateral principle of consanguinity, they are also considered to be one's

close consanguineal kin. Although the basic terminology does not offer a terminological justification for merging siblings and all bilateral cousins (i.e. bilateral aspects in ascending or descending generations), the logic of the system is apparent in a special instance of bilaterality involving maternal uncles and paternal aunts.

As discussed in detail by Silva (1986:93-105), a special social bond is established between a woman's children and one of her brothers (actual or classificatory) when, during their childhood, he paints them, adorns them with cotton necklaces, and sends them to their parents' house carrying large maize cakes. That ritual is performed by just one of her brothers for each child, and usually by the same brother for all of her children. As a consequence of that ritual, the mother's brother becomes their ceremonial father (*ĩnhorebzu 'wa* – cotton necklace giver) and they become his ceremonial children (*tarebzú*). The social dynamic between ceremonial parents and their ceremonial children is especially intimate, an example of a joking relationship (Silva 1986:213), reflecting the same paternalism characteristic of other real and classificatory parents and their children. He continues to play a very important role in their lives, bestowing names upon his ceremonial sons and sponsoring marriages (*adabá*) for his ceremonial daughters. After childhood, ceremonial children cease to call their ceremonial father by the standard term for mother's brother (*ĩmamawapté* in the referential terminology and *ĩmawapté* in the vocative terminology) or the term for ceremonial father (*ĩnhorebzu 'wa*). At that time, his ceremonial sons begin calling him *aimãñã* (ceremonial father) and his ceremonial daughters call him *ĩmama* (father). Similarly, he ceases to call them by the term for immature ceremonial children (*tarebzú*) in favor of the term for mature ceremonial children (*simãñã*). That terminological shift is extended to all immediate kin, such that

the ceremonial father's wife, previously called *ĩtebe* (paternal aunt), also becomes their *danhorebzu'wa* (ceremonial parent) and comes to be called *aimãnã* (ceremonial father) by her husband's ceremonial sons and *ĩna* (mother; *dati'ö* in the vocative terminology) by her husband's ceremonial daughters. Several other terminological changes occur as a result of ceremonial parenthood. For example, ceremonial parents may call their ceremonial children by standard children terms (e.g., *ĩ'ra* in the referential terminology) rather than nephew/niece terms, spouses of ceremonial children may call the ceremonial parents by parent-in-law terms (*ĩmapré'wa*), and fathers may call their children's ceremonial parents by the special term *sorebzu'wa* rather than brother-in-law terms.

Silva, who described ceremonial parenthood in great detail, characterized it as the consanguinization of categorical affines, such that individuals in the opposite-exogamous moiety come to consider one another same-moiety members (Silva 1986:102-103). I disagree with that representation, because, as I proposed earlier, there are two simultaneous emic formulations of consanguinity. Moiety membership is one of those formulations, but another is a bilateral reckoning of consanguinity, most apparent between generations, as evidenced in the relationship terminology by the merging of sibling terms for all bilateral real and classificatory siblings. It appears to me that through this important relationship between a mother's brother and her children, the logic of bilateral consanguinity is also expressed in the first ascending generation. Said another way, even though only one of mother's brothers becomes ceremonial father to each of her children, the logic of that relationship is generalized for all of her children's cross cousins, irrespective of whether the specific intervening MB or FZ is a ceremonial parent. An important detail of my argument is the observation that although ceremonial

parenthood is affected through a mother's brother and not a father's sister, the logic of that relationship is also extended to her. As I mentioned above, there is an equivalence of terms between MBW and FZ, indicating that whether or not MB is actually married to FZ, MBW is a categorical FZ. Thus, the consanguineal status associated with (and the social correlates of) ceremonial parenthood and MBW status may also apply to FZ. That extension of consanguinity is evident in the use of consanguineal sibling terms for all paternal cross cousins (FZCh).

The patrilineal and bilateral nature of categorical siblingship is reflected in a pervasive sense of unity among one's close siblings (*wasisinawa*) and close kin (*wasi'hōi'ba*) that is apparent not only in the kinship terminology, but also in the extended family residence configurations that condition the social experience. One common residential pattern is for multiple married brothers to reside in a single house with their sibling-wives and father-in-law, according to the pattern of uxrilocal residence. Given that configuration, with the next generation, parallel cousins are also coresidents during their youth, until the males marry and move into their own wives' residences. Although that pattern is not uniform, even when married brothers establish their own households, their multiple residences become welcome and friendly environments for each other and each others' children. Thus, despite living apart, the childhood experiences of parallel cousins involve great intimacy with one another and their paternal uncles and maternal aunts. Children similarly grown up with a great deal of social access to and familiarity with the homes of their paternal aunts and maternal uncles, who customarily live apart from them, also due to the pattern of uxrilocal residence. However, that pattern is also not strict – it is more a value than a residence rule

per se – and many contemporary young married men choose to live in their father's households, at least for a time until they establish their own residences. Nevertheless, under any of those configurations, bilateral siblings and categorical siblings are often reared in close proximity to one another and derive from that experience a great sense of familial intimacy.

Those social bonds were evident during the village division, in which men who considered one another close siblings (*wasisinawa*) and close kin (*wasi'höi'ba*) tended to side with one another and opted to live in the same village after the split. However, because family is construed bilaterally, siblingship is a cognatic construction, whereby only ego and his or her actual siblings share the same set of close siblings and close kin. Conversely, only those people, one's sibling in-group, share the same criteria for distant siblings (*wasisinawa siwadi*), the same-moiety categorical siblings they know, but not well. Consequently, they were also the individuals people tended not to rely on or side with in the political dispute that divided the village.

Sibling proximity and distance were also mitigated by another important association, patrifilial loyalty. Although married parents almost always live together and share the same social networks and political alliances, especially in the later stages of life, only males are explicitly active in the political arena. Thus, political solidarity within the nuclear family is understood and expressed in terms of sons and fathers rather than daughters and mothers. In March 2007, after the village split, 98% of married males with living fathers lived in the same village as their fathers. In other words, sons remained politically unified with their actual fathers. Furthermore, if we consider that the Xavante formulation of social fatherhood includes one's categorical fathers, it becomes apparent

that the Xavante formulation of patrifilial loyalty is also expressed bilaterally. That apparent paradox derives from the logic whereby one's paternal uncles may also be considered social fathers through the model of ceremonial parenthood (*danhorebzu'wa*) and therefore sociopolitical loyalty may also be extended to them. Furthermore, through the consanguine-affine equation $FBW=MZ$, one's patrifilial loyalty to FB also entails MZ, his classificatory spouse. Similarly, through the consanguine-affine equation $MBW=FZ$, one's feelings of patrifilial loyalty to MB also involve FZ, his classificatory spouse. Thus, the logic of the kinship system entails a sense of patrifilial loyalty that binds sons to fathers and, by extension, all of one's bilateral uncles and aunts.

Viewed from another angle, the set of individuals (in-group) who consider themselves close siblings (*wasisinawa*) and close kin (*wasi'höi'ba*) share patrifilial loyalties to the same set of fathers, which through the logic of the consanguineal-affinal equations $FBW=MZ$ and $MBW=FZ$, entails the entire contingent of bilateral uncles and aunts. Those bonds extend patrilineally and bilaterally through notions of categorical parenthood, such that the sociopolitical bond between close siblings (*wasisinawa*) and close kin (*wasi'höi'ba*), may also be understood as mutual fidelity to a shared set of categorical fathers. Carried into subsequent generations, such fidelity may stimulate sociopolitical unity among a rather large set of categorical siblings.

Such dynamics were tangibly evident in the 2005-2006 village separation when players on both sides actively sought support from large sets of categorical siblings located in dispersed communities in order to bolster their own political strength at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá. Importantly, I also found the converse to be true. In the absence of shared categorical fathers, sibling solidarity was also more likely to break

down, as evidenced by close siblings (*wasisinawa*) and close kin (*wasi 'höi 'ba*) whose mutual categorical fathers were deceased and who aligned themselves with opposite factions in the dispute. In some such cases, even the most intimate of real brothers broke with one another and, for a time, stopped speaking to one another. In those cases, brothers variously aligned themselves with other close siblings (*wasisinawa*), close kin (*wasi 'höi 'ba*), or with their spouses' allies according to their own ideological and social priorities. Thus, the notion of sibling solidarity is more overt for younger individuals with living categorical fathers. Also, given that the dual nature of consanguinity assigns dominance to patrilineal over bilateral ties, patrifilial loyalty to parallel uncles is stronger than to cross uncles. Consequently, sibling solidarity between cross-cousins is often not as strong as between parallel cousins. Ultimately, the variable matrix of vertical patrifilial loyalty and horizontal sibling solidarity provides abundant options for affirming certain ties at the expense of others. Through the simultaneous operation of patrilineal and bilateral aspects, there is no absolute genealogical out-group – consanguinity is pervasive and genealogical proximity may be recognized for virtually any potential political ally. Just as sibling solidarity may bind small groups of close kin, expansive genealogies of categorical fatherhood and siblingship may be invoked to reaffirm any political alliance.

Within the genealogical configurations explored in this section, senior men have a great deal of political power and flexibility. They may join forces with their close siblings (*wasisinawa*) and close kin (*wasi 'höi 'ba*) to establish kin-based blocks of political solidarity or they may break from their categorical siblings in favor of other affinal or ideological associations. In doing so, they obligate their male descendants (female descendants other being otherwise compromised by their husbands' associations) to

support them politically and remain with them locally. Such obligation does not occur by force of rule, but is rooted in a morality of patrifilial loyalty that casts genealogically junior males in subordinate sociopolitical roles. In my observations of the political conflict of 2005-2006, patrifilial lines of political solidarity exhibited extreme stability. However, in the absence of living apical males, the horizontal connections that may otherwise serve to unite categorical siblings were enormously flexible. Known ancestral connections between classificatory siblings were employed just as commonly as justification for political solidarity as political opposition between them. In some cases of categorical sibling opposition, wherein people explicitly differentiated distant siblings (*wasisinawa siwadi*) from closer kin, the roots of their disagreement were traced to historical disagreements between their shared ancestral close siblings (*wasisinawa*). According to those oral histories, sets of genealogically senior brothers with no living fathers chose to oppose one another politically, in the same fashion described above for contemporary senior siblings. Severing their own amicable relations with close siblings also implicated their descendents for generations to come, including many of the individuals involved in the contemporary village separation.

An important example of such an oral history involves Apōwê, a renowned leader of the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá community from the contact era in the 1950s, then located at São Domingos village or Wedezé, until the 1970s. Most written accounts of Apōwê cast him as a strong leader who, despite having achieved power by killing his political opponents in their sleep, was widely respected by his people (Maybury-Lewis 1967; Flowers 1983; Graham 1995). That view is maintained by many of his actual grandchildren and their political supporters, including the leadership of Wederã village,

which split from Pimentel Barbosa village in 1996.⁷⁸ According many individuals at Pimentel Barbosa village in 2005, those grandchildren actively sought to regain a political foothold at their former Pimentel Barbosa village by asserting their genealogical ties to Apöwẽ's. Furthermore, after 2005, it was thought by many of Chief Suptó's factional supporters that those grandchildren sought to involve themselves in the affairs of the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá community by siding with the faction that opposed Suptó. However, according to members of both political factions at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá during my research, there is another side to the story that calls into question Apöwẽ's leadership character and the leadership rights of his contemporary grandchildren. They represented Apöwẽ as a despotic leader who defied the morality of collective decision making in the men's council by using authoritative and coercive strategies, often murder, to force people to comply with his political program. Furthermore, according to some of Suptó's supporters, not all of Apöwẽ's contemporary close siblings (*wasisinawa*) agreed with his strategies. Those men are said to have instead advocated cooperative leadership and peaceful methods of conflict resolution. However, due to Apöwẽ's alleged despotic tactics, his brothers' ideological opposition did not coalesce into political opposition at that time. According to that version of history, the actual grandchildren of those ideologically righteous ancestors have more sound claims to leadership than do Apöwẽ's grandchildren.

Those various oral histories illustrate the various ways sibling solidarity at various degrees of genealogical distance may be asserted or denied. For example, in the absence

⁷⁸ The perspective that Apöwẽ was a popular leader was documented by a journalist sponsored by Wederã village to write a book about Apöwẽ's life (Nacer 2004).

of living categorical fathers, Apōwē and his closest siblings were free to publicly disagree with one another. However, in doing so, they motivated a political opposition between their descendents. During my early fieldwork, Apōwē's grandchildren and his real siblings' children considered one another distant siblings (*wasisinawa siwadi*) and political adversaries. Interestingly, however, during the political division, Apōwē's siblings' children, then genealogical seniors who considered one another close siblings also opposed one another by joining opposing factions and choosing to live in different villages after the separation. Furthermore, by doing so, some of those close siblings realigned themselves with Apōwē's grandchildren from Wederā village, their distant siblings, who supported their faction. That shift may result in the reestablishment of sibling solidarity between them, and, perhaps, reclassification of one another as close siblings.

Consanguinity is just one among many forms of intergenerational inequality. Examples include the conjunction of nongenealogical age structures previously discussed, such as age grades and age sets. Another example is the generational inequality between parents-in-law and their children-in-law. Whereas the bond of patrifilial loyalty is one of intimate solidarity, the bond that unites intergenerational in-laws is decidedly more distant. Nevertheless, from the emic perspective, it is also decidedly respectful. According to Laura Graham, young sons-in-law and their parents-in-law treat show their mutual respect through avoidance behavior, including absolute absence of direct speech (Graham 1995:70-72). She characterizes it as a "muting" of the son-in-law and accounts for it as a way to minimize the potential for conflict between an established residential family and a new coresident husband, who may come from a

different political faction and be something of an unknown political quantity, at least for a time. After some years, once a new couple has developed an intimate spousal relationship and given birth to several of their own children, relations between parents-in-law and sons-in-law may become more relaxed, although they generally remain respectfully formal. According to my data, in addition to reciprocal avoidance behavior, that relationship manifests in a perception on the part of both parties that the son-in-law should contribute to the sustenance of his wife and his other affinal relatives. Such obligations precede marriage and continue throughout life, whether or not the son-in-law resides in the father-in-law's household according to the pattern of uxorilocal residence. Those obligations contrast with the typical relationship of a young man to his father, which include the right to consume without contributing food or work. I characterize the position of sons-in-law relative to fathers-in-law as affinal obeisance to distinguish it from the more intimate and entitled character of patrifilial loyalty. Although such relationships are overtly formal and distant, they also have the potential to mature into strong sociopolitical alliances.

Affinal obeisance affords fathers-in-law considerable influence over sons-in-law and figures importantly into every young married man's social reality. In contrast, patrifilial loyalty motivates a more enduring form of genealogical seniority over real and classificatory sons, construed patrilineally and bilaterally, thereby creating generational kindreds of sibling solidarity in subsequent generations. As I mentioned earlier, I do not interpret that configuration to be a rule or a causal factor in political factionalism. Rather, it is one among many social and ideological factors that influence how people go about the business of politics. In fact, the bilateral aspect of genealogical seniority lends it

ample flexibility, whereby kin relations may be sought between almost any two people.

The same might be said of all the age hierarchies discussed in this dissertation, which together provide an intricately complex landscape of seniority and juniority that people engage in personally and contextually appropriate ways as they navigate social life.

Those diverse configurations of seniority, involving age grades, age sets, spiritual grades, political seniority, and genealogical seniority, coexist in a single sociological matrix that, despite its potential contradictions, comprises a coherent ideological system, whereby multiplex relationships of equality and inequality are integral to the social experience.

Chapter 6: Xavante age organization in Gê perspective

6.1. Introduction

Nimuendaju and Lowie first suggested that Gê-speaking and other Central Brazilian groups display a solid core of derived cultural similarities (Nimuendaju and Lowie 1937:579-580; Lowie 1941:192-193). Later, Lévi-Strauss asserted that these groups comprise a single sociocultural complex and that their differences were variations on underlying shared structures (Lévi-Strauss 1963:130). Reconciling that assumption with ethnographic data continues to be a major focus of Gê studies. It is an agenda that crosses theoretical boundaries because it is based on the seemingly uncomplicated presumption that these groups share history and indeed, biology, and hence they ought to exhibit common cultural solutions to similar problems. Cultural materialists found this agenda appealing because the Central Brazilian *cerrado* landscape was thought to present these groups with cognate ecological challenges that they would have presumably solved in similar ways (e.g., Gross 1979). It was an equally attractive agenda for structuralists, because as divergent as these cultural systems seemed, their differences could easily be imagined to be transformations of one another that revolved around universal themes, prominently structural dualism (Lévi-Strauss 1963:130; Maybury-Lewis 1979b::237-246). Even structural functionalists also found it to be a compelling agenda because the diverse Gê societies seemed to share similar forms of internal integration. For example, the diversely elaborate Gê social organization seemed to consistently create crosscutting

social allegiances that minimized the likelihood that one or another would result in societal cleavages (Crocker 1979:249).

Abundant scholarship from diverse theoretical orientations has proposed answers to the question of what sociocultural features are common to all Central Brazilian Gê groups. It seeks to explain not only their similarities but also their differences (cf. Hornborg 1988:52-121; Carneiro da Cunha 1993; Gordon 1996). Much of that literature I already referred to in Chapter 1. In this chapter, I discuss that literature again, though more critically, setting it against the light of my own field research findings. In this context, I will attempt to show how my findings either support or diverge from the earlier work and in what ways my findings contribute new knowledge or put into new light the earlier findings of previous scholars on questions that treat Xavante society and Gê ethnology more generally.

Considering the body of Gê literature as a dialogic whole, a most striking pattern is that the call for a unified Gê theoretical model has resulted in exactly the opposite – a diversity of proposed solutions and little consensus regarding their validity or applicability. Not entirely unlike Gê factional politics (Maybury-Lewis 1967:165-171), much of Gê scholarship is characterized by theoretical cleavage and multiplication. Although several models have gained wider followings than others and continue to influence the field, none has produced the scholarly consensus that the problem would seem to require. For example, Lévi-Strauss's alliance theory (Lévi-Strauss 1969 [1949]), Maybury-Lewis's dialectical approach to dualism (1979d), Terrence Turner's formulation of structural Marxism (1979a), Seeger et al.'s notion of personhood and corporality (1987 [1979]), and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's models of Amerindian

perspectivism and potential affinity (1995, 1998a) have all gained widespread currency in the field, at one time or another. It is within this very complex academic tradition that I contribute this study of Xavante age organization.

My objective in this chapter is to synthesize some of the ethnographic themes of the preceding chapters and to situate them within the field of Gê ethnography. In the preceding chapters I employed the notion of social experience in counterpoint with social structure. This approach shares certain assumptions with structure and agency theory (e.g., Bourdieu 1977 [1972]; Giddens 1986) in that it supposes that structure, considered abstractly, gains meaning individually and interpersonally through everyday social interaction. I employ the notion of agency, however, not as an epistemological exercise, but rather as a pragmatic ethnographic strategy. In my view, social phenomena are best viewed through multiple lenses. In this case, I choose to take in this panorama by approaching Xavante social life in both its structural and its experiential aspects. Accordingly, I consider my insertion into Xavante social life as a field researcher to be neither an obstacle to objectivity nor grounds for yielding to total subjectivity. Rather, I employ it explicitly and from the outset of analysis as a tool for ascertaining the real, inherently relativistic social dynamics that constitute Xavante social experience.

Just as Xavante sociality is different for different individuals, my exposure to it was different than it was or would be for others who might have or assume different social statuses than I did. For example, my presentation of Xavante social life is predicated on my exposure to it as a male researcher who was classified within the community as a member of the novitiate adult age grade, a spiritual initiate, and a member of the Tadpole (*poreza'õno*) exogamous moiety. Those designations caused me

to engage the community from a social position involving near constant age set activities and male spiritual cohort obligations, among other age-related dynamics, that other researchers could not have experienced in the same manner, at the same time and place. Clearly those circumstances cause my data to be more empirically robust in certain respects and less so in other and these circumstances, related to my firsthand fieldwork experiences, may help explain some of the divergences between my own account of the Xavante social reality and those of other scholars. Accordingly, in this chapter, I intend to remain mindful of my relationship to the data, offering my findings and conclusions not as the whole or only truth, but as a distinctive slice of the Xavante social experience at a particular time and place, based on my own firsthand study of it.

6.2. A multiplicity of age systems

If any common theme can be isolated from the divergent propositions for principal underlying Gê social structures, it may be that dual social or ideological structures are of singular importance. In fact, within the field of Gê studies, dualism became something of an object of scholarly obsession. Accordingly, a predominant objective of Gê scholarship has been to propose that one or another single, fundamental dual structure can explain a particular Gê ethnic group's (or all Gê groups') social organization, ideology, or cosmology. Such dualistic models come in a variety of forms, some reciprocal (e.g., Lévi-Strauss 1944; Lea 1992), some ranked (e.g., Bamberger 1974; Lave 1975; Turner 1984), and some tripartite (e.g., Carneiro da Cunha 1982; Da Matta 1983; Ewart 2003). Often, in an attempt to attribute complex social dynamics to singular dualistic components, age organization is relegated, implicitly or explicitly, to secondary

status (e.g., Carneiro da Cunha 1982; Da Matta 1983; Ewart 2003). Thus, my emphasis on age organization tends to contrast sharply with prevalent themes in Gê scholarship. Nevertheless, mine is not an arbitrary emphasis. Xavante sociocultural reality, as I encountered it in the Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhrítipá community, involved a striking number of age-based social configurations that contribute pervasively to the social experience. The same may correctly be said of dual structures, although that point was already well established by the literature cited above. However, my ethnographic data suggest that the near exclusive attention paid to dual structures rather than to systems of age distinction that predominates in the Gê literature is not justified for the Xavante case. As I argue throughout this chapter, dual structures are no more salient in the Xavante experience than age structures.

Maybury-Lewis wrote that the “most immediately striking feature of Gê societies is their proliferation of moiety systems” (1967:296). Contrary to his perception, my field experience among the Xavante led me to conclude that age structures were at least as significant, if not more so, than moiety systems. My perception derives from the seemingly constant attention given by Xavante individuals to age in our daily interactions as well as the sheer number of age structures that exist in Xavante society. That latter fact may not be apparent from previous literature, but is easily substantiated by a brief review of the age morphologies covered in the previous chapters of this dissertation.

I found that four separate age grade systems pattern the human life cycle from infancy to late adulthood. Two of those are informal gendered age grade systems that classify secular age according to individualistic or subjective criteria. Both those age grade systems were recognized since Maybury-Lewis’s (1967:339) seminal study of the

Xavante, although the particular grades and criteria for inclusion in them underwent significant revisions successively by Müller (1976:73), Silva (1986:64), Graham (1995:96), and now by me in this dissertation. The third age grade system is a set of three formal categories that patterns the secular human life cycles according to a single set of criteria for both males and females. Although each of the formal age grades in this third system was recognized as part of the male life cycle since it was first outlined by Maybury-Lewis (1967:339), the sequence was not recognized as separate from the preceding informal age grade systems or as applicable to females. The fourth age grade system is a sequence of four formal male spiritual grades. Maybury-Lewis did not recognize it as an age graded system as such, but did recognize that people of different ages had different spiritual functions (Maybury-Lewis 1967:255-269). Core features of that system were outlined by Müller (1976:128), but it has been otherwise ignored in the Xavante literature ever since.

Two distinct age set systems unite cohorts of similarly aged individuals for life. One classifies males and females together in a sequence of secular named age sets that collectively pass through the three formal secular age grades. Maybury-Lewis explored that age set system in considerable detail and thereby established it as a defining feature of Xavante social organization (Maybury-Lewis 1967:105-164). The other age set system, presented here for the first time, classifies males in lifelong unnamed spiritual cohorts that pass through the four formal male spiritual grades.

Several systems of age-based hierarchy rank members of age sets and spiritual cohorts internally. Within age sets, individuals are ranked according to when they entered the pre-initiate house (*hö*). Graham (1995:93) mentions the sequential nature of the

induction process, whereby boys of similar ages take up residence in the pre-initiate house after they participate in one of a series of induction ceremonies, but did not discuss how those groups serve to differentiate age set peers according to relative age. Also, a series of age set leadership positions are filled according to a number of age, genealogical, and personal factors. Although Giaccaria and Heide (1972 [1984]:153-154) recognize the existence of age set leadership positions, they did not document them systematically or identify their relationship to age status. Spiritual cohorts are also internally ranked on the basis of relative age and one's age set membership outside of the spiritual hierarchy. The former was included in Müller's account (1976:128), but the latter was not previously documented in the scholarly literature.

Two distinct agamous moiety systems arise from the alternation of age sets. The first is a pair of secular moieties that result from the alternation of age sets, made explicit through the alternating placement of the pre-initiate house on the left and right sides of the village, and applies equally to males and females. Although that configuration was in passing acknowledged by Maybury-Lewis (1967:159; 1979b:236) and Müller (1976:177), they did not recognize the degree to which it is implicated in the total social experience. The second age-based moiety system, which was not previously addressed in the literature, derives from the alternation of spiritual cohorts and therefore applies to males only.

The relationship between relative age, prestige, and leadership in the men's council was thoroughly addressed by Maybury-Lewis (1967:146-148) and Graham (1995:149-151). Also related to prestige and leadership is a system of heritable knowledge ownerships, whereby largely patrilineally transmitted knowledge prerogatives

have senior owners, who consequently yield considerable influence in limited intellectual fields. Although those prerogatives were recognized by Giaccaria and Heide (1972 [1984]:121-133) and Müller (1976:169-191), the influential role of senior owners has not been addressed explicitly in the literature to date.

Three forms of genealogical seniority are age differentiated kinship terms, affinal obeisance relationships, and filial loyalty. Although Maybury-Lewis recognized that some kinship terms vary according to relative age, such as sibling birth order (1967:313), he also perceived other inconsistencies, which he attributed to systemic flexibility (1967:237-238; 1979b:242). Some of those variations actually reflect the pervasiveness of transformation in social relationships that occurs throughout the life cycle, as described in Chapter 6 and by Silva (cf. Maybury-Lewis 1967:220; 1989:167-180). Although Maybury-Lewis (1967:98-104) discussed the hierarchical nature of social relations between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law, Graham (1995:67-74) frames the subject in terms compatible with my model of respectful obeisance rather than as a structural source of social conflict. Maybury-Lewis (1967:165-171) also attended thoroughly to the relationship between patrilineal associations and political factionalism, but he framed it according to traditional models of descent and thereby failed to recognize that it is not based on corporate group membership, but rather on patrifilial loyalty.

Additionally, one system of formal friendship establishes symmetrical bonds of social solidarity and proximity between adults from, potentially, different age sets. Silva described that system and many of its social implications, although she did not appreciate

that it is a highly individualized system whereby bonds are established according to personal preference and by mutual agreement (Silva 1986:216-239).

Thus described, Xavante social organization is presently known to involve at least 16 distinct age structures. Those systems may be classified according to several criteria (Table 5). A first criterion is whether each structure is hierarchical. Of the structures identified above, 14 are hierarchical and two are symmetrical dual moiety structures deriving from the alternation of age sets. Xavante society involves at least another three other social moiety systems which are not directly related to age. The first is an exogamous moiety system involving two ranked patrilineal segments. The second is a spiritual moiety system dividing males into Wood-Owners (*wedehōri 'wa*) and Rattle-Owners (*umrê'tede 'wa*) according to their father's perceptions of their likely adult physical forms as either shorter and squatter or taller and thinner, respectively. The third is a division of the village into left (*danhimi 'e*) and right (*danhimire*) sides, based on house location, which serves to organize village-wide distributions of food and goods (half of the goods are distributed within the left side of the village and half are distributed within the right side). Although I limit the list of social moiety systems to those five, the number might be expanded indefinitely when one considers other dual configurations unconventionally classified as moieties or those based on ideological rather than organizational principles.

For example, the sharp gender division that pervasively structures social roles, division of labor, access to resources, and rights to knowledge domains, might be considered a form of moiety organization (Hornborg 1988:111). Similarly, the human life cycle may be divided into various pairs of ranked moieties by applying a series of

culturally valid criteria, some of which are suggested by Müller's (1976:89-106) study of Xavante body painting. Potential examples include distinctions between uninitiated and initiated individuals and between immature and mature adults. Several of the ideological dichotomies that have been presented by ethnographers as culturally salient for the Xavante are self/other (Maybury-Lewis 1967:165-171), center/periphery (Seeger 1989), public/private (Silva 1989:336), individuality/collectivity (Graham 1995:149-152), living/dead (Graham 1995:176-206), and consanguinity/affinity (Maybury-Lewis 1967:167). Although those lists are infinitely expandable, especially in the less explicit realm of ideological dualism, the extant Xavante literature suggests a minimum of some 14 culturally salient dual structures, of which at least eight are social, six are ideological, four involve age distinctions, and ten do not even involve age distinctions. Comparing those figures to the 16 age-based social structures enumerated above calls into question Maybury-Lewis's (1967:296) suggestion that dual organization is a more prominent feature of Gê society than age organization.

Xavante age-based structures may also be distinguished according to whether they are formal or informal. Bernardi (1985:2) made the distinction between formal and informal age grades, based on whether they are "institutionalized" in conjunction with age sets. That theoretical model corresponds with how Xavante age categories are understood and applied by Xavante individuals. Whereas there is extreme individual and situational variation in the interpretation and applicability of informal age categories, formal age categories are considered *emic* to reflect historical fact – membership depends on the occurrence of common knowledge collective ritual events. For the purpose of classifying Xavante age structures, Bernardi's distinction may be extended to

the other component structures of age group organization, including age sets and age set moieties. Age structures that do not pertain to such age group systems may be considered to be informal. Accordingly, Xavante age-based social structures may be divided into six formal and eight informal age structures. That tally compares with just two of eight dual social structures that can be considered formal (those two are age set moieties that are also included in the six formal age structures). Again, the obvious proliferation of dual structures is more than matched by the proliferation of age structures.

If it is allowed that some but not all societies are fundamentally dualistic, Xavante society certainly qualifies as such (cf., Maybury-Lewis 1967:296-298). That said, it is also many other things, none of which is necessarily less important or less diagnostic than being dualistic. The preceding comparative tally of age and dual structural diversity serves to illustrate that it is ethnographically unwarranted to relegate age to secondary status in the Xavante case. In fact, as I argue below, my data suggest that age organization is a defining feature of Xavante social identity. That conclusion derives in part from the new evidence, presented in this dissertation, of the pervasiveness and prolificacy of age organization in the social experience. It also derives from the circumstances of my field experience.

As detailed previously, I was assigned to the *êtêpá* age set, which at the time of my initial fieldwork occupied the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*). Through close friendships with several of my age set peers and social pressure from many of my older adoptive kin, I came to participate in many of the daily age set activities typical of males of my social age. I was also assigned to the spiritual cohort occupying the initiate spiritual grade and expected to share fully in the ceremonial and non-ceremonial burdens

appropriate to that male social status. Those factors, among others, set the stage for me to perceive certain aspects of Xavante social life more readily than others. In particular, my full involvement with young secular and spiritual age sets allowed me to perceive, through personal social engagement, nuanced aspects of the secular age group system and spiritual hierarchy that characterize early life. At the same time, those same conditions excluded me from other social circles and undoubtedly prevented me from perceiving and therefore addressing in a precise manner, certain other aspects of Xavante age organization. In particular, my social status as young and male may have diminished my ability to analyze critically certain aspects of late life and the female experience.

That said, other scholars' representations of Xavante society clearly indicate that attention to Xavante age organization is warranted. Although age may receive less attention in other ethnographic representations of Xavante society, it still factors prominently in the writings of ethnographers who assumed very different social statuses in their field communities and chose to focus on very different aspects of Xavante society than I did. For example, researchers who focused on such diverse aspects as social structure (Maybury-Lewis 1967:299), ritual discourse (Graham 1995), body ornamentation (Müller 1992:133), and subsistence practices (Flowers 1983:161-164) also found age to be a conspicuous aspect of Xavante sociality.

I do not rule out the possibility that my finding regarding the prominence of age organization also derives from recent culture changes that have resulted in greater emphasis being placed on age. Nevertheless, a critical assessment of earlier ethnographic accounts supports the interpretation that the four previously undocumented age structures were present since the precontact era. Contradictions and inconsistencies in scholars'

treatments of age grades and age sets suggest they did not attend to the distinction between informal and formal age grades (e.g., Maybury-Lewis 1967:339:339; Müller 1976:72-80; Silva 1986:64; Graham 1995:92-99), which is one of the defining features of age group organization (Prins 1953:10; Bernardi 1985:21-22). That omission accounts for their not having distinguished between the formal and informal secular age grade sequences and suggests they may not have anticipated the possibility that the formal spiritual grade sequence be accompanied by formal spiritual cohorts and spiritual moieties. Additionally, Maybury-Lewis accurately described some ritual activities that I found to be specifically allocated to older members of spiritual cohorts, suggesting they existed as a system at that time (Maybury-Lewis 1967:260).

Although age is recognized as an important aspect of social organizational in other Central Brazilian and Gê groups (Vidal 1977a:361; Gross 1979:325), the proliferation of formal and informal age distinctions among the Xavante appears to be unique. Secular age sets are clearly distinguished only among several other Gê groups, but it is uncertain if they operate in conjunction with explicit formal age grades. The most likely evidence of formal age group systems is found in Eastern Timbira groups. Age sets are intact among the Ramkokamekra (Nimuendaju 1946:91-95; Lave 1977:312-313; Crocker 1990:194-195), but are less organized among the Krahô (Nimuendaju 1946:90-95; Melatti 1970:46; 1978:85; 1979:47) and merely remembered among the Křĩkatĩ (Lave 1967:89-93; 1979:16-17). In these societies, not only is passage between age sets a collective ceremonial affair that operates on a ten-year cycle, but the alternation of those age sets serves to divide them into age set moieties (Melatti 1978:84-88; Lave 1979:26; Melatti 1979:47; Crocker 1990:194-195). That configuration suggests the possibility of

formal age grades, even if they are unnamed. In other Gê societies, age grades and age sets seem to operate quite differently.

Among the closely related Xerente, age grades are relevant components of male sociality (Farias 1990:98-100; Silva and Farias 1992:108-111; Farias 1994:315-317).

Despite a lack of clarity regarding the details of that system and the apparent absence of age sets, Xerente age grades appear to operate in conjunction with age grade moieties but not through the alternation of age sets (Lowie 1939; Silva and Farias 1992:108-111).

Similarly, the Apinayé have clearly delineated age grades that do not appear to operate in conjunction with age sets and therefore cannot be considered formal in the technical sense (Nimuendaju 1939:36-37; Da Matta 1979:118; Farias 1990:98-100; Silva and Farias 1992:108-111; Farias 1994:315-317).

Differently, among Kayapó groups, both males and females belong to age sets and age grades, although ethnographic descriptions indicate that recruitment to the age grades is not based on collective and simultaneous recruitment of all members of age sets, thus precluding the possibility of a formal age grade sequence (Lowie 1943; Turner 1965:109; Vidal 1977b:125-158; 1977a; Bamberger 1979:134-135; Fisher 1991:230-252).

Furthermore, whereas Xavante, Xerente, and Eastern Timbira age sets are internally structured according to induction sequence or age-based leadership positions, Kayapó age sets lack internal inequality of any kind (Nimuendaju 1942:12, 60; Turner 1965:269-270; Crocker 1990:210).

Until the possibility of formal age group systems among these groups is confirmed ethnographically, the Xavante remain the only Central Brazilian Gê society that is documented to have a fully functioning secular age group system comprised of age

sets that pass through formal age grades. They are also the only group with two documented age group systems, due to an absence of ethnographic evidence of formal spiritual age grade systems among any other Central Brazilian Gê societies.

Whereas the structural formality of the two Xavante age group systems may be unique among the Gê, they appear to share some of the less formal aspects of age organization that I highlight in this dissertation. For example, informal seniority-based systems of social prestige and political influence appear to be common among Gê groups. Dennis Werner proposed for the Mekranoti Kayapó that the greater influence afforded elders may be described as a gerontocracy based in ceremonial knowledge (Werner 1981). Although Werner made the point particularly explicitly, Gê scholars tend to agree with him that age is an important basis for social influence. For example, Turner identified seniority as a criterion for leadership among the Kayapó because age tends to be accompanied by oratory skill (Turner 1984:359). I made a similar argument regarding the importance of age and seniority for formal and informal leadership positions among the Xavante. However, in contrast to Werner, I attributed the high status accompanying age to multiple factors, including early life socialization of the naturalness of rank, the association between political influence and oratory skill development, and the relationship between authority and senior social statuses, including spiritual maturity, heritable knowledge ownership, and genealogical seniority. Those multiple causes accompany a plurality of settings that involve age-based social influence, including the public realm of male politics involving the men's council (*warã*), spiritual performance, secret knowledge transmission, and household social dynamics.

Other Gê scholars have made similar observations regarding the relationship between age and influence, especially in regard to mature or elder men's councils that meet regularly to discuss community affairs, as in some Eastern Timbira, Kayapó, Xerente, and Kaingang communities (Nimuendaju 1946:132-133; Turner 1965:39-47; Vidal 1977b:143; 1977a:362; Crocker 1990:212; Oliveira-Reis 2001:106; Fernandes 2006:41). Although some Gê societies do not appear to have had such councils, prestige and political influence are nevertheless invested in elder men (Melatti 1970:199, 313; Da Matta 1976:202). In some societies, men's councils are internally stratified according to relative age, as among the Xavante (Turner 1965:332; Bamberger 1979:134). Some Gê scholars have also described the cultural appropriateness of respectful treatment of elders by younger individuals, often marked by avoidance behavior, as I describe for the Xavante (Nimuendaju 1946:132-133; Crocker 1990:116). Thus, the political seniority system I describe for the Xavante is, in general terms, similar to those reported for other Gê groups.

Also common to the Xavante and other Gê societies is generational inequality between coresident fathers-in-law and their sons-in-law. I characterized that relationship for the Xavante as one of affinal obeisance based in reciprocal respect. In addition to reciprocal avoidance behavior, that relationship manifests in a perception on the part of both parties that the son-in-law should contribute to the sustenance of his wife and his other affinal relatives. Similar observations have been made for other Gê groups. Some scholars have viewed the asymmetrical relationship between coresident fathers-in-law and sons-in-law as a potential source of social conflict in need of resolution. For example, Maybury-Lewis proposed that fathers-in-law and sons-in-law tended to belong to rival

political factions, an oppositional relationship that caused their proximate relationship to be a constant source of conflict and that Xavante society attempted (but to not succeed) to counteract through the “harmonizing” character of age group organization (Maybury-Lewis 1967:99, 164, 303-305; 1984:133-135). Other scholars emphasize the asymmetrical aspects of the father-in-law/son-in-law relationship. For example, Turner presented a highly mechanical model of Gê moieties and age structures based on the convincing proposition that fathers-in-law seek to control the productive labor of their sons-in-law through their daughters and society reaffirms that power relationship by institutionalizing its asymmetries through communal institutions such as age groups (Turner 1979a, 1984). Others scholars do not see it as a problem, but rather as one factor among others that Gê groups seek to balance through multiple social structures that act as systems of checks and balances. For example, Crocker characterized Bororo social organization in terms of age hierarchies and dual structures that counterbalance one another and thereby facilitate community solidarity (Crocker 1969:56-57). Still others frame generational in-law asymmetry in terms of reciprocal exchange. For example, Melatti suggests that among the Krahô, uxorilocal residence exports men from their natal households, but those transfers are compensated by the transfer of male names back to their natal households (Melatti 1979:77-78). The wide recognition of the importance of the father-in-law/son-in-law relationship attends to the broader question of why uxorilocality, the institution that exports sons-in-law into the households of their fathers-in-law, is uniformly distributed among a Gê societies when other social institutions often thought to be more important than residence patterns (e.g., descent rules and kinship terminologies) are not (Gross 1979:325; Maybury-Lewis 1979b:240-241; 1979a:305;

Turner 1979a:161-164; 1984:341; Hornborg 1988:52-121).⁷⁹ Thus, the hierarchical relationship between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law observed for the Xavante is pervasive among Gê groups. However, as Maybury-Lewis noted (1979a:305), the experience of those relationships by those involved may vary considerably.

Several of the informal age structures that I observed among the Xavante are less common among other Gê groups. First, I am unaware of documentation that any other Gê group has heritable knowledge ownerships, what Maybury-Lewis called “lineages” (Maybury-Lewis 1967:169-171), involving senior owners with primary authority to administer and transmit specialized intellectual property. Second, I am not aware of any other group with a kinship terminology that is so pervasively contingent upon factors that change with age. In the Xavante system, a substantial proportion of genealogical positions are or may be reclassified throughout one’s life due to progressive shifts in relative age and social relationships. These including reclassifications due to the sequential passage of certain alters between informal (developmental) age grades, progressive changes in relative age set status between ego and alters, establishment of ceremonial parenthood between ego and alters, and the generation of new affinal bonds through marriage by ego or alters. Each and every one of these factors may affect the kinship terms used at any given stage of life, creating a cultural perspective of kinship as transitory and age-dependent. Hence, relative age distinctions are common features of Gê kinship terminologies, as among the Ramkokamekra (Nimuendaju and Lowie 1937:574-

⁷⁹ The importance many Gê scholars place on residence echoes Lowie’s early assertion that residence rules (or patterns) transcended descent rules in importance to society (Lowie 1920:157-160).

575; Nimuendaju 1946:105), Apinayé (Nimuendaju 1939:111-112), Xerente (Maybury-Lewis 1979b:226-2227), and Bororo (Crocker 1979:274). Also, kinship terminologies are contingent on often intergenerational naming relationships among several Northern Gê groups (Da Matta 1979:95; Lave 1979:22-23; Melatti 1979:67). Third, I am unaware of patrilineal loyalty generating kinship-based systems of political seniority as I have described for the Xavante, a fact that may derive from the Xavante and the Xerente being the only explicitly patrilineal societies among the Gê. Of particular note are accounts of Gê groups that perceive relatedness in terms of telescoping degrees of non-patrilineal genealogical relatedness. For example, Seeger describes how the Suyá construe degrees of relatedness in terms of close cognates, distant and classificatory cognates, affines and nonrelatives, Suyá, and non-Suyá (Seeger 1981:122).

In contrast, several age structures that are prevalent among other Gê groups are absent or less prominent among the Xavante. The most striking of these are age hierarchies based on name transmission relationship. Among the Xavante, name transmission is not institutionalized and does not create cohesive social groups or emphasize formal intergenerational relationships. Xavante names may be transmitted by just about any consanguineal relative in ascending generations, typically fathers, bilateral uncles, and grandfathers, although names of a certain age tend to receive their names from a mother's brother (Silva 1986:70, 131). A similar situation was described for the Xerente (Nimuendaju 1942:17, 44). In contrast, name transmission among Northern Gê societies tends to be a singularly important basis for one's participation in abundant social groups and relationships (Lave 1967:141). Among the Eastern (Ramkokamekra, Krĩkatĩ, Krahô) and Western (Apinayé) Timbira, names are passed intergenerationally

between senior name givers (MB or FZ) and junior name receivers (ZS or BD), each of which comprise age ranks within name holding groups that are also arranged in moieties (Nimuendaju and Lowie 1937:569; Lave 1977:311; 1979:20-29; Melatti 1979:47-67). Suyá name transmission also occurs along intergenerational lines and determines one's membership in four plaza groups and two ceremonial moieties (Seeger 1981:137). In some societies, as in the case of the Bororo, name organizations are internally ranked according to age seniority (Crocker 1979:263).

Interestingly, the very Northern Gê societies that have institutionalized name-based social organization also tend to have intergenerational formal friend relationships between name givers and name receivers. Formal friendship in these contexts refers to special bonds between somehow structurally opposed individuals that are expressed in ceremonial contexts, among others. Among the Eastern and Western Timbira, intergenerational formal friendships are formed between name givers and name receivers (Nimuendaju and Lowie 1937:569; Lave 1967:187; 1977:311; 1979:20-29; Melatti 1979:47-67). Among those groups, formal friendship is characterized by asymmetrical solidarity and social avoidance between a younger and older partner (Carneiro da Cunha 1978:85; Melatti 1979:66-68). Suyá name transmission also accompanies formal friendship, but, in contrast to the previous examples, is explicitly non-hierarchical as it emphasizes absolute symmetrical identity between formal friends despite systematic differences in generation between name givers and receivers (Seeger 1981:141). Among the Kayapó and Apinayé, formal friendship does not follow name transmission, but is characterized by similar relationships of respectful avoidance (Da Matta 1973:284; 1976:118-122, 141; Vidal 1977b:98; Da Matta 1979:108-109).

In much of the Gê literature, formal friends are characterized not only as relationships that connect individuals, but also as symbolic expressions of the social distance between symbolic opposites (Da Matta 1976:77-78; Carneiro da Cunha 1978:87-88; Lea 1995a:342-343; 1995b:218). Some scholars have interpreted formal friendship and name transmission in Northern Gê contexts as expressions of the dualistic principles of affinity and reciprocity that are not overtly attested through marriage exchange (Melatti 1979:74-76; Lea 1995a; Viveiros de Castro 1995:13-19; Gordon 1996:174-184).⁸⁰ Among the Xavante, formal friendship takes somewhat different forms, but is always between members of opposing exogamous moieties. However, unlike most of the Gê groups mentioned above, it implies extreme social solidarity and intimacy such that any possible connotations of “otherness” are negated. Among male members of the *wapté* pre-initiate age grade, formal friendship occurs between equal age set peers and is accompanied by constant social partnership. Among older males, formal friendship is usually established between members of different age categories but is similarly characterized by equality, solidarity, and physical proximity (Silva 1986:216-220).

6.3. The mutuality of similarity and difference

Although an arguably essential feature of age identity is asymmetry, it is not necessarily also the case that it excludes symmetry. As James Flanagan (1989:248) points out, even societies considered to be egalitarian or equal-access are typically asymmetrical in terms of age and gender. Among the explanations offered for age set systems is that

⁸⁰ See Gordon (1996:184-198) for a review of this and alternative interpretations.

they facilitate militaristic organization. Some scholars argue that they serve as alternate forms of political integration in societies that lack centralized authority while others propose that they provide a standard mode of military recruitment between otherwise unrelated societies (Bernardi 1952; Eisenstadt 1954:102; LeVine and Sangree 1962; Hanson 1988). Based on a global cross-cultural examination of age set organization, Ritter (1980) concluded that age set organization serves to integrate men in societies that face constant warfare and in which local group composition fluctuates due to ecological conditions. In order to substantiate her hypothesis ethnographically and in South American context, Ritter presented Xavante age organization as a case example (Ritter 1980:99-102). Common to each of those proposals is the idea that age sets have a sociopolitically integrative function in warfare settings. They tend to differ regarding the nature of its integrative role. Eisenstadt (1954:102) and Bernardi (1952:331) suggest it organizes people vertically through authority while LeVine and Sangree (1962:104) suggest it organizes people horizontally through recruitment. Those alternative interpretations suggest that whether age hierarchies construct vertical or horizontal social relationships is open to debate even in militaristic contexts.

Those functionalist explanations illustrate the complex nature of the relationship between social similarity and difference in age organization. Another example can be found in how the many informal and formal age structures detailed in the previous section create a dynamic field of social relationships with important implications for Xavante social identity. As Richard Jenkins argued, social identity involves both individual and group factors (Jenkins 2004:112-117). Those two aspects cannot be easily separated, since they are both engaged through the human social experience. In the

context of Xavante age organization, individual identity can be imagined as involving a complex and intersection of shared age identities that contribute to the makeup of the social field for a given person at a given time. Thus, the cultural emphasis placed on group identity in such forms as age sets, age grades, age set subgroups, and age set moieties, the aggregate result is a patently individualized system of age identity. In different terms, people encounter one another according to particular conjunctions of multiplex age relationships that simultaneously join and separate them in highly individualized ways.

The preceding two examples illustrate that age organization is not only hierarchical and differentiating, but also implicates the mutually constitutive principles of equality and similarity. As mentioned in the previous section, from a structural perspective, Xavante age hierarchies may also involve both asymmetrical and symmetrical age relationships, as in the case of age set sequences organized into age set moieties. Furthermore, the quality of the asymmetries involved may be varied, as in the contrasting examples of social solidarity between alternate age sets and rivalry between adjacent age sets. The complexity of the relationships between group and individual identity, on the one hand, and similarity and difference, on the other, is further increased as one considers additional aspects of social identity less directly related to age, such as gender and exogamous patrilineal moiety. Thus, the multiplex nature of Xavante social organization may be seen as generating a social landscape that both unites and differentiates people according to multiple concurrent configurations. I propose that this plurality of similarity and difference is a pervasive aspect of Xavante sociality not by coincidence but because the Xavante tend to view similarity and difference as integral

parts of the same phenomena. The same may be said of other related sets of principles, including equality and hierarchy, symmetry and asymmetry, inclusion and exclusion, and individuality and collectivity. In each case, Xavante culture deemphasizes the apparent antithesis of each pair in favor of a formulation that prioritizes their mutuality. I derive that conclusion in part from the observation that the Xavante social experience involves abundant interpersonal arrangements that implicate both similarity and difference in congruent fashion. I also derive it from my experience of Xavante social interaction, which I found to presume and accommodate the multiplicity of social configurations between individuals, a point that I address in greater detail in the final section of this chapter. This proposal echoes other scholars' characterizations of Xavante social dualism as congruent with or presupposing asymmetrical structures (e.g., Seeger 1989:110), but goes further to suggest that each is predicated on the other according to a pervasive social logic of the plurality and simultaneity of similarity and difference. In the remainder of this section I discuss examples of the informal ways in which Xavante age organization concurrently involves both similarity and difference and compare those findings with ethnographic data regarding other Central Brazilian and Gê groups. In the next section, I address the formal ways in which similarity and difference are mutually implicated through dual organization and age hierarchy.

The mutuality of similarity and difference in the Xavante social experience is apparent in the relative autonomy retained by individuals in otherwise subordinate age positions. As I discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, older people rarely exercise direct authority over younger or structurally subordinate individuals. Children (*a'uté*) generally enjoy considerable liberty to play without intervention from senior kin. For their part, parents

and other elder relatives express their expectation that children actively imitate adult behavior through play and thereby prepare for becoming responsible adults. However, they explicitly consider the initiative to do so the child's responsibility rather than their own. Thus, people tend to exert indirect rather than authoritative influence over children. Even among girls (*ba'ōno*), who generally perform domestic work at younger ages than boys (*watebremi*), adults generally consider it the child's responsibility to do so of her own accord and not the business of parents to compel them to do so. That philosophy extends to education in general, as age seniors often place the burden of seeking knowledge and educational experiences on youth. Furthermore, even decisions that are explicitly parental are executed in such a manner as to afford a measure of autonomy to the child. For example, although parents choose when their sons will be inducted into the pre-initiate house, the decision to actually take up residence there remains his own. Similarly, parents arrange marriages for their children at very young ages, but even adolescent girls (*azarudu*) are afforded the right to refuse them. My characterization of these arrangements is not meant to imply that parents and elder kin lack interest or remain uninvolved in the business of their children, but rather to point out that their formulation of how to do so emphasizes persuasive techniques over direct intervention.

Similar dynamics can be observed in how older individuals treat male pre-initiates (*wapté*) and novitiate adults (*ritei'wa*). For example, mentors tend to treat their pre-initiate protégés with a great deal of indulgence. Rather than exert authority over their charges, they tend to instruct them through example and advice. Also, when young male adults fail to meet certain social expectation, such as to remain out of sight and avoid mature adult social settings, their elders rarely direct them not to do so, but rather

humiliate them in ways that demonstrate the advantages of conformity. In each of those scenarios, senior individuals refrain from exerting direct authority over their age subordinates, choosing instead to indirectly encourage them to arrive at preferred decisions of their own accord.

The preceding examples illustrate that unequal age relationships are accompanied by expectations of behavioral conformity and a simultaneous morality of individualism. It is also the case that age status equality concurrently emphasizes group and individual identity. Other scholars have emphasized that the earlier phases of age set membership involves a social milieu that prioritizes collectivity and conformity among age set peers (Maybury-Lewis 1967:108; Graham 1995:97). In Chapter 5, I suggested that the morality of collectivity they address simultaneously involves a strong philosophy of individuality. For example, the aesthetics of novitiate adult male song performance not only showcases the collective voice of an age set and its allies but also forefronts the individual voice of each song's public owner.

Although the principle of youth autonomy appears to be prevalent among other Lowland South American societies (Antonella 2007:13-15), individualism and individual agency appear inconsistently in the Gê literature. At one extreme is scholarship explicitly excluding the individual factor (e.g., Carneiro da Cunha 1978:1-2). Other scholars allow for individual agency in conjunction with structural or functional frameworks. For example, Fisher presented Xikrin Kayapó social structure as complexly contingent, arguing that it provides a nondeterministic ideological framework for social and productive action (Fisher 1991:17-19, 269-272). In a later publication, he characterized Kayapó rituals as sites of emotional expression and means by which individuals construct

social order (Fisher 2003:132). Lave makes the historical argument that Krĩkatĩ social organization underwent a process of individualization through the transformation of age set moieties to moieties based on personal name transmission (Lave 1979:36-44). Silva develops the idea that in Xavante society, naming practices do not produce social groups, as they do among the Northern Gê, but rather create identity between individuals of different generations and thereby contribute to the maintenance of social continuity over time (Silva 1986:161; 1989:334-335). The few examples of scholarship that expressly prioritize individual agency follow from theoretical orientations involving performance. Graham took such an approach in addressing the relationship between ideologies of individuality and collectivity in Xavante discourse (Graham 1995). Similarly, Seeger explores the relationships between the individual and the collective in Suyá song performance (Seeger 1987).

Another example of the mutuality of similarity and difference can be found in the important roles played by age and seniority-based prestige and influence in political processes ostensibly based on consensus. As Laura Graham argues, multivocal political discourse during semidaily men's councils (*warã*) depersonalizes speech and emphasizes the anonymity of political opinions (Graham 1995:149-152, 165-167). Nevertheless, as both my and Graham's data show, one's tendency to speak and thereby to be heard is highly dependent on age and age-based seniority. In this context, frequent and effective speakers enjoy a great deal of prestige because, among other things, they are skilled orators and respected factional leaders, individual characteristics typically associated with advanced age. Furthermore, prestige also accompanies the prerogative to exercise and communicate secret knowledge, which is the special right of senior heritable knowledge

owners. Those relationships between age, seniority, and individual political influence appear to be typical of Gê groups. For example, Bamberger argues that in Kayapó society, social factors, including age and name transmission, structure access to social status and political prestige, even though they do so through individual action (Bamberger 1974:363-364; 1979:133-138).

In Xavante society, there are limited circumstances in which people apply direct vertical authority. For example, elderly women often used brooms to scatter playing children from the middle of ritual performances. I observed spiritual guards (*dama'ai'a'wa*) use moderate physical force to effect behavioral compliance by spiritual initiates (*wai'āra*) including moving them away from fires on cold nights and interrupting horseplay during spiritual rituals (*wai'a*). Also, those same guards stomped on the feet of initiates who had eaten prohibited foods (although the initiates voluntarily offered their feet to be stepped on). Similarly, members of the novitiate adult age grade (*ritei'wa*) were expected to remain vigilant of their immediate juniors in the pre-initiate age grade (*waptê*) and punish serious behavioral transgressions by dishonorably piercing their ears. However, with the exception of the first example, all of those scenarios involve a special antagonistic social relationship between adjacent age sets in opposite age set moieties, a topic I return to below.

Despite those counterexamples, the Xavante formulation of age hierarchy tends to entail individualism at the same time that it emphasizes conformity. In asymmetrical age relationships, junior status does not preclude individual autonomy, as expressed through personal decision-making or noncompliance with the wishes of seniors. In symmetrical age relationships, emphasis on collectivity and similarity between peers does not preclude

concurrent attention being given to the positive individualistic values of being known and gaining prestige as an individual. More succinctly, unequal age status does not usually imply direct control and equal age status does not usually imply a subordination of individuality.

The simultaneity of similarity and difference is also apparent in certain structural arrangements that cast people as both equal and ranked members of a single age category. In mentioning this aspect, I draw attention to the fractal logic of age hierarchy, whereby ranks are subdivided into subranks. Among the Xavante, that logic of rank implies that members of single age categories are simultaneously equals in relation to external points of reference and unequals in relation to one another. Several examples pertaining to the informal and formal age grade systems, the age set system, and genealogical hierarchy illustrate this point.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the informal female age grade *a'raté* (wife with child) entails the greater portion of the female's life cycle, from the birth of her first child through late life. All married women who have had at least one child are considered to be of equal status in the sense that they have similarly achieved mature status within the informal age grade system and thus have equal status as wives and mothers in their respective nuclear families. Yet, there several other aspects of age status that further qualify mature womanhood. For example, within the informal female age grade system, elder (*ĩhi*) status differentiates mature women according to whether they have reached menopause. As compared to premenopausal mature women, elders are generally thought to have greater wisdom and respectability. As grandmothers (real and categorical) they command the adoration of often large numbers of younger people and thus may have

considerable range of social influence throughout the community. Thus, in the case of mature womanhood and elder womanhood, the interaction of two informal age statuses simultaneously identifies individuals as similar and different. Similarly, aspects of the formal age group system may differentiate between otherwise equal members of the mature womanhood. For example, females who are mature women in the informal age grade system may be either novitiate adults (*ritei'wa*) or mature adults (*iprédu*) in the formal age grade system as well as belonging to one of many age sets, all of which carry their own social correlates.

In Xavante discourse, male members of the formal mature adult age grade (*iprédu*) are said to share the right and responsibility to “participate” in the twice daily men’s council (*warã*). Doing so is considered a defining aspect of that status. Nevertheless, what it means to participate varies according to men’s relative age statuses. As discussed in Chapter 3, I found that the *warã* seating arrangement reflects age in such a manner as to forefront elders in the center and marginalize younger men at the periphery. Men’s inclination to speak similarly reflects their relative age statuses, such that elder mature men speak with more frequency and generally do so while standing. In contrast, younger mature men speak less frequently and usually do so while seated. Such internal age differentiation within the single category of mature adulthood occurs in a wider social context of seniority-based prestige and political influence. Similar observations have been made for other Gê groups, most notably the Xikrin Kayapó. As among the Xavante, Xikrin age grades are not only ranked relative to one another but also internally. As Vidal (1977a:362-363) described, the initiates group is internally stratified for its functioning and education. Also, married men with children comprise the

politically active age grade, but only its older members avail themselves of the forum and exhibit the adult male ideal of eloquence. Xikrin political process also seems to resemble the Xavante case in that public associations create an impression of collective interest that in fact overlays less explicit personal interests (Fisher 1991:452).

As discussed in Chapter 3, the spiritual age system similarly involves age categories that are internally distinguished by yet other age categories. For example, each of the younger two spiritual grades, initiates (*wai'ãra*) and guards (*dama'ai'a'wa*), are subdivided into junior (*aiuterene*) and senior (*ipredumrini*) designations that imply differentiated ceremonial roles. For example, the weighty responsibility of carrying sacred cane arrows (*ti'ipê*) belongs only to senior initiates (*wai'ãra ipredumrini*) who are considered disciplined enough to do so without risk of failure.

Internal age-based hierarchies among males of a single age set are established while they are pre-initiates (*waptê*) and live in the pre-initiate house (*hõ*). I discussed two examples of age set hierarchy in Chapter 5. The first ranks them according to the order they were inducted into the pre-initiate house, which occurs in a series of three to six staggered groups according to parents' perceptions of their sons' ages. Induction order not only differentiates them in terms of relative maturity and seniority, but also serves as a criterion for selecting age set leaders, which for their part comprise an additional ranked category with leadership and ceremonial prerogatives. Similar arrangements have been noted among some but not all Gê groups. Age set leaders are documented among the Eastern Timbira (Apanyekra-Canela) and Xerente but not among the Kayapó (Nimuendaju 1942:12, 60; Turner 1965:269-270; Crocker 1990:210).

Genealogical age statuses also manifest internal ranking, as evident in terminological differentiation between opposite-gender siblings according to birth order. In Chapter 6, I presented a model of genealogical seniority that attributes political solidarity between categorical siblings to mutual fidelity to their shared real and categorical fathers. A strong sense of social solidarity exists between real and categorical siblings, especially while their mutual father(s) are living. Among categorical siblings, who otherwise share a single genealogical landscape, birth order differentiates them relative to one another. Both male and female individuals refer to their opposite-gender categorical siblings by different terms based on whether the latter were born before (*ĩdub'ráda*) or after (*ĩno*) the speaker. Relative age distinctions for ego's same-sex siblings and cousins are encountered among many other Gê groups, including the Ramkokamekra-Canela, Krĩkatĩ, Apinayé, and Xerente (Hornborg 1988:118-119).

The preceding examples of the holarchical relationship between rank and subrank illustrate that age categories are simultaneously homogeneous and heterogeneous. Considering the additional aspect of age structure multiplicity, the totality of age identity among the Xavante may be seen as plurally homogeneous and heterogeneous. Another way of framing that plurality and thereby also the concurrence of similarity and difference in the Xavante experience is through the diversity of ways in which individuals progressively come to be included and excluded from assorted configurations throughout the life cycle. Chapters 3 and 4 detailed some of the ways in age status transitions are accompanied by transformations in one's social affiliations. In the male and female life cycles, individuals pass through multiple statuses that temporarily associate them with certain groups of people and disassociate them from others.

Examples of such transitions during a man's life include temporarily leaving his parents' household to take up residence with his new age set in the pre-adolescent house, leaving his parents' household once again to join his wife in her household and gradually creating a nuclear family of their own. Important shifts during a woman's life typically include receiving her husband in her parent's household and establishing a nuclear family with him, belonging to a household in which her husband's influence comes to replace her father's, and then in which her sons-in-law's political associations become dominant. Those limited examples illustrate how each stage of life is accompanied by a different set of social associations. A similar process occurs as peoples' nonresidential associations shift during the life cycle. In some cases, the fact of joining one association implies leaving others, either permanently or temporarily. In this sense, unity may be understood to derive from separation and vice-versa. For example, joining the ranks of initiated adults implies leaving the category of uninitiated adults. On the other hand, joining some associations does not imply disassociating from others. For example, men often leave their natal households when they marry, but in my experience that does not imply that their social connection to it diminishes. Rather, they become active members in two households instead of one. Thus, one's progressive passage between age statuses during a lifetime may be viewed as a process of identity transformation and multiplication.

Given the importance of age organization in many Gê societies, the process of transition between age categories is necessarily an important aspect of the age experience. For example, among Northern Gê groups, where name transmission is central to social identity and process, age grade transitions (initiate, mature man, counselor) can run parallel to changes in naming status (name-receivers, name-givers) (Lave 1979:24-

26). That plurality of age trajectory mirrors the Xavante case, with its multiple systems of age gradation. Also, according to Fisher, the Xikrin Kayapó lifecycle involves the “constant breaking and recasting of relationships,” much as I described for the Xavante (Fisher 1991:398). Although they were not the focus of my field study, similar name transitions occur among the Xavante. As Silva describes, name changes “indicate the process of living the social experiences and transformations an individual has to go through in order to achieve the necessary attributes of a human being” (Silva 1989:337).

6.4. Dual organization and age hierarchy

Considering the academic attention given to dual social organization among the Xavante and other Gê groups, it is striking that Xavante age organization involves not one age set moiety system, as previously documented, but two that operate according to the structural principles of age set alternation. As presented in Chapter 5, the secular age group system involves a conjunction of hierarchical and dual age structures. Named age sets (*da'usú za'ra*), or cohorts, are inaugurated in sequence about every five years during a set of initiation rites (*danhono*) that mark the collective passage of the pre-initiate age set (*wapté*) into novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*), and, in turn, the advancement of all age sets along a fixed sequence of formal age grades. Following the sociospatial pattern whereby a pre-initiate house (*hö*) is constructed for each successive newly inaugurated age set in alternation on the opposite side of the village, those same age sets are assigned to conceptually opposite sides of the community, often referred to as “our age set side” (*waza'runiwĩmhã*) or “their age set side” (*hö'amoniwĩmhã*). Significantly, the spiritual age group system follows a parallel structural pattern involving moieties generated

through the alternation of spiritual cohorts as they pass through a sequence of formal spiritual grades. In this case, unnamed age sets (spiritual cohorts) are inaugurated about every 15 years through a set of spiritual initiation rites (*darini*) that simultaneously promote older cohorts along the sequence of spiritual grades. Although I am not aware of an associated sociospatial arrangement analogous to the alternating construction of the pre-initiate house on opposite sides of the village, spiritual cohorts are similarly assigned in alternation to two opposed spiritual moieties, often referred to as “our spiritual side” (*wasiré wai’a*) and “the other spiritual side” (*wai’a amo*).

Those two age group systems are, from the male perspective, of two different orders and absolutely independent from one another. The spiritual system, along with spirituality in general, occupies a privileged conceptual space and is not to be confused or conflated with non-spiritual aspects of the social world. Nevertheless, their structural similarity in terms of age sets, age grades, and age set moieties was readily recognized by some of my informants. In fact, when discussing the two systems in Portuguese, bilingual informants used identical terminologies for their respective components. For example, Xavante individuals noted that both systems involve “groups” (*grupos*) that belong in alternation to two “sides” (*lados*), and through that configuration each group is allied with different group of “mentors” (*padrinhos*), which is always the next oldest group on the same side. It is in that sense of structural similarity that I compare these two systems.

Several additional observations may be made regarding the spiritual and secular formal age group systems. In the first place, their dual aspects, the pairs of moieties generated through the alternation of age sets, are inherently symmetrical, a point that cannot be assumed because dual structures and moieties, specifically, are often

asymmetrical (Lévi-Strauss 1944, 1956). In this instance, the symmetry of the two sets of moieties derives from the diachronic aspect of the age set alternation, whereby phase is structurally equivalent to all others and each age set will, through time, occupy all positions in the system. That symmetry is reflected in the terminological reciprocity of the two sides as an opposition between “our side” and “their side.” Even in the secular age set system, which is pegged to the left and right sides of the village, the contrast is arbitrary, being fixed geographically to the position of the nearest river, irrespective of the direction of its flow, the Cartesian coordinates, or other criteria that might rank the two sides according to such asymmetrical formulations as east/west, upper/lower, or strong/weak as has been documented for other moiety systems in Central Brazil and elsewhere (Lévi-Strauss 1944). At any given time the arrangement of age sets in age grades will lend a temporary asymmetrical aspect to the moieties, but the cyclical nature of that arrangement means that all age sets and both moieties will in their turn assume all of the available positions. Even the association between each secular age set moiety and a set of four recycling age set names do not lead to an asymmetrical aspect. In my experience, age sets of different generations that carry the same names do not tend to share identity, other than a sense of solidarity that derives from being in the same age set moiety. Rather, the only qualitative basis for differentiating them is the particular collections of individuals associated with them at any particular moment in time.

Unlike patrilineal exogamous moieties, discussed in the next section, both the secular and spiritual age set moieties are both categories of people and social groups of people. That is because in certain contexts their members tend to congregate or associate to the exclusion of members of the other age set moiety. For example, members of the

same secular age set moiety tend to gather in the pre-initiate house, join forces for sporting competitions, and go on excursions into the forest together. Members of the same spiritual moiety do not congregate publicly outside of ritual contexts, but they do associate on a daily basis in the sense that same-moiety members enjoy social license with one another to break dietary restrictions imposed by the other spiritual moiety. In other words, members of the same spiritual moiety enjoy social privileges with one another that they do not enjoy with members of the opposite moiety. That contrast in behavior between same-moiety solidarity and opposite-moiety distrust is a fundamental aspect of both age group systems.

In Chapter 5, I discussed the intimate social relationships that develop between mentors and their protégés while the latter reside in the pre-initiate house. It is through those relationships that members of each alternate age set join a continuous chain of mentors and protégés and that all age sets in that chain come to be identified as members of a side in opposition to and exclusion from another similarly constituted side. The result is a village divided into two conceptual halves, each of which enjoys a fundamental camaraderie among its own ranks and assumes a rivalrous stance towards the other. Excluding the pre-initiate house, that description applies almost verbatim to the spiritual age group system. As in the secular system, each moiety is comprised of alternate spiritual age sets in a continual chain of mentorship and solidarity in conceptual and social opposition to the opposing moiety. Just as members of opposing secular age sets treat each other as competitive rivals in certain settings or respects, members of opposing spiritual age sets similarly may treat each other with a degree of mistrust or punitive watchfulness.

Importantly, although the social relationships between sides have an antagonistic aspect, it is understood by the Xavante as an arrangement that explicitly facilitates the betterment of junior adversaries. For example, competition between unequally ranked age sets in opposite secular moieties tends to place the younger and less experienced junior age set at a disadvantage but to the effect that its members are stimulated to push themselves and thereby develop the strength and skills to compete more effectively. Similarly, members of elder age sets ridicule members of younger age sets in the opposite moiety not only for the pleasure of asserting their inferiority but also to encourage them to prove themselves undeserving of ridicule. Also, spiritual guards keep strict vigil over initiates to discourage misbehavior and thereby ensure their successful spiritual development. Thus, although age asymmetrical relations between opposite-moiety adversaries differ starkly from those between same-moiety allies, both are examples of respect relationships, whereby individuals of different ages treat each other with socially sanctioned forms of deference or esteem (Murdock 1949:79; Schusky 1965:79). In the Xavante case, respect relationships are bifurcated into social solidarity and adversary dynamics for the mutual goal of transforming youth into responsible and capable adults. An analogy for that contrast can be found in the alternative parenting models of tough love and indulgence.

An important correlate of the allocation of social solidarity to chains of alternate age sets arranged into two opposing moieties is the mechanism it creates for the transfer of knowledge from older individuals to younger individuals. In the secular age group system, mentors are responsible for educating their protégés about the mental, behavioral, and practical skills required for adulthood. Because those particular mentors and protégés

are merely two links in a continual chain of same-moiety mentor-protégé relationships, there is also a continual pedagogical chain that unites all members of a moiety and separates them from individuals in the other moiety. That dynamic is evident in the interest expressed by individuals of all ages in the successes and failures of younger same-side age sets even though direct responsibility for their education lies with their own mentors.

A similar dynamic occurs in the spiritual age group system, although the pedagogical implications are even more distinct. Spiritual knowledge, being a matter of utmost secrecy is not spoken aloud except in very secure settings. It is not discussed in the presence of women or individuals who have not been initiated or yet attained a sufficient spiritual grade. In addition, spiritual knowledge is only to be discussed among members of a single spiritual age set and between them and members of the other spiritual age sets in their spiritual moiety, especially their spiritual mentors. Thus, members of opposite spiritual moieties should not, and in my experience do not, exchange spiritual knowledge. This restriction is a somber one, as spiritual information is so carefully guarded precisely to protect it from theft by those to whom it does not rightfully belong. Knowledge theft is thought to threaten its potency for its original owners and grave sanctions are threatened for compromising its security. The result is a total bifurcation, in principle, of spiritual knowledge between two symmetrical unnamed lineages of spiritual mentors and protégés. When I inquired into the subject, members of both sides asserted in no uncertain terms that neither they nor anyone else had any idea what was being taught in the other moiety. In effect, they were seen as two separate but equal spiritual traditions with a common origin.

For males, the segregation of educational process between moieties in both the secular and spiritual age-group systems is not coincidental. Both systems entail the principle that one's same-side elders are one's allies and instructors, while opposite-side elders are adversaries and watchmen. They are also both based on the bifurcation of respect relationships between indulgence and tough-love models. Furthermore, they both involve the belief that the dual social roles of mentors and watchmen and the alternation of age sets that produces them are part of and necessary for the continuation of "traditional culture" (*wahöimanazé*). I argue below that the alternation of cohorts and social roles are involved in a particularly Xavante sociology of traditional male knowledge.

Another fundamental aspect of these two age group systems is that their dual symmetrical features (moieties) are inseparable from their hierarchical features (age grades and age sets). That is because both the secular and spiritual age set moieties are generated through the passage of age sets through age grades. In this context, symmetrical moieties and ranked cohorts exist through and define one another. It is my point that their mutual constitution engages Xavante formulations of similarity and difference (also symmetry/asymmetry, equality/inequality, and inclusion/exclusion) as congruent and simultaneous.

The alternation of age sets and its social repercussions are not well appreciated in previous literature about the Xavante. As mentioned previously, Maybury-Lewis did not perceive the spiritual age group system and therefore did not report its operation. Also, although he acknowledged the special social bond between pre-initiate protégés and their mentors and eventually recognized the opposition between adjacent and alternate secular

ages sets as a moiety system, he did not recognize its pervasive implications for the social experience (Maybury-Lewis 1967:159; 1979b:236). Furthermore, he made the consequential choice to emphasize factional formulations of dual social organization as theoretically and ethnographically more important at the expense of age set moieties and age organization, in general. Although subsequent scholars made efforts to reequilibrate scholarly representations of age in Xavante social organization (e.g., Silva 1986; Graham 1995), the social implications of age set alternation have not received adequate scholarly attention.

Xavante formal age group organization, involving age sets that pass through a series of formal age grades, may be unique among the Gê. Yet, it shares important elements of age organization with other Central Brazilian Gê groups. As mentioned above, both the Xerente and Apinayé have age grades, although they do not correspond with age sets and do not form moieties through an operation of alternation (Nimuendaju 1939:36-37; Da Matta 1979:118; Farias 1990:98-100; Silva and Farias 1992:108-111; Farias 1994:315-317). The Kayapó system also differs from that of the Xavante in that recruitment into age grades is not based on collective and simultaneous recruitment of all members of age sets and adjacent age sets enjoy close social solidarity rather than rivalry (Lowie 1943; Turner 1965:109; Vidal 1977b:125-158; Bamberger 1979:134-135; Fisher 1991:230-252).

Although the Xerente are linguistically and historically most closely related to the Xavante, the Eastern Timbira groups resemble it most closely in terms of age set organization (Melatti 1978:84-88; Lave 1979:26; Melatti 1979:47). As mentioned previously, although analogous ages set organizations are documented for all Eastern

Timbira groups, they are most well defined among the Ramkokamekra-Canela (Hornborg 1988:52-61). The striking parallel to the Xavante is that Ramkokamekra age sets form moieties through their spatial alternation between the east and west (or upper and lower) sides of the village (Nimuendaju and Lowie 1937:571-573; Crocker 1990:193-195). As among the Xavante, new age sets are incorporated in alternation on opposing sides of the village. However, in the Ramkokamekra case, the installation of each new age set in either the northwest or northeast quadrant about every ten years initiates a sequence of displacement, whereby older age sets on the same side move in counter-clockwise or clockwise direction, respectively, towards the elder men's council in the center of the village (Nimuendaju 1942:59-64; Farias 1994:315-318). As in Xavante age set organization, Ramkokamekra age sets and the moieties they form engage each other in a variety of activities, including sports, initiations, communal hunting, agricultural work, and warfare raids (Crocker 1990:194-195). Thus, although it appears that Eastern Timbira age sets do not pass through formal or named age grades (cf. Melatti 1970:187-188), the overall pattern of age moieties are generated through the alternation of ranked age sets is extremely similar to that of the Xavante. One important difference is that Eastern Timbira age set moieties appear to be associated with political asymmetry (Crocker 1990:195). That similarity and the scholarly presumption of an underlying cultural unity among Gê and Central Brazilian groups, such that they are thought to be explainable in terms of one another, leads to the question of whether Xavante and Eastern Timbira age set organization might express some common principles, functions, or philosophies that are also shared by those groups with less similar age set organization.

Age organization is more formally and thoroughly specified among the Xavante than any other Gê group. Nevertheless, numerous scholars have hypothesized for other Gê groups that age set organization received more cultural emphasis in the past which, through a process of historical transformation, was relocated to other social institutions. For example, various authors have proposed for Kayapó groups that age-based moieties, once an important organizing principle of ceremonial life, were transformed through time to meet changing needs of the community and the emphasis on age competition was transferred to junior and senior divisions of other moiety organizations (Turner 1965:269-270; Vidal 1977b:136-137; 1977a:365). Da Matta similarly interpreted contemporary emphasis on name-based societies among the Apinayé as historically derived from decreased emphasis being placed on age organization (Da Matta 1983:14-34). The hypothesis was most thoroughly developed by Lave, who proposed for the Krĩkatĩ that plaza group moieties based on name transmission historically were age set moieties (Lave 1979:16-17). She accounts for that change as a gradual shift in emphasis from age sets to personal name transmission as means of ceremonial group recruitment. Importantly, age is central to both configurations, but it is now reconfigured according to individual naming relationship between formal friend relationships. Whereas in the past men changed status from initiates to mature men and elders, under the naming system they change from name-receivers to name-givers. Lave's argument relies on evidence that the Krĩkatĩ terms *kuigatiye* and *harungatiye* are used for moieties that do not currently involve age sets, but were previously documented by Nimuendaju to be used for age set moieties (Nimuendaju 1946:90-91; Lave 1979:34).

That historical argument has found support in hypotheses that Northern Gê name transmission and formal friendship are structural cognates of Xavante age set organization (Silva 1986:160; Seeger 1989:104-105). That interpretation would seem to gain support from similarities in the social relationships involved in each. Among the Kayapó, naming relationships can establish access to social status and imply paternal social relationships, at least in the ceremonial realm (Bamberger 1974:365-369). Among the Eastern Timbira, they take on an explicitly pedagogical aspect, with age seniors (name-givers) explicitly behaving as mentors to their age juniors (name-receivers) (Lave 1979:20-25). Such mentors of both sexes serve as guides in ceremonial performances, teachers of lore and singing, athletic trainers, and daily companions. Furthermore, intergenerational formal friendships formed through naming relationships bear a striking resemblance to Xavante mentorship relationships, as discussed in Chapter 5 (Nimuendaju and Lowie 1937:569; Lave 1967:187; 1977:311; 1979:20-29; Melatti 1979:47-67; Silva 1986:204-214). As I argued in Chapter 5 regarding Xavante age group organization and historicity, other scholars have characterized Northern Gê name transmission as a basis for social continuity through time (Lave 1979:30; Carneiro da Cunha 1982:169). However, despite those similarities, those Northern Gê naming and formal friendship systems appear to be closely associated with descent-based alliance principles (Gordon 1996:152-198). In contrast, Xavante age group organization excludes kinship and residence as primary recruitment factors.

A final field in which the mutuality of the relationship between similarity and difference in the Xavante social experience is apparent is that of patrilineal exogamous moieties, briefly described in Chapter 6 as a factor in political influence. I raise it in the

present context because, as I argue below, exogamous moieties involve age hierarchy in an important manner. Although conception is understood to involve semen and fetal growth to involve dietary supplementation, bodily substance is framed in terms of “blood” (*dawapru*), which is inherited equally from father and mother. Other parts of the body besides blood (e.g., flesh and bones) are similarly said to be derived from both parents, although blood is the substance of kinship. Although one’s blood is equally paternal and maternal, male blood is said to be stronger and therefore to pull the father’s but not the mother’s moiety. The two exogamous moieties are Tadpole (*poreza’ōno*) and Big Water (*ōwawe*). These patrilineal moieties are a primary emic formulation of consanguinity that regulates marriage by excluding as potential spouses members of one’s own moiety. Although exogamous moieties can imply positive rules of marriage and reciprocal exchange of spouses in other societies, they do not among the Xavante. I attribute that condition to a second formulation of consanguinity based on the idea that even though male blood is stronger, mothers and fathers contribute equally to their children’s blood. The result is that consanguinity is understood to be bilateral for several generations, but decreasingly so. Accordingly, marriage between close bilateral cross-cousins is commonly viewed as inappropriate or undesirable. There was only one example of marriage between first cross-cousins when I conducted my fieldwork and Maybury-Lewis found no examples in the 1950s and 1960s (Maybury-Lewis 1967:229). Some informants said such marriages were allowable even though they were rare because cross-cousins belong to different exogamous moieties. However, other people denied that they were possible because first cross-cousins are categorical siblings in the kinship terminology and, from their point of view, one should not marry siblings of any kind.

Yet, upon further questioning, informants uniformly report that they did not consider their cross-cousins to be “real” siblings as they did their parallel cousins. It seems to me that the equivocation apparent in those responses may be related to the ambiguous nature of blood inheritance, whereby one’s blood substance is derived bilaterally but its male aspect is dominant. Thus, cross-cousins are siblings insofar as they share mother’s blood, but they are not siblings to the extent they do not share father’s dominant blood.

Extending that logic into the third generation, opposite-moiety second cousins (individuals who share a great-grandparent) are considered eligible spouses because their blood is sufficiently different. When the two notions of consanguinity are considered together, the marriage rule may be seen to be nearly complex or semi-complex (Lévi-Strauss 1965; 1969 [1949]:464-465) or “non-prescriptive” (Viveiros de Castro 1995:12) – spouses may not be members of one’s own patrilineal moiety or be one’s first degree cross-cousins.

Contrary to the findings of other scholars (e.g., Maybury-Lewis 1967:225-226), I found marriage exchange between all arrangements of siblings, including between cross-gender siblings, to be common practice and an important aspect of the kinship logic. However, following the idea that bilateral consanguinity diminishes with each generation, those exchanges tended not to be repeated in successive generations. For example, two sets of parents may arrange a marriage exchange between their children, whereby the son and daughter of one couple marry the daughter and son of the other. In the next generation, the children of those two unions are genealogical cross-cousins to one another but call each other by sibling terms and often consider one another close family (*wasi’höi’ba*). It would therefore be exceptionally unusual for parents to consider

arranging marriages between them. The logic of nonrepetitive marriage exchange finds terminological expression in consanguineal-affinal terminological equations in all generations but according to a logic that deemphasizes first cross-cousin marriage. For example, $FZ=MBW$ but $FZ \neq WM$ and $MB=FZW$ but $MB \neq WF$.

The bilaterality of consanguinity is also apparent in the intimate social relationships that tend to characterize relations between a mother's brother and his sister's children. As discussed in Chapter 6, men have especially intimate paternal relationships with their sisters' children. As Maybury-Lewis observed, a mother's brother and sister's child often called one another friends, give each other choice food during distributions, and enter name bestowal relationships (Maybury-Lewis 1967:226-227). Such men treat their sister's children with the same indulgence as fathers. In some cases, that special relationship is formalized as ceremonial parenthood (*danhorebzu'wa*) to the effect that they come to call one another by father and child terms rather than by uncle and nephew/niece terms. Those special bonds, whether or not formalized as ceremonial parenthood, are shared by a mother's brother's wife who is terminologically, and often genealogically, the children's father's sister due to a tendency for individuals to marry their siblings' spouses' siblings according to the principle of sibling exchange.

In each of those cases, members of adjacent generations from opposite exogamous moieties are joined by relationships of strong social solidarity rather than social distance. According to Maybury-Lewis, the social intimacy that often exists between children and their mother's brother contradicts the patrilineal formulation of consanguinity, a problem he seeks to explain in terms of a household exemption from the oppositional aspects of affinity (Maybury-Lewis 1967:228). However, I found intimacy

to exist equally with maternal uncles and paternal aunts even though those individuals usually reside elsewhere. These configurations of consanguinity and marriage are reflected in the kinship terminology. As mentioned above and discussed in Chapter 6, the Xavante have a bifurcate-generational terminology, meaning that all genealogical consanguines in ego's generation are called by sibling terms. In contrast, there are sharp distinctions in the generations immediately above and below ego based on patrilineal moiety affiliation, among other things. Thus, those three generations of the kinship terminology reflect a clear alternation of generations, whereby exogamous moieties are deemphasized in one's own generation and emphasized in adjacent generations. Stated another way, consanguinity is largely construed bilaterally in ego's and grand generations and unilaterally in adjacent generations. These findings are consistent with the Xavante formulations of consanguinity, whereby substance is shared bilaterally, but decreasingly so.

Patrilineal transmission of moiety membership through the dominance of male blood in combination with bilateral consanguinity for one to two generations has important consequences outside the realm of procreation. Maybury-Lewis first recognized the existence of exogamous moieties among the Xavante and established them as important features of sociopolitical life (Maybury-Lewis 1967:165-171). However, he also encountered apparent inconsistencies in their operation, which he attempted to accommodate by framing the system in terms of a dominant and rather flexible dualistic ideology that finds expression in the social system. In the specific case of politics, he proposed that an underlying oppositional ideology was expressed through exogamous moieties, which in turn came to be expressed politically through the action of

corporate patrilineages (Maybury-Lewis 1967:169). I did not encounter a correspondence between moiety opposition and political factions or find lineages to exist as he described them. That is not to say patrilineality is unrelated to politics. In Chapter 6, I discussed some of the implications of patrifilial loyalty for the political enterprise, but purposefully did not frame it in terms of exogamous moiety membership because paternity has a bilateral aspect and does not result in socially coherent descent groups.

Nevertheless, I agree with Maybury-Lewis that exogamous moiety affiliation factors importantly in diverse aspects of Xavante sociality. Some of those were mentioned in preceding chapters. For example, throughout men's lives, beginning when they are first indicated for inclusion in an age set, they establish bonds of formal friendship (*da'amo*) with other men who belong to the opposite moiety (Silva 1986:214-238). As youth, those bonds establish them as each other's friends and partners in play, sleep, and dance. As adults, they mark intimate bonds of friendship and social solidarity. Men and women of opposite exogamous moieties also handle funerary duties for one another, including digging graves and transporting bodies. Exogamous moiety membership is also an important factor in the political process. For example, it is a basis in the seating arrangement of men's council meetings (*warã*), it provides a format for dispute resolution, and it structures access to formal leadership positions.

In the remainder of this section, I consider how exogamous moiety opposition engages generational age in the domestic social experience. Uxorilocal residence became a prominent subject in Gê studies when various scholars affiliated with the Maybury-Lewis's Harvard Central Brazil Project found it to be common to all of the groups they studied (Melatti 1970:111). However, it is only among the Xavante, and perhaps the

Xerente, that it coexists with patrilineal descent in the form of exogamous moieties (Maybury-Lewis 1979b:235; Hornborg 1988:118-119). The combination of patrilineal descent with uxorilocal residence, an example of what Lévi-Strauss called a “disharmonic regime” (Lévi-Strauss 1969 [1949]:197-220), has been documented elsewhere in Amazonia (Murphy 1956; Kracke 1976).

As first described by Maybury-Lewis and discussed in Chapter 3, when young Xavante men marry, they usually leave their natal households in order to take up residence in the homes of their spouses and spouses’ parents. When repeated over time, the cumulative result of uxorilocal residence is that male members of patrilineages tend to be dispersed between households while female members of matrilineages tend to reside together. That pattern in combination with patrilineal exogamous moieties results in a generational alternation of moiety affiliations within a household as young husbands-in-law move in and eventually become heads of household through the deaths of their fathers-in-law. Maybury-Lewis provided a detailed account of that cyclical household pattern, but did so strictly in terms of the male experience, characterizing it as a cycle of alternating domestic political dominance based on the assumption of a certain congruence between patrilineal moiety affiliation and political allegiance (Maybury-Lewis 1967:98-104).

In contrast to Maybury-Lewis’s account, I encountered a somewhat less strict pattern of uxorilocality, whereby young husbands usually, but not always, took up residence in their wife’s households for at least some years, but often established their own separate households while their fathers-in-law were still living. After some years and often just a few, sons-in-law frequently constructed separate houses adjacent to those of

their fathers-in-law. In such cases, movement of people between the two households was frequent and free, suggesting they remained socially close even if they were no longer single domestic units. Despite those changes, some men remain in uxorilocal residence indefinitely and uxorilocality remains an emic model of household composition. Thus, it might be said that a strong pattern of uxorilocal residence applies to the majority of marriages for at least a period of several years. Although my data do not support Maybury-Lewis's model in full, there is some ongoing truth to his model of generational alternation of moiety affiliation among same-sex members of a household.

Although uxorilocal residence may be less enduring today than it was in the 1950s and 1960s, there is still a tendency for sons to move away after marriage and sons-in-law to move in, at least for a period of years. Consequently, it is still the case that coresident married men of adjacent generations tend to belong to opposite patrilineal moieties. The same is true for women because they tend to remain in their natal households for some time after marriage and elder widows often move into their daughters' households later in life. However, coresident married men in adjacent generations tend to be in-laws to one another while women tend to be lineal kin. Thus, the alternating pattern of moiety affiliation remains a fairly constant feature of household composition from both male and female perspectives, but differently so.

A primary difference between how males and females experience the residential alternation of patrilineal moieties is in the types of intergenerational social relations that exist between coresident members of different generations. In Chapter 6, I discussed patrifilial loyalty as a key feature of genealogical seniority, but I did not address the other dimensions of the residential social setting in which it occurs. Mothers and fathers

develop very intimate relationships with their children. Given the prevalence of sororal polygyny and sibling marriage exchange, similarly intimate social bonds develop between children and their maternal aunts and paternal uncles. Although those parental relationships exist for sons and daughters, the changes in residence that accompany marriage imply certain other differences between them.

Although parents and their sons remain close throughout life, and sons continue to have social rights and spend considerable amounts of time in their natal households, married sons tend to move out while sons-in-law move in. Thus, in a sense, the social ties that link parents to the subsequent generation of coresident males tend to change through time from parental bonds to affinal relationships of a different sort. In contrast to the liberty afforded to sons by parents to consume household resources without contributing, sons-in-law are expected by their own fathers as well as by their parents-in-law to contribute to the wellbeing of their new affinal coresident families by opening gardens and furnishing fish, game meat, and groceries from the supermarket. Furthermore, as Graham documented most richly, social relations between young sons-in-law and their parents-in-law are characterized by extreme social avoidance, including a taboo on direct speech (Graham 1995:70-72). According to my data, the Xavante understand that formulation of social distance as a culturally appropriate way to express mutual respect, a form of affinal obeisance. In contrast, because women tend to remain at home for some time and it is relatively unusual for daughters-in-law to move into their parents-in-law's household, the intergenerational relationships that link coresident females tend always to be parental and intimate. Thus, the combination of patrilineal exogamous moieties and

uxorilocality may be characterized as successively disruptive for patrilineal and continuously congruous for matrilineal.

Although there would seem to be a correlation between generational alternation in moiety affiliation and the distance that characterizes social relations between coresident in-laws in adjacent generations, as the issue was originally framed by Maybury-Lewis (Maybury-Lewis 1967:98-104), residential social relations involving women make that correspondence less uniform. In the first place, coresident mothers and daughters belong to opposite patrilineal moieties but enjoy the intimacy of maternal bonds. Thus, belonging to different moieties does not necessarily imply social distance. In the second place, relations between mothers-in-law and sons-in-law are characterized by formality and avoidance even though they belong to the same patrilineal moiety. Consequently, belonging to the same moiety does not always entail social proximity. Another way of presenting the problem is that social behaviors typically attributed to affinity (social distance) and consanguinity (social proximity) do not always follow from exogamous moiety membership.

Silva grappled with that problem by proposing a gradual assimilation of women by their husbands' patrilineal moieties, such that their genealogical positions (i.e., formal moiety affiliations) remain constant but women come to identify socially and politically with their husbands' moieties through time (Silva 1986:103). I agree with Silva insofar as patrilineal moiety affiliation has certain political implications that appear to be more salient for males than for females, such as in the unequal distribution of power between members of the two patrilineal moieties and the formal patterning of public discourse in the men's council, as mentioned above. However, Silva also seems to perpetuate

Maybury-Lewis's (1967:165-171) assumption that patrilineal moieties are corporate social groups with which one shares political interests because she presumes that social proximity is antithetical to moiety opposition. As discussed previously, I did not find patrilineal moiety affiliation to be associated with actual political unity or even an expectation of social solidarity. Accordingly, I consider moiety affiliation to contribute to social identity as categories of person rather than as groups of people. From that perspective, moiety membership may be a factor in how individuals relate but does not necessarily imply mutual interests or coordinated action. Thus, a mother-in-law and coresident son-in-law may share moiety affiliation, but it is not the primary factors in whether they relate to one another as socially proximate or distant.

Another way of making sense of this apparent gender incongruity is by framing the issue not in terms of descent relationships, strictly speaking, but in terms of transmission of knowledge. As I argued in Chapter 5 and 6, the social institutions Maybury-Lewis called "lineages" (Maybury-Lewis 1967:169) are better understood as heritable knowledge ownerships involving transmission of proprietary information and prerogatives between individuals in different generations. Although it is the prerogative of senior owners to pass their secret knowledge and accompanying prerogatives to whom they see fit, they tend to do so lineally. Some knowledge ownerships, including those that most attracted Maybury-Lewis's attention, tend to be passed from fathers to sons and thereby to assume a patrilineal aspect. Others tend to be passed from mothers to daughters and thus to resemble matrilineal descent. That gender contrast is explicit in Xavante discourse and, while not constituting a descent rule, it does suggest a preference for parallel inheritance for certain domains of proprietary information. Those patterns

may be thought of as patriline and matriline, respectively, in the sense suggested by Lea, whereby lines are different from lineages in that they exist *de facto* through repetition and are not necessarily consciously recognized (Lea 1995b:216-217).

In the case of male proprietary knowledge, the tendency for senior owners to teach secret knowledge and pass prerogatives to their sons is congruent with the patrilineal formulation of consanguinity that characterizes exogamous moiety affiliation. It also stands in contrast to the social opposition and absence of knowledge transmission between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law. According to male adults, a son-in-law's respect for his father-in-law is expressed not only by avoiding direct communication but also by providing him with food and labor. In my view, that dynamic is based on willful deference by a son-in-law rather than overt control by a father-in-law. I also see it as part of the formative experience of young husbands, whereby they learn, through the formality of the relationship with their parents-in-law, the importance of assumption of responsibility, providing for one's family, and treating others with respect. In my observation, when young men first marry, they often lack the practical and emotional wherewithal to provide adequately for their own wives and infant children. They are often not yet proficient hunters, have limited familiarity with horticulture, and have no monetary income. In essence, they are still their fathers' dependents. Accordingly, the initial years of marriage are often a formative stage of maturation into competent and conscientious fatherhood. The formal respect relationship with their fathers-in-law is essential to that process because it encourages them to recognize and assume those responsibilities.

The close social relationships that exist between men and their sons may be thought of as the pedagogical inverse of the distant social relations they share with their sons-in-law. The former involve social indulgence and sharing of secret knowledge while the latter involve social distance and an imperative to conform to adult social ideals. Framing that contrast in terms of the residential setting, whereby sons move away and sons-in-law move in, it might also be described as analogous to the contrast between indulgence and tough love, mentioned above, such that each generational shift is accompanied by a reversal in kinds of intergenerational social roles between coresident males. Thus, in that limited way, the residential dynamic may also be hypothesized to involve the Xavante sociology of male knowledge, proposed in the previous section, involving a bifurcation of intergenerational respect relationships between social solidarity and social distance. When viewed from the vantage point of a young husband, that dynamic appears as a contrast between one's natal household, where one shares bonds of consanguinity with parents, and one's marital household, where one shares affinal ties with one's parents-in-law. From that perspective, the hierarchical aspect of generational seniority has an accompanying dual aspect involving a bifurcation of socially proximate consanguineal relationships and socially distant affinal relationships.

The pattern is very different for females. Whereas men tend to transfer their knowledge to sons who live in other households, women tend to pass it to coresident daughters. A result of that configuration is that in terms of female knowledge transmission, the residential alternation of patrilineal moiety is not associated with intergenerational social distance. In other words, mothers are socially close to their opposite-moiety daughters. Consequently, it might be argued that the bifurcation of

consanguineal and affinal relations is less present in the female experience. That interpretation is supported by the observation that women tend to have somewhat close and informal social relations with mothers-in-law (but not fathers-in-law). For example, many mothers-in-law choose to share heritable knowledge ownerships with their daughters-in-law.

Following a suggestion by Lévi-Strauss that alternation of generations is part of an underlying Gê structure (Lévi-Strauss 1963:130; 1983:110), Hornborg proposed that among the Xavante, the “continuous spatial alternation of generations has been recognized by the Xavante themselves, and is probably the structural principle on which much of the ceremonial alternation has been modeled” (Hornborg 1988:83). I agree with Lévi-Strauss and Hornborg that there seems to be a certain aesthetic similarity between alternation in the residential cycle and the age groups systems. Furthermore, I argued that they both involve a sociology of male knowledge based on a bifurcation of proximate and distant social relations. However, Hornborg’s proposal relies on Maybury-Lewis’s model of the residential cycle, including its male bias and rather direct ideological correspondence between consanguinity and exogamous moiety affiliation (Maybury-Lewis 1967:169). The preceding discussion refutes that correspondence. Furthermore, I question the mechanism whereby a structural principle in one social domain would serve as a model for another, especially when the presumed origin (generational alternation between patrilineal moieties) is structurally much less precise than the purported derivative (age set alternation between age set moieties). However, the correspondence in both domains between the age alternation and a bifurcation of pedagogical roles suggests another possibility. The implication, which deserves further investigation, is that male

traditionalist values favor a division of intergenerational social roles between those based on social solidarity and transmission of private knowledge, on the one hand, and those based on social distance and cultivation of social responsibility, on the other hand.

In Chapter 3, I argued that Xavante traditionalism places great value on cultural knowledge, but even more on the structural relationships that are thought to facilitate the transmission of that knowledge, such as formal age group systems. Similarly, consanguineal solidarity and affinal avoidance are similarly viewed as essential for the cultural continuity of Xavante society. Although both those social morphologies involve males and females, they reckon them differently. The secular age group system, but not the spiritual age group system, involves females on equal terms as males. However, even in the secular age group system, females are excluded from its primary pedagogical aspect, the pre-initiate house. Similarly, intergenerational affinal relations are more pedagogically salient for males than females, because they are present in the residential setting. Consequently, although both systems involve structural patterns of generational (cohort) alternation, their pedagogical implications are more pronounced for males than for females.

6.5. Heterarchy, contingency, and social identity

The multiplex hierarchical and oppositional relationships that variously unite and separate individuals within Xavante society point to a pervasive feature of sociality – there is no single fixed point of reference for constructing inclusive and exclusive identity categories. Every outsider is also simultaneously an insider. Every equal is also a senior or a junior. Status is not absolute and is not fixed. It is contingent, transitory, and

circumstantial. The Xavante reality is that identity is multiple, that each formulation of identity has its place and time, and that individuals of all ages have the autonomy to construe those formulations as they see fit. Similarly, traditionalism for the Xavante, a theme I emphasized in earlier chapters, does not imply historical stasis, but rather that certain valued cultural modalities are maintained in the present and with attention to the future through their strategic reconciliation with contemporary sociocultural and socioeconomic realities. One of those modalities is the very plurality of social organization and, more specifically, the configurations of age organization that I present here.

To varying degrees, my characterization of Xavante society recalls those made by other scholars for the Xavante and other Gê societies. Maybury-Lewis's renowned ethnography of the same community at an earlier point in time called attention to the plurality and apparent flexibility of age organization and other social means of construing social identity and difference, such as moiety systems (Maybury-Lewis 1967:296-300). Silva similarly recognized the multiplicity of Xavante social structures and questioned what theoretical conclusions might be drawn from their fluid realities (Silva 1986:167, 331-332). However, both of those scholars attributed the variability they observed to ultimate causes. For Maybury-Lewis it derived from the struggle for harmony in a fundamentally divided society (Maybury-Lewis 1967:307-308). For Silva, the plurality of social structures constitutes a means for emphasizing social solidarity (Silva 1986:337). In contrast to those scholars, I argue that what has been described as asymmetry, flexibility, and complexity in Xavante and, perhaps, Gê social structure, reflects the largely deemphasized ethnographic reality that these systems are extremely contingent.

This is true both in the sense that they are situationally conditional and that the diverse structures themselves, taken as a social whole within any single society, are multidimensional. This observation leads me to an alternate interpretation of the ethnographic material, that the Xavante do not necessarily share anthropologists' strict ideological oppositions between hierarchy and equality, separation and integration, or individuality and collectivity. Rather, in many contexts these principles may be best understood as mutually constitutive and, therefore, not contradictory. Accordingly, I submit that Xavante age hierarchies deserve renewed attention in order to ascertain how they are experienced both individually and collectively in daily life and in conjunction with other aspects of social organization.

The theme of multiple age and moiety organizations is also ubiquitous in the Gê ethnographic literature. Some scholars respond to that plurality by asserting that some single structure is dominant or causal, thus essentially denying the very plurality that served as a starting point (e.g., Da Matta 1973; Carneiro da Cunha 1978; 1979, 1983; Coelho de Souza 2002). Nevertheless, the fact of multidimensionality in Gê social systems is undeniable. For example, although da Matta attributed multiple Apinayé social structures to a single underlying opposition, he simultaneously made the assessment that, "The social world of the Northern Gê is disjointed and its dual ideology permits multiple readings of social reality" (Da Matta 1976:247). Similarly, although Turner explained Kayapó social structures in terms of a single underlying socioeconomic and ideological dynamic, he also ascertained the abundance of contingent human relationships and recognized that social organization simultaneously unites and divides society (Turner

1965:84). These examples attest to a difficulty in reconciling structural plurality and singularity.

The tendency to theorize that single motivating structures explain the ethnographic facts of multiple social structures may derive, in part, from the perception on the part of such scholars that plurality and heterogeneity implies contradiction. That possibility is apparent in scholarship that asserts the impossibility of simultaneous social roles. For example, Turner wrote that in Kayapó society, for a man to become a husband and father he must cease to be a brother (Turner 1965:412). Similarly, Jackson identified one way of understanding the variability of Gê social alignments as a “surplus” of memberships, whereby for one to be activated others necessarily must be inactivated (Jackson 1975:318). Those characterizations are similar to the pattern of Xavante sociality that I called compartmentalization, which is the ability to selectively emphasize one dimension of social reality at the expense of another. My research suggests that compartmentalization is not the only possible strategy for reconciling the multiplicity of social relations that exist between individuals. Another involves their integration by allowing status in one domain to affect status in another. That dynamic is more closely aligned with the theoretical position that the multiplicity of social organization is always simultaneous and plural. Crocker illustrated that position when he accounted for multiple Canela age hierarchies and dual structures as alternative systems that serve to counterbalance one another for the sake of greater overall social solidarity (Crocker and Crocker 2004:67). Melatti took a similar position in arguing that in Krahô society multiple social and ideological configurations negate one another, thereby denying social contrast and increasing the overall equality of individuals (Melatti 1970:445-446;

1978:354; 1979:48-50). An important insight in Melatti's work is his description of the availability of multiple social perspectives. He wrote, "Krahô rites appear to give individuals the possibility to view social relations and the relations between the elements of the Universe, as they imagine them, from different points of view" (Melatti 1978:357). These theoretical positions are important because they recognize the irreducibility of multiplex social organization.

Fisher took these ideas even further in describing Kayapó social structure as fundamentally contingent. According to his evaluation, the plurality of social structure is both simultaneous and mutually exclusive such that in the kinship realm "there is an internal relation between hierarchy, equality, and identity" (Fisher 1991:480). According to his view, one can simultaneously assume multiple roles and can switch between them in turn, a paradox that contributes to the conditionality of social status and the unpredictability of social action (Fisher 1991:480-481). Such is also the case in Xavante society, where multiple systems for reckoning age in absolute and relative terms contribute to a complex terrain of social unity and differentiation. It is a social landscape that denies the distinctions between the heterogeneous oppositions that pervade this text and other scholarship about Gê societies, such as hierarchy and equality, separation and integration, individuality and collectivity, and similarity and difference.

The congruence of hierarchy and equality is a relatively new social theory (Schryer 2001). It has made inroads into the social sciences under the label of heterarchy, which is properly understood to be the multiplicity, heterogeneity, and simultaneity of

mixed systems of ranking (Bondarenko 2007).⁸¹ In anthropology, heterarchy has proven a useful concept for making sense of the diverse social relations that exist in complex societies (Crumley 1995; Stark 2001; Crumley 2003, 2005). In the Xavante case, it is also a useful term because it highlights that plurality of social identity and difference is an intrinsic feature of social structure that is emicly congruent and, as such, allows for highly individualized modes of engaging those structural realities.

The heterarchy of Xavante age organization is more than structure. It is, in my evaluation, how people go about social life. That assessment is ethnographic and personal, because I came to it through my own experience in the field. Doing field research with the Xavante at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá was a pleasure for many reasons, among which was the community's enthusiasm for including me as a guest participant in diverse social contexts that explicitly or implicitly involved age organization. The emphasis people placed on age status and age activities in their dealings with me was explicit and, at times, overwhelming. Being assigned age statuses in the secular age group system, the spiritual group system, and the genealogical network, imparted to me such abundant social rights and responsibilities that they consumed much of my research efforts despite not being the primary focus of my original research topic.

Such emphasis is illustrated by my most recent visits to Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá and another Xavante community that I had not previously visited. In

⁸¹ The notion of heterarchy employed here should not be confused with the notion of heterarchy as the horizontal or egalitarian relations that exist between nodes at any rank. Although Barreto rejected the applicability of the term heterarchy to Central Brazilian social organization because it can imply unranked systems (Barreto 2005:23), it would seem she did so according to this other definition.

2008, three years after completing my original dissertation research, I returned to Pimentel Barbosa twice. The first time was for a health-related study and the second was at the invitation of my age set peers to participate in a daytime dance ceremony (*rowete danho're*) sponsored for their protégés. I also visited São José village in the Parabubure Indigenous Reserve as part of a public health study. In all of those instances, my age status proved central to how people sought to interact with me. Although many other aspects of my social identity were also important, such as my male gender and status as a foreign researcher, people chose to speak to me and interact with me in ways that especially drew attention to my multiple age statuses.

The objective of the first of those visits, in 2008, was to report the results of a previous study regarding dietary health (Welch et al. 2009). Arriving in the men's council the first evening, equipped with a prepared speech about our research findings about obesity in the community, I was immediately dispatched by Chief Suptó to join my secular age set as they sang around the village. Despite having requested an audience that night, the mature adult men determined that I would not give my speech then and would instead perform my duties as a member of the youngest age set in their ranks and as a mentor to the pre-initiate boys. I was allowed to present those results in the men's council the following day, but even then doing so was overshadowed by an animated discussion about a spiritual ritual to be held the next day and in which I was told my participation was desired. Spiritual rituals are generally time consuming and draining activities. In that particular instance I was also selected to carry a sacred cane arrow for the duration of the ritual, from late afternoon to the following morning. Given that my visit to the

community was a brief one, that age-related spiritual obligation consumed the majority of my time and energy.

My second visit to Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhiritipá in 2008 was specifically to participate in a ceremony sponsored by my age set for our protégés in the secular age group system. The invitation was extended by my age set peers, who felt it was important that I attend because I had not yet assumed many of the social responsibilities of our newly achieved status as mentors to the pre-initiates. From my perspective, it was a first opportunity to experience mentorship activities from the structural position of a mentor and an insider to the pre-initiate house and its occupants. Previously, I had not enjoyed unrestricted access to the pre-initiate house because it had been associated with the opposite age set moiety. However, in 2008, it belonged to my age set moiety and I, as a mentor, could expect to involve myself there. Importantly, that status was associated not only with responsibilities, but also with important social rights.

With short notice to plan the trip and logistic constraints imposed by my travel itinerary, I arrived at Pimentel Barbosa village without food for my own sustenance. However, as a mentor, I enjoyed the right to eat with the pre-initiates from the food delivered to them in the pre-initiate house by the females in their households. Mothers, sisters, and grandmothers came to the pre-initiate house throughout the day with pots of food. Often, before eating, a pre-initiate passed his food to one of his formal friends in his own age set so that he might eat first. Then, after receiving it back and satisfying himself, he often passed it to his other age set mates. Living temporarily in the pre-initiate house also gave me the right to share the pre-initiates' food and obligated them to offer it to me. However, that was not my only potential source of food. I enjoyed the additional right to

be fed at my “natal” household, which in my case was my adoptive parents’ household, at any time of my choosing. Although all men enjoy that right, it is especially pertinent for male mentors. Typically, mentors are junior in-laws in their wife’s households, a status that burdens them with the responsibility to provide sustenance to members of their households even before they may have the resources or skills to do so effectively. Accordingly, they may welcome the opportunity to retreat to the familiar spaces of their natal households and the security of knowing that food awaits them there. Thus, the fact of my arrival in the village without food was of little consequence because my age set and genealogical age statuses afforded me the right to receive food in the pre-initiate house and at my natal household.

The primary social responsibility I assumed during that visit was to participate in the ceremonies (*rowete danho're*) my age set was sponsoring for our protégés. That was a grueling task that involved singing around the village repeatedly throughout the day during the hottest season of the year. As a mentor, I also led one such round as the publicly recognized dreamer of a song. As was explained to me, participating in this ritual was important for mentors and their protégés because it taught the value of responsibility and transmitted the capacity to withstand adversity. Mentors’ participation was critical because it demonstrated their commitment to their protégés and provided a sense of solidarity that facilitated their success. In other words, mentors suffered with their protégés so that they might become stronger. That dynamic illustrates a special kind of social bond that exists between mentors and protégés and is basic to the age group system. It also extended beyond the two age sets of mentors and protégés as the entire series of mentors and protégés in our age set moiety shared in the responsibility of

suffering with the pre-initiates in that ceremony. Many of our mentors (the pre-initiates' mentors' mentors) and their mentors also joined in, demonstrating to the pre-initiates that the burdens of membership in age sets are always shared.

The third trip I made to a Xavante village in 2008 was not to Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá, but rather to a village that I had previously had no dealings. São José village is located in Parabubure Indigenous Reserve, which is geographically very close to the Pimentel Barbosa Indigenous reserve, but is socially very distant. None of my Xavante associates from Pimentel Barbosa recalled visiting Parabubure in recent memory and no one I spoke with mentioned having friends or family there. Upon my arrival at São José, I was struck by a very noticeable difference compared to Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá, which was the prominence of Christianity in the discourse of some of the elders I met. Despite that and other apparent differences between the two Xavante communities, I found the manner in which people engaged me to be highly similar in that they emphasized age and genealogy rather than dual oppositions. After my arrival, word travelled fast throughout the community that I had lived at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá. Promptly, individuals of all ages and sexes began approaching me to ask my secular age group. My response (*êtěpá*) immediately identified me as a mentor to the current set of pre-initiates and resulted in those previously timid boys adopting a familiar stance with me and shedding their reluctance to approach my research team's camp area. A particularly emotional exchange occurred when an elderly couple approached me to ascertain my genealogical position at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênheritipá because they were members that community many decades ago, when it was still located on the banks of the Rio das Mortes ("River of Deaths") to the east. Having been separated from that

community so long ago, they remembered only a few names of kin, who happened to be my adoptive uncles. Recognition of our genealogical connection was a source of both sadness and joy, as it recalled memories of loved ones long lost. In all of those interactions, the community at São José inquired persistently about my age and genealogy in order to ascertain how I fit into their social world and how they fit into mine. However, only in one instance did someone ask me my exogamous moiety affiliation.

I am little interested in assessing the relative importance of dual organization and age organization. Although few people at São José mentioned exogamous moieties, I would not dare to interpret that as an indication of its lesser importance. I was similarly not asked about my spiritual age status, but such silence is appropriate to the patent secrecy of male spirituality. From my point of view, the more relevant argument is that age organization is an important aspect of the Xavante social experience and that there is little ethnographic reason to subordinate it to other social dimensions. Such recognition also demands that the multifaceted nature of Xavante age organization and its dynamic relationships with other aspects of social identity be taken into account. The Xavante people at Pimentel Barbosa/Etênhrítipá may be extraordinary for the attention they place on the plurality of age and social identity as they construe them in traditionalist terms and in contemporary context. However, that attention also attests a cultural recognition of the heterarchical nature of social organization that may be more, rather than less, typical among the Xavante and other Gê and Central Brazilian societies.

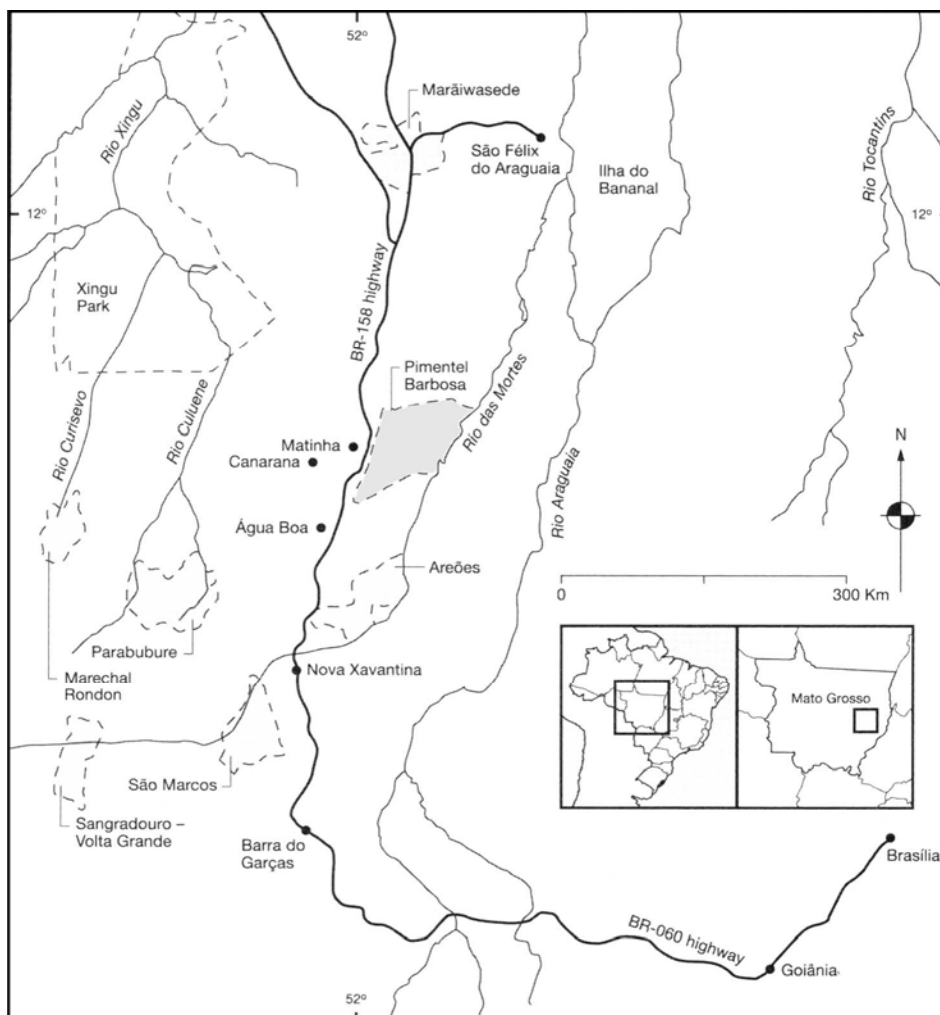
Figures

Figure 1. Map of the Brazilian closed savannah (*cerrado*) biome.



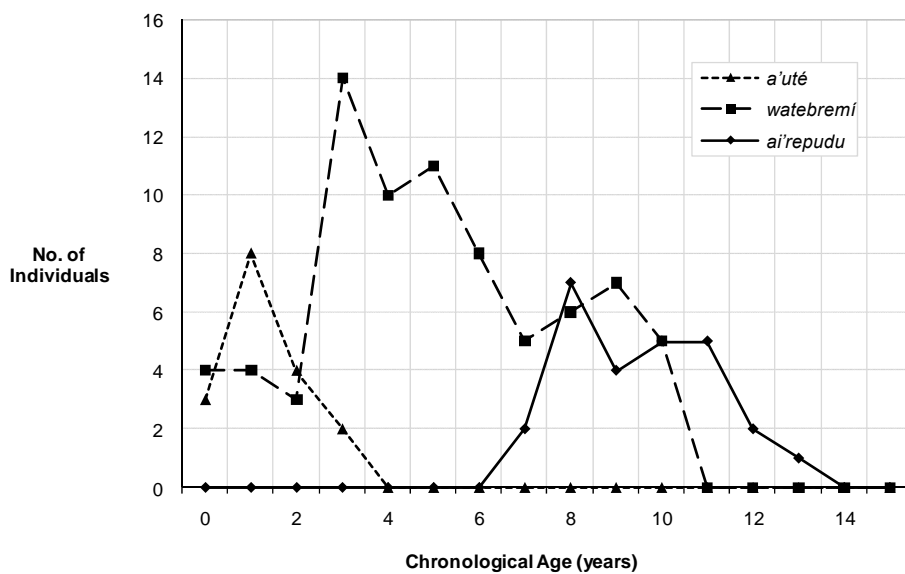
Source: World Wildlife Fund – Brazil (2006).

Figure 2. Map of Pimentel Barbosa Indigenous Reserve, Mato Grosso, Brazil.



Obs.: Pimentel Barbosa Indigenous Reserve is indicated with shading.
Source: Coimbra et al. (2002:18).

Figure 3. Frequencies of male individuals classified as infant (*a'uté*), boy (*watebreimí*), and adolescent male (*ai'repudu*), by chronological age.



Obs.: Chronological age is rounded off to the nearest whole year.

Figure 4. Relative percentages of male children identified as infant (*a'uté*) and boy (*watebreimí*), by chronological age.

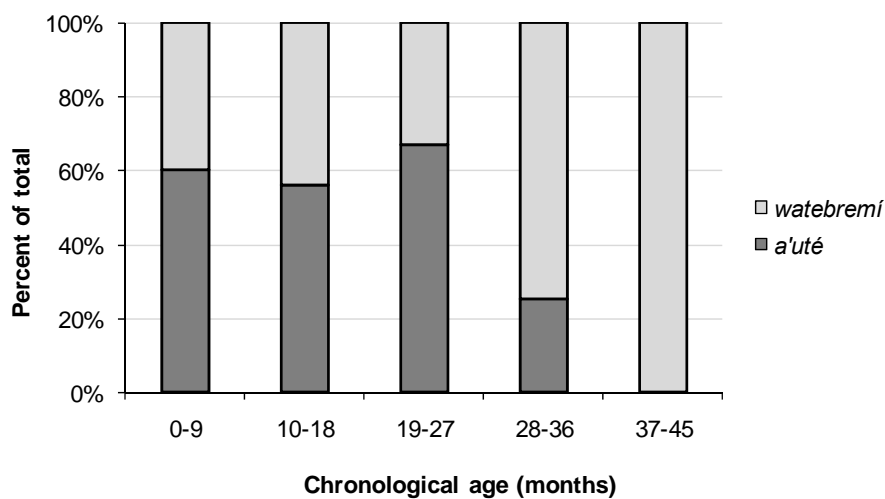
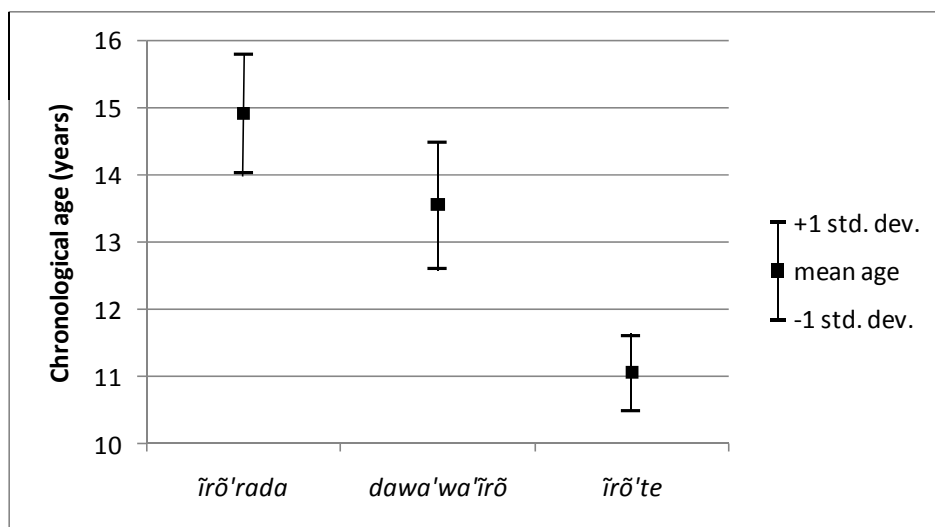
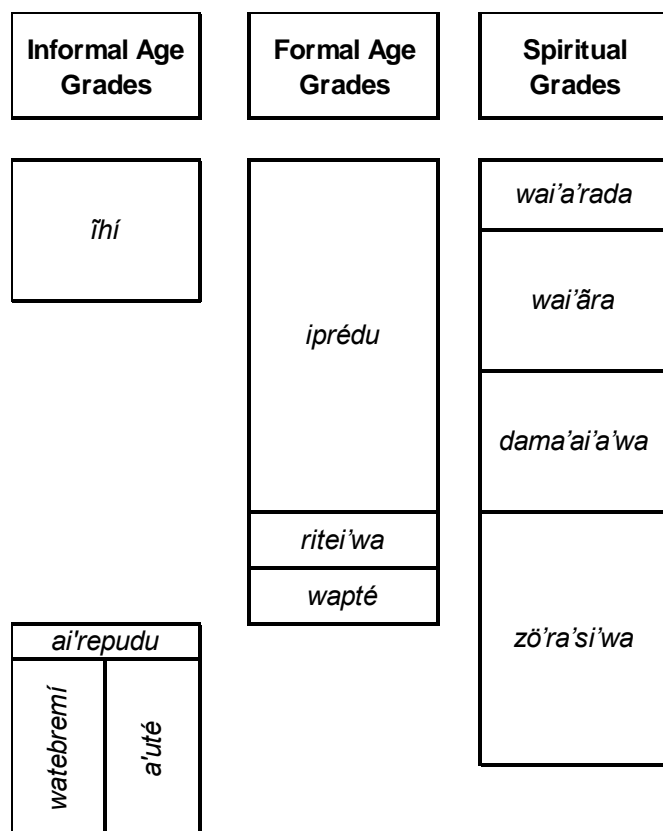


Figure 5. Graph of mean chronological ages of pre-initiates (*wapté*) by induction stage.



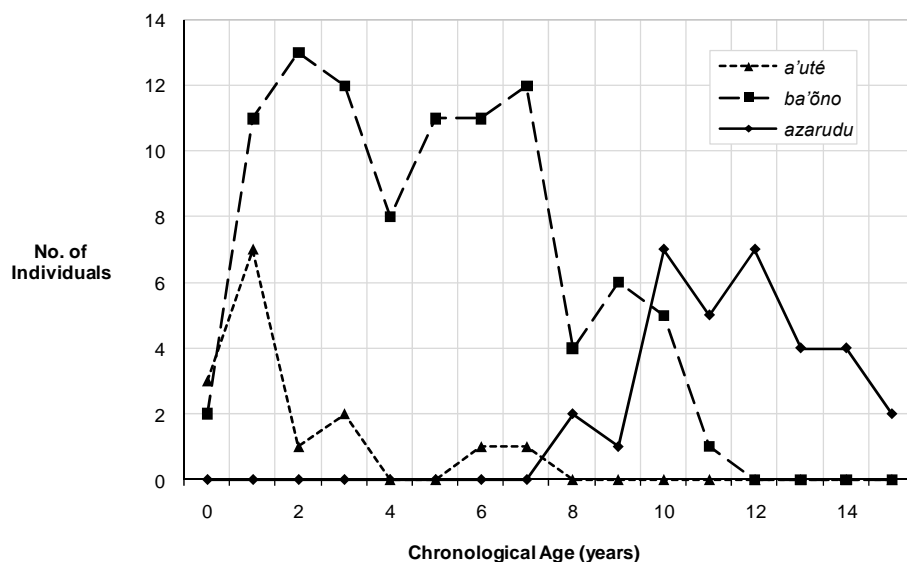
Obs.: Ages at the time of their initiation into novitiate adulthood (*ritei'wa*) by induction stage.

Figure 6. The male life cycle.



Obs.: Includes three systems of age grades. Boundaries for the informal age grades are approximate and do not correspond precisely with the boundaries of the other two systems.

Figure 7. Frequencies of female individuals classified as infant (*a'uté*), girl (*ba'õno*), and adolescent female (*azarudu*), by chronological age.



Obs.: Chronological age is rounded off to the nearest whole year.

Figure 8. Relative percentages of female children identified as infant (*a'uté*) and girl (*ba'õno*), by chronological age.

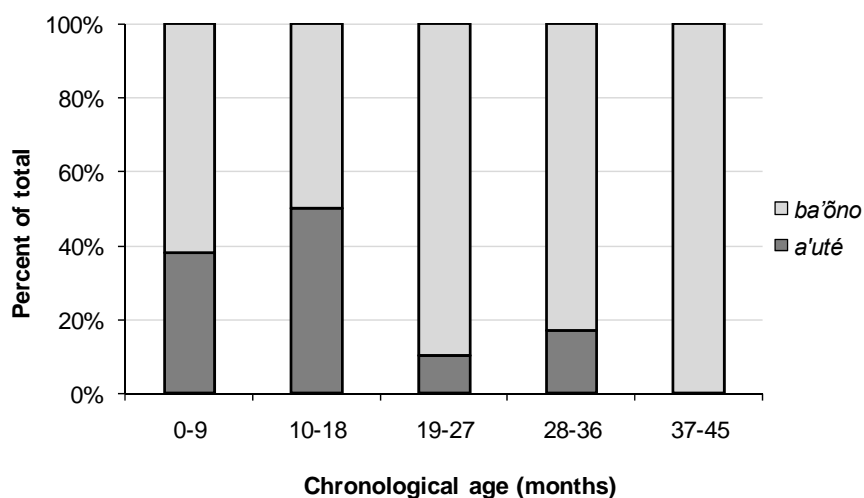
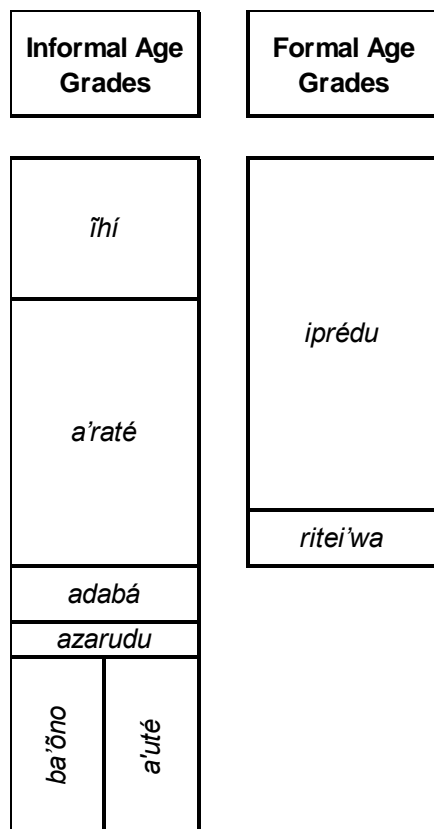
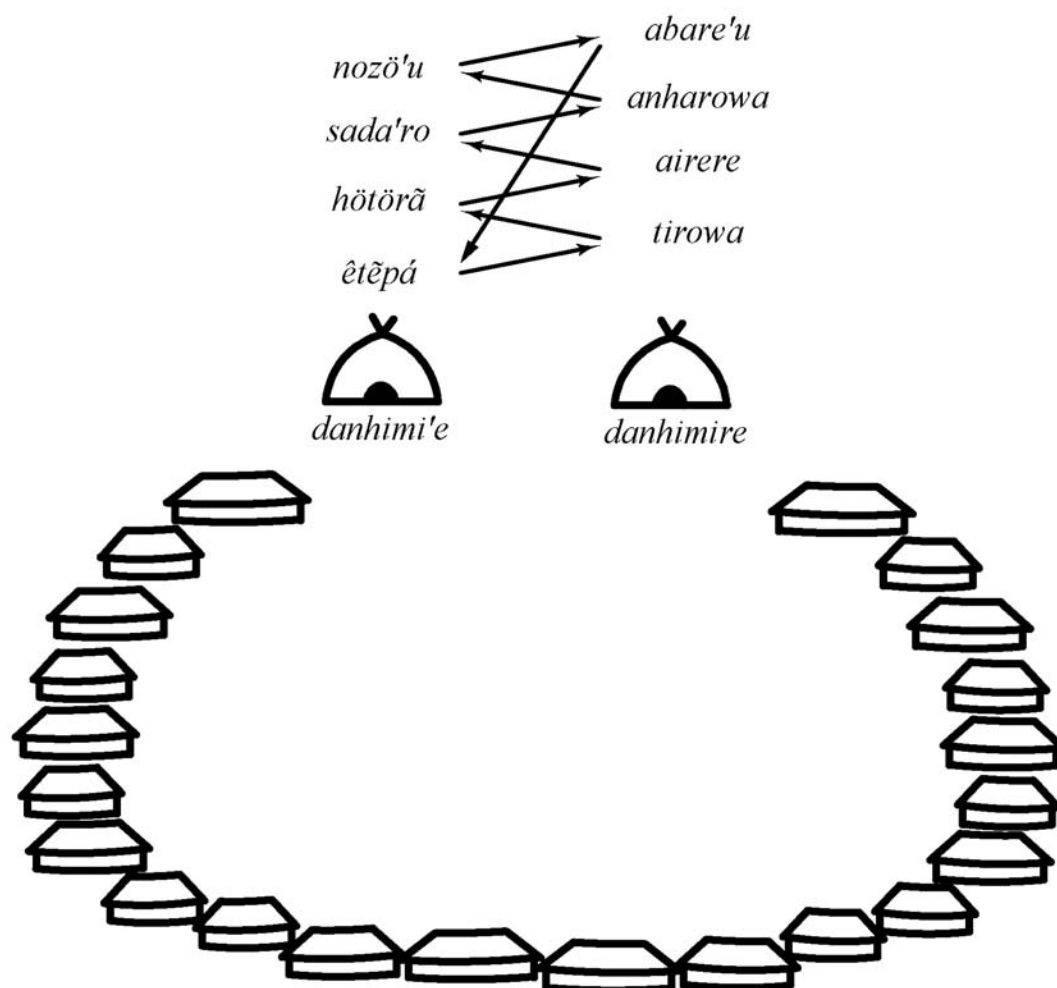


Figure 9. The female life cycle.



Obs.: Includes two systems of age grades. Boundaries for the informal age grades are approximate and do not correspond precisely with the boundaries of the other system.

Figure 10. Stylized sociospatial model of village and pre-initiate houses (*hö*).



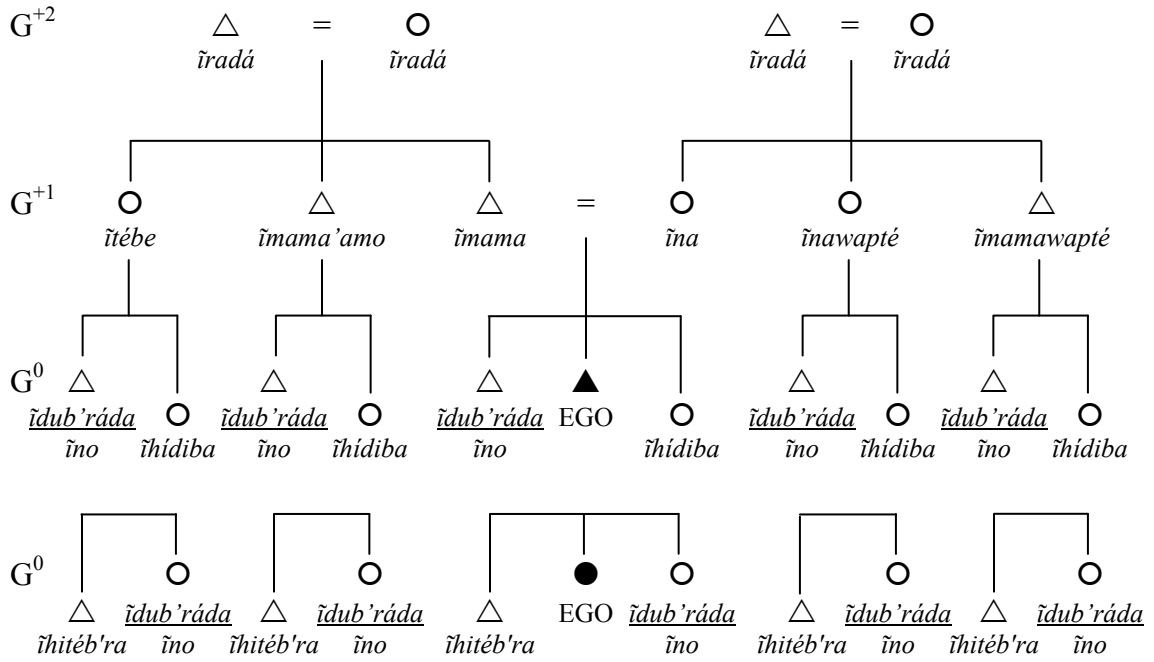
Obs.: Pre-initiate houses are indicated by semi-circular icons. Residences are indicated by rectangular icons. Age sets occupy left and right pre-initiate houses in alternation. The eight age set names rotate in cyclical fashion, with adjacent age sets occupying pre-initiate houses on opposite sides of the village and alternate moieties occupying pre-initiate houses on the same side.

Figure 11. Photograph of Abzú with circular Face Circle (*topdató*) design during women's naming ceremony, 1977.



Obs.: Photo by Nancy Flowers.

Figure 12. The Xavante referential kinship terminology.



<i>ĩtébe</i>	FZ, MBW
<i>ĩmama'amo</i>	FB, MZH
<i>ĩnawapté</i>	MZ, FBW
<i>ĩmamawapté</i>	MB, FZH

Obs.: Includes ego's and two ascending generations. G⁰ is repeated for male and female egos. Associated genealogical positions are specified for terms in the first ascending generation that are used for both consanguines and affines.

Tables

Table 1. Established model of male lifecycle.

Xavante term	Gloss
<i>ĩhi</i>	elder
<i>iprédu</i>	mature adult
<i>ipredúpte</i>	new mature adult
<i>ritei'wa</i>	novitiate adult
<i>wapté</i>	pre-initiate
<i>ai'repudu</i>	older boy
<i>watebremí</i>	boy
<i>a'uté</i>	infant

Obs.: Terms adapted from Graham (1995:96). Graham's presentation is inverted to show the advancement of age as progressing upward. Her orthography is modified to conform to the one in use in the Pimentel Barbosa community during my fieldwork.

Table 2. Foods considered harmful to infants (*a'uté*) if consumed by the parents.

Prohibited food	Consequences for infant (<i>a'uté</i>)
Alcoholic drinks	Stillbirth or poisoning.
Brain (all game animals)	Mental problems.
River turtle (<i>Podocnemis</i> spp.)	Vomiting.
Heart (all game animals)	"Dangerous."
Honey	Respiratory infection.
Intestine (all game animals)	Diarrhea and potential death.
Red-legged Seriema (<i>Cariama cristata</i>)	Short stature.
Rhea (<i>Rhea americana</i>)	Short stature.
Stomach (all game animals)	"Dangerous."
White-lipped peccary (<i>Tayassu pecari</i>)	Incessant crying and insomnia; slow growth and short stature.

Table 3. Frequencies of age grade responses for female individuals by adult age grade terms and post-initiation age set.

Age set sequence	<i>pi'õ</i>	<i>adabá</i>	<i>ĩ'rare</i>	<i>ĩhi</i>	<i>ritei'wa</i>	<i>iprédu</i>
12	0	0	0	1	0	0
11	0	0	0	3	0	0
10	0	0	0	7	0	0
9	0	0	0	4	0	0
8	0	0	0	5	0	0
7	1	0	0	5	0	3
6	3	0	3	7	0	0
5	6	0	6	3	0	3
4	3	0	12	1	0	4
3	4	4	12	1	0	4
2	1	9	8	0	5	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	22	4	33	32	5	19

Obs.: Age set sequence follows the order in which they were inaugurated, with 1 being the most recently inaugurated.

Table 4. Age set names and sequence.

Sequence	Age Set Name	Associated term(s)
1	<i>tirowa</i>	<i>ti</i> (arrow) or <i>ti'a</i> (tick – arachnid)
2	<i>êtěpá</i>	<i>êtěpá</i> (scarce stone, used as mortar or pestle)
3	<i>airere</i>	<i>airere</i> (babassu palm – <i>Attalea speciosa</i>)
4	<i>hötörã</i>	<i>hötörã</i> (oscar fish – <i>Astronotus</i> spp.)
5	<i>anharowa</i>	<i>anhana</i> (feces)
6	<i>sada'ro</i>	<i>dazada'ro</i> (breath, bad breath)
7	<i>abare'u</i>	<i>abare</i> (pequi fruit – <i>Caryocar brasiliense</i>)
8	<i>nõzö'u</i>	<i>nõzö</i> (traditional maize)

Obs.: A repeating cycle of eight names are sequentially assigned to age sets. The sequence repeats after all eight names have been used. Once a name repeats, elder age sets with the same name are distinguished with the suffix -'*rada* 'first.' Associated terms were reported by Xavante consultants as possible or likely meanings of age set terms.

Table 5. Classification of Xavante age-based social structures according to formality and structural form.

Structure	Formal	Informal
Age grades	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gender neutral secular age grades. 2. Male spiritual age grades. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male secular age grades. 2. Female secular age grades.
Age sets	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gender neutral secular age sets. 2. Male spiritual age sets. 	
Age-based moieties	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secular age set moieties. 2. Spiritual age set moieties. 	
Age ranks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pre-initiate induction sequence. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Aihö'oboni</i> leadership status. 2. <i>Īmurĩ'rada</i> leadership status. 3. <i>Pahöri'wa</i> leadership status. 4. <i>Tebe</i> leadership status. 5. Relative age within spiritual cohorts. 6. Age set membership within spiritual cohorts. 7. Prestige and leadership status. 8. Heritable knowledge ownership status. 9. Age differentiated kinship terms. 10. Affinal obeisance relationships 11. Patrifilial loyalty.

Glossary of Xavante terms used in the text

<i>abare</i>	Pequi fruit (<i>Caryocar brasiliense</i>)
<i>abare'u</i>	Age set name (may derive from <i>abare</i>).
<i>abarudu</i>	Wrist and ankle straps (used in spiritual rituals).
<i>abazé pra'ri</i>	To hunt animals by tracking.
<i>abzé</i>	Sorcery.
<i>adabá</i>	Married woman without child (“childless wife”), young bride (informal female age grade).
<i>adabasa</i>	Wedding meat (game meat given by a groom to the family of his bride).
<i>ai'repudu</i>	Male adolescent (informal male age grade).
<i>aibö</i>	Male, man. Also, initiated male (used for certain consanguineal kin, usually categorical sons, in the first descending generation of vocative kinship terminology).
<i>aihö'oboni</i>	Age set leadership position.
<i>aimãñã</i>	Term of address for a ceremonial father. See <i>danhorebzu'wa</i> .
<i>airere</i>	Age set name. Also, babassu palm (<i>Orbignya phalerata</i>).
<i>airere'rada</i>	Age set name (distinguished from a junior age set with the same name, <i>airere</i>).
<i>aiuterene</i>	Junior category within younger spiritual grades.
<i>anhana</i>	Feces.
<i>anharowa</i>	Age set name (may derive from <i>anhana</i>).
<i>a'raté</i>	Married woman with child (informal age grade, infrequently used). More commonly used synonym: <i>ĩ'rare</i> .

<i>a'uté</i>	Infant (informal male and female age grade).
<i>a'uté aibö</i>	Male infant.
<i>a'uté'manhãri'wa</i>	A heritable knowledge ownership (women's naming ceremony coordinator or, literally, "baby maker" or "baby organizer").
<i>a'uté'pré</i>	Infant (diminutive), small infant, newborn.
<i>a'utézo rōmhōri</i>	"Baby-making work" (painted ear plugs used to affect sex development of unborn children).
<i>a'uwê</i>	"The original People," Xavante, indigenous people.
<i>azarudu</i>	Adolescent girl (informal female age grade).
<i>ba'ōno</i>	Female child, girl (informal female age grade).
<i>ba'otore</i>	Female child (diminutive), young/small girl.
<i>barana si'iné</i>	Nighttime visits by a young man to the house of his future wife (literally, "to walk only at night" or "to visit only at night").
<i>bōdi</i>	Grandson (kinship term). Also, uninitiated male (used for certain consanguineal kin in the first descending generation, usually categorical sons, of vocative kinship terminology).
<i>da'amo</i>	Formal friend, third person (ceremonial comrade in the opposite exogamous moiety).
<i>da'pore'zapu'u'wa</i>	Ceremonial ear piercer.
<i>da'pore'zapu'u'wa'tede'wa</i>	A heritable knowledge ownership (owners of ceremonial ear piercing).
<i>da'usú za'ra</i>	Age set.
<i>dabasa ĩsemere</i>	Formal wedding ceremony (literally, "meat basket wedding").
<i>dabasa ĩsere</i>	Informal, abbreviated wedding ceremony.
<i>dabasa</i>	Marriage ceremony.

<i>dahi'wa</i>	Members of the next oldest age set (used in the third person to refer to the age set immediately senior to a referent age set).
<i>dama'ai'a'wa</i>	Guard, soldier (spiritual grade).
<i>dama'dö'ö'wa</i>	Chief, formal community leadership position.
<i>damro</i>	Spouse (wife or husband).
<i>danhimi'e</i>	Left, left side (may refer to left side of the village and its associated age set moiety).
<i>danhimire</i>	Right, right side (may refer to right side of the village and its associated age set moiety).
<i>danhimi'te</i>	A benevolent spirit that is associated with the <i>umrē'tede'wa</i> spiritual moiety.
<i>danhisé</i>	Shame, respect.
<i>danhizu</i>	To imitate (may refer to learning through imitation).
<i>danhohui'wa</i>	Mentor (responsible for members of <i>wapté</i> age grade).
<i>danhohui'wa pi'ö</i>	Female mentor (responsible for members of <i>wapté</i> age grade).
<i>danhono</i>	Age set initiation rites (mark passage between <i>wapté</i> and <i>ritei'wa</i> age grades).
<i>danhõ're</i>	Collective song-dances, performed in circles with joined hands.
<i>danhorebzu'wa</i>	Ceremonial father (a mother's brother who performs certain rituals for her sister's children; literally, "cotton necklace giver").
<i>danimiwanho</i>	An individual boy's personal mentor, ceremonially chosen by the boy from among his age set's mentors (<i>danhohui'wa</i>).
<i>darã si sãmra dahã</i>	"Opening your mind" (to adult ways of thinking, a goal for pre-adolescents).
<i>darini</i>	Spiritual initiation ceremony (a special type of <i>wai'a</i> spiritual ceremony).

<i>dasai'pé</i>	Dietary restrictions observed by parents during and soon after pregnancy.
<i>dasinã ã'ubu'mrõ'té</i>	“Young already participating” (may be used to indicate the youngest members of the <i>iprédu</i> age grade).
<i>dasi'sanho</i>	To teach, to set an example.
<i>dasiwẽ</i>	Girlfriend, a girl whose future husband visits her at night.
<i>dati'õ</i>	Mother, categorical mother (vocative kinship term).
<i>dawaparipesi</i>	Harangue, lecture.
<i>dawapru</i>	Blood.
<i>dawawa</i>	Mourning song.
<i>dawawa'ĩrõ</i>	Second staggered induction group into an age set (literally, “middle penis sheath”).
<i>dazada'ro</i>	Breath, bad breath.
<i>daza'uri'wa</i>	Ceremonial foot race at the conclusion of the age set initiation rites (<i>danhono</i>). Also, <i>sa'uri</i> .
<i>deza'hi'hõri</i>	Age set inauguration ceremony.
<i>du</i>	A type of collective hunting strategy employing fire to flush out game animals.
<i>êtẽpá</i>	Age set name. Also, “scarce stone,” used as mortar or hammer stone.
<i>êtẽpá'rada</i>	Age set name (distinguished from a junior age set with the same name, <i>êtẽpá</i>).
<i>heroi'wa</i>	Ceremonial stage grade during age set initiation rites (<i>danhono</i>).
<i>hõ</i>	Pre-initiate house (residence of members of the <i>wapté</i> formal age grade).
<i>hõ'amoniwĩmhã</i>	The other age set moiety, people in the other age set moiety.
<i>hõdawa'õ'ha</i>	Fourth staggered induction group into an age set.
<i>hõimana'u'õ</i>	“Descendants of the first creators” (Graham 1995:19).

<i>hötörã</i>	Age set name. Also, oscar fish (<i>Astronotus</i> spp.).
<i>hō'wa</i>	Coresidents of the pre-initiate house (<i>hō</i>). Also, used for certain consanguineal kin, usually categorical sons, in the first descending generation of vocative kinship terminology.
<i>hō'wa nōri</i>	Pre-initiate protégés (members of the <i>wapté</i> formal age grade under the guidance of <i>danhohui'wa</i> mentors).
<i>ĩ'amo</i>	Formal friend (ceremonial comrade in the opposite exogamous moiety).
<i>ĩdub'rada</i>	Older opposite-gender sibling (referential kinship term for speakers of both genders and vocative kinship term for female speakers).
<i>ĩdúb'rada</i>	Older opposite-gender sibling (vocative kinship term for male speakers).
<i>ĩhi</i>	Elder (informal male and female age grade).
<i>ĩhidiba</i>	Sister, categorical sister (kinship term for male speakers).
<i>ĩhidiba siwadi</i>	Distant sister (male speaker).
<i>ĩhire</i>	Elder (diminutive), young elder.
<i>ĩhitéb'ra</i>	Brother, categorical brother (referential kinship term for female speakers).
<i>ĩhiteb're</i>	Brother, categorical brother (vocative kinship term for female speakers).
<i>ĩhi'wa</i>	Members of one's next oldest age set (used until the speaker's age set has attained mature adulthood).
<i>ĩhöiba'rada</i>	Old person (literally, "old life/body").
<i>ĩhöibaté</i>	Young person (literally, "young life/body").
<i>ĩmama</i>	Father, categorical father (kinship term).
<i>ĩmama'amo</i>	Father's brother, categorical father's brother (literally, "other father") (referential kinship term).
<i>ĩmama'amo siwadi</i>	Distant father's brother.

<i>ĩmamawapté</i>	Mother's brother, categorical mother's brother (literally, 'new father') (vocative kinship term).
<i>imapré basi</i>	"Only my parents-in-law."
<i>ĩmapré 'wa</i>	Parents-in-law.
<i>ĩmawapté</i>	Mother's brother, categorical mother's brother (literally, "new father") (vocative kinship term).
<i>ĩmurĩ'rada</i>	Age set leadership position.
<i>ĩna</i>	Mother, categorical mother (referential kinship term).
<i>ĩnawapté</i>	Mother's sister, categorical mother's sister (referential kinship term).
<i>ĩnhorebzu 'wa</i>	Ceremonial father (a mother's brother who performs certain rituals for her sister's children; literally, "my cotton necklace giver").
<i>ĩnimiwanho</i>	Personal mentor, ceremonially chosen by the boy from among his age set's mentors (<i>danhohui 'wa</i>).
<i>ĩno</i>	Younger opposite-gender sibling (kinship term).
<i>iprédu</i>	Mature adult (formal age grade).
<i>iprédu ité</i>	Young mature adult (see <i>ipredúpte</i>).
<i>ipredumrini</i>	Elder category within younger spiritual grades.
<i>ipredúpte</i>	"Young animal" or "new growth." According to other scholars, a male age grade preceding mature adulthood (Müller 1976:73; Silva 1986:64-65; Graham 1995:96). Also, <i>iprédu ité</i> .
<i>ĩ'ra</i>	Child, categorical child (kinship term).
<i>ĩ'ra nõrí si</i>	"Only my children."
<i>ĩradá</i>	Grandparent (kinship term).
<i>ĩrapté</i>	Sister's daughter (vocative kinship term).
<i>ĩ'rare</i>	Married woman with child (informal age grade). Infrequently used synonym: <i>a 'raté</i> .

<i>ĩrehi</i>	Scout (male member of <i>ritei'wa</i> age grade or first age set in <i>iprédu</i> age grade who has been trained for territorial surveillance.)
<i>ĩrõ</i>	Penis sheath (precontact article of clothing).
<i>ĩrõ'rada</i>	First staggered induction group into an age set (literally, “first penis sheath”).
<i>ĩrõ'te</i>	Third staggered induction group into an age set (literally, “last penis sheath”).
<i>ĩsa'amo si</i>	“Only my sons-in-law.”
<i>ĩtebe</i>	Father's sister, categorical father's sister (kinship term).
<i>ĩzasú'nhori</i>	“Last group to arrive” (may be used to indicate the youngest members of the <i>iprédu</i> age grade).
<i>nõzõ</i>	Traditional (Xavante) maize.
<i>nõzõ'u</i>	Age set name (may derive from <i>nõzõ</i>).
<i>õhõhõibaniwĩmhã</i>	“People on their side” (may be used for age set moieties, exogamous moieties, and other instances of sidedness).
<i>oi'o</i>	Ceremonial club fight.
<i>õniwĩmhã</i>	“Their side” (may be used for age set moieties, exogamous moieties, and other instances of sidedness).
<i>otí</i>	Granddaughter (kinship term). Also, girl (used for certain consanguineal kin, usually categorical daughters, in first descending generation of vocative kinship terminology).
<i>õwawe</i>	Exogamous moiety name (literally, “big water”).
<i>pahõri'wa</i>	Age set ceremonial position and initiation ceremony.
<i>pahõri'wa'tede'wa</i>	A heritable knowledge ownership (owners of the <i>pahõri'wa</i> initiation ceremony).
<i>pi'õ</i>	Female, woman. Also, married female with child (used for certain consanguineal kin, usually categorical daughters, in first descending generation of vocative kinship terminology).
<i>pi'õsĩwe</i>	Boyfriend, a young man who visits his future wife at night.

<i>pi'u</i>	A dangerous yet empowering spirit appealed to in spiritual rituals.
<i>ponere</i>	Deer (<i>Mazama gouazoubira</i>). Also, slang for homosexual, fag.
<i>poreza'õno</i>	Exogamous moiety name (literally, “tadpole”).
<i>-'rada</i>	First, old (used as suffix with age set names to distinguish senior from junior age sets).
<i>'repudu</i>	Male adolescent (used for certain consanguineal kin, usually categorical sons, in the first descending generation of vocative kinship terminology). See <i>ai'repudu</i> .
<i>ri</i>	House.
<i>'rini'rada</i>	Physical partition within household giving privacy to young couples.
<i>ritei'wa</i>	Novitiate adult, young adult (formal age grade).
<i>rowaihú</i>	To learn, to understand.
<i>rowete danho're</i>	A daytime dance ceremony sponsored by mentors for their protégés.
<i>sada'ro</i>	Age set name (may derive from <i>dazada'ro</i>).
<i>sa'uri</i>	See <i>daza'uri'wa</i> .
<i>simãñã</i>	Mature ceremonial child.
<i>simi'hõ'pãri</i>	A malevolent spirit associated with the <i>wedehõri'wa</i> spiritual moiety.
<i>sinhõ'ra</i>	Members of one's next youngest age set (used until the referent age set has attained mature adulthood).
<i>siré'wa</i>	See <i>wasi're'wa</i> .
<i>siwadi</i>	Distant (may be used with a variety of kinship terms to indicate genealogical distance).
<i>soimbá</i>	Married female without child (“childless wife,” used for certain consanguineal kin, usually categorical daughters, in first descending generation of vocative kinship terminology).

<i>sorebzú'wa</i>	Term used by fathers for their children's ceremonial parents.
<i>tarebzu</i>	Ceremonial child (a sister's child for whom a man performs certain rituals).
<i>tebe</i>	Age set ceremonial position.
<i>-tede'wa</i>	Owner (often used to indicate heritable knowledge ownership).
<i>tepé'tede'wa</i>	A heritable knowledge ownership (owners of the <i>tebe</i> ceremonial mask).
<i>ti</i>	Arrow.
<i>ti'a</i>	Tick (arachnid).
<i>ti'ipê</i>	Sacred cane arrows (used in certain spiritual rituals).
<i>tirowa</i>	Age set name (may derive from <i>ti</i> or <i>ti'a</i>).
<i>tirowa'rada</i>	Age set name (distinguished from a junior age set with the same name, <i>tirowa</i>).
<i>topdató</i>	A circular mark on the face used by <i>aiute'manhãri'wa</i> heritable knowledge owners (literally, "face circle").
<i>ubranhowaha</i>	Final and solitary inductee into an age set and into the <i>wapté</i> age grade.
<i>uhö'tede'wa</i>	A heritable knowledge ownership (literally, "white lipped peccary owner").
<i>uiwede</i>	Ceremonial log race.
<i>umrê'tede'wa</i>	Spiritual moiety name (literally, "rattle owners").
<i>uptabi</i>	True, genuine.
<i>u'ri'ro</i>	Womanizer, one who engages in intercourse frequently.
<i>wa-</i>	Our (prefix).
<i>wa'i</i>	Ceremonial wrestling match.
<i>wãhi'tede'wa</i>	A heritable knowledge ownership (literally, "snake owner").

<i>wahi'wa</i>	Members of one's next oldest age set (used until the referent age set has attained mature adulthood).
<i>wahöibaniwĩmhã</i>	"People on our side" (may be used for age set moieties, exogamous moieties, and other instances of sidedness).
<i>wahöïmanazé</i>	Traditions, customs, culture.
<i>wai'a</i>	A complex of male spiritual rituals that involve male spiritual age group organization.
<i>wai'a amo</i>	"People on the other spiritual side" (spiritual moiety).
<i>wai'ãra</i>	Spiritual initiate (spiritual grade).
<i>wai'ãra aiuterene</i>	Junior spiritual initiate.
<i>wai'a'rada</i>	Spiritual post-officiant (spiritual grade).
<i>wai'ãra ipredumrini</i>	Senior spiritual initiate.
<i>wamãri'tede'wa</i>	A heritable knowledge ownership ("peacekeeper"). Synonym: <i>wamarĩzu'tede'wa</i> .
<i>wamarĩzu'tede'wa</i>	A heritable knowledge ownership (owner of "peacekeeper" sacred powder).
<i>wanhimi warãmhã</i>	"Group that always participates in the men's council" (may be used to indicate members of the <i>iprédi</i> age grade).
<i>wanhimnhõhu</i>	Term used reciprocally between protégés and mentors after the younger of the two has married and had children.
<i>waniwĩmhã</i>	"Our side" or "people on our side" (may be used for age set moieties and exogamous moieties).
<i>wapté</i>	Pre-initiate (formal age grade).
<i>wapté rõiwiãhã</i>	Pre-initiate induction rites.
<i>warã</i>	Men's council.
<i>warazú</i>	Non-indigenous, "white people."
<i>warazú'tede'wa</i>	A heritable knowledge ownership (literally, "owner of non-indigenous people" or "one who is skilled at receiving non-indigenous people").

<i>wasi'höi'ba</i>	Family (one's close same-moiety kin or one's first degree cross-cousins).
<i>wasini'</i>	Term of respect used reciprocally by real and categorical fathers of a bride and groom.
<i>wasi're'wa</i>	"Separated from us" or "people separated from us" (may be used for age set moieties, exogamous moieties, and other instances of sidedness).
<i>wasiré wai'a</i>	"People on our spiritual side" (spiritual moiety).
<i>wasirewãro</i>	Members of one's age set that are in the same exogamous moiety or that one considers particularly intimate friends.
<i>wasirewãyõno</i>	Members of one's age set who are also in one's exogamous moiety, one's first degree cross-cousins, or socially very close.
<i>wasisanawa</i>	One's genealogically close same-moiety categorical siblings.
<i>wasisinawa siwadi</i>	One's genealogically distant same-moiety categorical siblings.
<i>wasiwadi</i>	One's genealogically distant categorical siblings or distant members of one's exogamous moiety.
<i>watebremi'</i>	Boy, male child (informal age grade).
<i>watebremire</i>	Boy (diminutive), male child (diminutive), young/small boy.
<i>watei'wa</i>	Ceremonial stage grade during age set initiation rites (<i>danhono</i>).
<i>wa'uiwada'wa</i>	"People on our side" (may be used for age set moieties, exogamous moieties, and other instances of sidedness).
<i>wautop'tu</i>	Spiritual pre-initiate (spiritual grade).
<i>waza'runiwĩmhã</i>	"Our age set moiety" or "people in our age set moiety."
<i>wedehõri'wa</i>	Spiritual moiety name (literally, "wood owners").
<i>zarudu</i>	Adolescent girl (used for certain consanguineal kin in first descending generation of vocative kinship terminology). See <i>azarudu</i> .

zö'ra'si'wa

Singer (spiritual grade).

zusi'wa

A heritable knowledge ownership (Sacred Powder Owner).

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