

# INTERETHNIC RELATIONS BETWEEN XAVANTE AND NON-INDIANS IN BARRA DO GARÇAS, BRAZIL

BERTE-STINE V. AAS

NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES  
MASTER THESIS 30 CREDITS 2007





The Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric, is the international gateway for the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB). Eight departments, associated research institutions and the Norwegian College of Veterinary Medicine in Oslo. Established in 1986, Noragric's contribution to international development lies in the interface between research, education (Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes) and assignments.

The Noragric Master theses are the final theses submitted by students in order to fulfil the requirements under the Noragric Master programme "Management of Natural Resources and Sustainable Agriculture" (MNRSA), "Development Studies" and other Master programmes.

The findings in this thesis do not necessarily reflect the views of Noragric. Extracts from this publication may only be reproduced after prior consultation with the author and on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation contact Noragric.

© Berte-Stine V. Aas, May 2007

berte@sercon.no

Noragric

Department of International Environment and Development Studies

Norwegian University of Life Science (UMB)

P.O. Box 5003

N-1432 Ås

Norway

Tel.: +47 64 96 52 00

Fax: +47 64 96 52 01

Internet: <http://www.umb.no/noragric>



# Declaration

I, Berte-Stine V. Aas, hereby declare that this is my original work for a MS. Degree in Development Studies. The thesis has not been submitted to any academic institution other than the University of Life Sciences for a degree. All materials other than my own have been acknowledged.

---

Berte-Stine V. Aas

Ås, May 15<sup>th</sup> 2007



# Abstract

This thesis examines the interethnic relations between non-Indians and Xavante in Barra do Garças in the state of Mato Grosso, Brazil. The aim is to draw attention to the difficulties an indigenous people face today in everyday life as a dominated, culturally distinct group. I have started out by placing the Xavante and Barra do Garças into a historical context. Drawing on concepts from theories of ethnicity, acculturation, discrimination, symbolic interactionism, as well as indigenous peoples' rights, I have discussed the contemporary situation in Barra do Garças.

My fieldwork was conducted during a two months' period in 2006, and data was collected through participant observation, sixteen qualitative interviews, and several discussions with both Xavante and non-Indians in Barra do Garças.

My findings suggest that most current interethnic relations between non-Indians and Xavante in Barra do Garças are limited, impersonal, and uniplex. As a group, the Xavante practice avoidance towards non-Indians as an adaptive strategy; a consequence of their cultural self-awareness, but also because of discrimination. Several Xavante individuals living in town, however, seem to try to avoid discrimination through an assimilation strategy. Non-Indians avoid Xavante because of fear and resentment on the bases of stories, narratives, lack of knowledge, and misinformation.

Organizations working for the Xavante in Barra do Garças are the governmental National Foundation of the Indian (FUNAI) and the National Health Foundation (FUNASA), the latter with the non-governmental cooperatives Organização Nossa Tribo (ONT) and Fundação Universitária de Brasília (FUBRA). The quality of these organizations' work seem to vary, but more importantly in this context, what they do does not comply with what non-Indians in Barra do Garças think they do, but rather reinforces negative attitudes. Their functionaries are also often responsible for the spreading of many of the already mentioned prejudiced stories and narratives. In addition, Salesian missionaries provide significant assistance to the Xavante in their adaption to the non-Indian society, but this work is confined to the Xavante reserves.

Prejudice of the other is widespread in both ethnic groups, manifested through stereotypes and 'dichotomization'. The Xavante have difficulties with integration, not just because of prejudice, but also because of discrimination in the labor market, and traditional practices that do not fit into the national society. Non-Indians also have problems with accepting indigenous peoples' rights, as special rights for an ethnic minority collide with their notion of equality. The Xavante, on the other hand, are not well informed of their rights. The majority participates in public institutions, but still lives in Xavante reservations and does not partake in the national economy. Therefore, the Xavante are only partly integrated into the Brazilian society as of today.



# Table of contents

<b>List of illustrations .....</b>	<b>VII</b>
------------------------------------	------------

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>IX</b>
------------------------------	-----------

<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
-----------------------------	----------

1.1 Problem statement.....	2
----------------------------	---

1.2 Who are the indigenous peoples?.....	5
--	---

1.3 Literature review and theoretical framework.....	6
--	---

1.3.1 Ethnic relations in general.....	6
--	---

1.3.1.1 Cultural self-awareness .....	8
---------------------------------------	---

1.3.1.2 Assimilation, integration, segregation .....	9
--	---

1.3.1.3 Discrimination and rights .....	10
---	----

1.3.2 Indigenous peoples' rights in Brazil.....	13
---	----

1.3.2.1 The Indian Statute .....	13
----------------------------------	----

1.3.2.2 The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 .....	15
--	----

1.3.2.3 ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' Convention No. 169 .....	15
---	----

1.3.3 Symbolic interactionism .....	16
-------------------------------------	----

1.3.3.1 Adaptive strategies.....	18
----------------------------------	----

1.4 Methodology .....	19
-----------------------	----

1.4.1 Selection of study area .....	19
-------------------------------------	----

1.4.2 Host family.....	19
------------------------	----

1.4.3 Communication .....	20
---------------------------	----

1.4.4 Trust issues .....	20
--------------------------	----

1.4.5 Lost opportunities .....	20
--------------------------------	----

1.4.6 Fieldwork methods.....	21
------------------------------	----

1.4.6.1	Participant observation .....	22
1.4.6.2	Conversations and discussions .....	23
1.4.6.3	Making contact .....	23
1.4.6.4	Interviews .....	24
1.4.7	Data influenced by researcher .....	24
1.5	Ethical considerations .....	25
1.5.1	Informed consent .....	26
1.5.2	Confidentiality .....	26
1.5.3	Consequences.....	26
1.6	Chapter description .....	27
<b>2</b>	<b>Background.....</b>	<b>29</b>
2.1	Indians in Brazil.....	29
2.1.1	Early history .....	29
2.1.2	From the 20 <sup>th</sup> century and beyond.....	30
2.1.3	Current situation .....	31
2.2	The Xavante .....	34
2.2.1	History .....	34
2.2.1.1	The politicization of the Xavante.....	38
2.2.2	Current situation .....	39
2.2.2.1	Culture .....	40
2.2.2.2	Egalitarianism and economy .....	41
2.2.2.3	Land and nature .....	42
2.2.2.4	Health and education .....	42
2.3	Barra do Garças .....	43
2.3.1	Location and history .....	43
2.3.2	Current situation .....	44
<b>3</b>	<b>Results and discussion: Interethnic relations.....</b>	<b>49</b>
3.1	The nature of presence and interaction.....	49

3.1.1	Hang out points .....	50
3.1.2	At FUNAI .....	51
3.1.2.1	A village chief.....	52
3.1.2.2	Friendly mistrust.....	52
3.1.3	Students.....	54
3.1.4	Shopping.....	56
3.1.5	Restaurant and bars .....	57
3.1.6	The Indian Health House .....	58
3.1.7	Other arenas of interaction.....	59
3.1.8	Attitudes and appearances .....	60
3.1.9	Interethnic marriages .....	63
3.1.10	Concluding remarks.....	64
3.2	Acculturation.....	67
3.2.1	The state of Xavante integration.....	68
3.2.2	Xavante viewpoints .....	72
3.2.3	Non-Indian viewpoints .....	74
3.2.4	Integration difficulties .....	75
3.2.5	Concluding remarks.....	78
3.3	Stories and knowledge .....	79
3.3.1	Narratives .....	80
3.3.2	Stories.....	81
3.3.3	Xavante memories.....	83
3.3.4	Concluding remarks.....	83
3.4	Institutions, organizations, and missionaries.....	84
3.4.1	FUNAI.....	84
3.4.1.1	FUNAI practices .....	84
3.4.1.2	Xavante and non-Indians' opinions of FUNAI.....	87
3.4.2	FUNASA, ONT, FUBRA, and the Indian Health House.....	87

3.4.2.1	What people think about FUNASA, ONT, FUBRA, and the Indian Health House .....	88
3.4.3	Salesian missionaries.....	89
3.4.4	Concluding remarks.....	90
3.5	Lack of knowledge and its effects on interethnic relations.....	91
3.5.1	Concluding remarks.....	93
3.6	Discrimination and indigenous peoples' rights .....	93
3.6.1	Non-Indian views on indigenous peoples' rights .....	93
3.6.2	Xavante views on indigenous peoples' rights .....	96
3.6.3	Xavante views on discrimination.....	97
3.6.4	Non-Indian perceptions of discrimination.....	98
3.6.5	Concluding remarks.....	99
3.7	Ethnic classification .....	101
3.7.1	What characterizes Xavante.....	101
3.7.2	What characterizes non-Indians.....	104
3.7.3	Concluding remarks.....	105
<b>4</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>References.....</b>	<b>113</b>
	<b>Appendix – List of anonymous interviewees .....</b>	<b>119</b>

# List of illustrations

Illustration 1: Location of Xavante reservations and Barra do Garças in the state of Mato Grosso, Brazil ..... 35

Illustration 2 (top): Overview of Barra do Garças ..... 47

Illustration 3 (mid-left): Xavante hangout place and pickup point ..... 47

Illustration 4 (mid-right): Xavante transport provided by FUNAI ..... 47

Illustration 5 (bottom-left): The FUNAI office ..... 47

Illustration 6 (bottom-right): The Indian Health House ..... 47



# Acknowledgements

Doing fieldwork and writing a thesis has been a good, but challenging experience. Many people have helped me along the way, and I would therefore like to show my thankfulness.

First, I want to thank my host parents in Barra do Garças, Solange Timo and Neuton José Filho, for letting me stay at their house, for treating me like a daughter, and for helping me in the research process.

Special gratitude goes to all my Brazilian friends, the people at FUNAI, the Indian Health House, and elsewhere, who have devoted their time to interviews, conversations, and discussions with me. In particular, I want to thank Márcia de Abreu Freitas from FUNAI for taking interest in and helping me in my research, and for introducing me to many interesting Xavante.

I also want to thank my husband for all the support, the listening, the advice, and for stepping in whenever my computer skills failed. Thanks also to my colleagues at Noragric for your advice and encouragement.

Last, but definitely not least, I want to give special thanks to my supervisors, Randi Kaarhus and Darley Jose Kjosavik, for invaluable guidance throughout the process.



# 1 Introduction

“The biggest problem with the Indians is their laziness and lack of willingness to integrate themselves and work” (João, non-indigenous local: Interview).

“It’s very hard to find a job for a Xavante. We are looked down upon and less worth to them. We’re outcasts” (Armando<sup>1</sup>, Xavante working in town: Interview).

“We have a saying here in Brazil: The laws are written for the English” (Leonardo, FUNAI official: Interview).

More than 500 years have passed since the first encounters<sup>2</sup> between indigenous people and the colonizers of Brazil. Interethnic interaction<sup>3</sup> between indigenous people and whites<sup>4</sup> has been practically unavoidable for many indigenous peoples since then. As acknowledged, contact between indigenous groups and whites in Brazil has been an area of great conflict with severe consequences for the Indians<sup>5</sup>. When the bloody conflicts<sup>6</sup> have ended, when the worst disease outbreaks<sup>7</sup> have settled down, and when the Indians and the non-Indians<sup>8</sup> have spent decades in each other’s presence, how has interethnic relations turned out to be, and what characterizes this relationship today? The indigenous group I have focused on in this thesis is the Xavante of the Brazilian interior, who resisted interethnic contact until mid 1900’s by migrating deeper into the country<sup>9</sup>. The three citations at the beginning of this chapter illustrate my main areas of interest during research, which are interethnic relations with an emphasis on the Xavante and the non-Indians’ point of view, and how the different organizations established to work in favor of the indigenous peoples’ interests

---

<sup>1</sup> I have made all my informants anonymous. Most Xavante have two names, one Xavante and one Portuguese.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 2 for a description.

<sup>3</sup> Contact and relations between different ethnic groups

<sup>4</sup> The use of the term ‘white’ is discussed in 1.2

<sup>5</sup> The use of the term ‘Indian’ is discussed in 1.2.

<sup>6</sup> See chapter 2

<sup>7</sup> See chapter 2

<sup>8</sup> Whites, blacks, and people with mixed races

<sup>9</sup> See chapter 2

implement state policies in practice and how that affects the interethnic relations. I carried out my research in Barra do Garças in the state of Mato Grosso, Brazil with a focus on the Xavante as one group, and the non-indigenous locals as another.

## 1.1 Problem statement

After a yearlong stay in Barra do Garças in 1998/99 and a month's visit in 2000, I had become aware of the negative attitudes the majority of the non-indigenous population there possess towards Indians. This caught me by surprise, since I had always considered Indians to be victims and minorities worthy of respect and protection. I knew about the inhuman treatment<sup>10</sup> the Brazilian Indians got during colonization and initial contact with new settlers. Not hearing anything about the continuation of the story, I, perhaps a bit naïve, thought that with the last decades' focus on human – and indigenous peoples' rights in international fora<sup>11</sup>, non-Indians now recognized the indigenous peoples as an important part of Brazilian culture and history and treated them accordingly. However, David Maybury-Lewis, an anthropologist who performed research in a Xavante community both during the 1960's and the 1980's, described non-indigenous locals' attitudes towards the Xavante during the 1980's:

Shavante, they told us, were bloodthirsty barbarians. Their customs were indecent, their food revolting. It was well known that they were sadistically cruel, that they took no prisoners, that they ate their prisoners, that they had reared their prisoners as slaves, that they had harems of captured white women. In short, they could not be trusted (1988: 205).

My impression from visits in the period 1998-2000 was that prejudice and unflattering rumors about the Xavante were still common among the non-indigenous locals. I wondered whether there had been increased interaction affecting the interethnic relations since Maybury-Lewis' fieldwork.

The Brazilian government's approach over the years on how to deal with its indigenous population is accounted for quite identically by several authors<sup>12</sup>. The anthropologist Shelton Davis has analyzed Brazilian history with an emphasis on indigenous peoples and the effect the country's Indian policy and development had on them. He quotes an earlier president of the National Foundation of the Indian (FUNAI):

---

<sup>10</sup> See chapter 2

<sup>11</sup> See section 1.3.1.3

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Davis (1977), Garfield (2001), Marés de Souza (1994), and Maybury-Lewis (1991).

My task will be to integrate the Indian into national society, because it is impossible to stop the process of development of the country with the argument that Indians should be protected and maintained in their pure state (1977: 89).

Although the Brazilian Constitution<sup>13</sup> confirms the indigenous peoples' right to maintain their traditional life styles, state policy and practice has been contradictory for many years. This might have played an important part in the development of the non-indigenous locals' opinions and standpoints when it comes to the Indians, and hence influenced their interaction with them. In accordance with this, Sidsel Saugestad, who has studied the relations between the indigenous San people of Botswana and the state, claims, "the asymmetric power relationship between the minority and the state will inevitably influence the social context in which the interaction takes place" (1998: 48). She further argues:

Some of the most significant encounters are those when official representatives of the state apparatus ... (the school, legal system, health institutions, welfare- and extension officers) meet individual members of an ethnic/indigenous minority in their capacity as clients, applicants, or defendants (1998: 49).

She believes these interactions are crucial in the shaping of interethnic relations in general, because they generate asymmetrical relations. These are among the interethnic relations I will look into.

Most literature on the Xavante concerns legislation, anthropological descriptions of culture, health, initial contact with the white and 'pacification'<sup>14</sup>, and their struggle with the state. Not being able to find much literature specifically on interethnic interaction concerning Xavante nor Brazilian Indians in general as of today, I therefore wanted to look into the case of the Xavante in the state of Mato Grosso and their relations to and interaction with the non-indigenous locals in Barra do Garças. Not only giving this a contemporary focus, but also performing my studies in town as opposed to inside a reserve<sup>15</sup>, has formed a less explored base for my research in the case of Brazil.

The Xavante were not able to escape from bloody encounters, but have since 1946 officially taken part in pacific interaction with non-Indians (Leeuwenberg & Salimon 1999: 8). Although the fatal conflicts that characterized relationships between them prior to pacification have stopped and no longer constitute a threat to their survival<sup>16</sup>, I find it interesting to know more about interethnic

---

<sup>13</sup> See section 1.3.2.2

<sup>14</sup> Attainment of non-violent behavior in the interaction between indigenous communities and whites.

<sup>15</sup> Territory set aside by law by the government for indigenous people

<sup>16</sup> See chapter 2

interaction today, gradually affecting the Indians' traditional ways of life and cultural heritage day by day without much attention.

There has been much focus on indigenous peoples' rights<sup>17</sup> and getting those enacted, compared to unfolding current daily life and practices in an ethnically mixed environment. Describing the interethnic relations between the Xavante and the non-indigenous locals calls attention to the difficulties the Indians face today.

My research questions for this thesis have been the following:

- What are the arenas for the interethnic interaction in town?
- What brings the Xavante living in Indian reservations to Barra do Garças?
- What characterizes the Xavante's relations with non-Indians today?
- How do the Xavante and non-Indians ethnically classify each other?
- What are the effects of these ethnic relations, and in what ways are they upheld?
- Are the Xavante discriminated, and if yes, how?
- Are the Xavante assimilated or integrated into the national society?
- How have indigenous peoples' rights in Brazil affected interethnic relations in Barra do Garças?
- Whom are the organizations dealing with the Xavante in Barra do Garças? Does their work affect interethnic relations, and if yes, how?

In short, my aim is to describe current interethnic interaction and relations between the Xavante and the non-indigenous locals in Barra do Garças, Brazil, and consider the underlying reasons behind it. In order to fulfill my aim, I will describe and characterize these relations and interactions, and attempt to answer the research questions above.

I will seek to answer my research questions with the information I have gathered in the field along with secondary literature, and consider it in the light of a theoretical framework. Saugestad's (1998) work already mentioned above, and earlier studies on interethnic interaction between Indians and non-Indians by mainly Joseph B. Casagrande (1988), Niels W. Braroe (1975) and Shuichi Nagata (1971), will furthermore provide useful empirical material for comparison. A varied selection of texts about the Xavante and the foundation and development of Barra do Garças also plays an important part in this thesis to understand the background for the current interethnic situation.

---

<sup>17</sup> See section 1.3.2

Indigenous peoples' difficulties have much in common all over the world. There are examples of discrimination by dominating populations from most continents. There is however a difference when it comes to the historical background of interethnic interaction. Some indigenous peoples have disappeared, like 90 of Brazil's 270 Indian 'tribes' since 1900 (Linden 1991), or been more or less assimilated into the majority population, like the Cherokee of the United States (*Cherokee* 2007). Others, like the Xavante, have resisted, and therefore still uphold a distinct culture and lifestyle. Although my findings may not be transferable to other indigenous peoples, I nevertheless hope they may draw attention also to other indigenous peoples' difficulties.

## 1.2 Who are the indigenous peoples?

According to the UN Special Rapporteur, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, there is no global consensus about a universal definition of indigenous peoples (1998). Most definitions of indigenous peoples include notions of them as historically the first people in an area, as a minority under state control, and as culturally different from the majority (Saugestad 1998: 26). The International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169 defines indigenous peoples as:

[P]eoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country ... at the time of conquest or colonization, or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions (*C169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989*: Art. 1b).

Another more commonly used criteria in addition to those presented above is self-ascription, meaning that the peoples shall also consider themselves indigenous (Saugestad 1998: 26). Former UN Special Rapporteur José R. Martínez Cobo's definition has taken this last criteria into account:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, considered themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in these territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identities, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patters, social institutions and legal systems (Martínez Cobo 1987: Vol. 5).

The colonizers of America, Brazil included, called the peoples they encountered Indians, as they presumably first thought they had arrived in India. Even though they found out they were not in Asia, they continued using that name (*Os Índios*)<sup>18</sup>.

---

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.funai.gov.br/indios/conteudo.htm>

The Brazilian Indian Statute defines an Indian as: “A descendant of pre-Colombians who identifies with, and is identified as, belonging to an ethnic group whose cultural characteristics distinguishes them from the national society”<sup>19</sup> (*Estatuto do Índio* 1973). According to the historian Seth Garfield (2001: 21), and also my own experience, Indian is not a racist term in Brazil.

When non-Indians classify themselves and each other by skin color, they most commonly use white, black, dark, or Japanese<sup>20</sup>. When it comes to ethnicity, however, Maybury-Lewis claims Brazilians consider themselves as part of one big blend of cultures. Different cultures and ethnicities are not regarded separately, but part of what constitutes the Brazilian culture. The Indians on the other hand, he argues, do not want to be fused into one giant mix of cultures, but rather claim the right to keep the uniqueness of their people as something diverse without this implying that they are any less Brazilians (1991: 231). To separate non-Indians from Indians, Garfield claims there is a tendency for both Indians and non-Indians to classify all non-Indians as white when speaking of them as one group. He further underlines that these classifications are social constructs, meaning they do not necessarily refer to actual skin color (Garfield 2001: 21). Alcida Ramos (1998: 8) claims:

In Brazil brancos (whites) encompasses all non-Indians – Brazilians and foreigners, regardless of racial features. Moreover, branco is used by both Indians and non-Indians and thus constitutes a ‘native’ category of Brazilian society in general. As a polar category to Índio, branco is a necessary element in the Brazilian model of interethnic relations.

I will mostly use the terms Indian and non-Indian, but because ‘white’ is so commonly used in Brazil, I will also use ‘white’ in some parts of the background, and the results and discussion chapter.

### **1.3 Literature review and theoretical framework**

In the following section, I will give an outline of the theoretical framework that will provide a context for my findings and discussion. I will start by looking into concepts related to ethnicity and ethnic groups, before I move on to symbolic interactionism where the focus shifts from group to individual, and back to group in the discussion of adaptive strategies.

#### **1.3.1 Ethnic relations in general**

Thomas Hylland Eriksen states that ethnicity is not about factual cultural differences, but rather the social communication, verbal and non-verbal, of ethnicity in interaction. Not all cultural differences are relevant in a social setting. Hence, ethnicity may consist of classifications based on different

---

<sup>19</sup> My translation

<sup>20</sup> Japanese is commonly used when referring to people from the Southeast Asia. This is based on my own experiences and observations.

things. One ethnic group might emphasize religion, while another may express their ethnicity mainly through appearance. The purpose of this is however the same, it is about defining ethnic boundaries through contrasts to other ethnic groups (Eriksen 1998: 363-364). This is in line with Fredrik Barth's thoughts on ethnicity. He criticizes the understanding that isolation is a crucial element in culture preservation and rather claims that: "Cultural differences can persist despite interethnic contact and interdependence" (Barth 1969: 10). He further stresses that as long as ethnic boundaries are upheld, through ascription, exclusion, and inclusion, ethnicity prevails in spite of cultural changes, but there must be at least some noteworthy cultural differences for it to have any meaning. As long as there also is a mutual acceptance of what norms shall be in force in cases of interethnic interaction, and in which social situations interethnic interaction shall be prevented, cultural differences are viable (1969: 10-30). This seems as a possible explanation of ethnic groups' persistence in a globalized world.

Barth believes interethnic relations between dominant and minority groups are often outcomes of historical events outside the local context. By this, he means that societies tend to pursue social systems and cultural contrasts already practiced elsewhere (1969: 30). Leo A. Despres (1975: 88) emphasizes that although historical events may have influenced initial interethnic relations, the reason why it persists in the same form also have other explanations. In connection to his study of ethnicity in Guyana, he presents "the competition for material resources" as a significant factor. By this, he means that if ethnicity is a comparative advantage when it comes to get hold of scarce resources, its members will most likely use it to the expense of improved interethnic relations. Within symbolic interactionism, however, it is argued that such relations persist because of present interaction where relations are displayed, interpreted, and redefined, which I will return to in section 1.3.3.

Rohit Barot, Harriet Bradley and Steve Fenton include the nation-state in their analysis of ethnicity. "In many nation-states there is a majority population which is ethnically defined and in some cases the majority ethnicity is identified with the nation; there is a political claim that equates the nation and the majority ethnicity" (Barot, Fenton & Bradley 1999: 9). This is in line with how Maybury-Lewis described Brazil in section 1.2. Stavenhagen claims several states want their indigenous peoples to assimilate or integrate into the nation's majority ethnicity to create one national culture (1998: 140).

Eriksen (1998: 366) describes ethnic classification as a tool to create social order by placing people within fixed categories of characteristics without regard to individualities. This system is dependent on credibility and stereotypes. Eriksen explains the latter as simple descriptions of assumed characteristics of certain categories of people that are often judgmental. These groups of people also

commonly have stereotypes concerning their own characteristics, but they are usually of a more flattering kind. Julio Cezar Melatti's words are in accordance with this though:

When two populations are in each other's presence, each tries to interpret and judge the customs and traditions of the other. It is not always that interpretation or judgment is done with good faith. Like this, the civilized Brazilians have determined thoughts when it comes to Indians and they act according to these ideas. Every indigenous society, on their side, makes up an image of the civilized society and act according to that image<sup>21</sup> (1983: 193).

Harald Eidheim (1971: 79) describes two main ethnic processes. The first is "to complementarize the two ethnic groups in order to facilitate the establishment of interethnic relations based on equality", meaning to form interethnic relations in which the ethnic groups complement each other on the same level of respected distinctiveness. The second is "to dichotomize the groups", explained by Eriksen (1998: 367) as an ethnic group defining its ethnic characteristics by making contrasts to another ethnic group.

### *1.3.1.1 Cultural self-awareness*

In the article *Representing, Resisting, Rethinking*, Terrence Turner (1991) discusses what he calls "historical transformations of Kayapo culture". According to him, the Kayapo went from not having an understanding of culture as a way of living and maintaining a society, to using it as a means of political resistance in their relations to the non-indigenous Brazilians. He therefore argues cultural self-awareness is crucial when it comes to how affected an indigenous group will be by interethnic interaction. He claims the Kayapo have come to see themselves as one of many indigenous ethnic groups struggling with one major other dominant "white" group. He further believes this resulted in the comprehension of "preservation or loss of their cultural identity as a matter for conscious concern and concerted political action". Instead of maintaining traditional lifestyles because that is the way they have always done things, the Kayapo now consciously continue and resume this as a means of resistance. By holding on to traditions and customs, they reject assimilation.

As Turner writes: "The focus is on the interface between indigenous and Brazilian society instead of on what goes on within the indigenous society" (1991). Their lifestyles are contrasted to the "Brazilian" lifestyle, and although their lifestyle has several "Brazilian" aspects, they combine it with what they see as important cultural elements. He claims the Kayapo express the maintaining of the traditional as a necessity for cultural preservation, happiness, strength, and to keep away from weakening "Brazilian" practices. If people are aware that traditions, customs, and lifestyles make out a distinct culture and understand that in order to preserve it they must keep to their own way of

---

<sup>21</sup> My translation

doing things, it will be easier not to embrace foreign elements. In my analyses, I will look into how cultural self-awareness has affected the Xavante.

### 1.3.1.2 *Assimilation, integration, segregation*

Assimilation and integration can be seen as two acculturation<sup>22</sup> processes. Assimilation can go as far as to the disappearance of an ethnic group. This normally takes many years, and can take the form of an ethnic minority melting together with the majority to the degree that one may no longer tell a difference between them. Assimilation can be both forced and freely chosen (Eriksen 1998: 389). Eriksen points out that although many indigenous people have assimilated and become just like any member of the majority population where they live, their distinct looks still make it possible to tell their origin. In such a blended mix of people as there is in Brazil, however, it is not always easy to tell the difference between an integrated or assimilated Indian from a non-Indian. In Barra do Garças there are also members of the Indian group Bororo, although few in number. The appearance of the Bororo has more in common with the appearance of the non-Indians than the Xavante's has, hence they will easier blend in with the majority than the latter. Eriksen also emphasizes that assimilation can take place individually, even though the majority of the ethnic group stays as they were or integrate themselves.

The difference between assimilation and integration can be minimal. Eriksen defines integration as "participation in a society's public institutions, combined with the maintenance of group identity and cultural distinctiveness" (1998: 389)<sup>23</sup>. By this, one can say that a Xavante going to public school and using public health services, and at the same time identifies with Xavante and upholds Xavante cultural features, is integrated. The definition provided by the Brazilian Indian Statute (Estatuto do Índio) distinguishes between 'being on the way to integration' and 'being integrated'.

When they are on their way to integration, they have permanent or intermittent contact with non-indigenous, but conserves more or less parts of their native lives. They accept some practices and ways of ordinary living as well as sectors of the national community, which they will need more and more for their proper sustenance. When they are integrated they are incorporated into the national community and recognized in the full exercise of civil rights, at the same time as conserving their own traditions, customs, and characteristics of their own culture (*Estatuto do Índio* 1973: Art. 4 II, III)<sup>24</sup>.

---

<sup>22</sup> Acculturation is defined by Herskovits, Linton, and Redfield (1935: 146) as: "Those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups".

<sup>23</sup> My translation

<sup>24</sup> My translation

Segregation is a third strategy, and Eriksen claims: “Most empirical cases of majority-minority situation show a combination of segregation, assimilation, and integration”<sup>25</sup> (1998: 390). Being segregated means to be physically separated from the majority population because of the majority’s perception of minorities’ inferiority and a conviction from their side that it is not good to mix cultures (Eriksen 1998: 289). The Brazilian state has been criticized for practicing assimilation and integration closely connected to assimilation. It is however not known for practicing segregation.

### *1.3.1.3 Discrimination and rights*

Discrimination may be defined as: “The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, sex, and age” (Simpson & Weiner 1989)<sup>26</sup>.

Iain Walker accounts for what has been called ‘modern’ racism. This theory claims that racism “has changed from being blatant, direct, and hostile into being subtle and indirect” (2001: 25). It has further been argued that the modern racism in the United States has taken the form of support to the principle that all people are equal. Despite this egalitarianism, Walker claims there is still a tendency in the United States for white not to trust blacks, and to show fear, hostility, or some form of reaction around them. Although not as strong as the ‘old’ forms of racism, these tendencies are nevertheless negative and affect behavior (Walker 2001: 25-26). Modern racism theories usually see it as an individual phenomenon, but Walker believes racism is also an attribute of institutions, and cultures. According to him, institutions, history, and culture play an important role in reproducing racist and prejudiced social relations between individuals (2001: 41-42).

Walker uses the term racism, which refers to characteristics, abilities, and qualities appointed to a particular race, hence biological elements (Simpson & Weiner 1989)<sup>27</sup>. In this thesis I use the term discrimination, as that refers to more social elements as ethnicity and culture. As Pierre L. Van den Berghe claims about the interethnic situation in Guatemala: “Although Guatemalan informants occasionally mention physical traits as distinguishing characteristics between Ladinos and Indians, the division is almost entirely non-racial” (1968: 322). He further states that the most common criteria for discrimination of indigenous people in Guatemala are cultural features like language and clothing. The expression of racism and discrimination, however, may take similar form. I therefore believe Walker’s account of modern racism is just as relevant when it comes to ethnic discrimination.

---

<sup>25</sup> My translation

<sup>26</sup> From the Oxford Dictionary of English, keyword: discrimination

<sup>27</sup> From the Oxford Dictionary of English, keyword: racism

Discrimination may be expressed through stereotypes and prejudice. Locke and Johnston distinguish between them by using Stangor and Lange's (1994) definition of stereotypes as "mental representations of social groups and their members which contain enough detail to allow us to know what group members are like without ever meeting them" (Locke & Johnston 2001: 108). Prejudice is explained as "the affective nature of the response to members of different social groups", with a "negative evaluative tendency towards a group and its members" (2001: 108). They believe prejudiced people use stereotypes to guide their judgments. Martha Augoustinos and Katherine J. Reynolds point out that: "Stereotyping and prejudice are often constructed as the ultimate consequence of failing to perceive people as individuals with unique characteristics and traits" (2001: 9). Penelope J. Oakes and S. Alexander Haslam believe that by creating a distance to another by seeing an individual as 'one of them' instead of 'one of us', there will often be consequences like derogation and mistreatment (2001: 184).

Tolerance can be seen as self-control and putting up with others. This form does not mean the acceptance of others' opinions and behavior, but rather allows for tolerance and prejudice at the same time. For instance, a salesperson may be prejudiced against customers from another ethnic group, but practices tolerance to keep up their commercial relationship. One can also see tolerance as without prejudice, or as an attempt to abandon one's own stereotypes because of reason or moral. A last understanding of tolerance is the full acceptance of others despite differences. The different practices of tolerance have consequences for behavior and attitudes (Robinson, Sanson & Witenberg 2001: 74). For instance, a person rejecting own stereotypes might be less likely to spread these stereotypes than a person who does not accept other's opinions and practices, but tolerates it in their presence. Tolerance is of relevance in my analysis to understand the nature of interethnic interaction between Xavante and non-Indians, and why attitudes expressed among non-Indians differ from the attitudes expressed in interethnic interaction.

Saugestad claims there is a need for what she calls 'positive' discrimination of indigenous peoples and that it is increasingly recognized in international fora<sup>28</sup>. She argues that to ensure "equality of opportunity for a population marked by cultural diversity, rights cannot in all cases be the same for all segments of the population" (1998: 24). By this, she means that the minorities, in this case a dominated indigenous people, need special rights to survive as distinct groups and not get run over by the majority. She also points out that a minority's right to make own decisions concerning them,

---

<sup>28</sup> The latest recognition being the Human Rights Council's adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in June 2006

as for instance when it comes to culture preservation, does not affect the majority's right to do the same (1998: 24).

Saugestad (1998: 25) argues that if cultural practices shall be meaningful, they must be part of people's lifestyle. When such practices involves natural resources, as in the case of most indigenous peoples, the rights to these must be respected alongside the right to culture preservation. The majority population may however not always welcome this.

Saugestad claims that: "Common to all democratic states with indigenous minorities within their borders is the need to find a balance between the general ideals of equal rights and equal treatment, and the special needs of the minority for protection and affirmative action" (1998: 33). Ronald Niezen (2003: 17) believes: "The actions and objectives of indigenous peoples are often seen as contradictory, above all as contradicting the goals of state sovereignty and constitutional uniformity". This, he claims, is because indigenous peoples want to put a stopper to discrimination on special terms, and want to participate in the state at the same time as they resist state control. He also argues it has to do with collective rights, going further than individual equality. As a result, Niezen believes many influential people from majority populations support assimilation and want to put an end to collective rights. In some cases, non-Indians may feel discriminated because of indigenous peoples' special legal treatment. This is described by Shuichi Nagata in the case of a non-Indian in the United States claiming to be discriminated against because where he lives, only Indians are allowed to use land, own livestock, and get free medical care, at the same time as they also have special labor contracts reserved for them only (1971: 127).

In most cases, however, discrimination in the labor market represents one of the violated rights of indigenous people. The former UN Special Rapporteur also recognized this problem: "The problems of underemployment and unemployment, ..., are having a particularly severe effect on indigenous populations. The underemployment and unemployment rates for indigenous groups tend uniformly to be well above the national average" (Martínez Cobo 1987: Vol. V, 15).

Virginia Dandan (2001: 191) emphasizes that non-discrimination is "one of the essential doctrines of the international legal order", and that it is included in all major human rights treaties. It is also a recognized principle in the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169. The problem, however, according to Dandan, is that indigenous peoples are uninformed of their rights, which are also often written in a language different from their mother tongue. When this is the case, the rights do not have much significance for these people when violated, because they will not know what they are entitled to claim or refer to.

### 1.3.2 Indigenous peoples' rights in Brazil

In Brazil, there are three major bodies of legislation concerning indigenous peoples: The Indian Statute, from 1973, the Brazilian Constitution, from 1988, and the ILO Convention No. 169, ratified by Brazil in 2002.

#### 1.3.2.1 *The Indian Statute*

In 1973, the Brazilian state took on the responsibility for the Indians through the Indian Statute. Its main goal is to “preserve their culture and integrate them progressively and harmoniously into the national community”<sup>29</sup> (*Estatuto do Índio* 1973). Through this law, their exclusive right to the land they occupy is stated, and non-Indians are not allowed to use any of their land resources. However, the government may intervene in cases of inter-tribal fights, epidemics, national security, public work (roads) that is in the interest of national development, and to extract subsoil resources in the interest of national security and development. FUNAI is also entitled to the right to administer and lease the resources contained on Indian land to others.

The country, the states, and the counties are obliged to give assistance to the Indians and the Indian communities ‘not integrated’. FUNAI is responsible of demarcating<sup>30</sup> indigenous territory, and originally this should have been done within five years from the adoption of the Statute. The president is responsible for the ratification<sup>31</sup>. The protection of indigenous territory is the responsibility of FUNAI and the federal police.

Through the Indian Statute, discrimination in the labor market became illegal, and Indians gained legal right to defend their causes in court. In what is called the process of integration into the national community, their culture, traditions, and customs shall be respected, at the same time as it states that the Indians must be able to freely choose their way of life and subsistence.

An Indian can only be punished by law if it can be proven that it was a conscious act and that he or she understood what he or she was doing. In a court case, the Indian’s degree of integration shall also be taken into account.

According to the Statute, a judge may liberate an Indian from the Statute if the Indian is at least 21 years old, speak Portuguese, has competence to work in the national community, and has a reasonable understanding of the practices and customs of the national community. Indians not liberated from the Indian Statute cannot make deals with non-Indians without the assistance of

---

<sup>29</sup> My translation

<sup>30</sup> A demarcated territory is surveyed territory with marked boundaries

<sup>31</sup> The ratification is the final stage of territorial recognition

FUNAI. Work contracts made between non-Indians and Indians 'on their way to integration' must be approved by FUNAI.

The Indian Statute characterizes Indians as 'incapable' of keeping track of births, deaths, and marriages. The Indians are entitled to education in both their mother tongue and Portuguese, and their education shall be oriented towards the integration into the national community.

The statute is widely criticized for being outdated and too general, and has been going through National Congress since 1991 for a reform yet to be agreed upon (Parellada 2006). There are two proposals for a new statute under consideration that have dealt with what is seen as problematic in the statute in force. FUNAI describes the current Statute as a reinforcement of "the paternalistic and interventionist role of the state" and admits that the Indians remained dependent and submissive (*História e Política Indigenista*)<sup>32</sup>. More than thirty years have passed since the adoption of this statute, and the demarcation process is yet to be finished. There is no punishment for invaders of Indian land. Invaders can be removed, but not imprisoned or fined. Davis (1977: 58) claims the Statute is contradictory when recognizing Indians' exclusive rights to their territory, "because it also empowers the president to intervene in native areas and remove Indians for several purposes", as described above. New highways, mining projects, and agribusiness enterprises on indigenous territory have been some of the consequences (Davis 1977: 106).

The Brazilian non-governmental organization Instituto Socioambiental, argues that the Indians need a new statute that demands from the government the protection and support required to make their own decisions without having to get permission from FUNAI. They believe a new statute should guarantee the Indians' survival as distinct communities, at the same time as they are provided with health and education, and support to cultural, economical, and environmental projects by the government. They further claim the Statute is overprotective in the ways that it, for instance, get in the way of their free political expression, the labor market, and access to loans. They also point out that there is no need to consider Indians as incapable, but rather as different peoples (2000)<sup>33</sup>. Their statements concord with Leif Dunfjeld who believes that: "In Brazil, the indigenous peoples' rights are in conflict with development and make it difficult for the indigenous people trying to survive in the 21st century", referring to such restrictions as emphasized by Instituto Socioambiental.

---

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.funai.gov.br/quem/historia/politica.htm>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.socioambiental.org/pib/portugues/estatutoindio/atualestat.htm>

### ***1.3.2.2 The Brazilian Constitution of 1988***

The Indians' rights to stay Indians and uphold their own traditions, religions, customs, social organization, and languages are acknowledged in the current Constitution, as well as their rights to the lands traditionally occupied by them, all on a permanent basis. The Constitution provides Indians with the exclusive rights to use the natural resources on their land, at the same time as it declares that the National Congress may authorize resource extraction by outsiders if the Indians get a share of the results. The National Congress may also remove Indians from their territory in case of an epidemic, natural catastrophe, or a threat to the country's sovereignty, as long as they will be allowed to return when risk is over. Furthermore, the state has again taken on the responsibility to demarcate indigenous territories and protect Indians' rights, as in the Statute (*Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil de 1988*).

Despite the adoption of the Brazilian Constitution in 1988, which somewhat overlaps with the Indian Statute regarding Indian rights, there is still a need for an Indian Statute. The Constitution only has seven articles concerning Indians, and therefore does not cover everything that needs to be covered. The Indian Statute today has sixty-eight articles, and is more comprehensive. The chapter in the Constitution is therefore seen as complementary.

According to Instituto Socioambiental, the Indians' right in the Constitution to stay Indians is a major reason why the Indian Statute has become outdated (2000). This is supported by anthropologist Héctor D. Polanco who has claimed that the Constitution was seen as a turning point in policy from assimilation to integration (1997). According to Carlos F. Marés de Souza, from Instituto Socioambiental, the fulfillment of indigenous peoples' rights in Brazil has increased discrimination, because the Indians have gained so many powerful enemies as a result. The main reason for that is the competition for land (1994). Sociologist Livia Neves de H. Barbosa claims there is a notion of equality in Brazil, because it is a right, but also because Brazilians see themselves as "morally equal in terms of their common biological membership in the human species" (1995: 44). Saugestad (1998: 53) points out that integration has become a widespread policy that often remains an assimilation policy under a different name. I will present some examples of this problem in the results and discussion chapter, and discuss the Brazilian Indians' rights' affect on interethnic relations.

### ***1.3.2.3 ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' Convention No. 169***

In 2002, the Brazilian government ratified the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' Convention, which has been described as "a new approach towards an acknowledgment of indigenous' cultures and ways of life and recognition of their right to control their own path of development" (García-Alix 2005: 559).

In addition to the rights also covered by the Brazilian Constitution and the Indian Statute, the ILO Convention instructs the government to protect the environment in which the indigenous peoples live, to protect them from discrimination, and to match their work, health, and education conditions to those of the non-indigenous population. The Indigenous peoples shall also be in charge of their own development, and shall be consulted in all matters concerning them. The governments shall also support their economic and self-supporting activities, and when requested they shall provide sustainable technical and financial assistance. The indigenous people shall also be able to set up education programs addressing their needs, history, cultures, and traditions. The government is furthermore responsible for teaching them about their rights and duties, and education on indigenous peoples shall be provided to the non-indigenous to avoid prejudices (*C169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989*).

In the results and discussion chapter, I will briefly look into whether the ratification of this Convention has had any significance in practice to the Xavante.

### **1.3.3 Symbolic interactionism**

Georg H. Mead laid the foundations of symbolic interactionism. His, and others' more recent thoughts on the field, are gathered by Joel M. Charon (1989). This approach's main focus is interaction. "Interaction means actors taking each other into account, communicating to and interpreting each other as they go along" (Charon 1989: 140). It emphasizes that people are active participants of interaction through defining it and interpreting the meaning things have to them, something that may change during interaction. It is about the present and what develops during interaction rather than the past. Charon defines symbolic interactionism as: "The study of human beings interacting symbolically with each other and with themselves, and in the process of that symbolic interaction making decisions and directing their streams of action" (1989: 140). He further explains that the meaning of social interaction as symbolic reflects that people's actions have meaning to both the acting individual and the individual the action is directed towards. People's perspectives, that is points of view on reality, are important guidelines for humans. He further states that people are more influenced by perspectives than by attitudes emerged in the past, because they always define and interpret the world around them. He believes these perspectives are learned, changed, and replaced in interaction.

Interacting individuals make up a society, and by communicating, they form a common perspective (Charon 1989: 30). To describe it more in detail, social objects used by a person in a situation, symbols, language, and perspectives arise in interaction. Out of these social objects emerges an interpretation of a situation, which again results in action (1989: 46). People are not passive respondents to realities, but active in shaping the world they act in because of the symbol (1989: 61).

Symbols are “social objects used by the actor for representation and communication”, language included (1989: 40). According to Charon, symbols make three contributions to the human being. They form our reality, the foundation for our social life, and they are central to what it means to be human (1989: 62). The anthropologist Clifford Geertz emphasizes that symbols must be described in the context in which they are expressed. When seeing human behavior as symbolic actions, the focus is on what is communicated between actors through the symbols, and that may vary from one context to another (1973: 10-14).

Locke and Johnston undermine the importance of interpretation in interaction by arguing that: “People only absorb information consistent with their beliefs, which translates into bias for processing, or encoding of, stereotype consistent information” (2001: 118). Blumer believes that: “Interpretations of new situations are not predetermined by conditions antecedent to the situation but depend on what is taken into account and assessed in the actual situations in which behavior is formed” (1962: 191). This way, the arguments of Barth, Blumer, and Locke and Johnston do not necessarily exclude each other.

Ervin Goffman (1959, cited in Braroe 1975: 25-26) has added what is called a dramaturgical perspective to Mead’s thoughts. He sees the individual, often in a team, as performing a role in front of an audience, transmitting and receiving communications involved in the images of self. A good performance includes “staging, the management of props and personal appearance, protecting boundaries, and in general effectively mastering the art of ‘impression management’” (Braroe 1975: 25). This last skill is about trying to control what is communicated about oneself, hence the impression others get of that person.

People judge other people’s behavior according to the society’s norms on what is right, wrong, and acceptable. Banton (1965, cited in Braroe 1975: 28) claims such judgments are made also when it comes to the definitions of situations and social selves. Different situations may bring out different selves of a person. All people still possess a self they consider their true self, and that provides them with a feeling of continuity. This means that although people take on different roles they are still the same person within (Braroe 1975: 29). Braroe, who has performed research on interaction between Indians and whites in Canada, claims that when people do not know each other very well, or even at all, they use different kinds of rituals to show attraction or avoidance. These are symbolic acts to express interest or unwillingness to be involved with someone (Braroe 1975: 32). Anthropologist Robert F. Murphy (1964, cited in Braroe 1975: 34) has argued that: “Interaction is threatening by definition, and distance serves to provide partial and temporary protection to the self”.

In my results and discussion chapter, I will draw on the ways Barroe uses symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework. However, by using this perspective alone, since symbolic interactionism focuses more on the individual, I may be criticized for overlooking the group aspect of interaction. That is why I have used concepts of ethnicity together with concepts of symbolic interactionism to give an account of interethnic interaction between Xavante Indians and non-Indians in Barra do Garças. I will look into how the Xavante use symbolic interactionism, especially adaptive strategies, to uphold and mark ethnic boundaries, and how non-Indians act in accordance with it.

### *1.3.3.1 Adaptive strategies*

Saugestad claims:

In the face-to face encounters of more unstructured interaction, individuals strive to express and maintain cultural identities by a process of self-ascription and presentation of self. On this level, the task of ethnic identification and ascription by others may lead to very different individual strategies, depending on the situational context (1998: 49).

These adaptive strategies are plans of action minority groups develop gradually to protect themselves from the pressures of the dominate group. There is an assumption that marginalized groups and individuals have several adaptation styles to choose from. These adaptive strategies are expressed in the social, economic, and political strategies invented to deal with the dominant society. They are also explicitly stated as dependant variables in the fundamental positions groups take towards the dominant society, and in the behavioral strategies used in interaction and communication between them and members of the larger society. Such behavioral strategies may vary from withdrawal to servility (Casagrande 1988: 95).

It is assumed that the responses chosen are in great part determined by, or at least consistent with, a group's "ecological circumstances". They are viable strategies that both individuals and groups have gradually developed to survive in an oppressive society. There are individual differences, but the strategies are nevertheless largely shared by the group members (Casagrande 1988: 95).

A group's "ecological circumstances" means the ways in which power is produced and spread out by the dominant sector, and its consequences on an Indian community in economic, political, social, and religious domains. For many Indians today, this domination is brought about by, and symbolized in the persons that still have great power over the Indians' lives Casagrande (1988: 96). Casagrande, who has studied several different Indian groups' adaptive strategies towards non-Indians in Ecuador, claims the major dimensions of a group's ecological situation are:

- The extent to which it is involved with and dependent on the larger society.
- The nature of the goods and services exchanged with the outside society.

- The degree to which a group has control over the basic resources necessary to maintain its social and economic integrity (1988: 96).

Saugestad further points out that: “Under conditions of very asymmetrical relationships, a person may consciously avoid expressions of ethnic identity for fear of causing embarrassment, hostility or discrimination” (1998: 49).

I will use adaptive strategies in the results and discussion chapter to explain certain phenomenon I observed in Barra do Garças.

## **1.4 Methodology**

In this part of the thesis, I will describe how I performed my fieldwork and which research methods I used. I will also discuss strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages, and the reasons behind the choices I made during the research process.

### **1.4.1 Selection of study area**

I base this thesis on data collected during a two months fieldwork in the town of Barra do Garças, 2006. The reason why I chose a town for my location was because few studies of the Xavante had been performed in town, and because it seemed most interethnic interaction between Xavante and non-Indians occurred in town. My selection of Barra do Garças in particular was a result of prior acquaintance with the town from previous stays in 1998/99 and 2000. This meant that I already had a network within one of the ethnic groups, was familiar with Brazilian culture, spoke the national language, and knew my way around town.

### **1.4.2 Host family**

I stayed with the same non-Indian family I spent my other stays in Barra do Garças with, and they treated me like a daughter. As they took care of the household, I did not have to spend my time on nothing else but my studies. It further gave me the advantage of being able to observe how they expressed their attitudes towards the Xavante at home. Although they knew what my research was about, that did not seem to place any restrictions to their discussions and attitudes, although it did probably result in more discussions on the topic than usual.

The father of the house was very helpful to take me to places I could not get on foot, and to get me in touch with several informants. He also gave me tips on where to seek information, and made me aware of organizations dealing with the Xavante. I only had one concern about living with a non-Indian family. I was worried the Xavante would think I was on the non-indigenous locals’ side, and that it would make them question my intentions and become suspicious of me. I did not experience this as a problem, but it might still be that it laid some restrictions on their openness towards me that

I did not perceive. Some did ask with whom I lived, and commented that it would be much more fun for me to come live in their village. Different factors, for instance that I needed a FUNAI permission to go, and that it was not considered safe by non-Indians, FUNAI officials included, to go alone as a non-Indian woman, prevented me from doing so, although I really wanted to see for myself how village life is. There is no question about whether that would be interesting or not. It would have given me the opportunity to get to know the Xavante better and observe the attitudes they express towards the non-Indians at home.

### **1.4.3 Communication**

The fact that I speak Portuguese helped me a lot during research. Not having to use an interpreter made conversation flow more naturally and I did not have to worry about misinterpretations to the same extent. Instead, I was in control of my own wording and could focus one hundred percent on my informants and be able to observe their body language and reactions, in addition to verbal communication. The Xavante speak their own language called Xavante. Although many of the Xavante also speak Portuguese, some, in particular those living in the reserves, speak it with difficulty, and others, especially women and elderly, do not speak Portuguese at all. Since I do not speak Xavante, this made it difficult for me to get in touch with the women and elderly. Most Xavante living in town speak Portuguese very well, and the conversations I had with them floated naturally without language problems. Some of the conversations I had with Xavante living in the reserves, however, would sometimes get stuck when they could not understand me, and I did not manage to explain myself differently.

### **1.4.4 Trust issues**

With some Xavante, it took time to gain their trust, especially with the women and elderly. They appeared more suspicious of me, and in the cases where they had difficulties with the Portuguese language, it was a challenge to explain my intentions. Some ignored my approach, but still wanted to listen to my conversations with others as if to find out about what I was up to. After a while, some of them would decide to help me. Some did not want to answer my questions at all, or answered in one or two quick words before they turned their heads away. The elderly and women's suspiciousness of me, as well as my language problems with them, is why most my Xavante informants are men under the age of forty, but also because the places in which I managed to make most contact with the Xavante are places more men than women tend to be present, like the FUNAI office.

### **1.4.5 Lost opportunities**

A lesson I have learned in Brazil is that things take time. I must also blame myself for visiting places at the last minute, only to discover that if I had done so earlier I would have broadened my network and

data. An example of this was that I postponed my visit to a University in the neighboring city because it was so difficult to go there with public transport. One of the last days of my fieldwork, I went there to visit the library. I found valuable secondary literature, but when I went to have it copied, I got in touch with an anthropology student more than willing to help me get in touch with his professors on the field. Since I was about to return to Norway, I did not get to make use of this connection. If I had gone sooner, or had more time, I would probably have received good help from people with academic practice from the field. This also happened with the local FUNAI office in Barra do Garças, because after doing some reading on FUNAI before I went to Brazil, I got the idea they are not fond of anthropologists wanting to do research on their work and the Xavante. I was worried that if I showed up in their office, they would not want me to do interviews with the Xavante and to ask questions about their work. I therefore decided that I should wait to visit them until I had done my observations and more interviews. When I went there, however, many of their officials were very helpful both in my search for secondary literature and informants, and to engage in conversations with me. If I had gone there sooner, I would have been able to perform more interviews with both their officials and visiting Xavante, and to observe their work for a longer period. During the process of writing this thesis, I have also come to regret that I did not make interviews with certain non-Indians about their relations to the Xavante. These are people I later suggest are non-Indian 'outcasts', representatives from the federal police, and the owners of the bars and hostels Xavante tend to hang out.

#### **1.4.6 Fieldwork methods**

I always carried with me a notebook to make notes on keywords and quotations, but most of the time I did not make complete notes during conversations and interviews because I felt it disturbed my informants and that it placed them in an unnatural setting. Any available time during the day I therefore sat down to get the rest of the information I had gained on paper so that I would not forget important details. According to Jenny Preece, Yvonne Rogers, and Helen Sharp (2007: 297), making short notes during interviews is of little disturbance and flexible. It only gets what the interviewer finds important and is therefore easier and less time consuming to transcribe than tapes. On the other hand, it "relies on humans making a good record and knowing what to record" (2007: 297), something that might affect the reliability of data. I did not use a tape recorder, because I felt it would be more disturbing to my informants, and because I did not want to risk getting tapes where I could not hear what was being said because of noise etc. A tape also does not show body language and facial expressions, so I would have to make notes in any case if I wanted to include such observations. Still, as Preece, Rogers, and Sharp (2007: 297) underline, only the tape recorder

provides a complete interview record, and provided that the sound is clear, it is therefore more reliable.

I gathered my data through participant observation, interviews, discussions, and secondary literature. I did observations in town, both during the day and at night; at the local FUNAI office; at the Indian Health House (Casa do Índio de saúde); and in social settings with non-Indians. I spent the first weeks of my research mainly observing interethnic interaction in town. I would walk up and down the streets, go shopping, have lunch at different luncheonettes, and seek out places many Xavante have a tendency to hang out. This way I tried to both get involved in daily life in town, at the same time as I also pulled back only to observe without participating to the same degree. This is also recognized as the main purpose of participant observation by Eriksen, who explains one needs to be “both inside and outside the explored community at the same time”<sup>34</sup> (1998: 33).

#### ***1.4.6.1 Participant observation***

Participant observation provided me with an image of how things work, which was very useful in the process of making changes to my interview guide or come up with new questions I had not thought of. Perhaps more importantly, it also provided me with information on interaction that interviews did not, because during observations I would detect things my informants would not reflect upon during interviews. As Steinar Kvale points out in his account of participant observation:

If the research problem touches upon implicit opinions and understandings, as a group or culture’s implicit assumptions, participant observation and fieldwork on these people’s actual behavior, combined with informal interviews, will be the method with the most valid results<sup>35</sup> (1997: 61).

For instance, many non-Indians claimed they did not interact with Xavante at all, but having done weeks of observations, I knew it was not the case. It was a matter of different understandings of interaction, as they answered if only thinking of social interaction as in spending time together as friends or acquainted.

Alan Bryman (2004) emphasizes that participant observation also uncovers atypical behavior, something I also experienced. Some of the days I spent observing in town felt like a big waste because I did not observe anything new. However, it was what I observed repeatedly that confirmed what I did observe was not just a coincidence.

---

<sup>34</sup> My translation

<sup>35</sup> My translation

### *1.4.6.2 Conversations and discussions*

Conversations and discussions about the Xavante became daily happenings from the beginning with the people I already knew and others they introduced me to when I came to town. Having spent a couple of weeks observing, I chose to start my interviews with my non-indigenous friends. This helped me become confident with making interviews, and provided me with information I could test by further observations and interviews with the Xavante themselves.

### *1.4.6.3 Making contact*

Since none of my friends knew any Xavante, my strategy for making contact with them was by introducing myself to someone I would meet in town. This was however easier said than done. In the places I knew for sure that I would find a Xavante, were places I would usually find about ten or more gathered in the same place. Walking around by myself as a very visible foreigner, I sometimes felt as if I was the one being observed. In addition to never have had anything to do with a Xavante before, I felt insecure about walking up to a whole group of them to ask one of them for an interview. The first Xavante I took the courage to make contact with was a Xavante woman I met on the street together with two small children. She however did not speak Portuguese, and since I did not speak Xavante, I was not able to speak with her.

After only being able to get one interview this way, I came up with another idea, which was stopping Xavante on the street to ask for something like directions just to make contact. By practicing this, I got used to approaching them and sometimes it also lead to longer conversations and interviews. It was nevertheless when I went to see the Indian Health House and the local FUNAI office that I managed to perform most of my interviews with the Xavante. I asked around for people to talk to, both indigenous and not, and after a while they introduced me to several Xavante, both employers and visitors from the reserves. This is called snowball sampling, in which “the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contact with others” (Bryman 2004: 544). Some also made contact with me on their own initiatives and were waiting to speak with me when I arrived at the FUNAI office.

When it comes to my non-Indian informants, most were selected through a convenience sample, which is: “A sample selected because of its availability to the researcher” (Bryman 2004: 538). These include my friends and acquaintances from my previous stays in Barra do Garças, and people they introduced me to. I also selected non-Indian informants through snowball sampling, as in the case of my non-Indian informants at FUNAI. One may say that I did not make a representative sample, since I did not randomly select my informants. This implies that I cannot make generalizations based on my interviews.

#### **1.4.6.4 Interviews**

My interviews had a semi-structured form. I had topics and both specific and open questions I wanted the interviewees to consider, but at the same time, I performed the interviews more like a conversation. I wanted to focus on my informants' understanding of things, and wanted them to feel free to make anecdotes and express what they felt was important. The semi-structured interviews also allowed me to ask follow-up questions and to explore the new directions my interviews headed based on the informants' points of view. Before ending the interview, I would make sure that we had covered all topics and questions on my interview guide. I performed most interviews face to face, but I also did one phone interview as my informant was travelling. Some issues are difficult to observe, like what the Xavante think of the non-Indians and vice versa. This is easier to get an understanding of during an interview. Kvale states: "The interview is a scene in which knowledge is produced through interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee"<sup>36</sup> (1997: 75). By this, he means that interviews encourage people to consider and express their viewpoints and experiences in ways they might not have done prior to the interview situation.

In addition to many casual conversations and discussions, I interviewed sixteen people; eight Xavante and eight non-Indians. Some of them were also interviewed twice. I have a small sample, but it represents people frequently engaged in interaction between Xavante and non-Indians. People who did not interact with members of the other group did not have much to say about interethnic interaction, and what they did say tended to be the same. To get the data I needed to attempt to answer my research questions, I therefore decided to focus mainly on people who frequently interact with members of the other group.

#### **1.4.7 Data influenced by researcher**

The data collected will always be influenced by the researcher in the way that who I am and how I am perceived make a difference. One unavoidable aspect of my research was the fact that I am white. This was an advantage when it came to my conversations with non-Indians, because it made them comfortable with being honest and clear in their point of views, since they saw me as one of them. When it comes to my conversations with the Xavante, however, I got the feeling that they were not as conversant with describing the non-Indians and their behavior and attitudes. They were not always comfortable with expressing exactly what they felt, because when describing the white, it would also include me. They would look down not knowing how to phrase it when the topic came up, carefully selecting not too offending wording. Some of them nevertheless solved that by defining me as different before they went on with their opinions of the non-indigenous locals. They would say

---

<sup>36</sup> My translation

things like: “Many white people are not like you. You are a good person” (Lucas) or: “We have been treated very badly by the whites, but you are different. You care about us” (José).

Bryman (2004) points out the weakness of qualitative research in that it is subjective. The researcher’s background, experience, and different ways of interpreting methods and data color the performance of fieldwork, and because of its unstructuredness it is difficult to have the research repeated. He is correct in many ways, as it would be difficult to perform a research exactly like mine to every detail. Eriksen says: “The anthropologist himself is his most important scientific instrument, and his or her personality has inevitably great significance for the research methods”<sup>37</sup> (1998: 33). This may be positive in the sense that some researchers may see things differently than others, hence add something to the scientific field, but it may also be that researchers come up with contrasting conclusions. This is also recognized by Finn S. Nielsen (1996: 62). Kvale argues that this must not lead to a consensus that an interpretation is only reliable if everyone can agree on it, or that an observation or an interpretation is only valid if it is repeatable by anyone (1997: 115). Nielsen claims all viewpoints on fieldwork have their strengths and weaknesses, and that there will never be a complete vision available (1996: 64).

I decided to combine interviews with participant observation and secondary literature, using triangulation. According to Bryman: “Triangulation entails using more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena” (2004: 275). I observed people in different arenas, different times of the day and different days of the week and interviewed both Xavante and non-Indians from different age groups and sexes, and Xavante both from town and the reserves. I used interview guides to ensure some consistency, although it varied according to ethnicity and the interviewees’ work situations. I have collected data about individuals, but also about the Xavante and the non-Indians as two different groups and as part of a bigger community, Barra do Garças. While in the field, I gathered as many publications about the Xavante, FUNAI and other topics that I could get hold of to back up my findings. It is however important to highlight David Silverman’s point that combining different methods (triangulation) does not necessarily “reveal the whole picture” (2005: 122). Although I have used several methods to see things from different angles, my findings nevertheless rely on my own subjectiveness. In connection with this, I want to stress that I take full responsibility for the contents of this thesis.

## 1.5 Ethical considerations

Kvale (1997: 67-69) emphasizes three important ethical aspects of research methods.

---

<sup>37</sup> My translation

### 1.5.1 Informed consent

The first highlighted issue is what he calls informed consent. The researcher must inform the research subjects about the research aims, main features of the project, and about possible positive and negative aspects of participating. It also means that the researcher must get the research subjects to participate on a voluntary basis, and that the researcher must inform that they may withdraw from participating at any time.

I practiced informed consent to a certain extent. I explained my fieldwork to all the people I had conversations and interviews with, and asked if it was ok with them to answer some questions. If there were questions the interviewee signaled he or she did not want to answer, I respected that and moved on. In one case, my interviewee wanted to leave the interview and I did not attempt to talk her out of that decision. Tove Thagaard argues that it is not always possible to get informed consent from the people under observation, especially when these people are not part of a milieu, but rather people in the public arena. "When the observation do not involve establishment of contacts, there are no people in particular that the researcher can communicate his or her identity to"<sup>38</sup>, she claims (Thagaard 2002: 72). I asked for the informed consent from people I observed closely outside the public arena, but when observing in public places I did not.

### 1.5.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a second underlined aspect in Kvale's account of ethical considerations. By this, he means that the researcher should not publish data that can reveal the research subjects' identity. One should protect the informants' right to privacy by changing their names and other revealing information. Although no one asked me to, I have decided to make all my informants anonymous by changing their names and leaving out identifying information. This is because I do not know whether it would have negative effects to use their real identity. It is also because my informal research methods may have resulted in that my informants spoke to me as if I was mainly their friend instead of a researcher, and in that context said things they might not have said if they knew I would cite it with their names attached. However, it may still be possible for some people to recognize informants they know well through stories I retell.

### 1.5.3 Consequences

The third point emphasized by Kvale is consequences. It is important to consider whether your research will harm the research subjects or not, and whether they will gain something from it. I hope that those who read it will rather learn something and see things from a new perspective, not the

---

<sup>38</sup> My translation

least to get a better understanding of the other group's point of view. In that case, they would gain something. Some of the Xavante also expressed gratitude just because I cared about their situation. Some also took the advantage of the interview situation to ask me some questions, and seemed very pleased with that. Although I could not think of any consequences that would harm my informants now that I have made them anonymous, there is no guarantee. In addition, this thesis may not have turned out as my informants might have imagined, as I have analyzed my findings in the light of a theoretical framework. Although they might see things differently, I hope they will still recognize aspects of the interethnic relations between Xavante and non-Indians in Barra do Garças discussed in chapter 3.

## **1.6 Chapter description**

In Chapter 2, I give a presentation of the background for interethnic relations between the Xavante and non-Indians in Barra do Garças. I start out with a brief description of what I have called early history, meaning the colonization of Brazil and how that affected the indigenous population. In the next section, from the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, I describe the situation in Brazil after it has gained its independence, in which there was an opening of the frontiers to the west, and eventually to the state of Mato Grosso. I further look into Brazil's Indian policy from this time, and some of its consequences. I then present Brazilian Indians' current situation, demography, the status on the demarcation process as of today, the work of FUNAI and the creation of the National Health Foundation (FUNASA), before I narrow it down to the history and current situation of the Xavante in specific, and my study area Barra do Garças. This will provide an understanding of how the Brazilian state has dealt with the Indians over the years, the Xavante in particular, and give an insight into the Xavante as a people and their relations to the region in which they live, to place interethnic tensions in a historical context.

Chapter 3 presents and discusses my findings from the field with a basis on the research questions already outlined above, and in the light of the delineated theoretical framework with key concepts such as interaction, acculturation, cultural self-awareness, ethnical classification, adaptive strategies, discrimination, and indigenous peoples' rights.

In chapter 4, I come up with a conclusion based on my results and discussion.



## 2 Background

In this chapter, I first examine the history of indigenous peoples in general vis-à-vis the Brazilian state, which will be followed by the specific history of the Xavante and Barra do Garças. This will provide a useful context for the following chapter.

### 2.1 Indians in Brazil

Frans Leeuwenberg and Mário Salimon (1999), in a booklet for UNICEF on the indigenous' history in Brazil with an emphasis on the Xavante, criticize the way Brazilian history has usually been retold. They think it is based on a story of white heroism and the interests and viewpoints of the colonizers, without describing the immense suffering of the indigenous peoples. To take this into consideration, I will base my account on their work together with the work of Davis (1977), Alejandro Parellada (2006) from the International Work Group of Indigenous Affairs, Marés de Souza (1994), Maybury-Lewis (1988), the interdisciplinary publication on Xavante in transition by Carlos Coimbra, Nancy Flowers, Francisco Salzano and Robert Santos (2002), and FUNAI publications.

#### 2.1.1 Early history

The contact between the white and the indigenous peoples in Brazil occurred because of economic factors. Since the Portuguese had failed their initial mission to find a new route to India, they wanted to justify their expedition by bringing back treasures from the forest. Since they were in need of labor to do so, they dominated and turned the Indians into slaves. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Brazil was the world's main provider of sugar, and because of increased European migration, cattle ranching were in progress with the inevitable continuation of invasion of more Indian land. With cattle ranching, the colonizers did not need the Indians for labor, something that came to affect their survival (Leeuwenberg & Salimon 1999: 13).

The contact resulted in interethnic wars and transmission of diseases from the white to the Indians. Because of this, the indigenous population was already reduced before the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Indian culture influenced the white people's customs in several ways, but ethnic classification and prejudice still prevailed, and persecution and exploitation of Indians increased as the white expanded their activities and enterprises (Leeuwenberg & Salimon 1999: 14).

In 1757, representatives from the Portuguese crown came up with an assimilation legislation called the Directorate (Coimbra et al. 2002: 59). This was a strategy to transmit white customs and values to

the indigenous peoples. This involved capturing Indians from different groups and placing them in big villages. This also marked the beginning of interethnic marriages between whites and Indians (Leeuwenberg & Salimon 1999: 15-16).

The Portuguese also used Indians for gold mining, but by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, mining was declining. Jesuits who had set up religious missions for Indian fugitives and converted Indians were expelled from Brazil in 1759, and the Indians fled their missions. Because of this, indigenous people were reunited and strengthened, and went on attacking whoever invaded their territory (Leeuwenberg & Salimon 1999: 16).

In 1822, Brazil gained its independence and the Portuguese crown was no longer in charge. A decree was made in 1883 to release all the Indian labor slaves, representing the first law in favor of the Indians. In 1850, Law 601 provided the indigenous peoples with limited rights to the lands they were occupying. It did however remain more of a policy on paper than a practiced law (Marés de Souza 1994: 215-219).

### **2.1.2 From the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond**

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, interethnic violent land conflicts were many as the frontiers to the west were opened by new infrastructure. The conflicts gained attention in the national press and marked the beginning of a political debate. The state wanted to get the Indians out of the way, and non-Indians increasingly adopted racist theories. An oppositionist group of people reacted against what they saw as massacres of indigenous peoples, and with increased support they convinced the government in 1910 to form an agency for the protection of Indian communities, the Indian Protection service (SPI). SPI's task was to protect the Indians from discrimination and oppression (Davis 1977: 1-2).

Pacification excursions came to be SPI's main business. One of the problems of pacification was however that it worked more in favor of the Brazilian society than of the Indians. They were pacified with gifts and promises, but when no longer a threat, their territories were invaded by resource extractors. Although the SPI answered by setting up Indian posts with SPI officials in several areas, they failed to protect indigenous territory. Consequently, almost everywhere the SPI worked, Indians were struck by disease or ended up oppressed without much land (Davis 1977: 5).

From 1900 to 1957, the Brazilian indigenous population was reduced from about 1 million to less than 200 000. Many indigenous groups suffered extinction and destruction or ended up more or less acculturated. The Indians who were integrated into Brazilian national society did not do much better. They lost their languages and customs, and took on the role as the poorest ethnic class. Because of

discrimination and exploitation, they did not manage to assimilate into the Brazilian society (Davis 1977: 7).

In the late 1950's, corruption, robbery and illegal sale of Indian lands, and in some cases also complicity in murder of Indians, characterized the SPI administration. Davis claims: "Economic rather than humanitarian considerations began to form the basis of Indian policy in Brazil" (1977: 10). Consequently, SPI was dissolved and replaced with the National Foundation of the Indian (FUNAI). FUNAI's task was still to protect the Indians from discrimination and oppression, but it was also to integrate the Indians as soon as possible into the national society, a policy also later expressed through the Indian Statute from 1973 (*História e Política Indigenista*). Maybury-Lewis (1991: 222-223) points out the contradictory role of FUNAI. The government wanted FUNAI to keep the Indians out of the way of development, but since the foundation was founded to protect the Indians, it became impossible to please both directives. This is evident from the fact that a FUNAI official, Antonio Cotrim, resigned in frustration, claiming it was not possible to protect indigenous peoples' rights when FUNAI is an agency within the Brazilian Ministry of the interior, which is responsible for both developing the interior and Indian affairs (Davis 1977: 68).

During the 1940's and 1950's, new settlers were increasingly moving into central Brazil. By 1960, the states of Mato Grosso, Goiás, and Pará had turned into major areas of agriculture and cattle raising (Davis 1977: 29). In 1969, the new Brazilian government announced the beginning of the economic development of the Amazon Basin, the home of the majority of Brazilian Indians. Journalists and other writers described the economic development to the sacrifice of Indians as tragic, but inevitable and necessary. This viewpoint also became representative of the public understanding of Indian policy in Brazil, despite the recognition of Indians' rights through the Indian Statute adopted in 1973 (Davis 1977: 13-14).

During the 1980's, a cultural self-awareness among different Indian groups developed, and they became aware of each other and their common position within the national society as ethnic minorities. This marked the beginning of their political resistance, and they began organizing themselves politically, using their ethnicity as a comparative advantage. Both non-Indians and Indians were dedicated to their cause and had an influence on the new Constitution in 1988, which ended up with a separate chapter on Indians as demonstrated in section 1.3.2.2 (*História e Política Indigenista*).

### **2.1.3 Current situation**

Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world and has more than 184 million inhabitants. Due to a great population increase rate since 1991, especially in urban areas, indigenous people in Brazil now

number 734, 127 people<sup>39</sup>. This number includes Indians living outside of Indian territory and in urban areas (Parellada 2006: 190). Most Indians live in reserves and their degree of interaction with the Brazilian society varies. According to Coimbra et al. (2002: 2) they all nevertheless remain marginalized with poor health and economy, and have difficulties with accessing health care, education, and other social services. 1.1 million square km. are now assigned the indigenous population, divided on 604 different territories. 480 of these are demarcated or in the process of demarcation, while 124 Indian lands are yet to be officially identified and recognized by FUNAI (Parellada 2006: 190). According to FUNAI, there are also notifications on 63 indigenous communities not officially contacted by non-Indians (*Os Índios*). Because of Indian demographic increase and several incidents of reoccupation of Indian territory by non-Indian settlers, there is an increasing tension between Indians and landowners, loggers and illegal settlers. It is really a competition for resources between Indians and non-Indian. Consequently, Indians' trust in FUNAI is weakened. Parellada therefore claims the Indians' problems are getting worse. He refers to a report by Amnesty International, which states that: "Brazil's indigenous peoples continue to suffer from, among other things, violence, poverty, hunger, discrimination and conflict over land" (Parellada 2006: 191).

Although violent encounters between Indians and non-Indians still occur in Brazil, interethnic interaction has become less violent since the first encounters on indigenous land. Many territorial disputes have been settled, and the Indians have taken on more peaceful methods to resist and challenge their adversaries, like demonstrations, politics, making alliances with organizations, and the media. Parellada (2006: 190) however stresses that in 2005, more murders on Indians occurred than in the last 11 years. He further criticizes the current Brazilian government for not respecting and understanding the Indians' situation.

FUNAI has gone through several administrative reforms and are today in a process of restructuring itself and complying with their responsibility expressed in the Brazilian Constitution. They also claim to work in a way that is more sensitive and understanding of the needs and aspirations of the indigenous peoples (*História e Política Indigenista*).

Parellada (2006) still criticizes FUNAI for moving very slowly when it comes to demarcation of indigenous land, and for their inability to keep invaders out of already authorized land. He claims this makes the Indians lose faith in the state and rather decide to sort things out for themselves, which is the case in many instances. There is also movement of indigenous non-governmental organizations constantly laying pressure on the government to get their cases through and speed things up.

---

<sup>39</sup> This number varies between sources and is usually considerably lower because of a tendency to only include Indians living within reservations

FUNAI is the Brazilian government's organ that establishes and executes Brazil's politics based on the 1988 Constitution when it comes to the indigenous peoples. In practice, this means it is up to FUNAI to demarcate, secure, and protect the land traditionally occupied by Indians, and to stimulate the development of studies and surveys about indigenous groups. The Foundation still has the responsibility to defend the indigenous communities, to actuate the national society's interest for the Indians and their causes, to manage their property and supervise their lands, preventing ruthless exploitation from farmers, occupiers, lumberjacks and anybody else crossing their boundaries and that represents a risk to the life and the preservation of these peoples. FUNAI consists of one headquarter, 45 regional administrations, 14 indigenous support centers and the Indian museum in Rio de Janeiro, 10 alert posts and 344 indigenous posts, distributed throughout the country (*Fundação Nacional do Índio*)<sup>40</sup>.

FUNAI also used to be in charge of indigenous health and education, but after a reform in 1999, education is now under municipal responsibility. The Health Ministry became responsible for Indian health through the National Health Foundation (FUNASA). FUNASA's responsibility is to set up the subsystem of the Public Health Service (Sistema Única de Saúde), which is based on Special Indigenous Health Districts (Distritos Sanitários Especiais Indígenas). Parellada criticizes FUNASA and argues: "The new model centralized the system's management and left a trail of disasters through failure to implement the federal budget resources" (2006: 199), basically claiming they have spent their money on administration to the expense of the indigenous peoples' health.

As SPI, FUNAI also struggles with a reputation of being corrupt, as demonstrated by an article in the Brazilian magazine "Veja". It had an article on print with the title: "Tem Índio na Suíça?" meaning: "Are there Indians in Switzerland?" The article is about Mércio Pereira Gomes, the FUNAI president for the last three years. During these years, he has spent about 124,395 US dollars on travels, all paid for by FUNAI. His destinations were usually far from indigenous reserves. Instead, as *Veja* sarcastically writes, his main study objects seem to have been the customs of the Swiss in Geneva, which he visited about every 5 months during weekends while he was president. In total, he made 17 international travels and 118 to Rio de Janeiro, the latter in which he also has relatives. Only 49 of his 135 travels were to indigenous land. When this was revealed, Gomes resigned. *Veja* argues this is an example of FUNAI's waste of money. Last year the organization only spent 30% of its budget directly on Indians. *Veja* claims the majority remained in the hands of the white man. A big proportion was also spent to maintain the administrative structure of the foundation (*Veja* 2006).

---

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.funai.gov.br/>

FUNAI claims that the Brazilian society has recently been starting to see the Indians as their fellow citizens and that up to date information on them is increasingly sought after (*Os Índios*)<sup>41</sup>. This could mean that the ethnic process of complementarization<sup>42</sup> between Indians and non-Indians is in progress.

Many Indians speak Portuguese, wear clothes like the rest of the Brazilian society, and use modern technologies. FUNAI nevertheless emphasizes that this do not make them lose their ethnic identity. The foundation claims all cultures are in constant change, and that cultural diversity is related to the contact between different socio-cultural realities and the ethnic boundaries marked in the unavoidable coexistence (*Os Índios*).

## 2.2 The Xavante

With the background information on Brazilian indigenous peoples in general in mind, I now turn to the specific history of the Xavante vis-à-vis the Brazilian state, and their current situation regarding cultural practices, demography, health, and education.

### 2.2.1 History

I present the Xavante history through the eyes of Bartolomeu Giaccaria (2000), an Italian Salesian missionary who has dedicated his whole adult life to the Xavante; Leeuwenberg and Salimon (1999), who have worked together with six Xavante and their villages to present their point of view on history; Davis (1977); Garfield's study on Xavante struggles against the state (2001); and Coimbra et al. (2002). I will also use the work of Maybury-Lewis (1988) and (1991), the former referred to in most literature on the Xavante.

The Xavante's existence has been documented since 1751 when their land in the state of Tocantins appeared on a map as: "The Land of the Xavante Heathen". They were nomadic hunters and gatherers, and early descriptions indicate that they were many in number and great warriors (Coimbra et al. 2002: 57-60).

---

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.funai.gov.br/indios/conteudo.htm>

<sup>42</sup> See section 1.3.1

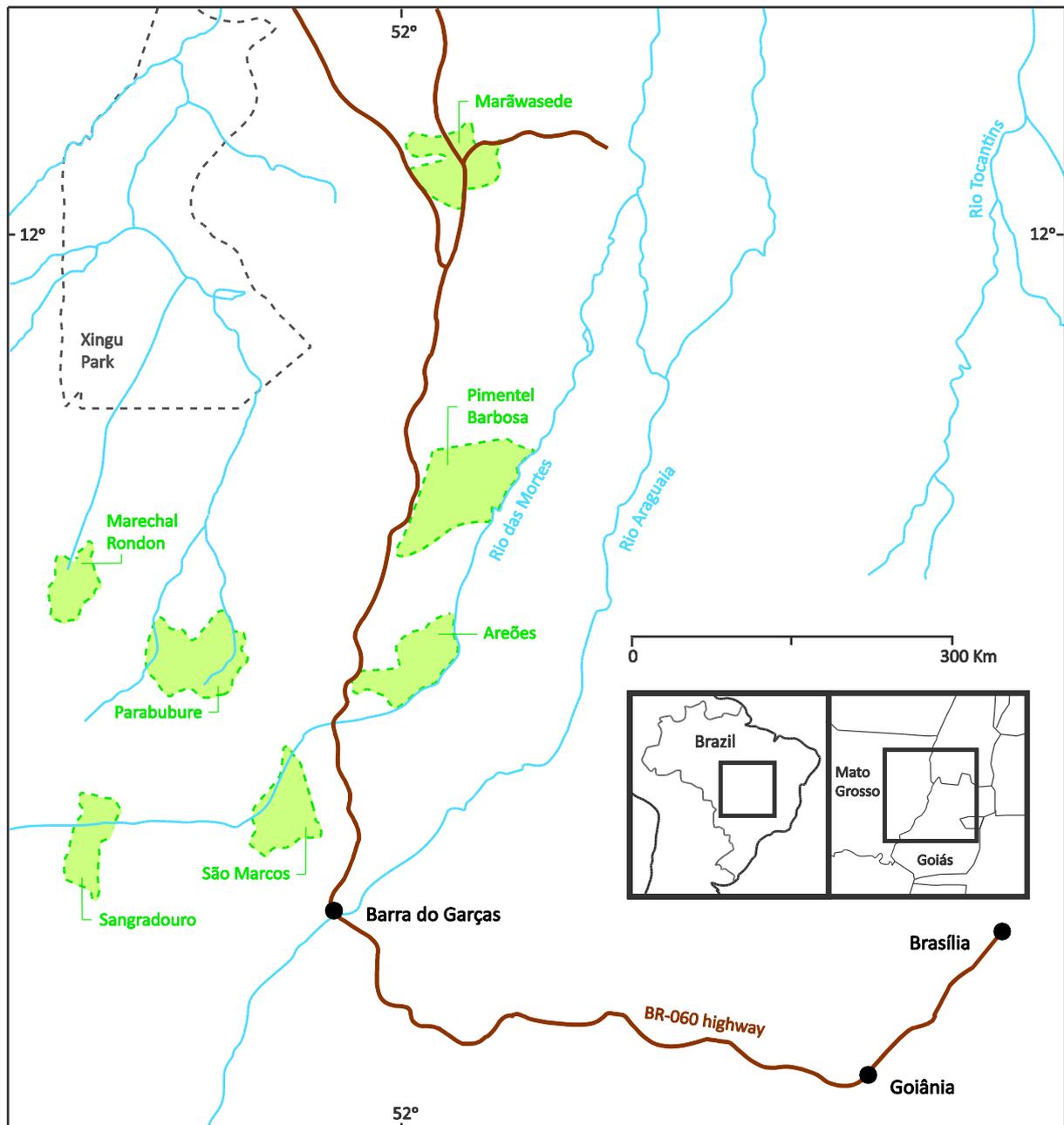


Illustration 1: Location of Xavante reservations and Barra do Garças in the state of Mato Grosso, Brazil<sup>43</sup>

Between 1850 and 1860, the Xavante moved west and crossed the Araguaia River and the Rio das Mortes in the state of Mato Grosso because of the growing Brazilian population<sup>44</sup> (Giaccaria 2000: 14). In the historic memory of the Xavante, the Xavante split in two in connection with the crossing of the Araguaia River. The group that stayed behind and did not cross became what is known today as

<sup>43</sup> Based on Coimbra et al. (2002: 18)

<sup>44</sup> See Illustration 1.

the Xerente. They accepted contact with the white right away, and suffered population decrease and several negative consequences of acculturation (Leeuwenberg & Salimon 1999: 28).

The Xavante arrived the mountain Serra do Roncador in the state of Mato Grosso, where they stayed for a century refusing contact with any other societies (Giaccaria 2000: 14). Intruding adventurers and settlers caused fear and insecurity among the Xavante who felt forced to fight back. It was in this period that the reputation of them on fierceness was constructed, as stories of deadly attacks went all over Brazil. Leeuwenberg and Salimon argue this reputation kept them alive to grow in number and stay isolated until the beginning of the 1930's (1999: 28). Explorer Timothy Severin claims: "Of all the many Indian tribes of Brazil, the Xavante have held possibly the most fearsome reputation" (1973: 319).

In 1936, after the Xavante had killed a settler's son during territorial conflicts, the governor of Mato Grosso authorized a punishing expedition that resulted in 30 dead Xavante. In 1941, SPI sent a group to make peace with the Xavante and to "tame them". Most of the SPI group was killed. In 1946, one of the Xavante sub-groups accepted peaceful contact with the representatives from SPI, marking the beginning of the official peaceful relations between Xavante and whites in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Leeuwenberg & Salimon 1999: 29). Some Xavante sub-groups yet managed to stay practically isolated until 1957 (Giaccaria 2000: 13).

Pacification exposed the Xavante to several diseases that put their survival both as individuals and as a people in further danger. Almost all the elders, who were the main transmitters of culture, died. There was a difference between the Xavante that made contact with SPI, and those who made contact with mission stations. There was also a difference between those who were able to stay on their lands and those that were forced to move. Salesian missionaries established stations in both the indigenous reserves of Sangradouro and São Marcos<sup>45</sup>, and their perspectives, norms, judgments of behavior, and religion have influenced the Xavante there. The Xavante forced out of from the Parabubure territory settled at SPI posts, in which they were exposed to American Protestant missionaries. The Xavante now settled in the indigenous reservations of Pimentel Barbosa and Areões have had more contact with the SPI than with missionaries.

In this period, the Xavante became accustomed to missions, SPI posts, and manufacture products, and were somewhat secured residence in the area by these institutions. Ranchers nevertheless bought and occupied Xavante territory surrounding the SPI posts and mission stations, limiting the Xavante to small plots of land. The SPI did not manage to keep invaders out of demarcated land

---

<sup>45</sup> See Illustration 1, page 35 for the location of the Xavante reserves.

because of financial shortcomings and lack of personnel. In addition, the SPI officials' reports on invasion and illegal title deeds were ignored by the state of Mato Grosso itself (Coimbra et al. 2002: 78-82).

When the first impacts of pacification had passed, Xavante cultural self-awareness arose, and they reacted by reestablished parties and ceremonies that they had abandoned more than twenty years earlier. They also managed to increase their population from a total of about two hundred in 1957 to 2160 in 1969 (Giaccaria 2000: 14).

The most serious conflicts involved cattle ranchers and the Xavante concerning the competition for land. Mining companies and agribusiness were favored, and instead of providing the Xavante with a reserve as promised, several governors began to sell their lands to cattle ranchers. Two hundred and sixty-three Xavante were living on the land assigned to the enormous Suiá-Missú Ranch. In 1966, they were forcefully moved with a Brazilian Air Force plane to a Salesian mission in the São Marcos reserve. Here, eighty-three Xavante died within days because of a measles epidemic (Davis 1977: 119).

Tensions between the Xavante and the new cattle ranchers only grew stronger, and in 1969, the Brazilian president signed a decree to create three reserves in the Xavante areas. The reserves were very small, and there were protests from both Xavante and landowners. The government decided to cancel the decree with a promise of a new demarcation (Garfield 2001: 155). When nothing seemed to happen, the Xavante decided to act in 1971, and started killing cattle and burning the houses of ranchers on their lands. In 1972, the government ordered military police to the region to control the conflicts. The ranchers did everything they could so that the government would not survey the Xavante lands (Davis 1977: 118). Davis (1977: 119) quotes a rancher cited in a Brazilian newspaper during this period: "These Indians are holding back the inevitable development of Brazil. They produce absolutely nothing and are creating conflicts with pioneers who want to integrate our country and make it the major exporter of meat in the world", he said, demonstrating similar attitudes towards the Xavante as the Brazilian majority's towards Indians in general<sup>46</sup>.

Later that year, the president eventually signed three decrees to establish five Xavante reserves on their lands (Davis 1977: 120). Garfield points out that these reserves were still small and of poor quality, and that FUNAI had yet to remove the invaders physically. The Xavante Marãiwatsede area was not awarded to the Xavante, but remained in the hands of "landowners". For the Indians, land is not only a source of self-sufficiency, but also a prerequisite for cultural autonomy and the land of

---

<sup>46</sup> See section 2.1.2.

their ancestors (Garfield 2001: 159). Despite new decrees, conflicts continued because of constant invasions of ranchers, who within the Sangradouro reserve also armed themselves against government surveyors of indigenous land (Davis 1977: 120).

During the 1970's ranchers started pouring into Mato Grosso, gradually reducing the Xavante territory despite the violent battles they took on (Maybury-Lewis 1988: 5-6). The most violent incidents occurred between ranchers and Indians at the São Marcos Reserve. In the early 1970's ranchers claimed the Xavante's land, who resisted and protested by killing their cattle and blocking trucks that were seeking passage along a nearby road. In 1974, armed ranchers attacked the community and tried to force the Xavante to move. They responded by turning to their weapons (Davis 1977: 120-121).

### *2.2.1.1 The politicization of the Xavante*

By the end of the 1970's, the Xavante had learned to draw on their ethnicity and use it as a comparative advantage to claim rights. They had come to see that ethnicity closed some doors, but opened others in the process. They also saw that to adapt selectively to parts of the white culture would help them in their struggles against them (Garfield 2001: 16; 115). As the Brazilian Indians in general, they changed their warfare methods into politics and peaceful activities like demonstrations. They took advantage of the improved infrastructure and went by bus to Brasília to lay siege on the authorities (Maybury-Lewis 1988).

After years of constant political resistance and active struggling by Xavante with assistance of different organizations, churches, FUNAI officials, and anthropologists, the president signed a new decree in 1979 to make a new reserve of an area occupied by a large farm. This marked the beginning of the Parabubure reserve. Sixty-five property holders were affected and had to move within a year. They were not compensated for the properties, only for the buildings. Many Xavante returned, although the area lacked game to hunt, fertile soils, and no pharmacy or cars like they had access to in the missions of Sangradouro (Garfield 2001: 183-184).

According to Giaccaria, the last of the most serious threats to the Xavante's survival occurred in the end of the 1970's and the beginning of the 1980's with the implementation of Brazil's big development projects. Large amounts of financial resources were placed in their disposition to communal development, seriously affecting their social organization of equality<sup>47</sup>. This has become known as the Development Plan for the Xavante Nation. The project goals were "generating self-sufficiency through mechanized rice production and cattle grazing and through educational and

---

<sup>47</sup> See 2.2.2.2

health programs at the Xavante reserves” and was implemented by FUNAI (Garfield 2001: 188). Access to financial resources resulted in individualistic and selfish responses, threatening the continuation of life in a group (Giaccaria 2000: 15). They freely disposed state resources and machinery, and many went to the FUNAI office in Barra do Garças everyday to ask for food, clothing, and other handouts. FUNAI provided chiefs and their so called secretaries with salaries, resulting in a power struggle and the forming of smaller groups with one chief (Garfield 2001: 196; 202). In 1986, “nearly the entire Xavante male population flooded Barra do Garças searching for handouts from FUNAI” (Garfield 2001: 206). Towards the end of the 1980’s, Brazil was in huge debt and stopped the funding. Many Xavante returned to self-sufficiency, while others keep appealing NGO’s, FUNAI, missionaries, and others to fund new projects (Garfield 2001: 208-209).

Maybury-Lewis returned to the Xavante in 1982 and describes their increasing connection to Barra do Garças. He saw the town as becoming the most important part of their lives, but also that without patrons from FUNAI or others, their trips were rather depressing. He describes one trip as follows:

They waited around, classically stolid, unwanted and with no place to go. Watching them, so out of place in the midst of their old ancestral lands, I was again reminded of the secular injustice from which they suffered. Some of them reacted boorishly, marching in where they were not wanted and demanding things instead of asking for them (Maybury-Lewis 1988: 279).

Nancy Flowers who did field work at the Pimentel Barbosa reserve in 1976, describes interaction between Xavante leaders and owners or administrators of the ranches near by the reservation as “surface tolerance with undercurrents of suspicion and resentment” (Coimbra et al. 2002: 83).

### 2.2.2 Current situation

There is no exact number available on how many Xavante there is today, but according to FUNAI they are about 11.550 people, distributed over 70 villages (Santos)<sup>48</sup>. This makes them one of the largest indigenous groups of Brazil. They mostly live in six different socially and politically independent federal reservations: Pimentel Barbosa, Parabubure, São Marcos, Sangradouro, Marechal Rondon, and Areões in the eastern part of the state of Mato Grosso. The registrations of the first four reservations are officially ratified. The last two are demarcated (Coimbra et al. 2002: 17). After 11 years and 8 months of discussion back and forth and constant activist activity by the Xavante, the Federal Justice in Cuiabá finally put an end to the process concerning the Marãiwatséde territory that was actually ratified already in 1998. It was decided that all farmers, including the Suiá-Missú ranch, those with “legal” titles to property, and invaders should be expelled. The majority should move without compensation as their occupation was not well intended and considered an invasion. They

---

<sup>48</sup> [www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/materias/xav\\_cddc.htm](http://www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/materias/xav_cddc.htm).

should also grow back the forests that were destroyed. Hence, the Xavante are now entitled to seven reserves. The FUNAI president sees this as one of the most important cases for FUNAI and the Indian politics for the last 20 years (*Justica devolve terra* 2007)<sup>49</sup>.

São Marcos is the reserve closest to Barra do Garças, and the FUNAI office in Barra do Garças only attend to Xavante from this reserve. This means that the Xavante coming to Barra do Garças on a regular basis mostly come from the villages in São Marcos. Occasionally Xavante from other reserves also come to Barra do Garças. It is therefore difficult to come up with a number on how many Xavante make frequent trips to Barra do Garças, but a survey from 1996 counted 1,813 Xavante living in São Marcos (Coimbra et al. 2002: 19).

### 2.2.2.1 Culture

According to Giaccaria, the Xavante is a cheerful people and several parties and competitions performed during the year express this cheerfulness as well as their spirituality. All their celebrations further reveal the religious spirit of the Xavante people (2000: 19). They are nevertheless better known for their physical resistance, as impressive warriors, for self-determination, and cultural pride (Leeuwenberg & Salimon 1999). They still value their traditions and culture, but there was a period when the young did not show interest. These Xavante, who are now middle aged, have come to understand its importance in the resistance against assimilation and acculturation, and keep traditional rituals and parties alive. This will be further discussed in the sections following 3.2. With the Xavante's reaction to acculturation, the influence from school, and constant action by people interested in the survival of their culture, the Xavante have managed to reinforce their own culture (Giaccaria 2000: 15).

One part of their culture they value especially high is the ritual events at the time boys leave their childhood behind to enter adolescence. They go to live in a bachelor hut where they attend traditional Xavante education, as physical training and other challenges to prepare them for adulthood. This lasts for several years and ends with a ceremony in which, among other events, their ears are pierced, and they are officially introduced to their future wives. In the pierced ears they put bamboo sticks, which is one of the public symbols of their Xavante identity (Giaccaria 2000: 17).

Within the reserves, the village council, consisting of adult men, makes all decisions. If the council cannot come to an agreement, the village split in two and one of the parties move to a different location within the reserve (Maybury-Lewis 1988).

---

<sup>49</sup> [http://www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/noticias/1\\_semestre\\_2007/Fevereiro/un0701\\_002.htm](http://www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/noticias/1_semestre_2007/Fevereiro/un0701_002.htm)

Many young Xavante admit they are dependent on certain white practices. Some girls say they would never be able to quit wearing dresses and underwear. Still, they claim they will never become a 'white' woman, but always be a Xavante. Leeuwenberg and Salimon describe it as an assimilated value not strong enough to have them refrain from being Xavante with their own customs (1999: 59-60).

Leeuwenberg and Salimon cite a Xavante stating: "Nothing could hurt us more than a total assimilation into the world of the white" (1999: 59). According to Leeuwenberg and Salimon, they work hard to find a balance where they can enjoy the advantages brought to them by the white without ever having to stop being Xavante. Still, they claim the Xavante are less energetic and more dependent today than 50 years ago. They have lost elements of their traditional culture without being accepted as part of the population of the national society (Leeuwenberg & Salimon 1999: 48-49), and even other minority groups, as blacks and people with Asian ethnicities, see them as different and inferior, using dichotomization and negative stereotypes for ethnic classification (Davis 1977: 51).

### *2.2.2.2 Egalitarianism and economy*

The Xavante's fundamental economic principle is the sharing of goods. The consideration for the other members of the groups is manifested in the equal distribution or division of goods between the them. This way they guarantee the survival of the group (Giaccaria 2000: 22). An important part of the Xavante culture is therefore sharing and equality. One will hardly notice any difference between the home of the chief and the home of any other Xavante. With the non-Indians, money became a part of the Xavante daily life. That has threatened equality principles, as the ones with the most resources have more possibilities (Davis 1977: 54). If they have something they do not want to share they must hide it, or else other Xavante will come and claim their share (Maybury-Lewis 1988). This practice is what anthropologist Marshall D. Sahlins calls generalized reciprocity, meaning it is an outcome of norms valuing sharing. Reciprocity is expected, but there is no norm for when and in which forms it should take place (1972: 194).

When the funding for the Development Plan for the Xavante Nation stopped, the Xavante went back to manual agriculture, combined with cultivation of selected seeds from town, in addition to hunting. Some villages have also developed, in a small scale, banana cultivating for commercial production to supply them with the means for buying cattle and the material necessary for village life. In commercialization, the Xavante still have difficulties to obtain profitable prices because they lack commercial experience (Giaccaria 2000: 155). To deal with this, they have formed several associations in the reserves to get better deals in the market. They have been united in the General Coordination of Indigenous Xavante (CIX) and cooperate with the Coordination of Indigenous

Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), FUNAI, and The Nature Conservancy, which is an American non-governmental organization. CIX's objectives are socio-cultural, economic, and political organization of the communities and indigenous organizations of the Xavante territory, and the strengthening of those through different projects like the cultivation of native fruits. With this, they also hope to pass on tradition to the young. One of the leaders has said that their "main difficulties is to understand the ideas and suggestions presented by the white. To do that we need to participate more in topics like the environment, culture preservation, education, and health" (Santos)<sup>50</sup>.

### *2.2.2.3 Land and nature*

The Xavante relate to nature in a very special way, as do most Indians in Brazil. To them, the land signifies much more than prospects for cash accumulation. A Xavante would not cut down the trees of their land if not to make a vegetable garden for his own family, because they need a lot of space for their hunting. It is not interesting for them to produce more than the family need for survival. They do not have minds for super production (Leeuwenberg & Salimon 1999: 53). Today, the Xavante reserves have good sizes as a result of their persevering and continuous struggle, but they were inefficiently administered by FUNAI and others dealing with indigenous peoples. The big farming projects promised agricultural accumulation without considering its compatibility with Xavante cultural norms, as the sharing and equality principle discussed in the section above. The reserve Pimentel Barbosa is the only one that still has complete conditions for sustainable hunting for all its four villages (Leeuwenberg & Salimon 1999: 54).

### *2.2.2.4 Health and education*

Giaccaria claims there still is a difference today between the Xavante under the influence of missionaries, and those under the influence of FUNAI. In the missions, health was always a priority. In the reserves directly attended to by FUNAI, the health sector was left basically uncovered or in the hands of some unprepared Xavante after the Development Plan for the Xavante Nation ended. The contact with non-Indians and more frequent trips to town made them contract new diseases.

The change in diet constitutes the impact they suffer the most from today. When the Xavante were taught to eat and plant rice, the women stopped gathering roots, plants, and fruits, which had guaranteed their health for centuries. Old Xavante are concerned with young Xavante's lack of interest in learning about traditional diet and medicine, because when they die, indigenous knowledge will die with them. The introduction to sugar, salt, cigarettes, and coffee have also caused a lot of health problems (Leeuwenberg & Salimon 1999: 51).

---

<sup>50</sup> [www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/materias/xav\\_cddc.htm](http://www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/materias/xav_cddc.htm)

In the villages only attended to by FUNAI, there was no one to supervise that the Xavante used their medication correctly. In the missions, nurses keep track of the medical treatments. In the other villages, the health workers responsible only occasionally visit them. The fact that non-Indians were put in charge of the Xavante health also affected their culture. Traditional medicinal practices, rituals, and parties became superfluous (Giaccaria 2000).

The majority of the children and young are literate. Some are already teaching the children in their own village. Education offers have increased and they are alphabetized in both their own language and Portuguese, and according to the coordinator of Indigenous Education of the Ministry of Education, efforts are made to try to adapt their curriculum to their local culture and with an emphasis on the communities' growth (*Número de Alunos 2007*)<sup>51</sup>.

## 2.3 Barra do Garças

In the following sections, I present the history and development of Barra do Garças to see how this has affected the Xavante. I also give some examples on early non-Indian citizens' attitudes towards the Indians. Last, I look into what Barra do Garças has developed to be, and its importance to the Xavante.

### 2.3.1 Location and history

Barra do Garças is situated by the Araguaia River the Xavante crossed during the 1950's<sup>52</sup>. It is a town in the state of Mato Grosso, which is closely connected to two other towns. By crossing the bridges over the intersecting Araguaia River and Garças River, one will find oneself in the tiny town of Pontal da Araguaia, and eventually in Aragarças, which actually belongs to the state of Goiás. In many ways, these three towns function as one, as many people from Aragarças and Pontal da Araguaia go to school or work in Barra do Garças and use it as their main commercial centre.

According to the former mayor Valdon Varjão (1985), Barra do Garças was founded in 1924 by two miners. They came to the region with the first arrival of miners that established themselves by the riverside during the diamond-mining era.

Varjão divides the history of Barra do Garças into four phases. The first phase was the mining phase from 1924 to 1942. The second phase was the foundation of Central Brazil from 1943 to 1964, when the town became very important to the regional economy. The third phase was the phase of the development of the Amazon from 1964 to 1973. This created opportunities and attracted large financial groups to invest in the region because of large tax incentives, resulting in a solid local

---

<sup>51</sup> [http://www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/noticias/1\\_semestre\\_2007/janeiro/un0109\\_001.htm](http://www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/noticias/1_semestre_2007/janeiro/un0109_001.htm).

<sup>52</sup> See Illustration 1, page 35 and Illustration 2, page 47.

economy. Phase four is the phase of economic consolidation, which has been ongoing since 1974 (Varjão 1985).

By the late 1970's, more than 135 000 people lived in the county of Barra do Garças, most of whom were subsistence farmers and agricultural workers (Garfield 2001: 163). By 1970, this area had become one of the main cattle-raising areas of Brazil. The indigenous peoples were the ones negatively affected by this (Davis 1977: 113-114).

In the 1960's there was a comprehensive dividing and selling of land in the county of Barra do Garças, and by 1971 the county which had been the home of the Indians, squatters and gold miners decades before, had been almost totally split up and sold. Its location with greater access to interregional highways and economic markets attracted capital, and promoters highlighted the county's size and cheap pastureland. In 1972, more than 2000 properties in the county were classified latifundios, meaning huge ranches, and 60 were classified rural enterprises (Garfield 2001: 166-172).

The Xavante did not receive much support from the people of Barra do Garças. When the Xavante pushed for a new reserve in 1974, Varjão among others claimed another reserve would hinder more investment in the region. The Barra do Garças town council spread fears that the Indians would keep claiming more land "until they reached the coast". They also used the tactic of defending the rural poor, and relocated families on Xavante lands. At one time ranchers killed a Father in a mission and wounded several Indians. The killers gained a lot of support in Barra do Garças, and in court they got away with "self-defense". A FUNAI official described interethnic relations in Barra do Garças as an "intense animosity" (Garfield 2001: 166-172).

The fact that the Xavante were successful in winning most their territory back did not work in favor of their relations with the farmers, who with that lost the competition for land. Some farmers, which had actually helped neighboring Xavante communities in need, now turned to revenge with the rest. They mocked and threatened FUNAI officials in Barra do Garças, and protests against the reserves appeared in newspapers, on posters, and on the local radio. Merchants of Barra do Garças also turned against them, as they were in need of the support of landowners, and hospitals, schools, and stores classified the Xavante as vagabonds, vandals, and cattle thieves. They were practically surrounded by hostility, and could only turn to FUNAI (Garfield 2001: 183).

### **2.3.2 Current situation**

Barra do Garças is at present a commercial town and a centre for local agribusiness. It is also a junction of transportation to the cities of Goiania and Brasília for both the Xavante and the non-Indians. It has a little more than fifty thousand inhabitants, but when the surrounding area is

included it accounts for more than one hundred thousand people (*Barra do Garças*)<sup>53</sup>. It is the location of the FUNAI and FUNASA regional offices, which have jurisdiction over the São Marcos reserve. The Indian Health House is located in Aragarças, but belongs to Barra do Garças. It is under the responsibility of FUNASA, and is supposed to work as a rehabilitation centre for the Xavante. In practice, it works more like a small hospital without adequate personnel and medical equipment (Coimbra et al. 2002: 198).

The Special Indigenous Health Districts of Barra do Garças are divided into four basic health units with its own medical team in direct contact with Xavante agents in the villages. Since these are very new, and the Xavante are very fragmented, it has been difficult to get things in order (Coimbra et al. 2002: 200).

The FUNAI office receives Xavante leaders practically every day asking for some sort of assistance. If they have resources available, they pay for gasoline, truck repairs, hotel bills, bus tickets, and drivers to bring Xavante back and forth from the reserves. Coimbra et al. indicate that this is to keep in control of their movements, but that the Xavante often pay their own bus tickets to avoid it, leaving hotel bills behind for FUNAI to pick up later. In cases of lack of food, FUNAI also provide basic food baskets. They write permit slips for non-Indians before they can enter the reserves, and they have a mediating role in case of land conflicts in which the Indians turn to them for their support (2002: 199).

Although the Brazilian population in general is supposedly more interested in its Indians<sup>54</sup>, “Indian issues and information about them are almost nonexistent at the municipal level” (Coimbra et al. 2002: 198). This is also the case in Barra do Garças.

---

<sup>53</sup> [http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barra\\_do\\_Gar%C3%A7as](http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barra_do_Gar%C3%A7as)

<sup>54</sup> See section 2.1.3





**Illustration 2 (top): Overview of Barra do Garças**

**Illustration 3 (mid-left): Xavante hangout place and pickup point**

**Illustration 4 (mid-right): Xavante transport provided by FUNAI**

**Illustration 5 (bottom-left): The FUNAI office**

**Illustration 6 (bottom-right): The Indian Health House**



## 3 Results and discussion: Interethnic relations

In this chapter, I present my answers to my research questions based on what I found out in the field, and analyze and discuss my findings by drawing on the concepts and theories from section 1.3 and other researchers' empirical material.

### 3.1 The nature of presence and interaction

I have focused on interethnic interaction in Barra do Garças, but that does not mean there is no such interaction outside of town. Within Indian territory, interethnic interaction usually occurs between Xavante and FUNAI officials, missionaries, health workers, researchers, and people from non-governmental organizations. There may also be contact between Xavante and ranchers surrounding their territories, and also, non-Indians trespass from time to time to make use of the natural resources. These are arenas of interaction I have not observed. I will still discuss some of them in cases they are relevant for my analysis.

Several trucks<sup>55</sup> and buses provided by FUNAI, with a FUNAI driver, or by the missionaries, come into town every morning during the weekdays full of Xavante. Some also come in private pickups. The people that come are usually men above the age of graduation from the bachelor hut<sup>56</sup> and adult women, often with small children. Adolescents not attending school in town seem to spend most their time in their village for their adulthood training. According to the functionaries at the FUNAI office in Barra do Garças, about thirteen Xavante families live in Barra do Garças. In several cases, however, these families are not complete, and there is a tendency for men to work and live in town together with their children attending middle school or high school, while the mothers stay in the village with the younger children. In the following sections, I will further look into what brings the Xavante living in the reserves to Barra do Garças, what characterizes current interethnic interaction and relations between the Xavante and non-Indians in town, and describe the arenas in which it takes place.

---

<sup>55</sup> See Illustration 4, page 47.

<sup>56</sup> See section 2.2.2

### 3.1.1 Hang out points

Walking the streets of the city centre, I observed that it was two places in particular in which I would practically always find Xavante hanging out. Later I understood that these are the main pick up places in town for the Xavante spending a day in town. One of these places is by a square in the upper part of the town centre<sup>57</sup>. During the day one will always come across some Xavante in the square on a bench, growing in number as the time for pick-up and return to the village approaches. Very few non-Indians use the square. There is a taxi rank for moped taxi drivers, but they keep to their own bench in the square's outskirts behind a small kiosk. The upper and middle class are not represented among the few non-Indian men that tend to eat and shop in the places surrounding the square, and those who use it are often poor, alcoholics, or odd characters having a rest at one of the benches. It is tempting to describe them as part of the society's "outcast", but this goes beyond my research. They may sleep or sit on a bench under the same tree as Xavante wait beneath, but I never observed any form for communication between them during the two months I passed the square several times on a daily basis.

The other Xavante pick up place is outside a hostel close to an old bus station in the lower part of the town centre. This is a part of town that has been practically abandoned since the bus station moved a few years ago. The hostel is crowded, and by Xavante only. They use it as a waiting spot, but also sleep there if they need to spend more than one day in town.

The Xavante may wait for hours in these places without doing much. They are not disturbed there by non-Indians, and it seems they are more at ease and relaxed there than in other settings in town where there are more non-Indians present and where they are few in number. They usually sit with their family and give the children a lot of attention. The adults do not talk much with each other, but rather play and laugh with the children. Most of the time they seem to be in a good mood.

There is also a hostel connected to the first pick up place. When Xavante have finished their purpose in town, many of them go there to watch television before they are picked up, especially the younger Xavante who speak Portuguese. The Xavante also sleep there if in need of a place to stay overnight. This is also a place almost exclusively used by Xavante. The Xavante that study in town, go to these places when they are out of school to see their family and hang out with them, or just to watch television. At first, I thought the hostels were just waiting rooms provided to the Xavante visiting town by FUNAI<sup>58</sup>. When I asked my non-Indian friends, it did not become much clearer, as they did

---

<sup>57</sup> See Illustration 3, page 47

<sup>58</sup> This was actually the same assumption a non-Indian believed to be fact, which I will get back to in section 3.5

not really know or care. To them it was just a place where Indians stay, and that was all they needed to know. A nurse at the Indian Health House clarified to me that the hostels function just like other hostels, and that the Xavante pay for their stays there themselves unless it has something to do with FUNAI. In that case, FUNAI pays the bill.

Walking the streets, I noticed the Xavante tend to walk fast and goal-oriented, as if they are heading some place in particular and are running late. I never saw them strolling down the streets doing window-shopping, for instance, as many non-Indians do. This was also a tendency observed by Barroe among Canadian Indians in town. He has claimed:

Their problem is to appear to have some purpose, and they try to do this in a number of ways. Indians tend to avoid places where their presence has no apparent purpose, banks, the more expensive shops, the power company and so on. Instead, they frequent the lobby of the post office, several filling stations, and a small secluded park at the edge of the business district (1975: 103-104).

Barroe has further claimed the Indians in town tend to “keep moving, to seem to have some business somewhere” (1975: 104). This tendency of trying to appear to have some business to attend to seems to be a way the Xavante practice what Goffman (1959) has called impression management<sup>59</sup> when walking the streets of Barra do Garças. They also seem to withdraw themselves from places where their presence is questionable to non-Indians to places in which they are left undisturbed, as they spend most of their time in town at the already mentioned typical hangout points when not doing errands or working. It seems the Xavante try to stay as unnoticed as they can and minimize non-Indian prejudice attitudes by blending in or keeping to themselves. It is as if they consciously distance themselves from the non-Indians, which Murphy (1964) claims are done in such cases to avoid threatening interaction<sup>60</sup>.

### 3.1.2 At FUNAI

The FUNAI office is a rather unwelcoming building with windows covered by old newspapers and a stale sign that spells FUNAI behind some branches of a tree<sup>61</sup>. It did not look like it was operating to me, so I asked a Xavante sitting on the sidewalk on the other side of the road (I later learned that his name was Lucas). He confirmed that it was in fact the right place, and that I could just ask for a Xavante named Alessandro, as he was his friend. Lucas comes to town once a week to see Alessandro for help, he told me, and he is supposedly a good guy. I went up the stairs to the second floor and

---

<sup>59</sup> See section 1.3.3

<sup>60</sup> See section 1.3.3

<sup>61</sup> See Illustration 5, page 47.

found a long corridor of offices and quite a few people. FUNAI in Barra do Garças turned out to have many functionaries, about just as many Xavante as non-Indians, it seemed. Although many of the Xavante hold the lower positions, I was surprised to learn that the administrator is a Xavante. Several Xavante usually hang out in the hallways, and some hang out in the offices. I noticed that the non-Indians tend to share offices, and so do the Xavante. The Xavante hanging out in the offices are mostly Xavante living in town doing small jobs for FUNAI, or friends of Xavante employees. According to one of the functionaries, the ones coming in to ask for help of some kind on behalf of the village are usually the village chiefs.

### *3.1.2.1 A village chief*

One day I entered one of the offices at FUNAI shared by three non-Indians, a village chief was present. He was in his thirties, wore a bright orange short-sleeved shirt, new jeans, and sneakers, and he was playing with his tiny Samsung cell phone. He combined this look with a typical Xavante hairdo and traditional wooden sticks in his pierced earlobes. He was not at all how I would have pictured a village chief to look like. It also hit me how groomed he looked. He was very present in the room, had an upright posture, and appeared very self-confident. When he spoke, he stood up and walked the room as he was giving a speech. One of the speeches was given to me, telling me he was very grateful that I and other foreigners care and worry about the Xavante's existence and situation. "The people here do not care at all", he said without minding the FUNAI functionaries' presence. He also made sure to get his view on anthropologists across, complaining that they do not provide anything in return to the communities. He wanted me to know that anthropologists believe they understand other cultures, but that they really cannot. "They do not have the culture in the blood", he said. When he finished, he sat down. When I asked him a question, he got up again to give another speech, this time complaining about their deprivation of freedom.

We do not have freedom anymore. We are so limited. Wherever we go outside the reserve, we bump into someone or someone's property. We are also suffocated by new technology. There is much less animals now, and the soil is degraded, but we have nowhere to go. We cannot do anything about it.

When giving these speeches, he automatically got everyone's attention, and I interpret that it was his way of dominating the communication and interaction. He was on his feet while the rest was sitting, performing the 'internalized' role as a chief worthy of respect, and communicating his knowledge and authority as a leader.

### *3.1.2.2 Friendly mistrust*

There was a friendly atmosphere in the offices, and Xavante and non-Indians interacted as friends, or at least as well acquainted. Still, it was as if some of the non-Indian functionaries were somewhat

bossy in their interaction with Xavante whom they felt secure, and as if they were on their toes with the Xavante they felt more insecure of. The Xavante they felt secure of were those that looked assimilated, while those they seemed to be more insecure of were Xavante who upheld the Xavante behavior and wore the Xavante public symbols<sup>62</sup>, like the village chief presented above. It was as if they were a bit intimidated by the latter category and as if they could not know for sure how these Xavante would react to their approaches.

Some seemingly assimilated Xavante were told to give up their seat for me, or attend to me even though they were in the middle of doing something. They would do so right away. A Xavante from the other category was asked much more politely to help me, and he demonstrated that he would help me only when he had finished his work, as he answered evasively and continued what he was doing, ignoring my presence. It was not until a couple of days later that he came to me with some literature I had wanted. I appreciated him putting his job before me and not just dropping everything else because of me, as often happened with others. He seemed to appreciate the respect I had given his work by waiting patiently, and he was very helpful when he decided that I deserved his attention. Another thing that got my attention was that non-Indians would not leave the office even for a minute without locking up their valuables. Although interethnic relations were friendly, Xavante were not trustworthy, at least in the eyes of the non-Indians. Pedro, one of the non-Indian FUNAI officials, explained this trust problem with the Xavante's tradition of sharing, which results in Xavante taking things also from non-Indians because of their understanding that resources should be shared. This problem will be further discussed in section 3.2.4.

When I talked to some of the functionaries in private, they did not hesitate to provide me with a more shaded impression of their relations to the Xavante. Sandra, a FUNAI functionary, said that although living independently in town, the Indians will always be considered "below" the white, that is, in a class hierarchy. Iris M. Young claims: "The symbolic meanings that people attach to other kinds of people and to actions, gestures, or institutions often significantly affect the social standing of persons and their opportunities" (1990: 23). In Barra do Garças this social inequality seems especially manifested in discrimination in the labor market, which I will get back to in section 3.6.1 and 3.6.3.

One of the non-Indian FUNAI drivers I met in the corridor was very eager to talk to me, and told me he finds it difficult to interact with Xavante. "It is hard to understand their culture", he said, explaining he always has to feel out what to do. He thinks it is hard to know what they want and how they want things done. He also said whispering that they are very intelligent and tough, and that

---

<sup>62</sup> These are in particular wooden ear sticks and Xavante hairdos, see section 3.1.8

they want things in their own way. “The chiefs must be treated like gold”, he said with a smile. But, he also described them as a calm people, and contrary to the common non-Indian understanding they are not aggressive, he assured me.

After one of the interviews I had with a Xavante at FUNAI, the non-Indian FUNAI officials started questioning his behavior as soon as he had left the room. They were sure he had been drunk because of the way he had behaved and because of the things he had said. I had not noticed anything like that at all. It was rather as if they wanted me to disregard what he had said because he had made some strong statements. He said he does not have any friends, not white or Xavante, and claimed the only people he trusts is his own mother and father. This, of course, put them as FUNAI officials employed to assist and protect the Xavante in a bad light.

Nagata, who has done research on American Indians in urban settings, has claimed that social relationships between Indians and non-Indians are usually shallow. “Contexts of interaction, rather than subjects, determine the quality of relationship, which is generally superficial” (1971: 126). This is also my impression of the seemingly friendly relations between Xavante and non-Indians at FUNAI. Although they claim to be both friends and co-workers, or both clients and FUNAI functionaries and friends, their relations are really uniplex<sup>63</sup>, as their friendship is only practiced at the FUNAI office in a work related setting. Interethnic friendships between Xavante and non-Indians will be further described in the following sections.

### 3.1.3 Students

Xavante studying in town usually get to know their non-Indian classmates, and some participate in out of school activities, like sports, with them. It is not common however, that Xavante and non-Indians hang out together in the same way as non-Indians do with other non-Indians. Their relations can also be described as superficial. Xavante students rather tend to hook up with other Xavante living in town, or coming into town from the reserves. During weekends, they usually always go back to the reserves, and are not there to participate in weekend festivities with non-Indians. This way social distance even between Xavante students in town and non-Indians are upheld, and Xavante students are not completely socially integrated with them.

My impression is that Xavante studying in town miss village life and do not want to miss out on the weekends with their families. One of the students I talked with said he loved village life, especially the parties, and that he goes back whenever he is able to. Leonardo, a non-Indian FUNAI official in

---

<sup>63</sup> A uniplex relation is defined by Eriksen (1998: 58) as a relationship in which actors have only one relation to each other.

Barra do Garças, claimed the Xavante students feel lonely and somewhat lost in town. Most reserves have primary schools, and some have middle schools. To continue studying in middle school, the Xavante usually have to move to town, at least if they wish to attend high school. “When you take a young teenager who only knows the Xavante way of living, and place him by himself in town, he will not know what to do”, Leonardo said. He further claimed they often end up doing the wrong things, as being alone with nothing to do might easily trigger unfavorable behavior like drinking.

Sandra, also from FUNAI, said there is a difference between those Indian children that attend elementary school in town and those who come from the reserves to attend middle school or high school. She claimed it is easier to make non-Indian friends for those entering school in town at the elementary level, because they are all children then and adapt more quickly. Indians raised in town are raised with two cultures from the beginning, she explained. “They have different minds than those living in the reserves”. She believes it is much harder for Indians coming straight from the reserves. “They are looked at as different and are avoided”, she said.

Flávio, a Xavante doing some small tasks for FUNAI, told me about his experience of the Brazilian elementary school. His account made me understand that it is also about language barriers. He told me that he moved to town with his family at the age of seven and started school. For one year, he just sat in class without speaking or understanding anything, since he did not speak Portuguese. He actually kept to himself in school until the age of fifteen. Then he started opening up a bit and talking with his classmates. Still, he told me, he never made friends. “I know a lot of people, but they are not my friends”, he said. His younger brother dealt with the school situation a whole lot better as he learned Portuguese before he started, and therefore got to know non-Indian classmates right away.

Of the young non-Indians I spoke with, only my friend Fernanda had gone to school with a Xavante in class. She had never talked to him, but claimed he did have friends in class. “With him it was easier”, she said, “because he had been educated by missionaries and behaved well and respected the white. He was well adjusted and spoke Portuguese”. Her statement underlines that both behavior and language are decisive factors when trying to fit in with non-Indian classmates. They are only accepted with a minimum level of adaptation. Many Xavante students therefore use assimilation as an individual adaptive strategy. Matheus, a young Xavante student living in town, is one of those. He said: “We must change and adapt so that we can get accepted in town”. He did not find that problematic, and told me that because of this, he has not had much trouble with discrimination. Fernanda’s statement also indicates that the white are raised with the idea that Indians ought to respect the white.

### 3.1.4 Shopping

Market transactions are constructed in a way that does not create personal relations between seller and buyer, and Casagrande has called it the “impersonal force of the market” (1988: 97). The seller is usually just there to sell and not the owner of the products. It therefore does not matter to whom they sell, as what they get in return is always money, and not selected goods as in barter. The buyer can also go to another person selling the same things, so he or she is not dependent on the relations to the seller. This way, market transactions are not dependent on Xavante and non-Indians creating personal relations to one another.

The relations between Xavante and non-Indians during market transactions are still different from relations between non-Indians. Brazilian non-Indians enjoy a chat with people they do not know. They tend to get into dialogue with sellers or other shoppers on some trivial issue, making comments on for instance the store products or someone’s baby. With the Xavante, communication is kept to a minimum level, and neither of the two will try to make a conversation. Usually the Xavante just find what they want and pay for it. The cashier will inform him or her of the price, and they will pay and leave. If they need something from behind a counter they will ask for it, and the cashier will silently, or with few words go get it. This non-Indian behavior reflects tolerance in the understanding of putting up with others despite prejudice<sup>64</sup>, which is the way most non-Indians seem to deal with the Xavante in town. The indigenous peoples’ rights prevent them from discrimination in the form of prohibiting their entrance, hence they have to tolerate their presence. They cannot however be forced to accept and respect their differences. Flowers (in Coimbra et al. 2002) has described interaction between Xavante leaders and landowners as a surface tolerance with underlying suspicion and resentment<sup>65</sup>. This description also fits as regards interaction between Xavante and non-Indians in general in town.

The Xavante do not have access to much money, as their main income is pensions the retired population get and share with their families. Therefore, if they shop for clothes or shoes, it is in the cheapest places in town. Sometimes the young go to record stores to listen to music or buy some records. Those who live in town and work have more money, and might be found in stores in which Xavante from the reserves do not go, as for instance furniture stores. Because of the Xavante’s financial shortages, it is still very seldom that the middle and upper class interact with Xavante when shopping, as they go to the more expensive stores.

---

<sup>64</sup> See section 1.3.1.3

<sup>65</sup> See Coimbra et al. (2002) in section 2.2.1.1

I visited a non-Indian photographer in his store and asked about his relations to the Xavante and whether he had anything to do with them. His answer was no. We talked some more and he elaborated on his view of them. Then all of a sudden, while making a face, he said: "I had a whole bunch of them in here yesterday". It turned out they had entered his store to have some pictures taken for identification papers. I asked whether this happened a lot, something he confirmed. I wondered how he could deny just minutes before that he had anything to do with Xavante, when he admits just minutes later that he deals with them on a regular basis. On the other hand, to him it is only about business and apparently not something he would characterize interaction. He does not want to have anything to do with Xavante, but then it is part of his job. He therefore creates a distance to the interaction they have by seeing it as a matter of impersonal business only. The Xavante on their side just want what they come for, and do not show any interest in social interaction beyond that. The Xavante and the non-Indians in Barra do Garças are similar to Casagrande's earlier description of the Salasaca from Ecuador and the non-Indians there (1988: 99). There is "a rule of social distance between the two groups that still obtains" (1988: 99), affecting the nature of interethnic interaction.

### **3.1.5 Restaurant and bars**

The Xavante coming into town from the reserves tend to eat at old, unpopular, and cheap restaurants and luncheonettes nearby the pickup places. Xavante living in town seem to prefer nicer places, although they also keep from going to the newest, most popular places. This is a tendency also earlier observed by Nagata (1971: 135) among Indians in the United States. "Indians seem to shy away from the numerous fancy hotel or motel restaurants in Flagstaff", he describes, illustrating it with a story of one time he had invited an Indian to such a restaurant. While eating, a relative of the Indian had come by and told them she had been wondering whether that restaurant could be a place Indians could go in. It is as if there are unwritten boundaries defined by non-Indians through their behavior as to where Indians are accepted and not.

This is also the case when the Xavante go out at night. I went out one weeknight with my non-Indian friends. The place to go is to a street down by the river, where a lot of bars and restaurants are gathered. This is where most non-Indians go when they want to go out at night in the city centre, so that is where we went. Going there, we passed another street with bars on a row, only a block further up town from the other street. These bars were much less fancy and most had pool tables. What caught my attention was that they were crowded by Xavante. Only a couple of non-Indians were there, sitting alone having beer. The Xavante were all male, and they were actively shooting pool or watching television. When we got to the "in" street for non-Indians, there were no Indians in

sight. This is also recognized by Nagata, who has claimed ethnic segregation was noticeable also in some of the bars in Flagstaff, Arizona (1971: 135).

Braroe (1975: 104-105) has also recognized the popularity of pubs with pool halls among Indians, and believes that because the lights are so dimmed in such places, it is difficult for people passing by to see into the pubs. They can therefore spend hours not doing much without openly displaying it in public. This also seems to be the case in Barra do Garças, because I later found that this is an activity they enjoy all days from after lunch hours. When the men have finished their business in town, they do not have anything to do during the many hours they have to wait for the trucks to pick them up. In the pool halls, they are undisturbed and may hang around as they please without being observed. Therefore, the reason why they tend to go to these places may both be that there are unwritten boundaries as to where the Xavante are accepted and because they seek places where they can uphold a distance to non-Indians as suggested by Murphy<sup>66</sup> (1964) as a tool to steer clear of interaction.

A lunch bar, which is not new and fancy, but still frequently used by non-Indians, is used more and more by Xavante living in town. In a short time, I observed seven Xavante in total eating there. I also observed that their personnel are helpful and provide good service to them. This was in contrast to other places where it was obvious that they were not wanted, and in which the personnel never made eye contact with them or spoke if not necessary. They seem to end up going the most to places where they are treated the best and feel most comfortable, and that seem to be places in need of costumers like the older, unpopular places, and those places no longer attracting as much people as they used to.

### **3.1.6 The Indian Health House**

The Indian Health House<sup>67</sup> is located far away from the city centre, and when staying there Xavante are mostly attended to by non-Indian employees. At the Indian Health House I met Armando, a middle-aged Xavante working in town for FUNASA. He complained that the employees there always attend to white people first, and set them in contrast to the functionaries at FUNAI. It was interesting then, that when I asked around for people to talk to, I was introduced to the nurse on duty in the clinic and attended to at once. A Xavante mother and child that were in the office left as I was asked to sit down. I do not know whether they had finished their consultation, but it made me uncomfortable that they did not ask me to wait outside until they had left the room. Later, when I sat

---

<sup>66</sup> See section 1.3.3

<sup>67</sup> See Illustration 6, page 47.

down with patients and chaperons and asked them about their treatment at the Indian Health House, I received no verbal answers. Their body language and facial expressions, however, revealed that they were not pleased with the care they were given. After doing interviews with the nurse, Armando, and Sandra from FUNAI, I understood that their discontent lay mostly in the fact that resources were lacking. The nurses lack necessary medication, the food often consists of just rice and beans, and it is so crowded that many have to sleep on the floor. They feel the National Health Foundation (FUNASA) is not doing their job in attending to their health care, and they blame the FUNASA administration for corruption.

The nurse I talked to claimed she has many Xavante friends, but explained it to be different friendships than the ones she has with Brazilians. Distinguishing work from leisure, she found it natural that a relationship between a Xavante client and a non-Indian professional is friendly but impersonal. As with the FUNAI functionaries<sup>68</sup>, her relations to the Xavante was superficial and uniplex, but at the same time she was definitely dedicated to her work for the Xavante. She had spent several years working as a nurse in Xavante villages, and spoke passionately about their situation.

While I was at the Indian Health House, the nurse arranged an interview for me with an elderly Xavante woman. Although she was informed of my research and had agreed to the interview, she got up and left as I sat down next to her. Later, when talking with another Xavante in his thirties, she interrupted our conversation and started asking him questions in Xavante, looking at me with suspicion. When she left, he told me she had asked questions about my intentions and wanted to discuss whether they should be talking to me or not. I interpret it as a discussion about which behavioral strategy<sup>69</sup> to apply towards me, a question of whether to withdraw themselves and avoid me, or stay and help me. They did not seem to come to an agreement, as she left while he stayed to exchange names and addresses with me.

### **3.1.7 Other arenas of interaction**

There are also other arenas of interethnic interaction in town. There is the bank, where they cash their pension payments, the federal police, which deal with all police issues concerning Indians, including identification papers for travelling, and the bus station, where they wait for the bus to go to other cities. In all these places, interaction is similar to the ones described above. When they can,

---

<sup>68</sup> See section 3.1.2.2

<sup>69</sup> See Casagrande (1988) in section 1.3.3.1

non-Indians ignore the Xavante. When they have to deal with them, they do it as fast and non-verbal as possible.

There are several artisan shops in town selling artisan products from all over Brazil. The Xavante make baskets of straw, collars, and earrings they sell to the store managers. So every now and then, Xavante drop by when they are in town to ask if they need some more products. So do the few Xavante women living in town who also make artisan products for sale. I talked to a non-Indian woman working in one of the stores. She only had positive things to say about the Xavante, but also has a uniplex relationship to them, only maintained through business. Her relation to the Xavante coming into her store is therefore friendly, but limited to a producer and dealer relation.

Another reason for coming to town is when Xavante have produced more food, usually rice, than they can eat, and want to sell it in town to get other supplies. This is something I have not witnessed, but just been told by several of my informants that happens. This is a complicated form of interaction, as it is prohibited in the Indian Statute for Indians to be dealing with such things without FUNAI assistance<sup>70</sup>. Agreeing with Giaccaria's (2000) statement in section 2.2.2.2, Father Raphael, a Salesian missionary who has worked with Xavante for many years, and several of my non-Indian informants from FUNAI, confirmed that the Xavante normally do not get good prices on these products, reinforcing the mistrust and suspicion they already have of non-Indians.

Some of my non-Indian informants living in other parts of town than the centre told me that when the Xavante come into town in the morning, they often drop off the women and children in their neighborhood to beg. The children beg for toys, and the women beg for soap and clothes. Fernanda's mother told me that once she had given some clothes to an elderly Xavante woman. When a younger Xavante woman had come by a bit later, she had given her some clothes as well. Then, she continued, the elderly Xavante woman had returned to her house reprimanding her for not giving her everything in the first place. After the reprimand, she had left and taken the bag away from the younger woman. "That is how they are", she said shaking her head, turning a onetime incident into cultural behavior. Because of that episode she has decided not to give them anything again when they come begging.

### **3.1.8 Attitudes and appearances**

Pedro, a non-Indian FUNAI official who has worked with Xavante for many years both within and outside the reserves, claimed: "Brazilians' reaction to the Indians is usually to ignore them". This statement fits in with my observations. When passing Xavante on the street, non-Indians ignore

---

<sup>70</sup> See section 1.3.2.1

them and avoid them, treating them like air despite their highly visible appearances. This may be seen as symbolic acts to show that they are not interested in any form of contact<sup>71</sup>. Similarly, Barroe's observations in Canada were that non-Indians retreated in the presence of Indians and "extended the Indians 'nonperson' status" (1975: 115). He has further claimed avoidance is the most common way white people deal with Indians, and that they do not go to places they know Indians tend to hang out. They also avoid making eye contact, and sometimes they cross the street to avoid passing an Indian on the sidewalk (1975: 116-117). Although I did not observe non-Indians crossing the street so they would not have to pass a Xavante, I noticed that they would make sure there was plenty of space between them when passing. They also never made eye contact, but looked away or to the ground while the Xavante continued facing forward. Again, as Murphy has claimed<sup>72</sup>, creating a distance this way is used to protect oneself from interaction, which he has also argued is threatening in itself as it is defined as taking others into account.

The Xavante women wear big t-shirts and knee-length skirts, in contrast to the fashion minded feminine Brazilians, and often carry a large basket made of palm leaves on their heads instead of carrying handbags. Both men and women traditionally wear their hair cut straight off with wide fringes, and their facial features are characteristic and considered 'masculine' by non-Indians. Xavante living in the reserves wear wooden sticks in their ear lobes<sup>73</sup>, increasing in size with their age. Their hairdos and wooden sticks are their main public symbols of Indian identity. Most Xavante living in town, especially the young, try to hide these symbols by taking out the sticks while in town<sup>74</sup>. Some also wear their hair according to Brazilian fashion. This way they do not stand out as easy in a crowd, but the pierced earlobes are easily noticeable even without the sticks, as the whole they leave is quite large. Edward Bruner has done fieldwork in Indonesia among the indigenous people Batak, where he has also recognized this tendency of adjusting in town even though they are in principle a proud people. "Despite this ethnic pride in kasar features the Batak do change their behavior in the city and in other modern contexts in the halus direction" (Bruner 1973: 229), meaning that although Batak take pride in their crudeness, they act more refined in situations that involve non-Bataks.

---

<sup>71</sup> See section 1.3.3

<sup>72</sup> See section 1.3.3

<sup>73</sup> See section 2.2.2.1

<sup>74</sup> I will get back to this phenomenon in section 3.2.1

The difference between Xavante living in a reserve and most of those living in town can be analysed in terms of collective and individual adaptive strategies. Collectively they are culturally self-aware and consciously use traditional appearance as a means of resistance, as explained by Turner (1991) in section 1.3.1.1. Individually it would seem it is easier and more comfortable to adapt to the non-Indian population and move towards assimilation by blending in as best they can with them. It seems the Xavante are more engaged in ethnic boundary making as a group than on an individual basis, especially when it comes to Xavante living in town.

Casagrande claimed the non-Indians of Ecuador expect the Peguche Indians to be polite, but not servile, as other Indians groups more dependent on non-Indians tend to be. Although they might not have general acceptance by non-Indians, they have respect (1988: 97). This also seems the case with the Xavante in their relations with non-Indians in Barra do Garças. I will argue that the respect has emerged from fear rather than admiration. As Casagrande explained in the case of the Indians living in the ethnically mixed agriculture community Atahualpa in canton Cayambe of Ecuador: "Always lurking in the background is the threat of the brutal force Indians can apply" (1988: 99). My friend Fernanda admitted to this. She said she would never have the courage to approach Indians on the streets as I did.

The Xavante are well aware of this, and seem to use it as part of their impression management<sup>75</sup> in interethnic interaction. Using symbols to create non-Indian fear of them it seems the Xavante try to rise above them and compensate for their inferiority in the eyes of the non-Indians. They however also seem to use this as an adaptive strategy to keep the non-Indians away from them. During my interview with Flávio, he asked me whether I was afraid of the Xavante. To me, the way he said it, and his facial expression while asking, indicated that he would like it if I confirmed it.

The Xavante walk like Casagrande (1988) would describe "proudly erect", with lifted heads and with a self-confident expression. A Bororo Indian has said the following about Xavante: "Xavante doesn't lower his head, no. When they want they are really tough" (Novaes 1997: 48). They are like the Salasaca Indians whose basic attitude against outsiders has been described as "aggressively defensive" by Casagrande (1988: 99). According to his studies, they further show little deference to non-Indians, and signal it by "posture, gesture, and forms of address" (Casagrande 1988: 99). One of the FUNAI drivers claimed, as mentioned in section 3.1.2.2, that the Xavante are not as aggressive as rumors has it, and that they are rather a calm people. To me it seems that the aggressive act is something they do to scare non-Indians and gain respect, and that with people they know well and

---

<sup>75</sup> See section 1.3.3

who respect them, like the FUNAI driver, they feel comfortable with showing a different side of themselves.

The signals (posture, gesture, and forms of address) can also be seen as symbols<sup>76</sup>, and out of the symbols used by Xavante in the presence of non-Indians, an interpretation of the situation emerges on the part of the non-Indians. Such interpretation results in action, as argued by Charon (1989) in section 1.3.3. The Xavante posture is, as mentioned, tough and confident. As discussed in section 3.1.7, their form of address is direct. Armando said: "They (non-Indians) are afraid of us because we tell them straight to their faces if there's something we don't like or if they do something bad to us". Because of these symbols, non-Indians often interpret the Xavante as unapproachable and unpredictable. João once said: "There are Indians of every kind, and some are unpredictable and dangerous. That's why I do not trust them". The nurse at the Indian Health House claimed: "They (non-Indians) are afraid of their reactions". The subsequent action of this fear seems to be avoidance.

### 3.1.9 Interethnic marriages

Although interethnic marriages between Indians and whites in Brazil have occurred since mid 1700's<sup>77</sup>, Leonardo from the FUNAI office told me that in the beginning of his career, interethnic marriages between Xavante and whites hardly occurred. It is still not common, but it happens more than it used to. Leonardo sees this as a bad thing for the Xavante culture and social organization. He explained the way it traditionally works, and still does: The Xavante are engaged already from birth. There are two main Xavante clans, and marriage can only occur between these two clans. When a child is born, the parents arrange an engagement with parents from the other clan. That is why the clans stay in peace although they have been enemies as long as they can remember. Since most of them have relatives in the other clan, they are reluctant to attack each other. When a Xavante marries a white however, it is problematic. The relations between the parents are affected by this because they had an agreement that can no longer be kept. That is why Xavante in the reserve do not like interethnic marriages. They also do not want mixed grandchildren and according to Leonardo, they are not wanted in the reserve.

During my stay, I only observed one such couple. They were out shopping together in a supermarket, and I could not tell if they were married or not, but they were definitely a couple. I never heard of or saw any other such couples, but it happened twice that Xavante men asked me whether I would be

---

<sup>76</sup> See section 1.3.3

<sup>77</sup> See section 2.1

interested in marriage. One of them was living in town and the other one was from the São Marcos reserve. Tomás, a Xavante working in town with wife and children in a village, said: “There are Xavante married to white, but they live in town. It is better to marry Xavante”.

### 3.1.10 Concluding remarks

The Xavante do not necessarily come into town because they want to, but because they have to. Most Xavante I talked to claimed they do not like it in town, and that they only come to do necessary errands. They prefer the village and claim life there is very good. Most men I talked to highlighted the village festivities at night for men. The young students from the reserves living in town want to go back to the village when they finish their studies and get jobs they can do from there. Armando said he only stays in town because of his work for FUNASA. “My work is to help my people. That is why I live in town”, he explained. “Whenever we can, we are out of here”, he continued, referring to all Xavante living in town. Tomás said he only lives in town for the money and that he goes home every weekend. He is a driver for FUNASA. Even Matheus, who was brought up in town, claimed he feels more at home in the village. “It is calmer and less stressful”, he said.

Leonardo told me the Xavante are always very eager to go somewhere. It does not matter where, if someone is going somewhere they want to come along. He has lived and worked for FUNAI in a Xavante reserve, and when he turned his truck engine on, Xavante of all ages would come running wanting to come along even though they did not know where he was going. He claimed the majority of the Xavante coming into town do not have anything in particular to attend to, but just come along. This information is a bit contradictory to what the Xavante I have spoken to say. However, there is a difference between Xavante visiting town and living in town. Only two of my Xavante informants said they did not even like to visit town at all. I must also underline that it is not the same people coming into town every day.

The Xavante that want to study beyond the educational level provided in the reserves must come to town. Some Xavante also work at FUNAI, for FUNASA, and at the Indian Health House, and therefore live in town. Most of them are men who leave their families behind in the village and go back during weekends. Many think it is too expensive to live in town, when they can live in the village practically for free. Therefore, few Xavante families live in Barra do Garças.

Most of my non-Indian informants wish the Xavante would just stay away from town. When I asked Father Raphael whether it is better for the Xavante to stay in the reserves or to go live in town, he answered my question with a question. “Why should the Indians go to the city? No one would offer them jobs here. They would become beggars. They are much better off in the reserves”. The

discrimination of other Indians integrated into the national society who ended up as the poorest ethnic class<sup>78</sup>, may explain his position.

When I asked a Bororo living in town about this statement, she had problems with answering it. It was as if she felt ashamed to admit she prefers town. After discussing the difference between the costs of living in town contra the village, she said:

Living in the village you do not move forward. You can stay there, but you can only do planting and that sort of things, and you have to come to town and beg FUNAI for help. That is bad. It is much better to be independent. We will however always be looked down upon by the white (Interview).

It seems the Xavante living in town complain at lot less than the Xavante living in the reserves. The latter face problems every day that the former do not. For those in the reserves things are not as easy, as they do not have fixed incomes besides the retired people's pensions. They also see what the government is doing and not doing for them. They are furthermore the ones most uncomfortable in town, and have not adapted in the ways as the ones living and working in Barra do Garças. Bert F. Hoselitz has suggested that the state of being economically less advanced appears to be "the result of partial unawareness of the close interconnectedness of economic advancement and cultural change" (1995: 18). He has further argued that changes in people's social organization and culture, as well as social mobility, may be a precondition for economic development. In the case of Xavante, then, cultural barriers to modernization must be removed before they can become more economically independent. One of these barriers is their sharing principle<sup>79</sup> standing in the way of individual resource accumulation as the incentives to work hard seem to be lacking, as they have to share the outcome with people that perhaps do not work as hard.

My observations discussed in the sections above lead to the conclusion that Xavante and non-Indians in Barra do Garças barely interact in public unless it is part of some sort of business, referred to by Casagrande (1988: 97) as "impersonal interaction". He has further described contact between Salasaca Indians and non-Indians: "Contacts between the two groups are shallow and occur primarily in the economic sphere" (Casagrande 1988: 99). This description is also transferable to interethnic relations between Xavante and non-Indians in Barra do Garças. Their relations are what Eriksen (1998: 58) calls uniplex. Between Xavante and non-Indians in town there is the customer and salesperson relation, the student and teacher relation, the boss and worker relation, the professional and professional relation, and the client and professional relation. These are uniplex relations

---

<sup>78</sup> See section 2.1.2

<sup>79</sup> See section 2.2.2.2

because the people involved are not related in other ways but the impersonal one. One exception here is the student-to-student relationship, as mentioned in the example with students practicing sports with classmates outside of school.

The uniplex relations, as they mostly occur as client-professional relations, are also often asymmetrical, as pointed out by Saugestad (1998) in section 1.1. In the Xavante's relations to people at FUNAI and other institutions and organizations in which they are to benefit from, the Xavante depend on what they can give them and must present themselves as deserving. Therefore, the power and control of these relations is in the hands of the professionals who remain somewhat above the Xavante for that reason.

However, the way the Xavante present themselves as deserving is not in a submitting manner. As Casagrande have described the Saraguro people from Ecuador, the Xavante are also "open and proud, and confront their compatriots without humility and fear" (1988: 103). This combination seems difficult to accept for the non-Indians, who think the Xavante are not humble enough. However, it did appear to me that the Xavante from the missions showed more deference to non-Indians than others, as they were more reluctant to confront them. The Xavante present themselves as poor by words and by going from house to house in the suburbs begging. No non-Indian I spoke to questioned their poverty, but when commanding for help the non-Indians find them ungrateful. One of my non-Indian friends declared that the help they receive is undeserved because: "The Indians receive everything from the state and still complain about life". Why should they have it all when the rest of the population must work so hard to get what they want, she wondered.

It is as if the Indians and non-Indians are living in two different worlds. There is coexistence, but limited social interaction. They do not mix, you have the Indians and you have the non-Indians. You never see an Indian at a snack bar or café together with a non-Indian. Discrimination is usually not expressed verbally and directly between Xavante and non-Indians. It is rather expressed amongst the non-Indians. When walking around in the city centre with non-Indian friends, they would tolerate the presence of Xavante and go on as if they were not there. Nevertheless, when I spoke with them in private, all the stereotypes and prejudiced stories would surface. The non-Indian Brazilians seem to live their lives as if the Indians do not exist and try to ignore and avoid them if they can. I interpret this indirect discrimination as partly an outcome of fear, because they do not seem to dare express their attitudes more explicitly as they find the Xavante to be unpredictable.

It is also not the Xavante way of life to socially interact like non-Indians do. Leonardo told me:

The Xavante are very formal, they do not visit each other like we do. They are socially different. The Xavante do not like visitors, nor to visit others. They only go to visit if they for some reason are asked to

come, if not it must be because they have something important to tell the other. If not they stay within their family (Interview).

This was confirmed by the Xavante Tomás who said: “The Xavante do not mix much among themselves. That is to prevent fights. We have conversations, but we usually stick to our own family and to our own village”. Braroe has also observed this in the case of Canadian Indians: “it is true that Indians do not ordinarily converse freely with Whites; they will not exchange small talk, or even respond readily to direct questions” (1975: 93). This is something I also observed and experienced. The Xavante do not hang around just to make conversation. When they have got the information they wanted, or in my case, when I signaled that I had no further questions during interviews, they were very quick to get up and leave, and without any farewell greetings. They keep to themselves and where there are other Xavante. As non-Indians, they also seem to use distance to protect them from ‘threatening’ interaction<sup>80</sup>. Once I was standing outside one of the hostels, an elderly Xavante arrived and hesitated to enter. He saw me, and asked me whether there were any Xavante in there. I confirmed, and he entered. It was as if he was somewhat scared to enter the dark corridor if only non-Indians were present inside.

Although both Casagrande (1988) and Nagata (1971: 126)<sup>81</sup> have done observations similar to mine concerning the nature of interaction between Indians and non-Indians, others have come to a different conclusion. Peter Z. Snyder, who has studied social interaction patterns between Navajo Indians and non-Indians in Denver, has claimed: “Navajos tend to have just as high a percentage of private interaction encounters with non-Indians as with other Navajos” (1971: 222). Therefore, one cannot just look at one case and assume that it is representative for all similar cases of interethnic interaction. One has to consider the contextual situation for the case and the characteristics of the peoples in question. In addition, the Indians of the United States have interacted with non-Indians for a much longer time than the Xavante who have only officially engaged in peaceful interaction with the white for sixty-one years. The contextual situation for the Xavante interaction with non-Indians will be further addressed in the rest of this chapter.

### **3.2 Acculturation**

In the following sections, I discuss the Xavante’s degree of integration into the Brazilian national community, and look into the ways they have adapted to life in town. I will further depict what the

---

<sup>80</sup> See Murphy (1964) in section 1.3.3

<sup>81</sup> See section 3.1.2.2

Xavante feel about acculturation and integration, followed by non-Indians viewpoints on the matter. I will also look into some elements that in particular make integration difficult.

### 3.2.1 The state of Xavante integration

Today, the Xavante as a people are 'on their way to integration', using the definition in the Indian Statute. According to the same definition, they are not completely integrated because they are not incorporated into all sectors of the national community<sup>82</sup>. They have their own schools within the reserves, they have their own health directorate, special Indian rights, and most do not perform paid labor. That they are socially on their way towards integration does not necessarily mean that they are moving towards integration as a group. Even though some Indians have been interacting with non-Indians for hundreds of years they are still described as not completely acculturated. It is therefore questionable to say they are still on their way towards acculturation. As Barth has emphasized:

[C]ategorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact, and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories (1969: 10).

Therefore, the survival of the Xavante as an ethnic group is not necessarily threatened by increased interethnic interaction. There are nevertheless individual cases of assimilation. The reason why one cannot say there are cases of 'real integration' is that Indians have to officially sign away the right to the Brazilian indigenous rights to be recognized in the full exercise of civil rights, which is a criteria in the 1973 Indian Statute's definition of integration. I do not know of any such cases among the Xavante.

The cases of assimilation are Xavante grown up in town who have become almost like any other Brazilian. These cases are few, and they are not one hundred percent assimilated because of their close connection to the villages. Some have less pronounced features than others, and could visually melt right in with the rest of the population if it was not for the pierced ears. All boys are however still sent back to the village their parents come from to spend at least a few years in the bachelors hut to become men<sup>83</sup>. The pierced ears they get there will tell them off as Xavante for the rest of their lives, even though they do not wear the wooden sticks. Apart from their looks, they study and behave like non-Indians. When they reach the time to apply for work however, it will again be problematic to be treated on equal terms as non-Indians, something I will get back to in section

---

<sup>82</sup> See the Indian Statute's definition of integration in section 1.3.1.2

<sup>83</sup> See section 2.2.2.1

3.6.3. Although some might be categorized as assimilated, they are also not completely assimilated socially. As emphasized in 3.1, Xavante and non-Indians do not spend time together outside the boundaries of their acquaintance. If they know each other because they work together, or play on a soccer team together, or go to school together, they seldom interact in other arenas of interaction. This affects their degree of assimilation and integration.

Van den Bergh sees these kinds of Indians as Indians with 'bi-ethnicities' who "abruptly shift or 'commute' back and forth in cultural and social spaces" (1968: 32). He has claimed Indians in Guatemala who speak Spanish accommodates to the non-Indian world when they are in a non-Indian setting, as for instance work in town. When they go home, they put on Indian clothing and express their Indian identity. He has furthermore claimed the reason for this is that it is convenient and advantageous; it attracts less attention, and may help them stay clear of discrimination (1968: 323). Eidheim have described a similar tendency among Lapps in the presence of Norwegians. In public, the Lapps speak Norwegian. In settings that are more private, they speak Lappish as long as no Norwegians are within earshot. Eidheim claims that: "Lapp and Norwegian are not complementary statuses", therefore "Coast Lapps avoid as much as possible behavior which in the local language of symbols and signs points to their identity" (1971: 59). Interacting with non-Indians, the Xavante use their Portuguese names and refer to their ethnic group by the Portuguese name Xavante instead of using their traditional name A'uwê. As mentioned, the Xavante living in town usually remove their wooden ear sticks, which is the most visible Indian symbol together with their characteristic hairdos. The young also wear their hair according to Brazilian fashion. The Xavante I spoke with, however, claimed they put the ear sticks back in and changes their hair when going back to the villages. Few of them had answers to why they adjust when in town, but indicated that they do so because the Xavante practices are not part of non-Indians' practices. Braroe has claimed Indians in Canada have understood that non-Indians find something about them to be unacceptable and that "they attempt to play this something down, so that tension between themselves and Whites will be minimized" (1975: 122). This is just what the Xavante do when they remove their public symbols of Indian identity and pretend to be about to attend to business when walking the streets of town<sup>84</sup>.

Saugestad (1998: 50) emphasizes that, "Most encounters in public settings ... are dominated by the majority's code of conduct". The fact that the Xavante adopt non-Indian conduct in interaction with non-Indians does not necessarily mean that their Indian identity is not important to them. According to Saugestad (1998: 50) it may rather mean that "the expression of this identity publicly is associated with so many negative repercussion that it is being undercommunicated".

---

<sup>84</sup> See section 3.1.8

There is a difference between Xavante influenced by missionaries and those not influenced by them. Xavante from the missions are more used to interacting with whites on a daily basis and more or less use white social codes of interaction when they are around non-Indians. Some of the Xavante I talked to from the missions actually overcommunicated white influence, especially when it comes to religion. Matheus, who is originally from the São Marcos reserve where the missionaries are present, was waiting for me at the FUNAI office one day, wanting to talk to me. He was very Brazilian in his ways. His hair was cut like that of the western boybands, his clothes were like a skater's, and his religious reflections were catholic. He was very eager to elaborate on the latter, at the same time as he wanted to tell me all he knew about Xavante history. His sentences were filled with catholic phrasings and doctrines, and the way he spoke was as if he was memorizing lessons on religion to show me that the Xavante are not all heathens. He went on and on about the importance of social work, and emphasized that he was talking about social work for all Brazilians, because: "we are all children of God and must help each other no matter origin". I would interpret this as an instance of impression management<sup>85</sup>. It was as if he was trying very hard to provide me with a good example of a city Xavante and distance himself from the non-Indian view of Indians as uncivilized.

It was obvious after talking with him for a long time that he did not really want to pursue his elaboration on catholic social work, but rather study chemistry and physics. When I asked him whether he saw himself as Brazilian first, and Xavante second, he had difficulties answering. He looked at me with an embarrassed smile not knowing what to say. It seems Matheus is an example of a Xavante with what Van den Bergh (1968) would call a Brazilian bi-ethnicity. Banton (1965) stresses that although people might commute between different roles, between presenting himself as Brazilian and Xavante in this case, they are still the same person within<sup>86</sup>. It must be difficult to come from an indigenous people as proud as the Xavante, when being Xavante in the traditional sense collides with one's personal life in town. In town, they learn about all the choices they have when it comes to profession, travelling, and other things that affect one's ways of living. It would seem that these choices are just as attractive to them as they are to non-Indians, but then they have the majority of the Xavante living in reserves with strong opinions concerning the preservation of the old ways. This seems to create dilemmas for the young Xavante like Matheus living in town.

Xavante cultural self-awareness is employed in political resistance. Before they grasped the meaning of culture and how it could be used, they were closer to assimilation than they are now. As mentioned in section 2.1.3, they have managed to change the degree of acculturation as they have

---

<sup>85</sup> See section 1.3.3

<sup>86</sup> See section 1.3.3

discovered that by keeping to their traditions and customs they will maintain their distinctiveness as an ethnic group. This has changed the process from assimilation to integration<sup>87</sup>, in which culture and tradition are upheld, and has slowed down the process of acculturation, if not put a hold to the whole process. As Armando said:

Our culture has changed very little. The Xavante are very interested in preserving our culture and origin. We study only to be able to preserve and protect our culture. Look at me for instance. I wear my hair the traditional way, I have pierced ear lobes, I possess the Xavante mindset and way of thinking, my body is stout, the characteristics of my face are typical Xavante, and my skin color is Indian. The only different thing about me is the clothes that I wear and my work. Other than that, I am just like my grandfather and great grandfather. This will not change (Interview).

‘Cultura’, is a word now commonly used among Xavante, and their cultural awareness become evident when they start speaking about their cultura, or culture. Tomás said their culture is very important to them and that their culture is well preserved. “We never speak Portuguese to one another”, he said. “We always speak Xavante no matter where we are, also at work”. This is something confirmed by my observations. He continued by claiming the Xavante have lost very little of their culture since permanent interethnic contact started, and blame decreased hunting and planting on non-Indians surrounding their territories and the size of their lands not being big enough for them to stay nomadic. He admits that their diet has changed, and that they now sell what they have left of what they plant to buy what they do not have. Nevertheless, what he sees as the main elements of their culture are pursued, and he reeled them off:

The men gather around the fire every night, we have traditional parties, the secret party for the men, the party for the teenagers turning into men, we use the wooden sticks in our ears to symbolize maturity, we shave a circle on the top of our heads for the secret party of the men [pointing at the FUNAI administrator’s head to underline his point] and we paint our bodies with red natural paint for the ceremonies and dancing (Interview).

Since his head was completely shaved, I asked him why he did not pursue the traditional haircut. He then told me that the Xavante shave their head as a sign of mourning. “My son died”, he explained, and by that he had made another point on culture preservation, and explained all the other shaved Xavante heads I had observed earlier on both men and women.

Although the Xavante raised in town also go spend several years in a bachelor’s hut in a Xavante village, it is questionable whether it is enough for them to truly obtain the Xavante culture. As Pedro, one of the non-Indian FUNAI officials, said: “One must be born and raised in the village for culture to

---

<sup>87</sup> Here I refer to Eriksen’s definition of integration (1998), and not the definition in the Indian Statute (1973). See section 1.3.1.2

truly attach itself to a person. If not, so many details and ways of doing things and ways of thinking are lost". By this, he means that culture is not something one can learn, just as the village chief I cited in section 3.1.2 argued. He believes one must have Xavante blood, but Pedro also thinks it is crucial to experience culture over a long period through all the important stages of life to get a Xavante mindset. "A Xavante mindset must be gradually formed since birth", he said. Many of my non-Indian informants believe that living in town Xavante will not be able to preserve the Xavante mindset as it is. Most Xavante I talked to living in town were reluctant to agree to these statements, while the Xavante from the reserves would usually confirm them.

In opposition to Barth's argument presented in the beginning of this section, Leonardo from the FUNAI office believes the Xavante culture eventually will be lost as communication and interaction with non-Indians increases. The Xavante is an ethnic group that has kept a lot of their traditions and their own language. The children only learn Portuguese when they start school at the age of seven, and still there are Xavante who do not speak Portuguese at all, especially women. "But", he said, "it is the elderly who keep the traditions going, and when they die, many of their ways of living will die with them, including the language". He claimed there are several Xavante families now that have stopped speaking their mother tongue when their children are around, and only speak Portuguese in front of them. When it comes to the reserves, however, he does not think that they will also disappear. The land is too precious for that to happen, he said. They get all the meat, fish, and other basic foods from the land. Still, he also claimed that the Xavante isolate themselves and go where there are other Indians. "They in fact also discriminate the white", he said.

The nurse at the Indian Health House on the other hand, does not think Xavante culture will gradually disappear.

They are a strong people. They go on like they always have. They have accustomed themselves somehow, like for instance now they wear clothes, but they keep their old traditions and ways of living. They have their own way of thinking about life and death, and their own way of being (Interview).

### **3.2.2 Xavante viewpoints**

Matheus does not think their culture will disappear, although he is what non-Indians in Barra do Garças would call integrated. He explained that he learns all about Xavante history and keeps all documents he can find on the subject. He also speaks Xavante, he said, believing this will help the Xavante culture to survive.

Tomás believes their culture will never disappear because they always go back to the village. "Even though many go to town, there will always be Xavante living in the reserves, and our culture's base is there", he said. "We study to learn the language and to know the Brazilian system and culture, to be

able to defend ourselves. When we finish studying, we usually go back to the reserve”, he added. This can be seen as an adaptive strategy. By educating themselves they learn to play the non-Indians’ game and use that knowledge in their political resistance. Because of the understanding of how the Brazilian system works and because they have learned to speak Portuguese, the Xavante have engaged themselves in non-Indian practices like demonstrations, going to court, and appeal to the media in their political resistance. One of the best examples of that is when the late Xavante Mario Juruna used a hidden tape recorder to reveal government officials’ double-talk concerning land demarcation in the 1970’s (Garfield 2001: 199).

Tomás also confirmed another adaptive strategy practiced by Xavante to resist acculturation. I confronted him with my observations that non-Indians and Xavante hardly mix, and he said that is both true and intentional. “We think it is wrong and bad to mix a lot with the white. I think it should stay like that, because if we started to mix more, we would eventually become more like you (non-Indians) and pick up bad things from your culture like lying, corruption, and individualism”, he said. Like this, avoidance becomes an adaptive strategy to preserve Xavante customs, because as Leeuwenberg and Salimon argue, the Xavante are “afraid to be swallowed by the culture of those who have caused them so many problems” (1999: 59).

The Xavante also consciously try to increase their population. This may also be seen as a strategy for political resistance now that they have become culturally self-aware and understand the importance of making new Xavante members to carry on their culture and traditions. Tomás has five children and wants more. “We have to increase our population”, he said. “It is important to have many children for our people and culture to survive”. José told me that he has nine siblings. Maria, an elderly Xavante woman I interviewed at the Indian Health House, said she has nine children, and for the time being Armando has six.

José said the Xavante culture is very important to him. “It is something I will take with me for the rest of my life”, he said, “something I will always cherish and preserve”. “Whenever there is a party, I’m always in the middle of it”, he said eagerly and described the way they paint themselves, sing and dance. “I cannot sit and watch, I have to enter it”, he explained smiling. When he has children, he is determined to speak Xavante with them and pass on Xavante rituals, parties, and ceremonies. He told me he often takes photos of Xavante events, and that he wants to make documentaries about his people and their way of life to make it known and to preserve it. Still, when I asked him about their history and where his village comes from, where they used to live and why they moved and so on, he said he could not remember. “My father has said something about it”, he said, “but I cannot remember what he said”.

### 3.2.3 Non-Indian viewpoints

In the case of Xavante in Barra do Garças, non-Indians call for either assimilation or segregation. Many of my informants showed the same attitudes as Fernanda, a young stay-at-home mother who claimed: "It would be much better if they could just stay in the reserves". Her mother entered the conversation and told me that as far as she is concerned "everything is fine as long as I am here and they are there (in the reserves). I live my life, they live theirs".

Tatiane, a young shop attendant, disagrees to the existence of indigenous territories, categorizing it as history. "Everything is different now, the system is different. They should be part of the same system and not be able to claim this and that to be theirs", she argued. She does not think it should be taken into account that some people have not embraced the development of Brazil as a modern democratic country, basically making the same argument as the former FUNAI president quoted in section 1.1. She continued by stating: "The best would be if they disappeared from the surface of this earth". After a couple of follow up questions I however understood that her opinion is still not far from the majority of the non-Indian population of Barra do Garças, because she has no problems with what she called "educated Indians", meaning the more integrated or assimilated. When the Xavante behave like any other Brazilian, she claimed they become like any customer to her in the store that she works in. During our conversation, she adjusted her argumentation. "it's like this", she said. "If the Indians stay in their reserves, become self-sufficient and do not come to town, or if they move to town, educate themselves and start working, I have no problem with them". This is an opinion repeated to me by several non-Indians. "The way it is now is not acceptable", Tatiane added.

One night when I had dinner with some non-Indian friends, we started discussing Indians. Brazilians love discussions and the voices raised higher and higher after every contribution up to a point where they were basically shouting out how much they hated the Indians and how bad they are. They all had something to say, young, and old. João, the father of the house, also stated the reason for his arguments, as opposed to several of the others. On integration, he said: "The biggest problem with the Indians is their laziness and lack of willingness to integrate themselves and work". All the people present shared the opinion that Indians should not be entitled to any form of special treatment just because their ancestors were already here more than five hundred years ago, and that now they must adjust to the majority and work like anybody else. They complained that the Indian reserves are not utilized to their full potential and argued that they should rather be in the hands of people who can fulfill these potentials and contribute to the development of the region. This is an old argument

being repeated<sup>88</sup>, and I heard so many similar arguments by non-Indians in both interviews and discussions, but also in short conversations with people I met just briefly.

Father Raphael claimed that the whites have difficulties with tolerating and accepting the Xavante's different culture, and that non-Indians want the Indians to become like them, to assimilate. In legislative history, this goes as far back as to the Directorate from 1757<sup>89</sup>. My impression is the same, but for non-Indians not particularly interested in politics and development, it seems it does not matter whether Indians assimilate or segregate as long as they do not have to deal with a different ethnic group.

### 3.2.4 Integration difficulties

The Xavante seem to prefer integration, integration as defined by Eriksen (1998) in section 1.3.1.2, meaning that they can uphold important parts of the Xavante culture and traditional ways of living at the same time as they participate in Brazilian public institutions. They know there is no turning back to isolation from modern Brazilian society, but do not want to lose their cultural identity. Leonardo, who has known the Xavante for many years, believes the reason why they have difficulties with integration is that: "They do not manage to grasp the Brazilian culture and way of life". In other words, they have difficulties with the processes of social change from tradition to modernity. In addition to their problems with combining their sharing principle with modernity discussed in section 3.1.10, this sharing principle can also not be integrated into the non-Indian society, as it would be considered stealing. "An old Xavante may see a truck full of bananas and want one. He is not a thief, because he is used to see things and be able to take it if he pleases", he explained. He underlined that the young Xavante have come to understand this, but it is still difficult when something that is the foundation of social organization in the villages is prohibited outside the reserves. Pedro also stressed that the Xavante culture does not fit into the Brazilian society. "Preserving their culture keep up the distrust between whites and Indians", he said.

In their culture, they can rob each other without anyone saying anything. It is not nice to complain that someone took anything from you. They are not individualists, but share what they have. If I see something in a Xavante house and take it, they will not say anything. This culture is complicated in the Brazilian society. We have to lock up everything in the office because if I leave it they take it (Interview).

He told me a story of some coins he had left on his desk for a minute once. When he had come back, a Xavante teenager he had known for years and who had been the only one in the room, had taken

---

<sup>88</sup> See Varjão's argument in section 2.3.1 and the newspaper quotation in section 2.2.1

<sup>89</sup> See section 2.1

it. He refused it when he questioned him about it, but when he moved it fell out of his pocket. Pedro told me he had then said in an angry voice that Pedro should not have left it alone. “It was very disappointing”, he said. These stories also contribute to confirmation of prejudice and stereotypes (although that may not be his intention), which I will return to in section 3.3.

Leonardo also emphasized the Xavante tradition of polygamy. For Xavante it is normal to have several wives, something he claims makes social interaction very difficult. When telling me about this, he lowered his voice as he used one of the Xavante FUNAI employees standing outside his office as an example.

That guy has two wives. They are sisters. They often do it like that to be sure to have at least one left if something happens to them. If a white went to his house he would see two wives living together with several kids and the one husband. This would be too difficult to deal with for the white. One has to respect their culture, but it is different (Interview).

By the tone of his whispering voice, it was clear that he also had problems with this. Armando confirmed this tradition, but explained that Xavante under the influence of missionaries normally do not practice polygamy anymore, but it still occurs also among them and in Xavante villages not adapted to missionaries.

Other customs would also be problematic to practice in the national society. Leonardo told me some stories that I did not get to confront a Xavante with. According to him, they kill any child born with abnormalities and the second born of twins. “They have another perception of reality”, he defended them. He explained this custom with previous times when other tribes often attacked them and they had to flee. Children with abnormalities would not be able to flee as easily as healthy ones. In addition, the women had to work very hard for their living, and such children would mean extra work. Missionaries have tried several times to change these customs, he claimed, and told me a story one of the priests had told him. A woman was having twins, and the missionaries knew about it. When the woman went into labor, they were there to prevent them from killing the child. After a lot of backs and forths, they let the child live. Then, when the twins were five, the one that should have been killed caught pneumonia and died. The Xavante believed he died because he was meant to die in the first place, only now that he had become five, they had started to love him, and it hurt much more to lose him. With that, the Xavante supposedly went back to their old practices of killing the second born. Such incidents, if they truly happen, would be considered murder if Xavante were to be integrated into the national community. These stories are however also examples of stories that will be used by non-Indians to confirm their prejudice<sup>90</sup>.

---

<sup>90</sup> See section 3.3

The Brazilian Indian Statute's definition of integration presented in section 1.3.1.2 does not respect the Xavante tradition of self-sufficiency and economizing, as an integrated Indian by definition must be incorporated into the national community, hence perform paid labor. As Leonardo among others have described, the Xavante do not have the custom of economizing and save. "For Xavante", Leonardo said, "tomorrow does not exist". They live the day today, and only worries about tomorrow when they wake up that very day. If they go hunting and catch a big animal, they prepare it and eat it the same day. They do not think about saving some for the next day. "If they do not have anything to eat tomorrow, tomorrow is when they will do something about it", Leonardo claimed. Several Xavante confirmed this to me. Melatti (1983: 199) describes this through a Brazilian Indian questioning a non-Indian about his work motives: "You do not die? Who gets what you leave behind? ... We have relatives we love, but we are sure that after our death the land that nurtured us will also nurture them. That is why we rest without big worries"<sup>91</sup>. This way of living is in contrast to the non-Indian mindset of working as much as they can to assure enough money to buy food not only today, but also on an everyday basis, and save money for later occasions. It does not mean that the Xavante cannot change their ways of thinking about this, because the ones working in town are living proof that they can. Again, it is a question of social change, and it seems that is what the Indian Statute is calling for through a process of integration into the national community.

Integration is not just difficult because of tradition. It is also very difficult because of the high unemployment rates. In many stores in Barra do Garças there are often an unnecessary number of employees working at the same time. Not because they are needed, but because people are in need of a place to work and are willing to work for very low wages and commission. How the Indians shall be able to further enter this labor market is hard to say. Many Brazilians are also unemployed, and are always preferred to Indians, according to several Xavante, Leonardo from the FUNAI office, and Father Raphael. Looking back on my year of living in Barra do Garças in 1998/99 as well as my two months of fieldwork in 2006, I have yet to see a Xavante working anywhere else than FUNAI and FUNASA. It seems the seven years that went by before I returned did not bring about any changes in that regard. According to law, they cannot start a business on their own, because all they do related to commerce must be with the assistance of FUNAI. They would be poorer in town than in the reserves as a result. They have little money in the reserves, but their way of living is much cheaper. They do not have or do not pay for electricity and water, they make their own houses, plant, hunt, and fish. They only have to spend money on what they cannot get hold of in the reserves. I will get back to the Xavante's difficulties in the labor market in section 3.6.1.

---

<sup>91</sup> My translation

### 3.2.5 Concluding remarks

I asked Matheus whether he believes non-Indians and Xavante must avoid each other for the Xavante to be able to maintain their distinctiveness. He nodded and became very thoughtful, as if thinking about his own state of integration in the light of this. Living in town, spending one's days like any other Brazilian, makes it difficult upholding Xavante culture as it is today. Stavenhagen (1998: 142-143) confirms my observations that indigenous peoples who move to urban areas upheld their connection to the village through seasonal migration, participation in ceremonies and parties, money sendings, and marriage within the ethnic group. This contribute to culture preservation, but as Xavante move to town, the fundamental traditions such as living in the wild, hunting, gathering, fishing, going on trek, village councils gathering at night, and the bachelor's training will be difficult to pursue on a regular basis. To some extent it can be practiced during weekends and vacations, and most young Xavante still go back to the village to receive the bachelor training, but that implies that a good proportion continue life in the reserves and keep their territories from invasion.

Such rural – urban migration patterns are common aspects of development and change processes during modernization worldwide. Robert B. Potter et al. (2004: 322-323) claims economic reasons is the most important underlying factor for such migration, and that it is a male-dominated process. They further provide examples of migrated city workers who send money back to their villages and who later return permanently to the village for their retirement. Hence, this is not solely a phenomenon among the Xavante.

Stavenhagen states:

To the extent that economic development is posited as a global objective, linked to modern/western values (...), it is held that the cultural values of non-western populations, especially indigenous peoples, constitute an obstacle to progress, development, and modernization. Their progressive disappearance is then considered to be inherent in the natural evolution of humanity in contemporary times (1998: 140).

This statement sums up most non-Indian locals' views on Xavante in Barra do Garças, basically calling for assimilation. After doing some thinking, some also however see segregation as an acceptable solution to the "inconvenient" Indians.

The Xavante have gone through changes because of increased interethnic interaction, but have in high degree resisted acculturation as defined by Herskovits, Linton and Redfield (1935: 146) as changes in a group's culture as a result of constant interethnic contact. As demonstrated through the quotation by Leeuwenberg and Salimon in section 2.2.2, the Xavante's cultural self-awareness has made them understand that assimilation would seriously affect their culture and traditions. A Xavante cited in Garfield declared: "If we lose our customs, ruin and destruction will put an end to

the Indian” (2001: 174). Therefore, they keep up traditions as hunting and ceremonies and rituals, they speak Xavante, follow traditional marriage routines, live in villages, and maintain the traditional haircuts. They have nevertheless gone through some culture changes, which is an aspect of acculturation (Herskovits, Linton & Redfield 1935: 146). As described in the sections under 2.2.2, they have, for instance, changed their diet, started wearing clothes, and attended school. The culture changes they have gone through have nonetheless not been enough to change their perception of what constitutes the Xavante identity. The Xavante I spoke with believe their culture has changed little and that their ways of living still pursue the main elements of Xavante tradition and culture.

### 3.3 Stories and knowledge

In Barra do Garças, I will argue that old attitudes, reinforced by stories and observations, are more relevant in interethnic relations between Xavante and non-Indians than reinterpretations of situations<sup>92</sup>, because interethnic interaction is so limited. Taking Barth’s statement<sup>93</sup> that the natures of interethnic relations are carried forward by historical events from other places would mean that the interethnic relations in Barra do Garças are influenced by the relations between Indians and non-Indians when the Portuguese settled on the Brazilian coastline. When people from the east of Brazil migrated to Mato Grosso, they brought attitudes and stories with them from interethnic experiences and history in the east. Most non-Indians I spoke with referred to Brazilian Indians in general even though I specifically asked about Xavante. It seems they do not distinguish between the various ethnic groups, and that the stories they have from other parts of Brazil are just as valid to them in their relations to the Xavante as stories concerning the Xavante in particular.

If I should use just one word to describe the relations between Xavante and non-Indians, it must be ‘mistrust’. The lack of trust came up in most conversations with both Xavante and non-Indians. Since many of my non-Indian informants’ only relation to the Xavante is that they may pass them on the streets in town from time to time, where does this mistrust come from? I believe it mainly comes from all the stories and narratives passed around. When I use the word ‘story’, I refer to retellings of specific incidents. ‘Narratives’ are also stories, but in addition they “refer to the ways in which we construct disparate facts in our world and weave them together cognitively in order to make sense of our reality” (Monroe & Patterson 1998: 315). Some narratives have their origin in history outside of Mato Grosso. It seems the more recent stories from the region, are stories passed on mostly by those that gain from painting bad pictures of the Xavante. In accordance with Despres’ (1975) argument

---

<sup>92</sup> See section 1.3.3

<sup>93</sup> See section 1.3.1

that competition for resources plays a significant role in this matter<sup>94</sup>, Melatti argues: “The civilized who live close to the Indian villages are always men competing for the Indian’s territory. ... It is in favor of the countrymen’s interest to maintain a series of prejudice ideas about the Indians”<sup>95</sup> (1983: 193). These ideas tend to implicate that the white would utilize indigenous territory much more productively than the Indians do, as argued by non-Indians in section 3.2.2. It is no wonder then, that neighboring farmers would indeed have such stories to tell. Melatti also believes that stories based on the same ideas are also spread by FUNAI functionaries, as they are usually from the same region and influenced by the same narratives as the rest of the non-Indians. Since they work so closely with Indians, their stories are very powerful (Melatti 1983: 194). I have already presented some examples of such stories in section 3.2.4.

In the following, I will present some of the narratives I heard about the Xavante, and stories experienced by some of my non-Indian informants. I will also look into whether the Xavante tell similar stories or narratives about non-Indians.

### 3.3.1 Narratives

A non-Indian man I met at a party provided a good example of how ranchers’ stories are spread. He told me that if I wanted to find out how the Indians really are, I should do interviews with their neighboring farmers. “If they leave their windows open the Indians take whatever they can get hold of”, he said. “And if they are having a barbeque, the Indians come to watch”. My two key non-Indian FUNAI informants are not originally from the state of Mato Grosso. Still, after decades of working with Xavante, they have many stories to tell. Their intentions are not to reinforce non-Indian prejudice against Xavante, but the outcome of the stories they tell still have that effect. In one case, one of my interviewees who knows one of these FUNAI functionaries, actually used one of his stories to support his characterization of Xavante as lazy. He said, “I’m so angry with the Indians because there are Indians sitting in their reserves starving with nothing planted but a mango tree”. This he claimed after listening to a story in which the FUNAI official had visited a Xavante village and found the Xavante their without nothing to eat but mango. The FUNAI official had not called them lazy, but it was assumed by my interviewee that laziness was the explanation of their situation. One of the FUNAI functionaries told me that Xavante women are not allowed to go to town on their own. “They will be raped by the Xavante themselves if they do”, he said, further exemplifying narratives spread by FUNAI.

---

<sup>94</sup> See section 1.3.1

<sup>95</sup> My translation

I very often got the impression that if a non-Indian hear of an incident involving Xavante, they do not see it as something that happened that one time, but as something Indians tend to do, like in the incident with Fernanda's mother and the Xavante beggar woman in section 3.1.7. Other narratives I have heard is that if you stop at a red light at night, the Xavante come and take your car. If you show something to a Xavante and let them check it out, they will claim it to be theirs as soon as they get hold of it. If they practice violence, they will not settle with just hurting somebody, but cut their scalps off with a big knife. Fernanda warned me against Xavante and said I have to be careful because they take anything of value: your camera, wallet, earrings, and your rings. These are all narratives that were not self-experienced by my informants or by someone they knew. Similar narratives were presented to Maybury-Lewis in Barra do Garças in the 1980's<sup>96</sup>. Although two decades have passed since Maybury-Lewis' fieldwork, the storytelling practices appear more or less unchanged and with the same circulating narratives.

Fernanda also told me that a friend of her family once hit a Xavante child with his car as the child ran out in the street when he passed. He went out to help, but the child had already gotten up and started running. The Xavante grown-ups who had been with him supposedly turned and went back to crowd the car. They were very angry wanting to bring the man to their village to kill him, she told me. Eventually the federal police had come and sorted things out. "They are crazy", she said. "They wanted to kill him, can you believe it?". She did not need more proof to claim they are all crazy, and she did not question what had made the non-Indian believe they had wanted to kill him.

### 3.3.2 Stories

Some stories were self-experienced. João, a senior non-Indian local of Barra do Garças, had gone fishing inside one of the Xavante reserves one day. He complained that he almost did not catch any fish, because Indians entering the water crowded the riverside. On their way back, some Xavante had stopped their car wanting to quarrel. He could not understand that they had even wanted to fight his friend accompanying him, who had worked in FUNAI for many years. When telling me this it was obvious that he saw it as a frightening incident. What he apparently did not consider, was the fact that they had intruded indigenous land to collect its rivers' resources, which is prohibited in both the Brazilian Constitution and the Indian Statute<sup>97</sup>. To him, the problem had been triggered by Xavante 'looking for trouble', and not his illegal actions. His daughter entered the conversation and claimed nobody cares about these laws, and if they (the law enforcers) do, they cannot do anything about it.

---

<sup>96</sup> See section 1.1

<sup>97</sup> See section 1.3.2.1 and 1.3.2.2

Apart from removing intruders, she is correct when arguing the federal police cannot do anything about it, as there is no legal punishment for intruding indigenous land<sup>98</sup>. When it comes to her statement that nobody cares, however, she is not correct. The Xavante care. This is one example of how non-Indians only see their side of the story. When I confronted João with that, he just brushed it aside. It is not like Xavante necessarily tend to see the whole picture either, but as the dominated minority they tend to be the ones most affected by such attitudes.

Leonardo told me a story from when he worked in one of the Xavante reserves. An 11 year old came to his house one day explaining Leonardo had to come right away because a child was very sick. The village was far away and the child had walked about 30 kilometers in the burning sun to get there. He took his car and hurried, thinking the nurse was not present in the village. When he got there, the nurse was actually sitting outside the hut next door to the sick child, and according to Leonardo he was relaxing and enjoying the temperature going down as the sun was about to set. Leonardo was as angry as he had ever been because the nurse had refrained from doing anything. As it turned out, the sick child was not a part of his clan, and therefore he did not bother to help. "That", said Leonardo, "is why one cannot trust the Xavante with such things as health, because they have a completely different way of thinking and acting". Leonardo's authority as a FUNAI official reinforces the power and assumed validity of his stories in the eyes of other non-Indians. As Walker points out<sup>99</sup>, institutions take part in the reproduction of social relations between individuals. Stories told by the institutions employees also seem to have this effect.

Pedro also had more stories of mistrust to tell. Working for FUNAI in one of the Xavante villages, he experienced that Xavante took all the food he had brought with him while he was working. Although he knew about their sharing principle, he felt they should have seen him as an exception as he was not capable to hunt and fish as they were. "I have worked with them for so many years, but I still cannot trust them", he said.

A non-Indian woman, whose husband works in FUNAI, told me a story of one of his Xavante colleagues. He supposedly disappeared with his white in-laws before he eventually returned alone. His in-laws were found killed in the forest with crushed scalps, she said with an indulgent look on her face. The Xavante was imprisoned, but released after heavy Xavante demonstrations and with the help from FUNAI lawyers. Such stories create and maintain fear and mistrust of the Xavante. The fear however, might also be to the Xavante's advantage, as discussed in section 3.1.8. Casagrande has

---

<sup>98</sup> See section 1.3.2.1

<sup>99</sup> See section 1.3.1.3

actually claimed that in the relations between Salasaca Indians and non-Indians in Ecuador, “the Salasaca’s reputation as being very fierce is perpetuated by both themselves and others through a number of oft-told tales of violence”. He has further argued that: “Each of these incidents is symbolic in its own way of resistance to various kinds of outside threats” (Casagrande 1988: 99). It seems the non-Indians in Barra do Garças who do not interact with Xavante on a regular basis use such stories as an excuse to stay away from the Xavante and refrain from interacting with them.

### 3.3.3 Xavante memories

I did not hear similar kind of stories from Xavante about non-Indians. If they do tell such stories, it is more likely that they keep them amongst themselves. As Casagrande (1988) has claimed in the section above, such stories are used to mobilize group resistance. The Xavante told me they do not trust non-Indians because many of them are liars and have done bad things to them in the past. They seem to turn more to history, reinforcing Barth’s argument<sup>100</sup> about the significance of historical events to current interethnic relations, than non-Indians who often use narratives without special references to time and place. Tomás described his relations to white people in general: “There are many liars in town. They cannot be trusted. There is so much corruption, Indians are not like that”, he dichotomized. He did not tell a story, but with corruption he referred in particular to the territorial struggles and how the demarcation of Xavante reserves went back and forth for years with promises, broken promises, and yet new promises.

Weismantel (2001) claims Indians also fear the white, and that they therefore want them to stay away from their territories. According to her, Indian communities in the Andes tell stories about white attacks, both documentable and based on fantasy. She heard narratives describing how white neighbors would take anything of value from Indians. This is in fact just what the non-Indian in section 3.3.1 said neighbors of the Xavante say about Xavante, only with a change of roles from victims to thieves. Perhaps I would have heard similar narratives or stories from the Xavante if I had gone to stay with them in a village.

### 3.3.4 Concluding remarks

As I listened to these narratives, I thought to myself that these are narratives that have passed around for years and are memories from the past, or episodes occurred one time but powerful enough for them to claim that this is how the Indians act as a people. It could also be like the stories of a fisherman, where the size of the fish caught increases every time the story is told. Details may be added to spice up the original story. Although they might be true, as it often seems, as indicated by

---

<sup>100</sup> See section 1.3.1

Weismantel, that stories contain elements of facts, one must remember that there are always people gaining on having these stories told and passed around, as stressed by Melatt (1983). Father Raphael argued it is actually the white's fault that the relations between Indian and white have become as tense and full of mistrust as it has. They have taken advantage of the indigenous people, as labor force, but also in the way that they have entered their territory and taken pieces of land to themselves. "They have treated the indigenous very badly, therefore the Indians have had to fight back and defend themselves. But, since other whites only hear one side of the story, all the tales you hear put the Indians in a very bad light", he said. There is also a problem with misinformation, which I will return to in section 3.5.

### **3.4 Institutions, organizations, and missionaries**

In this section, I will account for the institutions and organizations dealing with Xavante in town and their work. I start out with FUNAI, and move on to the different health institutions and organizations, before I briefly discuss the missionaries' work and influence on interethnic relations. Although the missionaries do not operate in town, they have influenced the Xavante appearance and behavior before they came to town.

#### **3.4.1 FUNAI**

I have already described interethnic interaction at the FUNAI office in Barra do Garças. I will now look into what they do in practice and what people think about their work. What they are supposed to do is presented in section 2.1.3.

##### *3.4.1.1 FUNAI practices*

FUNAI is the institution Xavante turn to for help, and it is their main connection to the government. They are still supposed to defend and protect the Indians, but the way they work has changed over the years. Today they do much less for the Xavante than they have done in the past, especially because they are no longer responsible for health and education, but also because the state cut the funding to the Development Plan for the Xavante Nation<sup>101</sup>, also known as the rice farming project.

With this project, FUNAI did a lot for the Xavante, according to Leonardo. FUNAI ended up with doing most of the work while the Xavante stood watching. They made fields in the reserves for rice planting, cultivated and sold rice, and gave the money to the Xavante. At this point, Leonardo said the Xavante got lazy and stopped the subsistence planting they had been doing before the project. When they could get money without doing anything, they did not see why they should keep working.

---

<sup>101</sup> See section 2.2.1.1

Now they could buy what they wanted, and they did. They bought bicycles, radios, lanterns, candles, and so on. After a while, the funding was cut. Leonardo described this project as: “FUNAI’s biggest mistake” because the Xavante became used to having things they did not have before, and have therefore created new necessities for themselves and a need to make frequent visits to town. With this, the Xavante had become more dependent on money and therefore had to come up with new ways of cash accumulation. Some went looking for paid labor, some, as explained by Giaccaria (2000) in section 2.2.2.2, engaged in small scale commercial cultivation, while others learned they were entitled to pensions. Davis (1977), as referred to in section 2.2.2.2, has pointed out that money has threatened the Xavante’s equality principles because unequal incomes results in unequal possibilities.

Before this project, FUNAI handled every problem the Xavante may have had within the reserves through a FUNAI official living in its outskirts. “This way the Xavante did not need to go to town”, Leonardo explained. In the 1980’s, the FUNAI president however decided to withdraw the FUNAI officials from the reserves, and the Indians had to come to town to fix their problems. This led to increased interaction between Xavante and non-Indians.

Leonardo claims FUNAI only provide food to some families on special occasions when lives are at stake. FUNAI pays for school uniforms, which consists of a T-shirt, pants, and sneakers. If an Indian wants to study in town, FUNAI also provides him with a place to stay and food. He further explained that the FUNAI trucks administered in the reserves are fixed with money from FUNAI when broken, and that the gasoline used is paid by FUNAI.

This is however not always the case. The village chief I met showed me photos he had brought from his village of several cars and a tractor broken down in need of repair and fuel. “Look at this”, he said shaking his head. I asked if FUNAI did not finance the repairs and fuel, and he said that they are supposed to but they do not. This was confirmed by all the people in the room, both Xavante and non-Indian FUNAI officials. “There is no money, we never see it”, they said. “It disappears”. One of the FUNAI officials said, “I’m sorry to say this, but there is a lot of corruption in this country and also in FUNAI”. The others agreed again. “But”, she said to the Xavante present, “you know who do their job and help you, and who do not, and it is not just the white that put money in their own pockets”. They all nodded in agreement once more.

José, a young Xavante student living in town, told me he has to pay for his school uniform and board and lodging himself. He has contacted FUNAI for help, but has only been referred to other offices. He is now worried whether he will be able to pay rent every month. He said he knows FUNAI have a big budget, but he believes “most of the money is spent on administration and not directly on the

Indians". This critique was also raised by the periodical *Veja*<sup>102</sup>, which claimed the former FUNAI president was corrupt, and that only 30% of the FUNAI budget was spent directly on the Indians.

Father Raphael said people, usually people from other regions, still take small pieces of land from indigenous territory. According to him, they chop down the trees to try to ensure that the Indians will not come back. "It is a mess with people from all places and politicians", he said. "FUNAI is unable to do anything about it because the politicians are in power".

Leonardo confirms that FUNAI still spend a lot of money on Indians, but that much of that money are spent on more invisible things like FUNAI salaries, the use of federal police, and lawyers for Indians accused of something or wanting to go to court. Lucas, the Xavante with a friend at the FUNAI office in Barra do Garças, nodded his head when I asked whether the help he came to seek every week was in the form of cash. Maria, the elderly Xavante woman staying at the Indian Health House, said FUNAI does a good job. "They help us", she said. When I asked whether they help with money, she said they do not. Then she adjusted her statement and said: "Very little, hardly ever". Sandra, a FUNAI functionary, said that when the chiefs come asking for food, FUNAI buy the necessities if they think the need is real, but they do not give money. It is as if the FUNAI practices vary from one functionary to the next.

Matheus said FUNAI is good because they help them. "They keep the white away and help us with lawyers in case of trials. They also buy seed and help out with cars and equipment for agriculture", he said. He however does not live in a village, and may therefore have a more positive picture of the work of FUNAI than the Xavante living within the reserves.

Indians are, as mentioned, not allowed to do business without the assistance of FUNAI officials according to the Indian Statute<sup>103</sup>. This is a law to protect the Indians from exploitation. Leonardo said that if Xavante come and ask for their assistance in such matters, they come along to help. Most of the time, however, they just do it on their own. Through what I observed and was told about their work at the FUNAI office in Barra do Garças, such assistance is rarely asked for. It seems like the FUNAI officials do more paper work than practical work. At the office, everybody was in front of their computers, filling out forms and making authorization for people to go to the reserves. Only a few Indians not working there were present, and they seemed to be living in town. I met a Xavante working as an inspector in charge of all the villages in the Barra do Garças district. He told me that

---

<sup>102</sup> See section 2.1.3

<sup>103</sup> See section 2.1.2

occasionally he would go visit the villages and check that everything was ok. When he did not do that, he was in the office doing paperwork.

#### ***3.4.1.2 Xavante and non-Indians' opinions of FUNAI***

Xavante's trust in FUNAI is weakened as a result of how difficult it is for FUNAI at the local level to get things through with the FUNAI administration and the government. "Demonstrations and complaints never lead anywhere", Leonardo said. "Things are extremely slow and it takes decades before anything changes". I asked Leonardo whether he thinks FUNAI is doing a good job in favor of the Xavante. His response was two-sided. "When FUNAI functioned as it did before, with functionaries present in the reserves, it did a much better job than it does now. Now, many FUNAI officials are only in it for the money, and it is a corrupt organization divided in two". He described the top level consisting of the president and politicians where everything is political. He claimed many of those are corrupt, and they do not work in favor of the indigenous people. Everything is slow, he explained, and the connection with the field is supposedly poor. This is also pointed out by the periodical *Veja*<sup>104</sup>. The low level consists of the ones working in the field like himself, and he believes they mostly do a good job. "They help as best as they can, but what they can do without the consent of the top level is however limited. They work and work, but make few results because of the top level. This in turn leaves them in despair and many resign", he said with a frustrated look on his face.

When asking Father Raphael about what FUNAI does, he asked me back: "What does FUNAI do?". He continued by saying:

On paper they are supposed to protect the Indians and their rights, but I have never seen something like that in practice. They do very little, their structure is malfunctioning. There are some that enter work at FUNAI with a passion for truly helping the Indians, but still there is little they can achieve (Interview).

Armando thinks FUNAI give the Xavante priority. "In a line full of white people and a Xavante at the end of the line, they help the Xavante first", he said. He is under the impression that FUNAI is doing a good job, but was also under the impression that they did better when they had more responsibility.

#### **3.4.2 FUNASA, ONT, FUBRA, and the Indian Health House**

FUNASA, ONT, FUBRA, and the Indian Health House cooperate on taking care of Indians' health. I tried to call FUNASA's office in Barra do Garças once, but the person attending the phone did not want to answer my questions. The only thing she could tell me was that they only worked with indigenous people. She could not, or did not want, to tell me what kind of organization they are or what they do, but kept asking me who I were and what I wanted, although I had introduced myself

---

<sup>104</sup> See section 2.1.3

and my research at the very beginning of the conversation. She eventually just put me on hold and never returned to the phone. When asking around which organizations work with Xavante, it happened that FUNASA, ONT, or FUBRA came up, but the majority of my informants had not heard of ONT or FUBRA. It was not until I visited the Indian Health House that someone could explain to me what they do and what the capital letters in ONT and FUBRA stand for.

The nurse at the Indian Health House explained that almost every village has nurses, dentists, and doctors frequently visiting. They come, stay 20 days, and are exchanged by others. These people work in a nongovernmental organization called Organização Nossa Tribo<sup>105</sup> (ONT) and are hired with a contract. FUNASA is the administrator, but does not hire people directly. They pay ONT to do the work, and ONT pay the workers. Fundação Universitária de Brasília<sup>106</sup> (FUBRA) is another nongovernmental organization dealing with Indian health, with its base at a university in Brasília. Every district has an Indian Health House, and the workers there are contracted by FUBRA. FUBRA also receives money from FUNASA to pay their workers. Since all these workers work on a contract, they have to do a good job to keep it, according to the nurse. “It is not like the public officials who do tests to get employed and do not have to worry about their position at all”, she said. Both ONT and FUBRA only work with health related issues.

In accordance with Coimbra et al. (2002: 200), the nurse explained that the Indian Health House is supposed to be a transfer stop and a recuperation home, but often works as a hospital. That is when the problem arises, because they do not have the equipment or personnel to do so. When the doctors say they are well, they must return to their homes.

#### *3.4.2.1 What people think about FUNASA, ONT, FUBRA, and the Indian Health House*

About the Indian Health House, Sandra said: “Their employees are good, but they lack medicines. The food they provide is not adequate for the sick and malnourished. Sometimes they only have rice and beans”. When I asked Maria about the work of FUNASA, she pretended she did not hear my question and turned her head. It was obvious that she did not approve of their work, but did not want to say so when staying at the Indian Health House. Armando, working for FUNASA, said health care was better before when FUNAI was still in charge. “FUNASA is supposed to work for us, but they boss us around. For them, the white always go first in line. It is a problematic bureaucracy”, he said. “Sometimes there are no medicines here”, he said, “and therefore nothing to send to the villages”.

---

<sup>105</sup> Directly translated it means “our tribe organization”

<sup>106</sup> Directly translated it means “the university foundation of Brasília”

Father Raphael said it has taken FUNASA a while to get things going, but defended them by stressing that they have only been in function for seven years, and things take time to come together. “They are doing better”, he said. “Still, it is very difficult for them in practice. They are few, and there are so many villages that they do not manage to cover all”. Often, he is the one who has to bring boxes of medicines to the villages. FUNASA ask him to help, because they have difficulties getting hold of medications. He claims FUNASA takes care of the sick, but there is a need for prevention. “This is a very important field which is left to itself”, he said, claiming that with FUNASA there is no prevention of disease and malnourishment. “Therefore, what they do is not enough, and missionaries must help to improve the situation”, he continued. When I spoke to the Father, he was actually on his way to a reserve 400 km. away with a box of medicines FUNASA had asked him for. He travels a lot and goes from village to village to visit. He had never heard of FUBRA, ONT, or any other NGO’s working with the Xavante. The only other people he knew of working with Indians in the area were missionaries from other churches, like the evangelic.

When I asked Sandra about the work of ONT, she said they hardly do anything. She believes their employees are only there to make money and that they are not dedicated to their jobs. “When they construct health stations, they always do it as cheap as they can to put the rest of the budget into their own pockets”, she stated. FUBRA, she said, does less work in practice, and mostly hire professionals to do their work. That way she had more confidence in their work. “ONT also hires professionals, but the ones they hire are not fit for the job”, she said. “Sometimes they are not even properly educated”, she continued, as if she had some bad experiences with them she did not care to elaborate on.

Lucas had never heard of FUNASA, ONT or FUBRA. But, he told me their health condition in the São Marcos reserve is bad. “A lot of people are sick and die, especially children and the elderly”, he said. He further complained that there are few medications available and no vaccinations.

### **3.4.3 Salesian missionaries**

Most of my Xavante informants were to some extent influenced by Salesian missionaries because most Xavante coming to Barra do Garças come from the São Marcos reserve, in which the Salesian missionaries are present in several villages. The missionaries help the Xavante adapt to the non-Indian society, an adaption seemingly an inevitable necessity now that they have become dependent on the national community, but also a necessity affecting their traditional lifestyle.

According to Father Raphael, the missionaries’ main work is the schools they run and the health care they provide. They however also run church services. They have nurses working in most villages they are present, and a laboratory to make natural medicine. His church has worked with the Xavante for

fifty years, and today about thirty people working for his church live within the reserves close to some of the villages.

Father Raphael claims that to the Salesian missionaries, help and assistance to fulfill Xavante needs come first, evangelization second. “The Indians are free and have the right to maintain their own beliefs. That is why they are offered to attend church services on an optional basis”, he said. During our conversation, he spoke with a true passion for his work to help and protect the Xavante as an indigenous people.

Tomás said: “They do a good job, they have helped us a lot with health, food, and education. Many Xavante are catholic now, but we still practice our traditional religion. We have mixed it”, he said. “We cannot abandon our old religion”. According to Matheus, the missionaries have only done good. “They have helped the Indians a lot, and done a lot of good for us”, he said. Lucas said he likes the missionaries. “They help us and educate the children”, he emphasized. Armando joined their praise in his description of their work:

They educate us and help us understand the Brazilian way of life, its culture and ways of thinking. This way they help us become stronger in our fight for the survival of our culture and our ways of living because we know how their system works now. If we have problems, they help sort it out. They also help us with medications (Interview).

José was not as positive concerning the missionaries as the others were. He made a face before he said they are very boring and that he does not like them. “They give us education, but they only talk about God. I think that is bad”. He thinks it is wrong that people come and force their beliefs on them. “Eventually it will make people forget their own beliefs”, he said, “I do not want that to happen”. It was rather interesting then, when I asked him about his personal religion, that he said he is evangelic. I asked whether his family was evangelic as well, he said it was only him. Maybury-Lewis is also not as positive to the missionaries’ work among the Xavante. He criticizes the missionaries for controlling the Xavante, and in the case of the mission within the São Marcos reserve he states: “Living in a community like this would be like being sent to boarding school for life” (Maybury-Lewis 1988: 275). Still, he admits the Xavante in São Marcos most likely have the best schooling and health care of all the Xavante thanks to the missionaries (1988: 275).

#### **3.4.4 Concluding remarks**

FUNAI, FUNASA, ONT, FUBRA, and the Indian Health House are results of necessary governmental and non-governmental initiatives because of interethnic contact. The missionaries are not necessary in the same sense, as much of their work is similar to that of others, but they provide additional help appreciated by many Xavante. The quality of the organizations’ work varies, and do not seem to be

consistent. This, together with broken promises and corrupt leaders, often seem to reinforce Xavante mistrust in non-Indians and the foundations and organizations as a whole. In addition, it seems many Xavante and others do not even know that ONT and FUBRA exist. Many non-Indians feel strongly about the special treatment they give Xavante and Brazilian Indians in general, however not always based on correct information. This way these foundations and organizations help the Xavante to adjust to the non-Indian society at the same time as they also reinforce non-Indian resentment of Indians. These problems will be treated in the following section.

### **3.5 Lack of knowledge and its effects on interethnic relations**

The non-Indians know extremely little about what has to do with Indians, and it does not seem they even care to know. It is as if they believe Indians have nothing to do with them, although the Xavante are highly present in the town that they live in. Non-Indians do not know much about village life or the organizations and institutions dealing with them, except from the people actually working in the organizations and institutions, and their relatives who get inside information from them. This is not a phenomenon exclusively present in Brazil. Saugestad provides a similar statement about the interethnic situation in Botswana and believes it is a common phenomenon. She claims: "By and large the majority is ignorant about San cultural practices, and assumes, as majority populations usually do, that what they do not know about does not exist" (1998: 129). She further argues that a reason for this ignorance may be that non-indigenous people count on the indigenous people to eventually assimilate, hence they do not need to learn more about them (1998: 133). In the case of the Xavante, I will argue that it is more about the non-Indians believing Indian practices do not really concern them; therefore, they do not want to put any effort into getting to know more.

Fernanda's mother told me that her son, who works for the city hall by going to schools to check on their equipment, described the villages as "true misery and pure poverty". According to him, they do not have anything, medicines, blackboards for teaching, and so on. "I think that is so weird", she said, "after all they say they receive monthly salaries from FUNAI". By "they", she meant rumors have it that this is the case. The villages are poor. That has been confirmed to me by both Xavante and non-Indians who have been to the villages. The salary statement however, is wrong. I believe this perception, which many non-Indians share, has its origin from the time of the rice project when FUNAI gave Xavante the money from the harvest produced on their fields<sup>107</sup>. Although the project has ended, non-Indians know what they observe, and that is Xavante coming into town on a daily basis filling their FUNAI trucks with food. They then take for granted that the money they spend

---

<sup>107</sup> See section 2.2.1.1

come from FUNAI. João, a non-Indian senior who has lived most his life in Barra do Garças, said: “They get money, food, clothing, everything, and they do not do anything, just receive”. His son said: “The Indians are so few, yet they receive so much from the state”. As mentioned in section 3.1.7, old Xavante receive pensions. Leonardo told me that: “Every retired Xavante receive 350 reais (about 172 US dollars) a month. As old Xavante spend little money, their grandchildren often get some money to buy clothes and other accessories”.

João told me that the Indian Health House, which people call the Indian House for short, is a hotel administered by FUNAI. Its nickname alone is enough for people to make assumptions. “When the Indians are in town they can stay there. Some sleep over, others use it as a base during the day in town. FUNAI pay the costs and they can eat there”, João explained. He told me this before I knew anything about it, and so I asked him whether the two small hostels always crowded with Xavante in town also functioned the same way, something he confirmed. Later I found out that this is really not the case. The Indian Health House is administered by FUNASA as previously explained, and the hostels are for everyone to use and only paid by FUNAI if the sleepover has anything to do with FUNAI.

The misinformation people gave me was never meant to be misleading. They have drawn conclusions based on their own observations and believed them to be correct, or been misinformed by others, without checking it out, because it does not really matter to them whether it is right or not as they seem to feel the Xavante do not really concern them anyway. Non-Indians seem to have a tendency to think they know things they actually do not, perhaps especially when it comes to Indians.

The public library in Barra do Garças does not have any literature on the Xavante. They have a couple of old books about Indians in Brazil in general. This means that people wanting to get information on Xavante have difficulties. FUNAI had one booklet I managed to get hold of after several visits. The library in the University in Pontal da Araguaia was better, but it is difficult to access from Barra do Garças. People know very little facts about Xavante as a result, and the lack of correct information available easily leads to alienation and neglect. The web pages I have found giving a presentation of Barra do Garças does not mention its Indians. Neither does Varjão in his account of the history of Barra do Garças presented in section 2.3.1. He just presented the non-Indian success story, as criticized by Leeuwenberg and Salimon (1999)<sup>108</sup>.

Pedro told me that the schools all over Brazil use the same books, and what they learn about Indians is very little and very general:

---

<sup>108</sup> See section 2.1

They learn that Indians are Indians, and that they have a different culture. They do not learn anything specific or anything about the differences between tribes or anything about tribes in the very state they live in. That way they do not get to know and understand the Indians they coexist with on a daily basis. The tribes are so different (Interview).

As leeuwenberg and Salimon argue: “The prejudice of the ‘civilized’ when it comes to the Indians reflects an incomplete education”<sup>109</sup> (1999: 62). Pedro further told me that the city hall hardly ever make any kind of presentations about the Xavante, and neither do schools, FUNAI, or any nongovernmental organizations. FUNAI is however starting to think in that direction, he claimed. “For people wanting to learn about the Indians it is very difficult to find information”, he admitted.

The nurse at the Indian health House believes the non-Indians do not like the Xavante because they do not know them and do not understand their culture and ways of being. “They have a completely different way of living and a totally different culture, but one must respect that”, she said. Armando agreed to this by saying: “Very few in town like us because they do not know our culture and us”.

### 3.5.1 Concluding remarks

Lack of knowledge and standard narratives both result in reinforcements of non-Indians’ perceptions of the Xavante and their attitudes towards them. The stories discussed under section 3.3, the conviction that the Xavante receive everything from the state, the lack of accurate literature and information about them, the inadequate education non-Indians get in school about Indians, and the everyday observations non-Indians make in town and the subsequent conclusions they make, seriously affect interethnic relations between them and Xavante as the Xavante are judged on the grounds of misinformation or lack of knowledge. The effects will be further elaborated on in the sections concerning discrimination and ethnic classification.

## 3.6 Discrimination and indigenous peoples’ rights

In the following sections I will present separately non-Indians’ and Xavante’s thoughts on Indians’ rights in Brazil and the effects these thoughts may have on their interethnic relations. I will also describe the two groups’ viewpoints on discrimination in Barra do Garças.

### 3.6.1 Non-Indian views on indigenous peoples’ rights

Leonardo claimed:

The law still works in favor of the Indians, which may cause jealousy and complaints from the whites. It has to do with the fact that Indian crime is dealt with by the federal police, and the solutions to fights between whites and Indians are always in favor of the Indians. But, they need this protection, or else

---

<sup>109</sup> My translation

they will disappear and have no land left. It is just like with children. They also need special protection (Interview).

He still argues that the Indian laws have flaws, because they apply to both integrated Indians and the non-integrated<sup>110</sup>. He believes there is a huge difference between Indians who has not yet been contacted by whites, Indians more recently contacted, and those who have been involved in interaction with non-Indians for more than 500 years. The latter category does not need the same protection, he stated. They have a different understanding of the Brazilian society and how it works. If an old Xavante who hardly ever leaves the reserve goes ahead and kills someone, Leonardo claimed it to be completely different than if an already integrated Indian living in the city does the same thing. “The former does not have an understanding of what he is doing”, he said, “but the latter does because he has learned how such an act is considered in the Brazilian society”. He therefore believes that not everyone needs special rights, only the ones with a different understanding, as they are weaker in the national society.

Leeuwenberg and Salimon claim: “There is a general ignorance when it comes to the indigenous question in Brazil because they are not co-producers and participants of the economic growth of the country”<sup>111</sup> (1999: 62). João said: “The Indians’ laziness is not necessarily their fault, because they have become used to receiving”. His son continued by claiming the Indians play a role in the country’s hardship because the government spends too much money on them. It seems to be difficult for non-Indians to handle that Indians receive special treatment from the state just because they are Indians. They feel this is very unfair, and draw on examples of non-Indian poverty. João’s son further claimed: “The state protects the Indians, they are free somehow, and never punished for the wrongs they do”. Their rights seem to reinforce non-Indian resentment towards the Xavante. Their rights and protection from the state are always mentioned when the topic of Xavante comes up.

Fernanda said the Indians believe they can do what they want because the law protects them. That is why she is very suspicious of them and do not trust them, she explained. She does not think Indians should have special rights beyond the rights of the rest of the Brazilian population. “Why should they?” she asked rhetorically. “The law treats them like children, but they’re not! They are adults and know what they are doing. They should not be able to do things we cannot”. She also blamed the Indian Statute for not functioning in practice in cases of interethnic interaction. “They are not

---

<sup>110</sup> See section 1.3.2.1

<sup>111</sup> My translation

allowed to drink alcohol<sup>112</sup>, but if someone refuses to sell it to them they get angry, start a fight, and break the bar. What can we do? It does not help to call the police, by the time they get there the bar will already be broken”, she complained.

Tatiane agreed with Fernanda, arguing: “The Indian Statute treats them like children. That’s wrong. They are adults and able to think like us”. She further stated: “They should not have more rights than other Brazilian citizens. They are just like us, they should not be treated with special rights and protection. The way it is now, they are stealing my money”, she concluded, referring to the taxes she pays to the government that they spend on Indians. They do not agree with Saugestad (1998) who claims that indigenous peoples and non-Indians’ opportunities will not be equal unless the indigenous peoples are entitled with rights to compensate for their situation as a dominated minority<sup>113</sup>.

Father Raphael on the other hand, recognizes Saugestad’s argument. He claimed the Xavante need their rights to survive. “They have rights like all minorities, it’s only natural. If their rights to indigenous land seized to exist, they would all be without land five years from now”, he said, describing how not only their neighbors, but also non-Indians from all over the country and perhaps even from abroad, would come in and take it piece by piece.

When it comes to the Indian Statute, he thinks it is difficult to judge, because as Leonardo argued above, there is a difference between those that do not yet have an understanding of how things work in the Brazilian society and does not know the Brazilian culture, and those who do. The former need the protection the Indian Statute provides them, he argued. Nevertheless, he thinks it is a misunderstanding that they are incapable as indicated by the Statute. “An adult is an adult, no matter the race. They are not stupid”, he said.

He does think things need to change concerning Brazilian Indians’ rights, as they are not respected as of today. “Now that their education is left to the city hall, they want the Indians to go through the same books as other Brazilians their age, all in Portuguese and with Portuguese speaking teachers. That is a violation to their rights to maintain their own language and customs”, he argued. It is also contradictory to the coordinator of Indigenous Education’s claim that they are working to adjust indigenous peoples’ education to Indian culture and needs<sup>114</sup>. Both Leonardo and Pedro have

---

<sup>112</sup> Non-integrated Indians are not allowed to consume alcohol, and non-Indians are not allowed to distribute it to them, according to the Indian Statute.

<sup>113</sup> See section 1.3.1.3

<sup>114</sup> See section 2.2.2.4

confirmed that the schoolbooks are the same for the Xavante as for the non-Indians, and further claimed that non-Indians do not get properly educated on indigenous peoples in schools, as mentioned in section 3.5. This is a violation of the ILO Convention No. 169, which states that this shall be done to avoid prejudice<sup>115</sup>. Instead, Pedro criticizes the schoolbooks for not complementarizing Indian and non-Indian culture and ways of living on the same level of distinctiveness, and for using stereotypes to present Indians as homogeneous. Several of my non-Indian friends told me that the only thing they learned in school about Indians is that they exist and have a primitive lifestyle.

Leonardo believes the Indian Statute itself makes it difficult to fulfill its article prohibiting discrimination in the labor market. He blamed the Indian Statute because non-integrated<sup>116</sup> Indians are not allowed to make deals and work contracts with non-Indians without the assistance of FUNAI<sup>117</sup>. Leonardo believes non-Indian employers are reluctant to hire Xavante because it gives them more work and a pressure to adjust their employees' working conditions to satisfy the standard FUNAI insists on. By arguing that the Indian Statute stands in the way of the Indians' development, Dunfjeld (2006) and Instituto Socioambiental (2000) seem to agree with Leonardo<sup>118</sup>.

### 3.6.2 Xavante views on indigenous peoples' rights

I asked José, who is a young Xavante student, whether he is familiar with the chapter on Indians in the Brazilian Constitution, the Indian Statute, and the ILO Convention No. 169. He said he had only read parts of the Indian Statute, but did not know it one hundred percent. José is worried about the discussions on reforming the Indian Statute, and is concerned that it will leave the Indians without protection. "Now", he said, "I have heard Indians cannot go to jail<sup>119</sup>. If the law is repealed, who will protect the Indians?" That is why he has decided that he wants to become a lawyer to protect their rights. He thinks the laws are good in the sense that they protect Indian tradition and culture, but still thinks something is missing. "The law should be more specific when it comes to work", he said. "It makes it difficult for Indians to enter the labor market. It should rather facilitate it". By this, he is referring to the Indian Statute prohibiting Indians from doing business on their own.

Tomás, the FUNASA driver, claimed he knows the indigenous peoples' rights in Brazil very well. "Our rights are crucial for our survival", he said. "We cannot let them be lost". He complained that they

---

<sup>115</sup> See section 1.3.2.3

<sup>116</sup> See the Indian Statute's definition of Indians "on their way to integration" in section 1.3.1.2

<sup>117</sup> See section 1.3.2.1

<sup>118</sup> See section 1.3.2.1

<sup>119</sup> This is a misunderstanding, see the actual legislation in section 1.3.2.1

are not heard when it comes to lawmaking, and that the letters they write to the government are never responded to. “We are not listened to”, he said, “and the congress is very far away. It is difficult for us to go there”. I asked him about the Indian Statute, and he said that for him personally who has an education, he does not need the protection it gives him, agreeing with Leonardo and Father Raphael. “For the one’s that do not have an education, it is good”, he claimed.

Matheus, the young Xavante brought up in town, told me he had read the Indian Statute once, but that he did not have access to it and did not know how to get hold of it. What he knew is that the police have no power within the reserves, in which the village council agrees on what shall be done.

Asking Armando about his rights, he said he knows a few but had never seen them on paper. He claimed some rights worked better before when they did not know the Brazilian culture. Now that they know the system, the laws are hindering them from starting their own business for instance, he claimed, supporting the arguments of Leonardo, Father Raphael, and Tomás. He emphasized that they are not incapable of making their own decisions. He is however worried that they will get less rights, as he understands their importance. He said some rights seem to work and are respected, others are not. “The people at FUNAI and FUNASA respect our culture and our people. Many in town disrespect us”, he said.

### **3.6.3 Xavante views on discrimination**

Young José told me he had never experienced physical abuses like assaults because of discrimination, and thinks discrimination was worse before and that his parents and grandparents have experienced much more discrimination than he has. It was a topic he was not comfortable talking about in a public luncheonettes with several non-Indians present, and he kept looking around him to check if anyone was listening in on our conversation. He believes that their rights in the Indian Statute helped decrease discrimination.

He said he likes living in Barra do Garças, but wishes he like it more. “It’s too hard to get a job”, he said, blaming discrimination. He claimed it was much easier to get a job in Brasília where he lived three years. In Brasília, he worked at a mall in a clothing shop, and he believes it is less discrimination there.

Flávio, who is about fifteen years older than José, told me he has experience with discrimination. “I have been refused entry to several places because of who I am”, he said. “The way they treat us has improved as we have learned their culture, language, and have studied. We now know how to act for them to treat us with respect”, he explained. This is supported by other Xavante in town, as

exemplified with a citation by Matheus in section 3.1.3. That is the price they have to pay to be treated with respect. Some think it is a price too high, others are ok with it.

As cited at the very beginning of this thesis, Armando claimed there is a lot of discrimination in Barra do Garças. “It is very hard to find a job for a Xavante”, he said before he continued:

We are looked down upon, we are less worth to them. We are outcasts. For the white it is much easier, they are always picked before us. Look even at FUNASA, almost no Xavante work for them. In the villages some Xavante work as teachers, drivers and so on, but that’s it. The nurses, doctors, administrators, bosses, the people in the kitchen at the Indian Health House, they’re all white. It’s such a bureaucracy (Interview).

He further claimed it is very difficult for a Xavante to live in town, and that it is hard to get enough money to pay the rent. In addition: “Very few people like us”, he said. I asked him why, and he said it is because they do not know them and their culture.

Giaccaria (2000: 23) claims the Xavante expect from the rest of the population to be able to share the same identity of being human beings as they are. They want people to understand that they are just like anybody else when it comes to the experiences in life such as happiness, sorrow, hope and struggle.

#### **3.6.4 Non-Indian perceptions of discrimination**

Tatiane indicates that because of the protection Xavante receive from the state, non-Indians are discriminated when it comes to being employed in FUNAI. She claimed FUNAI hires Xavante without proper education. “Such public jobs are the best paid jobs in the country, why should they get those jobs without competing with us?”, she asked me. She denied my question whether the Xavante, disregarding FUNAI, are discriminated in the labor market. “If an Indian was qualified, he would get a job in the store I work anytime”, she claimed,” but by hiring Indians, FUNAI becomes corrupt”. She is very preoccupied with justice and equity, and believes Indians and non-Indians should have equal opportunities, and with that, she does not consider the asymmetrical aspect of a minority-majority situation. This case has similarities with Nagata’s case presented in section 1.3.1.3, in which a non-Indian felt discriminated because certain labor contracts are reserved for Indians. Tatiane denies that discrimination towards Indians is real and a problem. “Brazilians also need education to achieve what we want, so should the Indians”, she said.

About discrimination, Pedro claimed: “There is a lot of discrimination in Barra do Garças, but twenty years ago it was a whole lot worse”. Father Raphael stated that there is a lot of discrimination in town, and that to find a job for the Xavante is extremely difficult because of it. The nurse at the Indian Health House said there is a lot of discrimination in town because people do not like them,

because they are different, and most of all because they are scared. Even though most whites do not practice their discrimination against Indians directly or physically, some do. The reason why most people rather use more indirect methods, like ignoring them and avoidance, also seem to have something to do with fear, as discussed in 3.1.8. Leonardo still said the Xavante situation today is better than thirty years ago. “There is less discrimination today”, he said. Sandra from FUNAI, claims discrimination is a problem, but used to be a lot worse. “For Indians who do not have higher education it is very difficult to get a job”, she said. “If the Xavante children living in town study hard, it will be much easier for them when they finish”, she said. “They are raised in town and with two cultures and languages from the beginning”.

There is a difference in views between people working with Indians, people living in a district where Indians also live or come on a regular basis, and people who live far from Indian lands. These three categories of non-Indians have different perceptions of Indians affecting discrimination. People who know the Xavante through working with them seem to respect them and their rights. The form for interaction between Xavante and non-Indians in town only appears to reinforce discrimination, because they do not get to know and understand each other in the same way, hence what they observe only confirms stereotypes. In accordance with this, Leonardo believes: “Discrimination exists because of interaction”. He further thinks that discrimination only decrease when Xavante adapts to the white society and adopt their behavior and way of living. There are no arenas in which Xavante and non-Indians can learn to know each other on a basis of how they really are, except for cases of employment dealing with Xavante on a deeper level than just business as in the shops in town. The only reason discrimination has decreased, according to Leonardo, is that the Xavante have adapted and learned to speak Portuguese.

### 3.6.5 Concluding remarks

Discrimination seems to have decreased because the Xavante living in town have adapted to the non-Indian society. It is rare that discrimination turns physical in town, but one day when I was walking around in the city centre, a non-Indian walked up to a Xavante who was by himself and pushed him hard in the shoulder, yelling some discriminating words. The Xavante was very surprised, but only kept walking as if nothing had happened. The non-Indian hurried off in another direction.

Everyone is allowed to enter public places by law, therefore discriminating Indians from entering shops and restaurants do not occur anymore. In some places, however, it is as if the atmosphere changes if a Xavante walks in. Both Xavante and non-Indians go on as they were, pretending nothing interrupted their daily routines. Casagrande (1988: 99) has described such settings as a ‘mutual discomfiture’, which I think is a good description also in the case of Xavante. In Barra do Garças this

happens when Xavante walk into the hipper places, like for instance the newest ice cream bar right in the middle of the city centre. In one of these cases, which do not seem occur often, a Xavante woman sat down and was ignored by the personnel. She placed herself with her back towards them like in protest, but did not approach the counter to get something. It is as if there are unwritten rules about where they are accepted and not, although by law they should really be welcomed wherever they want to go. If one is not wanted somewhere, one can easily feel it. Even though physical discrimination is prohibited by law, psychological discrimination like being ignored and treated like air and with indifference is not. This is the non-Indians' way of dealing with Xavante not adapted to the non-Indian society.

The former UN Special Rapporteur has claimed that because of discrimination there are high unemployment rates among indigenous peoples compared to non-indigenous people<sup>120</sup>. I do not have numbers on unemployment in general, nor in the case of the Xavante in Barra do Garças. It seems that the Xavante who do not manage to get a job stay in the reserve, so to get real numbers of unemployment would probably be difficult. Nevertheless, many of the Xavante I spoke with complained about discrimination in the labor market, and Leonardo, Dunfjeld (2006) and Instituto Socioambiental (2000) confirm that it is a problem, and that this is partly because of the Xavante's limitations in the Indian Statute.

As Dandan (2001) states<sup>121</sup>, indigenous peoples often do not know their rights. Nor do most Xavante. I have asked myself why, and the answer I have come up with is that the rights are written by non-Indians and in Portuguese. It is in the non-Indian people's interest that their rights are not known to them, and since they are in charge of spreading them, it does not seem to happen. They Xavante I talked with had all heard about the Indian Statute, and most knew that their rights were also treated in the Brazilian Constitution. Nevertheless, they did not know them very well or have access to them, nor did they know how to get hold of them. None of them had heard about the ILO Convention No. 169. Ideally, they should learn their rights in school to be able to use them in their defense when violated, and they should be translated to their language. But, as Leonardo claimed: "The laws are written for the English" in Brazil, meaning they often remain policy on paper to avoid interference from the outside.

---

<sup>120</sup> See section 1.3.1.3

<sup>121</sup> See section 1.3.1.3

Saugestad (1998) claims rights to cultural practices do not affect the majority's right to the same<sup>122</sup>. However, when it affects their access to land a situation of competition for resources appears. This has been the right the most non-Indians in the region have had the most difficulties with accepting. Many non-Indians see the Indians as a hinder to development. They possess vast areas of land, which they do not administer in the ways non-Indians would, with industrialized agriculture or cattle ranching. As Garfield describes it: "Mato Grosso elites disdained Indians as wasteful, unproductive, and debauched" (2001: 98). The struggling non-Indian population feel the Indians are receiving property and goods from the state that they do not get a piece of even though they feel they are in just as bad situation, if not worse, as the Indians. It is about the notion of equality<sup>123</sup>, because they cannot see why the Indians should receive more from the state just for being Indians when there are so many non-Indians suffering.

Niezen (2003) believes that because indigenous peoples seem to want everything, both self-determination and to be able to participate in the national community on the same level as non-Indians without being discriminated, non-Indians have problems with accepting it<sup>124</sup>. This seems to be the case also in Barra do Garças. The non-Indians continuously claim that Indians receive everything from the state and still are not satisfied.

### **3.7 Ethnic classification**

I will conclude my analysis by a description of the two groups' ethnic classification of the other group and look into what the groups think about themselves. I will also illustrate how they use dichotomization to mark the ethnic boundaries between them.

#### **3.7.1 What characterizes Xavante**

Mostly, non-Indians do not talk about Xavante in particular, but about Indians. If I ask a question about Xavante, they will still just refer to them as Indians alongside any other Indians in the country. They see them all as one people, although they know they belong to different groups. They also do not distinguish between Indians as individuals or as a group. According to Braroe, this is also the case in Canada, and the Indians have understood that: "It don't make any difference, whenever one of us does somethin' they don't like, they blame us all as a bunch" (1975: 5). According to Augoustinos and

---

<sup>122</sup> See section 1.3.1.3

<sup>123</sup> See section 1.3.2.2

<sup>124</sup> See section 1.3.1.3

Reynolds<sup>125</sup>, this is how stereotypes work, as they do not consider individual differences, but see a category of people as homogeneous, much like the Portuguese colonizers did<sup>126</sup>.

Barra do Garças is as described in section 2.3.2 a centre for agribusiness. Many people living in Barra do Garças are therefore involved in agribusiness in one way or another, or have friends and relatives that are. These people have strong feelings about the Xavante, as they are, or at least have been, competing for land. As expressed by Despres (1975)<sup>127</sup> and Melatti (1983)<sup>128</sup>, this is a reason for maintaining prejudice in interethnic relations. In section 3.3.1, I therefore argued that it is in farmers' interest to spread negative narratives and stories about Xavante. Melatti (1983: 194) further claims that they use these narratives and stories to confirm that Indians are "lazy, cruel, and dirty". I will also argue that the ranchers and agriculturalists have influenced citizens of Barra do Garças' characterizations of Xavante because of their close relations with so many of the non-Indians in town. Of all the non-Indians I talked to, there is only four of them that I do not know whether is related to farmers themselves or through friends or family or not. All of the others are involved in the business or knows someone that is. Father Raphael also believes the Xavante's bad reputation ascends from the fight over land. He said: "The state demarcated land to the Indians that the Brazilians also wanted, and the relations between white and Indian is still colored by this".

One night at a dinner party with eight non-Indians, a discussion arose about Indians as I started talking about my research. All of a sudden, all I could hear was the harsh descriptions shouted out by the gesticulating people around the dinner table: "Parasites", "Animals", "dirty", "Thieves", "Lazy", "Beggars", "Drunks", "Violent", "Lawless", followed by several narratives already presented in section 3.3.1.

One day I went on a trip with some non-Indian friends of mine. One of the girls was telling the rest of us about a bus ride she had just had from Brasília to Barra do Garças. To underline how horrible the bus ride had been, she pointed out that 90% of the passengers had been Indian. When I told her about my research, she started educating me on how they really are: "They don't work, they're lazy, and they drink. They basically don't do anything", she said, marking the ethnic boundaries between

---

<sup>125</sup> See section 1.3.1.3

<sup>126</sup> See section 1.2

<sup>127</sup> See section 1.3.1

<sup>128</sup> See section 1.3.1

them through what Eidheim (1971) calls dichotomization<sup>129</sup>, as it was clear that she thought the Xavante are just the opposite of non-Indians.

FUNAI official Leonardo claimed the Xavante's main concerns are survival and reproduction, and by this trying to explain why they are not concerned with things like money accumulation as many non-Indians are. "They make a lot of children", he said. "When one has learned to walk the mother is already carrying a new baby". Considering the Xavante's claim in section 3.2.2 that population growth is part of their political resistance strategy, however, this concern is logical without Leonardo's dichotomization.

According to Braroe (1975: 95), these forms of dichotomization also take place in Canada, where it is also commonly believed that Indians do not do anything but hang around, and do not live up to the white standards of being independent and hard working.

Fernanda characterized Xavante with the word unpredictable. "If you do something the Xavante benefit from, they are nice to you", Fernanda elaborated. "If not, they will immediately start fighting and making trouble". This, she underlined with a story already presented in section 3.3.1. She herself has Indian blood, as her grandmother's great grandmother was indigenous. She however does not see that as part of her identity.

The non-Indians working with Xavante on a regular basis<sup>130</sup>, like the FUNAI functionaries, the nurse at the Indian Health House, the owner of one of the artisan shops, and the Salesian missionary Raphael, were all less prejudiced than other non-Indians. They did not use the same stereotypes in their descriptions of Xavante, but rather explained their difference with reference to culture and tradition, calling for people to respect their way of living. They did not always approve of their practices, like the principle of sharing by taking other people's property without asking<sup>131</sup>, but they still would not call them thieves but rather try to understand why they do what they do and respect them for it. When I questioned Leonardo about the Xavante reputation as lazy, he answered that it is all about necessity. "The Xavante are not lazy, but they only work as much as they need to. Why should they work more than necessary?"<sup>132</sup> The majority does not try to understand their behavior but quickly find explanations in prejudice.

---

<sup>129</sup> See section 1.3.1

<sup>130</sup> The four people I do not know whether are somewhat connected to agribusiness are among these.

<sup>131</sup> See section 3.2.4

<sup>132</sup> This is confirmed by Giaccaria (2000), who in section 2.2.2.3 stated large-scale production is not part of the Xavante lifestyle.

As seen in section 1.3.3, Blumer (1962) believes interpretations in interaction are dependent on what is taken into account of presumptions, and that these interpretations affect behavior. My observations, as described above, revealed that the people working with Xavante on a regular basis have different attitudes towards the Xavante than those who do not know any Xavante at all. The difference seems to be caused by the different presumptions taken into account. Many non-Indians who do not have much contact with the Xavante, lack information and an understanding of the Xavante lifestyle. As an example, they do not know about their sharing principle<sup>133</sup> and therefore do not take that into account if they for instance observe a Xavante taking something from another. They would classify it as stealing. They do not know or understand that it is part of the Xavante culture to only work as much as they need to, and not work to secure the future. They call them lazy instead, because they only consider their own lifestyle. According to Leeuwenberg and Salimon (1999), taking regular baths is very important to the Xavante, and the river is constantly used to maintain their personal hygiene, something Leonardo also confirmed. Still, the whites usually call the Indians dirty. Leeuwenberg and Salimon believe: "This shows that such affirmations are always affected by prejudices and ignorance about the indigenous reality"<sup>134</sup> (1999: 36).

One might think that with so much hardship it would be difficult to maintain a high self-esteem and confidence as a people. On the contrary, Leonardo explained:

The Xavante see themselves as the centre of the Universe. They think of themselves as the greatest, the prettiest, the strongest, and the most intelligent. And, most importantly, they consider themselves to be no lower than anyone else (Interview).

He started talking about psychoanalysis and how Freud would become frustrated if he were to try to do one on a Xavante. "They are different", he said. "I have known them for decades and I have never seen or heard of any sort of depression. Depression, PMS, and post-natal depression do not exist among the Xavante". According to him, they are strong both physically and psychologically then, and they also see themselves as great warriors.

### 3.7.2 What characterizes non-Indians

Melatti claims Brazilian Indians classify non-Indians by what they (the Indians) are not, hence they also use dichotomization. Those that drink boos, are armed, swear, smoke, and cheat, they are what the Indians are not. They consider the non-Indians living far away to be good, and the ones living close to be bad. They also notice that in big cities people stop to look at them, receiving them with

---

<sup>133</sup> See section 2.2.2.2

<sup>134</sup> My translation

care asking questions about their customs and giving them money, clothing and utensils. (Melatti 1983: 200). As mentioned in section 3.6.3, José have lived three years in Brasília studying, and claimed the people there are a lot less prejudiced than in Barra do Garças, that way confirming Melatti's last statement.

The Xavante tend to call the non-Indian population white, as most Brazilian Indians<sup>135</sup>. In the past, the white caused them many difficulties and did many wrongdoings, as I have described in the background chapter. To them, it is a matter of indigenous peoples against the rest of the population, because the colored Brazilians have more or less blended in with the rest. In history, it was the white that they had the most conflict with and feared, and so this might be why they have chosen to see them all as white.

Leeuwenberg and Salimon (1999: 60) retell some reflections made by a Xavante about non-Indians. From his point of view, the whites are killing themselves because of all the stress they impose on their lives. He finds the urban white man's rhythm of life suicidal, and put it in contrast to the Indian rhythm of life, which is associated with the circles of nature.

What non-Indians think about themselves is revealed through dichotomization when describing the Xavante. They are what Xavante are not, hence hard workers, honest strugglers, independent, civilized, trustworthy, economical ,and calm.

The whites discussed by Braroe (1975: 108-109) evidently have similar ways of thinking and dichotomizing. They value industry, self-sufficiency, and independence, and see the quality of using money and other resources carefully as important. This is in contrast to the Indians whom they find ineffective and irresponsible when it comes to managing natural resources.

The Brazilian non-Indians also like to call themselves white, as seen in section 1.2. I believe it may have to do with the way history has been retold, as mentioned in chapter 2. Being white was being successful in business and development, and many non-Indians seem to identify with that image.

### 3.7.3 Concluding remarks

When it comes to non-Indians living far away from Indians, they tend to get a different picture of Indians all together. Leonardo thinks: "Brazilians living far from indigenous land who have only seen Indians on television have a much better, even romantic, image of the Indians". Pedro, who came to Barra do Garças from one of the big Brazilian cities just to work with the Xavante, said the same things about himself. Melatti (1983: 193-205) categorizes these people into four mentalities: The

---

<sup>135</sup> See section 1.2

romantic, the statistic, the bureaucratic, and the business mentality. According to him, the romantic see the Indians as courageous, active, and polite. The statistics do not think there should be a problem with the Indians since they are so few in numbers compared to the rest of the population. Being a minority, they believe they need protection and justice. The bureaucratic are the idealists preoccupied with the defense of indigenous peoples' rights, the protection of Indians, and respect for their traditions. The business mentality wants FUNAI to help the Indians incorporate into the national society and make them work for their protection and assistance from the state.

The non-Indians living close to the Indians without really knowing them, however, as most people in Barra do Garças, do not have much positive to say about the Xavante, and mark their ethnic boundaries through dichotomizations. The Xavante do the same thing with the non-Indians, although they do not express it as directly in interethnic interaction as the non-Indians do. They also use stereotype about their own group, but they are all positive in contrast to those they use on each other. Confirmation of prejudice in both groups has been the outcome so far.

## 4 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have analyzed the interethnic relations between the Xavante and non-Indians in Barra do Garças, Brazil based on data from a field study I conducted during a two months' stay in 2006. The Xavante were predominantly based in their villages without much interaction with non-Indians until mid 1900's. However, when the National Foundation of the Indian (FUNAI) withdrew its officials from the indigenous reserves in the 1980's, the Xavante under the protection of the FUNAI office in Barra do Garças had to start coming into town to settle their problems or when in need of something from town. This resulted in increased interethnic interaction between Xavante and non-Indians in Barra do Garças.

The interaction mostly occurs in the public arena, at the FUNAI office, and the Indian Health House. Young Xavante living in town also interact with non-Indians in school. In accordance with earlier observations by Casagrande (1988) in Ecuador and by Nagata (1971) in the United States, the Xavante also seem restricted by unwritten boundaries defined by non-Indians.

Through my account of stories, narratives, the lack of knowledge, the limited private and social interethnic interaction, the work of institutions and organizations, and indigenous peoples' rights in Brazil, I have tried to explain why interethnic relations are as they are today. As a result of the limited private and social interaction, attitudes with its roots in history and narratives are not given the chance to be reinterpreted, which according to symbolic interactionism is a main aspect of interaction. Old attitudes reinforced by stories and scattered observations seem more relevant in interaction than reinterpretation of the situation.

I have described interethnic interaction between Xavante and non-Indians to be superficial, non-personal, and characterized by its uniplex form. Again, this description is in accordance with Nagata and Casagrande's earlier research in similar contexts. The interethnic relations in Barra do Garças further reflect attitudes based on negative stereotypes. Non-Indian fear, tolerance, prejudice, and mistrust vis-à-vis the Xavante is discrete at first sight in public places, but more pronounced with a closer look on their behavior. There is also Xavante stereotyping, prejudice, and mistrust towards non-Indians, although perhaps more explicitly expressed when they are on their own than what I have been able to capture in this study.

The two ethnic groups mainly classify each other through what Eidheim (1971) calls 'dichotomization', using stereotypes to characterize, and create a distance to the members of the other group by claiming they are what they are not. They categorize each other as Indians and whites, as confirmed by Garfield (2001), and apply the stereotypes to these categories. This practice is also recognized by Braroe (1975) in his earlier study of such relations in Canada.

The non-Indians' fear might have its origin in history, but is upheld through stories and stereotypes presenting the Xavante as unpredictable and aggressive, but also because of their appearance and symbols communicated through posture, gesture and approach, as highlighted also in the case of Ecuador by Casagrande (1988), resulting in interpretations of them as tough, self-confident and unpredictable. Respect and tolerance based on fear, however, does not imply that non-Indians accept the Xavante. What I see as a lack of knowledge and misinformation is also decisive when it comes to upholding interethnic relations and attitudes as they are today. Non-Indians are ignorant of the Xavante's tradition and culture, and instead of seeking correct information, they make conclusions based on scattered observations, narratives, and stories. Even if they did want to broaden their understanding of the Xavante, literature is basically inaccessible, and non-Indians are not adequately educated about Indians, which may be seen as a rights violation of the ILO Convention No. 169 ratified by Brazil in 2002.

Discrimination is widespread in both groups, but seems more apparent among non-Indians. This may however be an inaccurate observation, as I did not get to visit the Xavante villages and observe how the expression of discriminatory attitudes takes place on their own ground. This should be done in case of any further studies of this relationship. Nevertheless, discrimination has more consequences for the dominated Xavante than the non-Indians. Seeing discrimination as unfair or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, one must agree there is discrimination of the Xavante in Barra do Garças. Discrimination today is not as clear as it was before, as it is practiced more indirectly through attitudes and discrete behavior than through violence or prohibition directed especially on Indians. In the labor market, however, discrimination towards the Xavante seems to take a more direct form, as they have troubles getting jobs. Further studies are needed to investigate whether discrimination is the only factor here, or if the Xavante do not want to work or only believe they would not get employed, hence do not apply. Some claim the Xavante discriminate the non-Indians by keeping to themselves. I see the latter more as an adaptive strategy emerged out of their cultural self-awareness, which implies an idea that interethnic interaction should be kept to a minimum to avoid negative cultural influence. Discrimination has decreased, but because the Xavante have adapted to the Brazilian society, and not because the non-Indians have accepted the Xavante as a distinct people.

Several adaptive strategies are used by Xavante to fit in as individuals into the Brazilian society, as individual strategies. In Barra do Garças attempts to assimilate and, as also described by Saugestad (1998) in the case of San people, blending in as best as they can through undercommunication of indigenous identity by removing indigenous public symbols in town is common, especially among those living in town. The latter is not because they lack pride in their ethnic identity, but rather a result of experienced negative consequences when expressed. Baroe has (1975) similarly argued that Indians in Canadian towns try to appear as to have a purpose, hide, and play down what is considered unacceptable by non-Indians. On the other side, he has also recognized that this is usually a superficial individual adjustment. Collectively they upheld strong Indian identity and distinctiveness, which also seems to be the case of the Xavante.

The Xavante, especially those coming into town from the reserves, also mark their ethnic boundaries and maintain their cultural distinctiveness, which is a collective strategy. E.g. through avoidance, appearance, and attitudes. Another collective strategy they use is to educate the young to learn how to match non-Indian 'game rules'. Casagrande (1988) has argued there is a rule of social distance among Indians in Ecuador. This is also evident among the Xavante in their relations to non-Indians.

Within symbolic interactionism, it is held that people's perspectives change during interaction. I believe perspectives often do not change in interaction, because non-Indians and Indians judge the other based on stereotypes. This concurs with Locke and Johnston's (2001) views that people only take what confirm their beliefs into account in interaction. They do not seem willing to have their perspectives changed, and are not interested to do something about their lack of knowledge. I also think this has to do with the frequency and quality of interethnic interaction, because when they interact so seldom face to face, they do not learn to trust each other over time, and it might therefore be easier to keep the old perspectives. With the people at FUNAI, the missionaries, and the other organizations, however, changes in perspectives seem more likely to occur, as they interact face to face more frequently and get to know each other on a different level. They seem to reinterpret their new knowledge of each other, and as presented, these non-Indians have different views on reality when it comes to the Xavante than other non-Indians. Increased interethnic interaction in settings where the members of the two groups would get to know each other might therefore improve their relations and attitudes.

Today, the Xavante do not want to mix with non-Indians because they want to remain Xavante and as non-influenced by non-Indians as possible. It also seems they try to avoid non-Indians when in town to steer clear of unpleasant situations that might occur in interethnic interaction, e.g. 'mutual discomfiture' when entering places they are not welcome. Murphy (1964) claimed there is a

tendency to create a distance to others to avoid threatening interaction. This seems to be the case with both groups. Non-Indians do not want to mix because of the lack of knowledge, the stories, and fear, leading to mistrust, prejudice, and stereotypes. As Saugestad (1998) argues in the case of the San people, the majority is ignorant of San cultural practices. As Braroe (1975) has also argued, non-Indians withdraw from places Indians are present to avoid them. A different social code for interaction is also a challenge today in interethnic interaction. As demonstrated by Braroe (1975) in the case of Canada, Indians tend not to practice small talk, but are rather direct in interaction with non-Indians. The Xavante have similar tendencies.

As a group, the Xavante are not assimilated into the national society. There are however cases of individual assimilation. They are also not completely integrated according to Eriksen's (1998) definition, as the public institutions they participate in are especially set up for them. They have their own schools more or less adjusted to their culture, and the health care they receive is administered by the National Health Foundation (FUNASA) exclusively created for the Indians. Furthermore, they are not dealt with by the normal police like any other non-Indian citizen, as only the federal police is allowed to deal with Indians. Nevertheless, these are all public institutions that they participate in, and they have preserved their Indian identity and culture at the same time. One may therefore say they are partly integrated. Considering the definition of integration in the Indian Statute, which in fact may be criticized for confusing integration with assimilation, the Xavante are not integrated because they are not incorporated into the national society and recognized in the full exercise of civil rights, as it seems they have to sign away their rights in the Indian Statute to achieve the latter.

As Niezen (2003) claims to be common among indigenous peoples, the Xavante also want both self-determination and to participate in the national community on the same level as non-Indians, but with special indigenous rights. Hence, they want to be different and equal at the same time. As Saugestad (1998) claims, states have difficulties with finding a balance between equal rights and treatment for all citizens and indigenous peoples' special needs that the non-Indian population can agree upon. The non-Indians of Brazil seem to be of the opinion that if the Indians want to participate in the Brazilian society, they must do so on equal terms as the rest of the population. Therefore, they tend to argue that Indians' duties as citizens must be the same as theirs, and that they cannot have special rights and get special treatment from the state that other non-Indians would have needed just as much. A result of this, together with discrimination, has in many cases resulted in that Indians' only way to integrate into the national community has been to take on the role as the lowest class in a class hierarchy. This is a great challenge the Xavante face in Barra do Garças today.

The Xavante are not well informed of their rights. Still, the indigenous peoples' rights seem to have negatively affected ethnic relations between non-Indian and Xavante in Barra do Garças, because they disturb the non-Indians' notion of equality discussed above. The Xavante's special treatment seems to increase non-Indian resentment and prejudice towards them, and the classification of them as lazy is reinforced as they claim the state provide the Indians with all they need without them doing anything in return. What Saugestad (1998) calls 'positive discrimination' turns negative for the Xavante in this sense. The apparently unsurmountable problems related to the notion of equality among non-Indian Brazilians, as described by Neves de H. Barbosa (1995) and Oakes and Haslam (2001) is therefore an evident problem in Barra do Garças.

In Barra do Garças, the organizations working with the Xavante are FUNAI and FUNASA, and the other organizations connected to FUNASA, which are ONT, FUBRA, and the Indian Health House. Missionaries also work with the Xavante, but they do so within the reserves, and not in town. These organizations' work seem to create relatively good relations between most of its non-Indian functionaries and the Xavante, but not with non-Indians in general. However, there are still asymmetrical relations between them, as they only exist because the Indians are dependent on their help. Stories told by non-Indian functionaries, and the fact that non-Indians are certain they do so much more for the Xavante than they actually do, reinforce prejudiced attitudes. Also, when the organizations do not do what they are supposed to according to law or their own promises, they enforce Xavante mistrust of non-Indians.

My research has a limited focus on Xavante women, who are less present in town and seem to have much less interethnic interaction with non-Indians than their male counterparts. Further studies should therefore have a focus on the Xavante women's situation. Unemployment among Xavante should also be more carefully investigated to get more accurate details. To see things from yet another perspective, it would also be interesting to study interethnic interaction within the Xavante reserves and with the Xavante neighbors.

The Xavante seem to have given up trying to make a change within Barra do Garças, and rather skip this link and go straight to the regional FUNAI office in Goiânia or to the FUNAI headquarter in Brasília. They also form alliances with different nongovernmental organizations there, calling for their help and fulfillment of their rights to improve their living conditions in the reserves. This might not result in improved interethnic relations at the local level, perhaps in fact the contrary, but since the Xavante also seem to prefer to maintain a social distance to non-Indians, what seem to matter the most for them is rather better healthcare, education, and alternative ways to enter the national economy. An improvement of education and healthcare is the responsibility of the municipality and

FUNASA. This arrangement has only been in function for seven years, and with time, as well as pressure from the Xavante and their allies, improvements are not beyond the realm of possibility. To find alternative ways to enter the national economy, however, will probably be a more challenging task as discrimination in the labor market prevails. The outcome of the discussion on a reform of the Indian Statute will also be decisive in this matter, as it contains restrictions on Indians' access to loans and engagements in paid labor. Moreover, the Xavante still have difficulties with incorporating implications of social change and modernization into their culture, especially when it comes to adjusting their tradition of sharing and collectivism to an economy based on individual cash accumulation.

## 5 References

Augoustinos, M. & Reynolds, K. J. (2001). Prejudice, Racism, and Social Psychology. In Augoustinos, M. & Reynolds, K. J. (eds.) *Understanding Prejudice, Racism, and Social Conflict*, pp. 1-23. London, SAGE Publications.

Barot, R., Fenton, S. & Bradley, H. (1999). *Ethnicity, Gender and Social Change*. Houndmills, Macmillan.

*Barra do Garças*. Wikipedia. Accessed 14.03.2007 on World Wide Web:  
[http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barra\\_do\\_Gar%C3%A7as](http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barra_do_Gar%C3%A7as).

Barth, F. (1969). Introduction. In Barth, F. (ed.) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, The Social Organization of Culture Difference* pp. 9-38. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.

Blumer, H. (1962). Society as Symbolic Interactionism. In Rose, A. M. (ed.) *Human Behaviour and Social Processes*, pp. 179-192, Houghton Mifflin.

Barroe, N. W. (1975). *Indian & White: Self Image and Interaction in a Canadian Plains Community*. Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Bruner, E. M. (1973). The Missing Tins of Chicken: A Symbolic Interactionist Approach to Culture Change. *Ethos*, 1 (2): 219-238.

Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods*. 2nd. ed. New York, Oxford University Press.

*C169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989*. (1989). International Labour Organization.

Casagrande, J. B. (1988). Strategies for Survival: The Indians of Highland Ecuador. In Heath, D. B. (ed.) *Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America*, pp. 93-107. Prospect Heights, Waveland Press, Inc.

Charon, J. M. (1989). *Symbolic Interactionism: An Introduction, An Interpretation, An Integration*. 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall.

*Cherokee*. (2007). Encyclopedia Britannica.

Coimbra, C. E. A., Flowers, N. M., Salzano, F. M. & Santos, R. V. (2002). *The Xavánte in Transition: Health, Ecology, and Bioanthropology in Central Brazil*. Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press.

*Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil de 1988*. (1988). Subchefia para Assuntos Jurídicos.

Dandan, V. (2001). Racial Discrimination and Vulnerable Groups: Some Instances of Light and Shadow. In The Division of Human Rights; Democracy; Peace and Tolerance Sector of Social and

Human Sciences; UNESCO (ed.) *United to Combat Racism*, pp. 191-200. Paris, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Davis, S. H. (1977). *Victims of the Miracle: Development and the Indians of Brazil*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Despres, L. A. (1975). Ethnicity and Resource Competition in Guyanese Society. In Despres, L. A. (ed.) *Ethnicity and Resource Competition in Plural Societies*, pp. 87-117. Hague, Mouton Publishers.

Eidheim, H. (1971). *Aspects of the Lappish Minority Situation*. Occasional Papers. Oslo, Department of Social Anthropology.

Eriksen, T. H. (1998). *Små steder - store spørsmål*. 2nd. ed. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.

*Estatuto do Índio*. (1973). Brazil.

*Fundação Nacional do Índio*. Brasília, Ministério da Justiça. Accessed 05.09.2006 on World Wide Web: <http://www.funai.gov.br/>.

García-Alix, L. (2005). International Processes. In D. Vinding, S. S. (ed.) *The Indigenous World 2005*, pp. 515-564. Copenhagen, IWGIA.

Garfield, S. (2001). *Indigenous Struggle at the Heart of Brazil: State Policy, Frontier Expansion, and the Xavante Indians, 1937-1988*. Durham, Duke University Press.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York, Basic Books.

Giaccaria, B. (2000). *Xavante Ano 2000: Reflexões pedagógicas e antropológicas*. Campo Grande, MS, Editora UCDB.

Herskovits, M. J., Linton, R. & Redfield, R. (1935). A Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation. *Man*, 35 (Oct., 1935): 145-148.

*História e Política Indigenista*. Brasília, FUNAI. Accessed 07.03.2007 on World Wide Web: <http://www.funai.gov.br/quem/historia/politica.htm>.

Hoselitz, B. F. (1995). Non-Economic Barriers to Economic Development. In Corbridge, S. (ed.) *Development Studies: A Reader*. London, Arnold.

Instituto Socioambiental. (2000). *O Atual Estatuto é uma Lei Velha*. Brasília. Accessed 20.04.2007 on World Wide Web: <http://www.socioambiental.org/pib/portugues/estatutoindio/atualestat.htm>.

*Justiça Devolve Terra a Índios Xavante*. (2007). Brasília, FUNAI. Accessed 07.03.2007 on World Wide Web: [http://www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/noticias/1\\_semestre\\_2007/Fevereiro/un0701\\_002.htm](http://www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/noticias/1_semestre_2007/Fevereiro/un0701_002.htm).

Kvale, S. (1997). *Det kvalitative forskningsintervju*. Oslo, Ad Notam Gyldendal.

Leeuwenberg, F. & Salimon, M. (1999). *Para sempre A'uwê: Os Xavante na balança das civilizações*. Brasília, UNICEF.

Linden, E. (1991). Cover Story. *Time*, 23.09.1991.

- Locke, V. & Johnston, L. (2001). Stereotyping and Prejudice: A Social Cognitive Approach. In Augoustinos, M. & Reynolds, K. J. (eds.) *Understanding Prejudice, Racism, and Social Conflict*, pp. 107-125. London, SAGE Publications.
- Marés de Souza, C. F. J. (1994). On Brazil and Its Indians. In Cott, D. L. V. (ed.) *Indigenous Peoples and Democracy in Latin America*, pp. 213-231. New York, St. Martin's Press.
- Martínez Cobo, J. R. (1987). Study of the Problem of Discrimination Against Indigenous Peoples. New York, United Nations.
- Maybury-Lewis, D. (1988). *The Savage and the Innocent*. 2nd. ed. Boston, Beacon Press.
- Maybury-Lewis, D. (1991). Becoming Indian in Lowland South America. In G. Urban, J. S. (ed.) *Nation-States and Indians in Latin America*, pp. 207-233. Austin, University of Texas Press.
- Melatti, J. C. (1983). O Índio e o Civilizado: O que um Pensa do Outro. In *Índios do Brasil*, pp. 193-205. São Paulo, Hucitec.
- Monroe, K. R. & Patterson, M. (1998). Narratives in Political Science. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 1: 315-331.
- Nagata, S. (1971). The Reservation Community and the Urban Community: Hopi Indians of Moenkopi. In Waddel, J. O. & Watson, M. O. (eds.) *The American Indian in Urban Society*, pp. 114-160. Boston, Little, Brown and Company.
- Neves de H. Barbosa, L. (1995). The Brazilian Jeitinho: An Exercise in National Identity. In DaMatta, R. A. & Hess, D. J. (eds.) *The Brazilian Puzzle*, pp. 35-48. New York, Colombia University Press.
- Nielsen, F. S. (1996). *Nærmere kommer du ikke... Håndbok i antropologisk feltarbeid*. Tromsø, Fagbokforlaget.
- Niezen, R. (2003). *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Novaes, S. C. (1997). *The Play of Mirrors: The Representation of Self as Mirrored in the Other*. Translations from Latin America series. Austin, Tex., University of Texas Press.
- Número de Alunos e Escolas Indígenas Aumenta 50% em Quatro Anos*. (2007). Brasília, FUNAI. Accessed 07.03.2007 on World Wide Web: [http://www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/noticias/1\\_semestre\\_2007/janeiro/un0109\\_001.htm](http://www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/noticias/1_semestre_2007/janeiro/un0109_001.htm).
- Oakes, P. J. & Haslam, S. A. (2001). Distortion V. Meaning: Categorization on Trial for Inciting Intergroup Hatred. In Augoustinos, M. & Reynolds, K. J. (eds.) *Understanding Prejudice, Racism, and Social Conflict*, pp. 179-194. London, SAGE Publications.
- Os Índios*. Brasília, FUNAI. Accessed 07.03.2007 on World Wide Web: <http://www.funai.gov.br/indios/conteudo.htm>.
- Parellada, A. (2006). Brazil. In Stidsen, S. (ed.) *The Indigenous World 2006*, pp. 190-200. Copenhagen, IWGIA.

- Polanco, H. D. (1997). *Indigenous Peoples in Latin America: The Quest for Self-Determination*. Boulder, Westview Press.
- Potter, R. B., Binns, T., Elliott, J. A. & Smith, D. (2004). *Geographies of Development*. 2nd ed. Harlow, Pearson Education Limited.
- Preece, J., Rogers, Y. & Sharp, H. (2007). *Interaction Design: Beyond Human-Computer Interaction*. 2nd ed. Chichester, Wiley.
- Ramos, A. (1998). *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press.
- Robinson, J., Sanson, A. & Witenberg, R. (2001). The Socialization of Tolerance. In Augoustinos, M. & Reynolds, K. J. (eds.) *Understanding Prejudice, Racism, and Social Conflict*, pp. 73-88. London, SAGE Publications.
- Sahlins, M. D. (1972). *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago, Aldine.
- Santos, D. (n.d.). *Índios Xavante Criam Coordenação para Defesa dos Direitos das Comunidades*. Brasília, FUNAI. Accessed 07.03.2007 on World Wide Web: [www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/materias/xav\\_cddc.htm](http://www.funai.gov.br/ultimas/materias/xav_cddc.htm).
- Saugestad, S. (1998). *The Inconvenient Indigenous: Remote Area Development in Botswana, Donor Assistance, and the First People of the Kalahari*. Tromsø, University of Tromsø, Faculty of Social Science.
- Severin, T. (1973). *The Horizon Book of Vanishing Primitive Man*, American Heritage Publisher.
- Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. London, SAGE Publications.
- Simpson, J. A. & Weiner, E. (1989). *The Oxford English dictionary*. 2nd ed. Oxford, Clarendon Press. 20 b. p.
- Snyder, P. Z. (1971). The Social Environment of the Urban Indian. In Waddel, J. O. & Watson, M. O. (eds.) *The American Indian in Urban Society*, pp. 206-243. Boston, Little, Brown and Company.
- Stavenhagen, R. (1998). Indigenous Peoples: Emerging International Actors. In Young, C. (ed.) *Ethnic Diversity and Public Policy: A Comparative Inquiry*. Basingstoke, Palgrave.
- Thagaard, T. (2002). *Systematikk og innlevelse: En innføring i kvalitativ metode*. 2nd ed. Oslo, Fagbokforlaget.
- Turner, T. (1991). Representing, Resisting, Rethinking. In Stocking Jr., G. W. (ed.) *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*, pp. 285-313. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press.
- Van den Berghe, P. L. (1968). Ethnic Membership and Cultural Change in Guatemala. In Heath, D. B. (ed.) *Contemporary Cultures and Societies of Latin America*, pp. 316-327. Prospect Heights, Waveland Press, Inc. .
- Varjão, V. (1985). *Barra do Garças: Migalhas de sua História*. Brasília, Senado Federal - Centro Gráfico.

Veja. (2006). Tem Índio na Suíça? *Editor Abril*, 1967 (30): 56.

Walker, I. (2001). The Changing Nature of Racism: From Old to New? In Augoustinos, M. & Reynolds, K. J. (eds.) *Understanding Prejudice, Racism, and Social Conflict*, pp. 24-42. London, SAGE Publications.

Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.



## Appendix – List of anonymous interviewees

### Xavante:

- **Armando**  
Middle-aged, lives in town, works for FUNASA, has wife and children in the village.
- **Flávio**  
In his thirties, has lived most his life in Barra do Garças with his family, and still does.  
Does some small tasks for FUNAI.
- **José**  
Young student living in town.
- **Matheus**  
Young student brought up in town.
- **Lucas**  
Middle aged man living in the São Marcos reserve
- **Maria**  
Elderly woman living in the São Marcos reserve
- **Tomás**  
In his thirties, works as a driver for FUNASA, lives in town, but has wife and children in a village.
- **The village chief**  
In his thirties, lives in a reserve

### Non-Indians:

- **Father Raphael**  
Salesian missionary who has worked with the Xavante for many years
- **Pedro**  
FUNAI official who has worked with the Xavante for many years both within and outside Xavante reserves
- **Leonardo**  
FUNAI official who has worked with the Xavante for many years both within and outside Xavante reserves

- **João**  
Elderly local who has lived most his life in Barra do Garças
- **Tatiane**  
Young shop attendant who was brought up and lives in Barra do Garças.
- **Fernanda**  
Young stay-at-home mother who was brought up and lives in Barra do Garças
- **Nurse at the Indian Health House**  
Young woman who has worked many years with the Xavante both within the reserves and at the Indian Health House
- **Sandra**  
FUNAI functionary who has worked many years with the Xavante