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## Comments

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## ***A'ãma Mrémé: A playful window into A'uwẽ-Xavante language, cognition and social organization***

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**Abstract:** *A'ãma mrémé*, or *a'ãma* speech, spoken by incumbents of a special ceremonial role within central Brazilian *A'uwẽ-Xavante* society, illustrates Joel Sherzer's argument regarding the centrality of speech play to both linguistic and social analysis. *A'ãma mrémé* is a ludic code variant, a system of lexical substitution primarily at the level of nouns and verbs, spoken exclusively by *a'ãma*. Morphological analysis of *a'ãma mrémé* reveals the existence of conceptual categories and perceptions that are not otherwise linguistically transparent. Further, *a'ãma*, who indexically make their ceremonial identity and role salient through the everyday practice of *ãma* speech, add an additional layer of complexity to *A'uwẽ-Xavante*'s complicated dualistic system of social organization. This complexity, heretofore overlooked by anthropologists of *A'uwẽ-Xavante*, becomes apparent through attention to socially situated discourse and verbal arts. *A'ãma mrémé* enriches and adds complexity to understandings of *A'uwẽ-Xavante* language, thought, and social organization. It is, as Sherzer contends, a place where language, cognition, perception, worldview and social structure come together in distilled form.

*A'ãma mrémé*, or *a'ãma* speech, spoken by incumbents of a special ceremonial role within central Brazilian *A'uwẽ-Xavante* society, beautifully illustrates Sherzer's argument about the significance of speech play to both linguistic and social analysis, and demonstrates the importance of ethnographic attention to contextually situated discourse, especially speech play and verbal art. Sherzer (2002:1) observes that speech play "provides implicit and explicit metacommentary – in the form of both the praxis of everyday life and artistic performance – on systems and structure, social and cultural as well as interactional and (socio)linguistic." *A'ãma mrémé* elucidates how understandings of speech play contribute in important ways to broader understandings of *A'uwẽ-Xavante* linguistic, cognitive/conceptual, and social processes.

Sherzer notes that, like play in general, speech play has tended to be trivialized within both anthropology and linguistics. A significant body of Sherzer's work (eg., 1975, 2002) counters this marginalization underscoring ways that attention to speech play reveals local understandings of language structure, topics that are salient to speakers, and dimensions of social organization. In this essay, I show that morphological analysis of *a'ãma mrémé* reveals the existence of conceptual categories and perceptions that are not otherwise transparent within Xavante language (*A'uwẽ mrémé*). I also show that *a'ãma*, who indexically make their ceremonial identity and role salient through the everyday practice of *a'ãma* speech, add a further layer of complexity to Xavante's immensely complicated dualistic social organization. This layer, heretofore overlooked by anthropologists of *A'uwẽ-Xavante*, becomes apparent when one pays attention to socially situated discourse and verbal arts.

### **A'uwẽ-Xavante**

*A'uwẽ*, known in Portuguese as Xavante, are a central Brazilian Gê speaking people. Today approximately 18,000 *A'uwẽ-Xavante* reside in over 200 autonomous communities located in legally demarcated Indigenous Territories (TIs) dispersed across eastern Mato Grosso state. *A'uwẽ-Xavante* are well-known within social anthropology for their complex, intersecting systems of dual organization (Maybury-Lewis 1974). Their society consists of multiple cross-cutting binaries: an agamous moiety system comprised of eight alternating age-sets cross cuts a patrilineal exogamous moiety system. For men only, a further set of binaries within the *Wai'a* complex further cross-cuts the agamous and exogamous moieties. An individual thus belongs to either the exogamous *poridza'õno* or *õwawẽ* moieties by virtue of patrilineal descent and, along with members of both exogamous moieties, to one of eight age sets that is nested within one of two agamous moieties. Boys are further assigned to one of two *Wai'a* groupings according to

physical and spiritual attributes. Various activities, including expressive practices such as song and dance, bring these groupings into being and create social and affective ties among members (Graham 1995). Practices at each organizational level establish connections that mitigate divisions at other levels.

Most A'uwẽ-Xavante are monolingual speakers of A'uwẽ *mrémé* (Xavante speech) but bilingualism in Portuguese, Brazil's national language, is steadily increasing. A'uwẽ *mrémé* – a branch of the central Gê linguistic family -- is, in fact, a rich heteroglossia characterized by a variety of artistic verbal styles, age-graded expressive practices, and sets of grammatical features associated with life cycle phases, particularly the transition to adult status -- initiation for boys, birth of the first child for girls – which is marked by the use of honorific person marking and some lexical variants (Graham 1990; also 1995). Linguistic (and social) variation also exists across communities. There are, for example, distinct regional accents and lexical variants, forms of youth slang, and differences in song (*da-ño're*) performance style.

### **A'ãma Mrémé**

A'ãma *mrémé* is a ludic code variant recognized by all adult (and many children) A'uwẽ across Xavante TIs (see Graham 1983). Its use is restricted to a'ãma although many adults can, when asked, supply some a'ãma words. People generally defer to a'ãma, however. Some variation within the a'ãma lexicon exists across communities. Without exception, A'uwẽ-Xavante people find a'ãma *mrémé* to be extremely funny. It is as if, by speaking a'ãma *mrémé*, a'ãma tickle their interlocutors' ears. A'uwẽ find it especially hilarious when I, a non-native speaker, use a'ãma *mrémé*. The production of a'ãma *mrémé*, which already stands out against the backdrop of everyday speech and is thus poetic in Jakobson's sense (1960), is totally unexpected from someone who is not A'uwẽ. My dropping a'ãma words into discourse is not

taken to be a violation or offensive. Rather it is uproariously funny; sometimes people provoke me to utter a'ãma words and phrases for comedic entertainment.

As a system of lexical substitution primarily at the level of nouns and verbs, a'ãma mrémé is somewhat analogous to the Djirbal “Mother-in-Law” code, *Dyalnuy* (Dixon 1972).<sup>1</sup> Like *Dyalnuy*, a'ãma mrémé has a reduced lexicon; not every A'uwẽ mrémé noun and verb has a corresponding *a'ãma mrémé* equivalent. Its use involves no syntactical alternations. Unlike most play languages, a'ãma mrémé is not generated by a series of definable rules (see Sherzer 1975; 2002). A'ãma speech does however have distinctive phonetic regularity in that all a'ãma mrémé words begin with [a]; many begin with [ai], [aiwa], [ats] or its phonological variant [adz].<sup>2</sup> The phonetic regularity of word initial [a] together with the unique a'ãma lexicon, draws attention to language form, causing the poetic function of a'ãma speech to be so prominent that its distinctive acoustic shape becomes a focus of attention. Characteristic of speech play as a form of verbal art, in a'ãma mrémé language itself is on display (Sherzer 1975:19, 2002:9).

The a'ãma role, effectively a ceremonial parent or guardian to the pre-initiate boys who reside in the bachelors' hut, is elected, not inherited, and passes across generations, generally between individuals within the same family.<sup>3</sup> Taking on the a'ãma role is considered to be a generous act and something of a burden. Both males and females can be a'ãma, but today women a'ãma are rare. Since I began my research in 1981, I have met only one female a'ãma.<sup>4</sup> Most individuals learn the special code by living in close proximity to senior a'ãma who use it in everyday interactions. Exposure thus dates to early childhood. Goiãno, an a'ãma who lives in Pimentel Barbosa, grew up listening to his MM who, according to Xavante's uxorilocal residence pattern, lived in the same household. Rômulo, an a'ãma in Idzö'uhu (Abelinha, TI Sangradouro), learned a'ãma mrémé listening to his FB who also lived in the same household.

Rômulo's F, Top'tiro, who did not assume the a'ãma role, is also knowledgeable since he heard it, as did his a'ãma brother, spoken by his F, an a'ãma. Of the a'ãma I know, only Lino (TI São Marcos) has no direct relationship with an ascendant a'ãma kin, and no elder a'ãma (*a'ãma-rada*) lived in his natal household. Lino learned listening to elder a'ãma "speaking here and there." He paid close attention so that "someday he could become an a'ãma." Lino reported that elder a'ãma support new ones and "sometimes gather together to teach the code to successors." Learning and perfecting competence extends well into adulthood. To answer some of the questions I posed, both Romûlo and Lino, who are in their forties and fifties, consulted with senior a'ãma and Top'tiro, an a'ãma's son.

#### Formal characteristics and revelation of conceptual categories

Some a'ãma lexical items bear some formal morphological resemblance to their A'uwẽ mremé equivalents.<sup>5</sup> Among these for instance are: *'retsu* (*atsu*, palm frond); *uiwede* (*aiwede*, buriti palm, *Mauritia flexuosa*); *aipró* (*wedepró*, black/coffee); *aiwa* (*höiwa*, sky); *aiprépé* (*ĩpré*, red); *ai'udza* (*da-udza*, clothing); *aiwahuré* (*upuré*, mosquito); *adzö* (*nodzö*, corn); *adömhi* (*uhi*, bean); *aibutuhi* (*wahi*, snake); *aiwa'u* (*u*, still water); *aibu'wa* (*tibu'wa*, bloodletting); *ané* (*poné*, deer), *aiwaprédzü* (*ětēprédzü*, money). A great number of a'ãma words bear no resemblance to their everyday equivalents. Among a'ãma nouns that do not resemble words they substitute, for example, are: *atsi'ridi* (*dzö*, nut); *ö* (*ai'wã'u*, water); *wede* (*aiwapti*, tree); *airãihöri* (*buru*, garden); *anomridzé* (*da-para*<sup>6</sup>, foot), *aiwadza'e* (*waptsã*, dog), *ai'ãputsi* (*da-wawa*, sung lament); *aiwahöpré* (*udzöne*, squash), *atsérérã* (*a'ódó*, macaúba palm fruit, *acrocomia aculeata*); *atsimi'rãmi* (*tsip'édzé*, knife); *atsabu* (*'ri*, house/village); *atsa'õno* (*marã*, forest); *aihidza'ére* (*ma*, rhea), *ai're* (*mi*, firewood); *adze-di*<sup>7</sup> (*mram-di*, hunger); *ai'redze* (*mo'õni*, edible root); *adu* (*upmrẽ*, gourd); *aiparapitsu'udu* (*awaru*, horse); *aiwahirã* (*padi*, anteater);

*ai'rāihōrō* (*tsipahudu*, vulture); *ai'ui'éredzé* (*pi'utö*, pen); *atsōrō'a* (*abadzi*, cotton); *tã* (*api* or *aipini*, rain); *atsa* (*ti'a*, ground/dirt); *aipe* (*uhö*, wild pig); *atsa'éné* (*uhödö*, tapir); *atsumdzadadze* (*warĩ*, tobacco); *aiwanari* (*da-tsa*, food). The comparatively large number of a'ãma words that do not resemble their A'uwẽ equivalents underscores the importance of relatively intense exposure to a'ãma speech during childhood.

Some a'ãma words contain morphological marking that in some way relates to, or describes, perceived characteristics of their signifieds. Formal similarities among sets of a'ãma nouns provides formal metacommentary that points to the existence of cognitive groupings, semantic classes, or in some cases metaphorical relationships, that are not otherwise discernable in the standard lexicon. One set that clearly emerges through common morphological marking is a large group of fish and, although many fish species are formally marked as a group in A'uwẽ speech through common initial syllable “pe” -- *pehöire* (*matrixã*), *pedzató* (*peau*), *pewató* (*roba*), *pedzapódó* (*pacu*) – when we contemplate a'ãma *mrémé*, we see that Xavante consider the class of “fish” to be larger than those whose names begin with “pe”. In a'ãma *mrémé* a larger class of “fish” is marked “*atsarebe-*.” Notably, “-*tsarebe*” denotes “fin.” Thus, along with *atsarebehö're* (*pehöire*<sup>8</sup>), *astarebezató* (*pedzató*), *atsarebewató* (*pewató*), *atsarebedzapódó* (*pedzapódó*), that all begin in A'uwẽ *mrémé* with “pe”, we also find words for fish that do not begin with “pe.” For example, *wa'wa* (*piranha*) is *atsarebéwa'wa* and *dahirãpó* (sometimes *tsadahirãpó*) (*pintado*) is *atsereberãpó*. The generic word for fish, *tebe*, also fits here as *atsarebe*. It is worth noting too that these a'ãma fish variants retain recognizable morphological elements from their A'uwẽ *mrémé* equivalents, which follow “*atsarebe-*”. The basis of this larger class of fish appears to be anatomical, as *atsarebe* highlights the fin.

Similarly, a number of birds also constitute a class by virtue of their common a'ãma morphological marking “*atsaripi-*.” For example, *tsi'a* (chicken) is *atsaripi'a*; *utu'u* (dove) is *atsaripi're*; *tsi'u* (horned owl) is *atsaripi'rãihö'u* (also *aiprorótó're*) and *tsaripi'rãihö'u* (hawk) is *atsariptóró*. Notably, in the standard lexicon “*-tsaripi*” denotes “wing.” Like (finned) fish, the logic of this grouping is based on a shared anatomical feature.<sup>9</sup> It is possible that these regularities in formal marking serve a mnemonic function. They also point to the existence of semantic groupings. Certainly the existence of such formal morphological groupings in a'ãma *mrémé* supports Sherzer's (2002:9) observation that some aspects of cognitive and linguistic structure only emerge through the study of language use in verbally playful and artistic discourse.

Because the a'ãma lexicon is reduced, not all nouns and verbs have a'ãma equivalents and a number of semantic differences that are lexically distinctive in the standard code are collapsed. For example, a single a'ãma word, *aiprépé*, denotes three distinct objects/concepts that have the characteristic “red”: *bö* (urucum, *bixa orellana*); *ĩ-pré* (red color); and *'rada* (red macaw). Both “water” (*ö*) and “still water” (*u*) are *aiwa'u*. Several nouns having to do in some way with eating are marked *aiwanari-* (the a'ãma verb form for “to eat/drink”): *aiwanari-dzé* – where *-dzé* is instrumental -- is a'ãma for *da-dzadawa* (mouth), *da-nhip-'rada* (hand, also *aiwanari-'rada*), *pidza* (plate), and *tsihö* (spoon). The distinction between hunger (*mram di*, “*di*” is the stative marker) and thirst (*rubu di*) is reduced to *adzé di*; the commonality here is discomfort related to lack of food or drink. A'ãma *mrémé* also collapses a number of distinct lexical items related to vocal production: *da-mrémé* (speech), *da-ño're* (song), *da-wawa* (sung lament), *da-hörö* (shout, call) are all denoted in a'ãma by *ai'ãpu* (or *ai'ãputsi*). And logically, both *warã*, the central patio where the men's council occurs and *dahörö-dzé* (telephone, where –

*dzé* is the instrumental marker, literally “the instrument for calling”) in a’āma mrémé are *ai’āputsi-dzé*.

Socially significant age grade distinctions that are lexically distinguished are also collapsed in a’āma mrémé for both sexes, and especially for females. The A’uwē word for baby girl, *ba’ōno*, and young girl, *adzarudu*, is *atsi’ridi*. *Atsi’ridi*, modified with the addition of the diminutive “-re”, becoming *atsi’ridi-re*, is the a’āma word for more mature females of various age grades: *adaba* (bride), *tsoimba* (married female without children), and *pi’ō* (woman who has given birth).<sup>10</sup>



Figure 1. A’āma Sasão. Foto Laura R. Graham, 1999.

A’uwē, both men and women, find this label for females to be extraordinarily hilarious. A’āma Sasão, now deceased (see figure 1), always uttered this word with a chuckle and twinkle in his eye. I wondered what was so particularly funny about *atsi’ridi*. Since the a’āma word for

*bödödi* (road/path) is also *atsi'ridi*, I tried to discover, to no avail, if some metaphorical connections exist between females and roads or paths. When I learned that the a'āma word for *dzö*, nut, is also *atsi'ridi*, I realized that no connection exists between females and paths, and that the a'āma word for “female” and “path” is homonymic, which explains why my questions about females and paths drew blank looks. (There are, in fact, several homonyms within the a'āma corpus I have collected.)

For A'uwē, unlike English speakers, a connection exists between females and nuts. *Dzö* refers to “clitoris.” When Warodi told me the story of the boy who created the sea, he told how the boy chewed his mother's *dzö*, thinking it was a *babaçu* coconut. The *dzö* caused the boy's stomach to swell. Eventually it exploded, water gushed forth and created the sea (Graham 2000). *Atsi'ridi* is exceptionally humorous because, using their special code, a'āma openly refer to female genitalia, which is generally unacceptable. Since ethnographers -- typically ignoring the existence of homonyms in every language and the diachronic or other processes from which they emerge -- often unsuccessfully attempt to establish “semantic” connections between homonyms, it is noteworthy that in this special code -- an expressive modality generally overlooked or dismissed by linguists and ethnographers alike -- we find homonymy at work in the service of avoiding taboo, as is frequently the case (see, for example, Sung 1979).

### **Social Organization:**

A'āma serve, defend and represent the *wapté*, the group of pre-initiate boys who reside in the bachelors' hut for a period of 1-5 years, depending on the time of their induction. A'āma are senior guardians who counsel, advise, defend and ensure there is no strife among the boys who live apart from their families and the community. Male a'āma may also represent the *wapté* in

the *warã* men's council if there is a serious infraction, such as an illicit sexual liaison which is taboo at this lifecycle phase (see Ubutu 2018:88).

A'ãma are beloved. They are calm, peaceful, generous and considered very special. To compensate a'ãma for their commitment and services, the wapté are obliged to perform tasks or service for them. In 1981, when I first learned of the role, the wapté – members of the *sada'ro* age set -- were on a four-day hunting trip with their mentors *for* their a'ãma, Honorato and Marcos. At dawn and dusk each day the boys were away, Honorato and Marcos lay on sleeping mats in their homes keening their ceremonial laments, *da-wawa* (audio example Graham 1986). Their tuneful weeping mourned the boys' absence and expressed sorrow for the hardship they were enduring on the a'ãmas' behalf. A'ãma may also enlist the wapté to perform other services, such as clearing their gardens. As Lino stated, the wapté are their a'ãmas' "soldiers." Whenever the boys perform a service for their a'ãma, the a'ãma sing laments, *a'ãma-wawa*. Each *a'ãma* has his or her own unique lament. Performing this highly expressive verbal art form is emotionally and physically taxing. While the boys were away on their hunting trip, Honorato and Marcos both sang six to seven times, at approximately 20-minute intervals, for 3.5 to 4 hours at dawn and dusk, each day. They were hoarse and exhausted when the boys returned and deposited the game they had collected at their doorsteps, which the a'ãma then distributed to all households in the village.

A named age-set is formally constituted when a group of wapté pre-initiate boys is inducted into the bachelors' hut. Age-sets unite members of both exogamous moieties and thus mediate a fundamental social division. Each age-set fits into a group of three other named age-sets, an agamous moiety, whose bachelors' hut is always located on one side, or the other, of the village. Age-sets thus belong to an agamous moiety whose "*hö* (bachelor's hut) is on our side"

(see Graham 1995: 111). Successive groups of wapté are inducted into bachelors' huts located on opposite sides of the village such that new age-sets alternate between agamous moieties, among which considerable rivalry exists. Age-sets recycle so the system continually regenerates. Further, each age-set has a special relationship with the ascending age-set of its moiety, its sponsor or mentor age-set (*tsimnhohu*). Multiple activities, including ceremonial log races and song-dance performances, reinforce the solidarity between age-sets of the same agamous moieties and the opposition and rivalry between agamous moieties.

Figure 2.

ai'rere		ai'rere	
	ẽtẽpa		hõtõra
tirowa		tirowa	ẽtẽpa
	nodzõ'u		nodzõ'u
abare'u		abare'u	
	sada'ro		sada'ro
anarowa		anarowa	
	hõtõra		
ai'rere		ai'rere	hõtõra
	ẽtẽpa		ẽtẽpa
tirowa		tirowa	
	nodzõ'u		nodzõ'u
abare'u		abare'u	
	sada'ro		
		anarowa	

Figure 2 Caption: Western (Left) and Eastern (Right) Xavante Age-sets and a'ãma cross-cutting relations.

A'ãma cut across the agamous moiety divide. A'ãma belong to ascendant age-sets of the opposite agamous moiety than the group they defend and keen for. The wapté in Aldeina, for whom Honorato and Marco keened, belonged to the *sada'ro* age-set. Honorato and Marco were both *tirowa* of the opposing agamous moiety. In Pimentel Barbosa, Sãsão, *ai'rere*, was a'ãma

for the sada'ro. Rômulo, hõtöra, serves the abare'u and Lino, ai'rere, is a'ãma for the ëtëpa. Goiano, nodzö'u, is a'ãma for abare'u. The diagram (Figure 2) shows the arrangement of age-sets into agamous moieties and illustrates how a'ãma cross-cut the agamous moiety division. Note that the sequence of age-sets varies between what are known as the Eastern and Western Xavante, but the basic principle remains.

Painted entirely in black, a'ãma publicly perform a'ãma-wawa during the wapté's initiation ceremonials. Most certainly "the representative" who wept during one of the initiation rituals that Maybury-Lewis mentions (1974: 252) was a'ãma. Because Maybury-Lewis's focus was on social organization rather than verbal art and discourse, he failed to recognize the a'ãma's significance to the very social structures he sought to describe. A'ãma provide an additional layer of complexity that mitigates the dualism of the agamous moiety system that Maybury-Lewis attempted to understand. Ideally each age set would be honored with an a'ãma from each exogamous moiety, as was the case of Honorato and Marcos. However, not every age-set has even one a'ãma. A'ãma are precious and rare, at least since I have studied Xavante. This rarity adds to their specialness.

A'ãma are seldom publicly *visible* as a'ãma. They appear as a'ãma, with special body paint, only at unique moments during the male initiation cycle. A'ãma are also rarely audible to the broad public, only when they keen. However, by virtue of their special code, a'ãma are audible everyday in quotidian interactions. "We, *aiwaihöpré tĩma ãna, dure atsaripi'a te aiwanari da hã,*" a'ãma Sasão said to his wife as we sat by the fire in his house. In standard a'uwe mreme, his utterance would be: *we, udzöne tĩma ãna, dure tsi'a te rene da* (Over here, bring me some squash and chicken for me to eat). Grabbing his toddling grandson who tottered too close to the fire, Sasão lovingly scolded, using a'ma mréme. In ways such as this a'ãma

mréme is common within the domestic sphere. It circulates routinely in everyday conversations. It is a playful linguistic resource available to those with a generous heart and lively sense of humor to pick up if they are so moved. Lino now regularly sends me a'ãma mréme messages via WhatsApp and Facebook demonstrating that, even though a'ãma are exceptional and rare, this special code is alive and well, and circulating in new and creative ways via new media technologies.

Each time the a'ãma uses this special code, the unique speech variants mark the speaker as a'ãma. The code's indexical value derives from the fact that, even though others may have significant passive knowledge, only a'ãma use it in social interaction. A'ãma speech calls attention to the a'ãma role, enriching and adding complexity to social organization. It also points to the group the a'ãma represents, also highlighting the agamous moiety system which a'ãma bisect. When there are two a'ãma, ideally one from each exogamous moiety, a'ãma mréme and keening draw attention to both the exogamous and agamous moieties, and also ways they complement and intersect. A'ãma mrémé thus reveals greater complexity within Xavante social system than previously recognized and highlights unrecognized patterns of Xavante thought and perception, and also taboo. Thus, as a playfully creative discursive mode, a'ãma mrémé beautifully illustrates Sherzer's (2002) argument that "artistically creative language constitutes the richest point of intersection between language, culture, society and individual expression." A'ãma mréme is indeed is a place where language, cognition, perception, worldview *and* social structure come together in distilled form.

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<sup>1</sup> A'ãma speech also entails some person marking variation, in pronouns and clitics which are grammatically loaded nodes indicating person, case, number, aspect clause type, and also honorific status (see Graham 1990:208-249). For example, everyday *wa mo* (*wa* 1S, *mo* go, "I go") becomes *wate anomri* in a'ãma mrémé; *wa wara* (*wa* 1S, *wara* run, "I run") is *wate aiwadza* in a'ãma mrémé. Since a'ãma mrémé operates primarily as a system of lexical substitution and honorifics work through person marking, it may be productive to consider these together and in relation to comparative honorifics.

<sup>2</sup> A'ãma use the term *Rotsi* to address close kin.

<sup>3</sup> Although Xavante teacher and researcher Paulo Ubutu (2010:87) indicates that veteran a'ãma select new incumbents, all a'ãma with whom I have spoken indicate that they elected to take on the role. In several communities in my sample, no senior a'ãma were alive when new a'ãma chose to assume the role and no senior a'ãma appointed them.

<sup>4</sup>Ubutu (2010:87) notes that presently some women are a'ãma and that female a'ãma are "important figures" in Xavante culture. It appears that presently there are fewer a'ãma than in the past. If historically male a'ãma outnumbered female a'ãma, a general decline may explain my observation that female a'ãma are rare today.

<sup>5</sup>Given space limitations, in this essay I limit discussion to nouns. The Mato Grosso Salesian Mission recently printed an dictionary of a'ãma mrémé nouns based on information provided by a'ãma Germano Tsimi'wadzé Tseredzatsé of Aldeia Onça Preta (Lachnitt 2012). Ubutu (2010) also provides a list of a'ãma nouns based on interviews with several a'ãma from different villages.

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<sup>6</sup> *Da-* is the generic possessive marker.

<sup>7</sup> *Di* is a stative particle. Function words, such as this, do not have a'āma equivalents.

<sup>8</sup> Notations are phonetic. A phonological analysis is yet to be completed but here [p] becomes [b] between vowels.

<sup>9</sup> Not all birds, however, are marked with “atsaripi in a'āma mrémé: for instance, *dza'u'e* (jaburu), in a'āma mrémé, is *ai'ā'a*.

<sup>10</sup> Two a'āma provided a further alternate, *anhomritede'wa* or *anhamritede'wa* (also Ubutu 2010: 93). *Anhomri* (or *anhamri*) is the a'āma word for *tsi'ōno* baskets made by women. *Tede'wa* signifies “owner” or “master.” Thus, females are designated as “owners” or “masters of baskets” in a'āma mrémé.