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Source: *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Jun., 2006, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Jun., 2006), pp. 293-311

Published by: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3804255>

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Tribal synthesis: Piros, Mansos, and Tiwas through history

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This article critically examines recent anthropological theorizing about indigenous tribalism using ethnographic and historical data on the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Indian tribe of New Mexico. Debates about constructionism, neo-tribal capitalism, and proprietary approaches to culture provide valuable insights into recent indigenous cultural claims and political struggles, but also have serious limitations. The approach taken in the article, 'tribal synthesis', emphasizes process, agency, interdependence, and changing political and cultural repertoires of native peoples who seek survival amidst political domination and internal conflict. Such an approach can apply the best of recent critical theory in an advocacy anthropology that supports indigenous struggles.

The marriage of Andrew and Donna Roybal in the Stanford University Memorial Church in 2003 was the culmination of a remarkable history of ethnic survival.¹ Members of the Piro-Manso-Tiwa (PMT) tribe, and their anthropologist, rode Greyhound buses from New Mexico and caught aeroplane flights to California to attend the wedding in the luxurious Euro-American-style church in the heart of one of the wealthiest areas in the world. A Lutheran priest presided alongside the tribal *cacique* (spiritual leader), who burned sage and gave prayers to Mother Earth and the Great Spirit to sanctify the marriage. The tribal War Captains and tribal women served as best men and matrons of honour, respectively. On one side of the church aisle, Donna's traditional Chinese relatives from Taiwan huddled together. The other side of the aisle consisted of Native American tribal members and their guests. Both groups participated fully in the indigenous blessing of the couple by blowing tobacco smoke and sprinkling blue corn on their faces and shoulders.

Five hundred years before, the Piros, Mansos, and Tiwas were distinct aboriginal groups residing in what was to become northern New Mexico and El Paso, Texas. Prior to the sixteenth century coming of the Europeans, the Piros and Tiwas (spelled Tiguas *per* Spanish orthography) lived as corn-farming villagers along the Río Grande in northern New Mexico (Marshall & Walt 1984: 135-234; Riley 1995). Mansos survived as hunters and gatherers or resided in small *rancherías* (villages) along the Río Grande, near what is today El Paso, and in the Mesilla Valley, presently Las Cruces, New Mexico (Beckett & Corbett 1992a). In the early sixteenth century Cabeza de Vaca was

Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.) 12, 293-311

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the first European to encounter Native Americans in the El Paso area, followed by Beltrán and Espejo in 1582 (Martínez 2000: 6). In 1598 Spaniards and other colonists led by Juan de Oñate met Manso people along the banks of the Río Grande in the region the Spanish would take over and call '*El Paso del Norte*' (Hammond & Rey 1953: 315).

In the 1680s and 1690s, after the Spanish conquest, a contingent of Piros and Tiwas relocated to the El Paso area during the uprising known as the Pueblo Revolt (Hackett 1942; Marshall 1984: 237; Weber 1999). In the El Paso area the three groups lived in and around Spanish missions, although some Mansos chose to remain free in the deserts and mountains, and groups of Mansos rebelled against Spanish rule on several occasions (Hughes 1914: 295-392). Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Piros, Mansos, and Tiwas intermarried with each other as well as with other native peoples and people of European descent (Houser 1996). Yet the various mission Indian communities retained distinct identifications with particular indigenous groups even as their populations grew more mixed and their customs blended to form a kind of generalized El Paso Indian culture (Bandelier 1890: 247).

After independence from Spain in the nineteenth century, the various El Paso area native communities continued to interact and intermarry and to adopt technologies and practices from the Mexican population of the region (Houser 1996). Changes also came from the shifting patterns of the Río Grande, which periodically flooded the region, destroyed churches and towns, and created new islands and riverine boundaries between communities. The process of inter-tribal *mestizaje* (merging of cultures and groups) and cultural subsumption by more powerful ethnic groups as well as the constant shifting of nation-state boundaries continued in the mid-nineteenth century with the expansion of Texas and the US-Mexico War (Timmons 1990).

During the middle to late 1800s, 'Anglo' settlers and an emerging Anglo-American agro-industrial capitalist system transformed the local political economy. Anglos usurped Indian land and further reduced the spatial and cultural freedom of indigenous people while contributing new cultural elements and language to an already diverse regional culture (Mitchell 2005). Some Piros, Mansos, and Tiwas, seeking new opportunities, migrated to the Las Cruces, New Mexico area where they set up a new pueblo and barrios, synthesizing various cultural strands into one unit that became the Piro-Manso-Tiwa tribe (hereafter PMT). The Indians ran their political and spiritual affairs with a structure strongly influenced by the Spanish civil-religious system and later by the US legal system. Through internal schisms, participation in government Indian schools, military service, and economic migration, the PMT became more geographically dispersed. Tribal members continued, however, to interact at seasonal ceremonies and tribal council meetings.

For at least the last forty years the tribe has been seeking federal recognition from the United States government. This article addresses recent anthropological theories about Native American tribalism and indigenous cultural claims (Asch 1997; M.F. Brown 2003; Colchester 2002)² as well as the struggles of native people for cultural survival and government recognition and anthropology's place in this process (Asch & Samson 2004; Bowen 2000; Kuper 2003; Perry 1996).

Tribes, indigenous peoples and the critique of authenticity and tradition

The terms 'tribe' and 'indigenous' have long and complex histories within the field of anthropology, histories too intricate to present in this article (Diamond 1987;

Stocking 1982). For our purposes it is important that the use of these concepts, within and outside anthropology, has been closely associated with colonial power structures and discourses about the genuineness or spuriousness, authenticity or lack of authenticity, of cultures (Pinkoski & Asch 2004: 189; Stocking 1993). Thus, the issues and analytical approach of the critique of authenticity genre now known as the 'invention of tradition' (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983) existed in earlier phases of anthropology. For native peoples, what has been at stake in these discussions has been not only what terms they might use to understand their cultures but also how their cultures have been viewed by more powerful outsiders and how those conceptions have influenced their positions within national societies and political economies. A historic discussion by Julian Steward in the 1940s and 1950s concerning whether 'loosely' organized aboriginal societies merited property rights highlighted these issues in the public policy arena; they have continued to weigh heavily on government treatments of native people (Pinkoski & Asch 2004: 187-200).

In the United States, the concepts 'tribe' and 'indigenous' have been primary categories in terms of which Native Americans have sought acknowledgement, recognition, and benefits from the government through the Indian Claims Commission (ICC) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Yet Kuper has characterized recent uses of the term 'indigenous' as 'the return of the native' (2003: 389-95), and he criticizes those who use them for reinserting discredited notions of culture into public discussion and for euphemistically equating 'indigenous' and 'native' with the antiquated concept of 'primitive' societies. Kuper levels useful critiques of simplistic treatments of the historical, cultural, genealogical, and ecological context of claims to 'indigenouness' and the paradoxes of privileging 'indigenous' claims to land and resources. However, his sweeping assertion that the 'indigenous-peoples movement has been fostered by the UN and the World Bank and by international development agencies and NGOs' (Kuper 2003: 395) ignores the endogenous grassroots struggles of native peoples on many continents (Asch & Samson 2004). Moreover, his bald statement that 'the ideas behind the [indigenous] movement are very dubious' (2003: 395) is overly generalized, if not reactionary and insulting (Ramos 2003). It seems that Kuper is less interested in social justice for impoverished populations than in defending a social status quo in which anthropologists are the expert arbiters of cultural knowledge (Turner 2004). The judgements and theories of anthropologists continue to weigh heavily on the political futures of native groups.

Recent critiques of Native American tribalism:

Haley/Wilcoxon and Schröder

Recent theoretical contributions on Native American culture have also produced significant revisions to received anthropological thinking about tribes and indigeneity (Field 1999). I will focus on two major lines of analysis put forth recently by Brian Haley and Larry Wilcoxon and by Ingo Schröder. Haley and Wilcoxon, in a series of articles (1997; 2000; 2005), argue for a constructionist perspective on 'indigenous' culture. Schröder (2003), from a political-economic standpoint borrowed from Rata (2000), suggests that we view native cultures as a form of 'neo-tribal capitalism' (cf. Dombrowski 2002: 1062-3). These studies provide useful new perspectives on Native American tribes such as the PMT. The present work extracts insights from Haley, Wilcoxon, and Schröder, but also points out limitations to their interpretations and suggests an alternative viewpoint that I call 'tribal synthesis'.

In recent years, various people claiming to be Chumash have made claims to land and for government recognition in the Santa Barbara, California area. Haley and Wilcoxon (2005), who have studied the much-publicized case extensively, view 'neo-Chumash' culture as an example of 'ethnogenesis', a neo-primitivist 'invention of tradition' with no legitimate roots in aboriginal Chumash ancestry. Haley and Wilcoxon examine Spanish colonial ethno-racial categorization, which they find to have been rigid in form but absolutely porous in actuality. In fact, they conclude that the residents of early Santa Barbara consistently changed their identities over time and even within one generation. People moved from the classification of *indios* (Indians) to various castes amidst the *gente de razón* (people of reason) category and eventually became *Californios* (Californians), White Spanish, and finally Chumash. Haley and Wilcoxon (2005) use these data to suggest that ethnic identity is never essential and that identity change is quite common.

Although Haley and Wilcoxon's interpretation is persuasive, it also raises problematic conceptual and ethical issues. For example, if we adopt the strong constructionist position they advocate, then, in addition to interrogating native constructions of identity, we should also question Anglo-American cultural constructions and the 'inventions of tradition' which sustain the United States government. There is something exceedingly unfair about expecting Native Americans to meet purist cultural criteria and standards of ethnic identification that the mainstream cannot meet either (Clifford 1988: 277-346; Friedman 1997; Sider 2003: xv). On what moral, ethical, or political grounds does Anglo-American academia or government bureaucracy (i.e. the Bureau of Indian Affairs, hereafter BIA) become the arbiter of who is or is not an Indian? The ethical relativism of extreme constructionism lends itself to potentially damaging political scenarios for unrecognized, self-identified native groups, like the PMT, unless applied equally to all ethnic groups, which never happens in a race/class-stratified political economy (Miller 2003). Granted, some means is needed for separating blatantly spurious identity claims for resources from ones more historically rooted. However, the constructionist approach must be wielded carefully to minimize harm to already marginalized groups and to promote social justice, not simply myth-busting contributions to anthropological theory.

Likewise, Schröder (2003: 435-56) claims to upset the epistemological apple-cart with his analysis of 'neo-tribal capitalism'. For him, essentialist interpretations of Native American culture are exoticizing, neo-traditional ideologies that obscure a reality of capitalist economic organization and class inequality. Modern-day 'natives', he says, are the products of Christianization, immersion in popular culture, integration into the national and global economy, and the effects of a system of 'reservation colonialism' (Schröder 2003: 435). Schröder argues that we should not view contemporary native culture as a survival of a unique way of life from pre-colonial times. He asserts that an over-emphasis on indigenous resistance to Euro-American customs and political-economic dominance has produced a one-sided, distorted anthropological corpus. His 'realistic' approach states that native tribes persist 'by the reproduction of symbolic representations' (Schröder 2003: 436) rather than the performance of aboriginal traditions in everyday life.

No serious fieldworker could ignore elements of truth in this analysis, but I also find a 'red herring' quality as well. It is important to ask who benefits from such an analysis, and what is accomplished by such work. Why in the twenty-first century

should we expect Native Americans not to be capitalist entrepreneurs? Should they be expected to live in a Palaeolithic time-warp? And if native people act in capitalistic ways and operate within class-stratified societies, does that make them any less 'Indian' and their cultures less legitimate? If we were to apply the same approach to Euro-Americans or Japanese, the limitations of this view are evident. Furthermore, it could be argued that 'neo-tribal' capitalism is actually an engine for emergence of new 'Indian' cultural forms.

In that sense, capitalist transformations and class struggle – the major division within contemporary Native American societies (Sider 2003) – rather than being 'non-cultural' processes, may be the fulcrums for cultural change and elaboration (Campbell 1993; Dombrowski 2002). Neo-tribal capitalism and neo-tribal ideologies in no way exclude the possibility of the existence of cultural differences and collective group rights to land, resources, and distinct ethnic practices. The neo-tribal capitalism explanation is also limited in relation to 'unrecognized' tribes which are excluded from the profits of government-sanctioned tribal enterprises (Schröder 2003: 444-5). Moreover, 'neo-traditionalist' rhetoric (Schröder 2003: 445-8) should not simply be taken at face value, but as a discourse of desire, a lamentation for what has been lost or an effort to maintain or regain elements of an earlier ethos. It is also part of what Sider refers to as 'the culture that becomes part of the struggle for federally granted sovereignty' (2003: xix).

Additionally, tribal groups are fraught with inequalities, and 'neo-tribal' political and bureaucratic Indian elites often take advantage of their power *vis-à-vis* the tribal majority. Yet that is how the larger society functions, and the form this takes in native communities is primarily a result of their domination by the US government and society (Sider 2003: lxix). Thus, we must question whose interests are served by anthropological theories like 'neo-tribal capitalism'. If such thinking and its application in practice cause a weakening of the powers of exploitative tribal elites and a growth of democracy on the reservation, then more power to it. But if it is used to attack tribal petitions for federal recognition, then its consequences can be largely negative to substantial numbers of Native Americans, elites and non-elites alike (Miller 2003). Likewise, the class inequalities that Schröder identifies on the reservation are ultimately for Indians to resolve, not anthropologists, although we should not naïvely exacerbate them.

Michael F. Brown has taken up related issues in his book *Who owns native culture?* (2003). Brown acknowledges the political paradoxes and anthropological dilemmas connected with contemporary 'indigenous' struggles over culture. Using a pragmatic approach, he sorts through numerous fights over cultural resources and seeks non-dogmatic, mutually agreeable resolutions to contested cultural rights. Given the often overheated nature of such debates, Brown's even-handed perspective is welcome: 'Here, as often when cultures collide, we are denied the comforts of absolutes' (2003: 41). Brown feels that the concept of 'sovereignty' is a flawed metaphor when used to understand transcultural processes. In his view, 'Many – perhaps most – elements of culture do not answer to a logic of possession and control' (2003: 225). He calls for a non-proprietary resolution to such issues involving the 'explicit balancing of multiple, conflicting rights' (2003: 53) and in which 'the crux of this does not lie in irreconcilable views of citizenship' (2003: 10).

Brown's work is helpful in thinking through current debates concerning control over culture. He makes clear that he is discussing language, customs, and forms of

knowledge, not land and political power. However, the persuasiveness of his argument should not cause anthropologists to extrapolate from it to the obverse issue of political sovereignty and governmental recognition of land claims. Even if some conflicts over tribal symbols, religious practices, and artworks can be resolved satisfactorily, this may not be the case regarding land claims and petitions for federal acknowledgement. Calling for compromise and a 'middle ground' (M.F. Brown 2003: 228) is easy for academics but it may be an unfair resolution to legitimate claims for reparations for damages resulting from invasion, war, colonialism, and cultural genocide. Brown's perspective is more than a bit utopian in asking native groups to sacrifice some of their demands for the common good. In this case, social justice for aggrieved minorities should outweigh the interests of more powerful, established groups in society.

Tribal synthesis

To take advantage of the insights of Haley, Wilcoxon, Schröder and Brown, without succumbing to the pitfalls of extreme versions of their theories, I propose the concept of tribal synthesis. I use the term 'synthesis' to mean the combining of two or more entities into a single or unified, or putatively unified, one. Tribal synthesis refers to the means through which Native Americans have survived historically since the coming of Europeans to the Americas (Brooks 2002: 37; Gutiérrez 1991).³ While avoiding essentialism, we need to historicize Native American identities (Deeds 2003; Reséndez 2004: 15-55; Sider 2003: 3-16) and examine how indigenous groups have combined and rearticulated cultural elements and subsistence strategies from multiple sources over long stretches of time (Brooks 2002; Clifford 2004: 5-23). Indigenous identities, lifeways, and cultural 'spaces' (Sider 2003: xx) have been reshaped and reformulated, often as a result of power imposed upon them through colonialism and neo-colonialism (T. Brown 2004: 463-500; Field 2003: 82-5; Miller 2003: 20). Adoption of new customs and habits – be it tribal councils, native beauty pageants, the English or Spanish languages, or 'neo-tribal capitalism' – and their incorporation into emerging styles of living, however symbolic and commercial, is not a spontaneous remaking of indigenous identity but the product of adaptation to asymmetrical power relations (Sider 1993: xvi). Cultural changes have occurred through time on a gradual basis but also through periods of rapid change – especially as a result of conquest, disease epidemics, and displacement (Sider 1993: xvii). These emerging forms of culture are constructed, in Haley and Wilcoxon's sense, but this makes them no less 'legitimate' than Stone Age hunter-gatherers or other cultural groups whose legitimacy is unquestioned.

The concept of 'tribal synthesis' emphasizes process, interdependency, agency, and changing cultural and political repertoires as native people have sought survival amidst political economic domination and internal conflict. Intra-group splinters have produced competing groups, each claiming to be the 'authentic' tribe. Anthropological analysis must transcend the reductionist dichotomy between true and false, invented and real, and emphasize the internal dynamics within ethnic groups and between ethnic groups and the larger society that produce such dichotomies (Dombrowski 2002). Ironically, one of the clearest indications of the existence of a 'tribal culture' is the existence of internal splits and debates about 'authentic' vs 'spurious' cultures. As analysts of such phenomena, anthropologists should come to grips with their positioning *vis-à-vis* indigenous 'tribal' groups⁴ and US structures of political power

instead of claiming a 'neutral' objectivity from which supposedly scientific judgements are made about the 'nature' of Native American society today.

If anthropological theory is to continue to be relevant to the struggles of native peoples, the constructionist or neo-tribal capitalism positions must be modified to account for the 'synthetic',⁵ relational character of contemporary 'tribal' life. We must not allow them to be used as ammunition by the enemies of native sovereignty (Miller 2003). The situated knowledge of anthropology must also be examined, not just as a trendy debating point but as part of the structures of knowledge and power within which tribes seek self-determination. The concept of 'tribal synthesis' allows us to recognize the diverse ethnic strands and divisions within contemporary 'indigeneity' (Dombrowski 2002; Sider 1993: xviii-xx) and understand the practice of selective emphasis of one dimension of identity by groups with multiple roots and possible identifications (Field 2002; Sider 2003). In a recent study, French found in Brazil that

the upsurge of indigenous self-identification, illustrated by the people who would become the Xocó, is not just about (or not necessarily at all about) Indianness but is more fundamentally about political subjectivities forged in the struggle for land that, when tied to claims of indigenous identity, result in communities of likeness (2004: 664).

In the PMT case, indigenous identity is strongly, continually grounded, unlike in the Xocó example, yet the same point applies to most if not all 'indigenous' peoples (if not people in general) today; indigeneity is, to a degree, the preferred identity of peoples with multiple roots or options. Given the omnipresence of such scenarios, the BIA's essentialist definitions of what is required for the acknowledgement of Indian tribes may, in fact, be the most ancient artefacts available for anthropological study (Field 1999). If we accept the existence of multi-ethnic roots among most contemporary groups, then *mestizaje*, as French observes, 'can be a supple analytical tool' (2004: 666), rather than a one-size-fits-all, heavy-duty mallet for destroying claims to indigeneity.

Tribal synthesis and the Piro, Mansos, and Tiwas

Piros

Before the arrival of the Europeans, Piro people lived in villages in the Upper Río Grande Valley of northern New Mexico. The main Piro settlements, like those of their linguistic relatives the Tompiro, were located along the Río Grande in the vicinity of contemporary Socorro, New Mexico or in the Salinas basin (Brandt 1996; Marshall & Walt 1984: 135-234; Riley 1995: 96-97). The Piro, like the Tiwa, are a Pueblo Indian culture. They engaged in trading networks and conflicts with various Pueblo groups as well as with mobile Apaches, Navajos, and others, establishing a pattern that continued into the colonial period (Brooks 2002: 45-79; Forbes 1960; Vierra 1997: 563-80). A major dislocation of the Piro people occurred with the Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century.

When thousands of Pueblo Indians revolted in 1680, Piro and many Tiwas sought refuge, along with fleeing Spaniards, in the El Paso area. Historians and anthropologists differ over the causes and consequences of the Pueblo Revolt (Preucel 2002; Roberts 2004; Weber 1999). For our purposes, the revolt was critical in

de-territorializing Piro, and some Tiwas, who then re-territorialized in the El Paso area. The historical break between the northern Pueblos and the Piro and southern Tiwas is still relevant in local ethnic politics. The Pueblo Revolt caused inter-tribal conflict and mistrust. Northern New Mexican tribes revolted against the Spanish and some were critical of those Indians who accompanied the Spanish to El Paso (Melchor & Gutiérrez (2005). To this day, the Piro and southern Tiguas have not been included in the All-Indian Pueblo Council of Albuquerque.

The Piro who left Northern New Mexico during the Pueblo Revolt located principally at the Socorro (Texas) mission and at Senecú del Sur. Evans (1989) has documented Piro burials from 1684 to 1829 in the Socorro mission church. The Indian burials demonstrate the existence of a Piro culture in the El Paso area with long-term continuities with its communities of origin (Evans 1989: 41). In 1751 the Piro and other local Indians were allotted land grants, but over time many natives lost control of their land (Martínez 2000: 11). Eventually the Piro population at Socorro dispersed and spread to other areas, mixing with other Indians or blending into the *mestizo* Mexican community (Fewkes 1902: 58). Today all that remains of the Piro community in Socorro, Texas is the residue of the old Piro mission settlement (now covered by a cotton field), the recently restored mission church (originally known as *Nuestra Señora de la Limpia Concepción de los Piro de Socorro del Sur*), and a few local residents who claim Piro ancestry.

Mansos

Manso Indians, who are non-Pueblo people, were living in the El Paso area when European explorers first crossed through the area in the sixteenth century (Beckett & Corbett 1992a; Hammond & Rey 1953: 315). According to Houser (1996: 2), Manso territory encompassed a region bounded on the west by the Mesilla Valley and Gila River in New Mexico and on the east by modern Presidio, Texas. The early Mansos constructed homes of reeds, straw, and wood and clustered together in small *rancherías* (Hodge 1907: 801). They subsisted on a diet of corn, mesquite beans, fish, and wild game (Vierra 1997: 25). When Mansos first encountered the Spanish they generously shared these foods with the Europeans (Beckett & Corbett 1992a: 23-30). The Manso community was governed by a chief, whom the Spanish referred to as a *cacique* (Martínez 2000: 6). The Mansos (a Spanish-imposed name which means 'tame' or 'domesticated') welcomed the Europeans, only to be conquered and subjugated as the Spanish became more established in the region. In 1598, Oñate celebrated the 'La Toma' ceremony formally establishing colonial rule (Martínez 2000: 7).

Mansos rebelled against the Spanish during the 1600s but finally settled peacefully at the Guadalupe Mission, in the vicinity of the *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Mansos* church, and at other locations (Beckett & Corbett 1990: 5-6; Forbes 1960: 200-7; Hughes 1914: 340-7). The Mansos built the church and became subject to Spanish laws regarding property, work, religion, and civil life (Beckett & Corbett 1992a: 8; Hughes 1914: 295-391; Simmons 1979: 181-6; Walz 1951). For most of the colonial period, the Mansos and Piro maintained distinct ethnic barrios or towns controlled by their governor (Beckett & Corbett 1992b: 5-6; Houser 1996: 1). By the end of the colonial period, diseases and violence had depleted the native population, which began to blend into one loosely connected multi-ethnic Indian population from which the Tigua Indian tribe and PMT tribe emerged (Beckett & Corbett 1992a: 15-16; Houser 1966; Peterson 1993: 472).

Tiwas (Tiguas)

The southern Tiwas, like the Piro, were originally northern New Mexico Pueblo people. Their main pueblo, which still exists, was Isleta, south of today's Albuquerque (Riley 1995). The Pueblo Revolt and its aftermath brought hundreds of Tiwas to the Guadalupe Mission and eventually to their own village, Corpus Christi de la Ysleta or Ysleta del Sur Pueblo (Houser 2000). The southern Tiwas (who, *per* Spanish usage in El Paso, came to be known as 'Tiguas') became permanently separated from their co-ethnics in the north but re-created aspects of their previous culture, including a multi-level pueblo housing compound with ladders and kivas like those of their counterparts in New Mexico. The community consolidated with the obtaining of a 36-square-mile Spanish land grant (the Ysleta Grant). The Tigua village clustered around the Spanish mission church and the Camino Real, the Royal Road that connected Mexico City and Santa Fe (Houser 1979). As of 1744, Ysleta del Sur was the most populous community in the Lower Valley of El Paso, with about 500 Tigua Indians (Hendricks 2002: 172).

For two hundred years, Ysleta del Sur was a thriving agricultural community, despite floods, disease epidemics, attacks by Apaches, and the eventual transfer of local sovereignty from Spain to independent Mexico (Hackett 1937: 461; Hendricks 2002). The Indian town began to decline with the coming of Anglo-American industrial capitalism (Schulze 2001). Unlike some other El Paso area native people, the Ysleta del Sur Tiguas successfully organized in the 1960s and, with the help of a well-connected El Paso lawyer, Tom Diamond, and a skilful anthropologist, Nick Houser, obtained full federal recognition as an Indian tribe by the United States government in 1987 (Schulze 2001). Subsequently, the Ysleta del Sur tribe constructed a lucrative gambling casino and other businesses, including the Wynngs native restaurant and a chain of gas stations. The approximately 1,200 tribal members lived well from the \$60 million/year generated by tribal businesses and enjoyed new houses and other facilities in a new pueblo constructed to the east of the original settlement (Schmidt 2004). The tribe's prosperity, however, came to a crashing halt in 2001 when the State of Texas rescinded the tribe's gambling concession. Subsequent lobbying efforts by the tribe came to naught. It was later determined that a well-known Washington lobbying firm had accepted \$4.2 million of tribal money, but several of the company's representatives (most notably Jack Abramoff) had actually worked to undermine the tribe's interest (Schmidt 2004).

The PMT synthesis and contemporary tribal politics in Las Cruces, New Mexico

The Piro-Manso-Tiwa tribe is a mix of the three main indigenous groups who have inhabited the El Paso-Las Cruces area historically (Beckett & Corbett 1992a: 19-22). As life became more difficult for native people in the El Paso border zone after the US-Mexico War and subsequent Anglo immigration, some Piro, Manso, and Tiwa sought a better life in the relatively unpopulated Mesilla Valley to the north and west (Fewkes 1902: 61; Loomis & Leonard 1938: 4; Sklar 2001: 9). In Las Cruces, Piro, Manso, and Tiwa intermarried and maintained a distinctive collective identity *vis-à-vis* local *mestizos*, other New Mexico Indians (such as Apaches), Anglos, and African-Americans (Beckett & Corbett 1990: 6). Clan and moiety structure died out, as did pottery-making, but community members distinguished between Indians and non-Indians (Hurt 1952).

The PMT retained a continuous core culture, even though the constituent elements of that culture evolved and changed over long stretches of time. These cultural features have been documented by numerous social scientists over a one hundred-year period, including Bandelier (1890), Fewkes (1902), Hodge (1907), Loomis and Leonard (1938), Hurt (1952), Oppenheimer (1957), Houser (1979), Reynolds (1982), and Beckett and Corbett (1990). Central elements of Indian culture in Las Cruces include: remnants of the Tiwa language; regular meetings of the tribal government; nature-orientated religious beliefs; hybrid spiritual practices such as worship of the Virgin of Guadalupe (although this has been phased out recently); pilgrimages to a sacred mountain (named 'A Mountain'); beating of ceremonial drums; strong kin networks; Tiwa dances, chants, songs, and costumes; cleansing with smoke; bonfires; seasonal rabbit hunts; consumption of native foods such as dried venison and a corn beverage; and traditional adobe and *viga* (wooden beam) house construction (Beckett & Corbett 1992b; Granjon 1986: 36-7; Hodge 1907: 803; Peterson 1993: 462-4).

Native peoples populated the village of Tortugas, areas in and adjacent to contemporary Las Cruces, New Mexico, and other outlying places, where they maintained farms. Tortugas was the centre of native ceremonial life and was the location of communal buildings, including the Casa de Comida and Casa del Pueblo. The main spiritual activities consisted of the annual dances, bonfires, and pilgrimages in celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The PMT spiritual leader, known as the *cacique*, presided over religious activities. Members of the Roybal family have served as *caciques* since the turn of the twentieth century and, according to tribal sources, since the 1750s.

Twentieth-century conflicts, mobility and cultural change

The combined PMT community thrived in Las Cruces, although life was not free from conflict. Cultural changes and movement of the community stemmed from internal disputes and changing relations to the US state and its boundaries. In 1906 the death of a charismatic and powerful *cacique*, Felipe Roybal, was thought to be murder.⁶ In the 1940s, a passionate dispute for control of the ceremonies and facilities at Tortugas created a rift between the Roybals and their supporters and the Fierros and several other families. This dispute resulted in a permanent split in the community. The predominantly Mexican Fierro faction kept control of the ceremonial buildings and other appurtenances at Tortugas, including the tribal drum. The Roybal-led group was thus excluded from annual religious ceremonies, which became more strongly associated with the Catholic Church and Knights of Columbus. Control of Tortugas resided in the 'Tortugas Corporation' (also known as *Los Indígenas de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*), directed by the Fierro faction. The Roybals and members of other native lineages regrouped tribal activity in the Indian barrio of central Las Cruces and carried on seasonal indigenous ceremonies and dances, although these were marked by the absence of the strong presence of the Catholic Church which characterized festivities in Tortugas. This group became the Piro-Manso-Tiwa tribe (Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe) and solicited the federal government for federal recognition as a Native American tribe in the 1960s.

The PMT struggle for cultural survival and government recognition has been a tortuous road filled with obstacles created by state impositions, migration, and social reformulations prompted by internal and external conflicts and economic pressures.

One reason why Piros, Mansos, and Tiwas survived was their knowledge of the local environment and their ability to cross national or state boundaries to escape difficult conditions. In 1993, anthropologists Nick Houser, John Peterson, and I interviewed Natividad Camargo, a nearly 90-year-old last surviving member of the Ciudad Juárez, Mexico Manso community. Camargo recalled how the Indians of Juárez banded together to defend themselves against Apaches and how his Manso father had avoided being drafted into the Mexican Revolution by crossing over the Río Grande/Río Bravo with his family: 'We were all friends and we had to stay together because the Apaches had come ... we went to the other side ... jumped across to the other side of the river ... to El Paso, the hills' (quoted in Peterson 1993: 459-60).

At other times, the US government precipitated movement. In the early twentieth century, many PMT children were removed to federal Indian Schools. The US government also drafted large numbers of PMT, who served in two World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam. Many war veterans were forced by the poverty of southern New Mexico to work in military industries in California. Urban renewal, the arrival of the railroad, commercialization of agriculture, and new immigrants to the Las Cruces area also diminished the spaces for native community in the Mesilla Valley. Discrimination and pressured acculturation led to the loss of Indian land and native languages. Despite these dislocations, tribal members maintained strong social networks and an 'extended community' (Kemper 2002) across the American Southwest.

Forced movement across state and international boundaries did not destroy the seasonal tribal ceremonies, which persist through change to the present day. Main activities include the spring and autumnal equinox rituals and the summer and winter solstice events. At the spring equinox ceremonies, PMT members scour the desert for *quiotes* (sotol stalks), thin *cachanilla* branches (from river willow trees), yucca fibres, and other plants which are used to make staffs used in dances that celebrate the beginning of the agricultural cycle. The summer solstice focuses on the summer heat and warmth and includes a sunrise ceremony in which tribal members greet and commune with the spirit of the sun. The autumnal equinox rituals emphasize the changing seasons and curative properties of native plants and natural elements like wind and smoke. The winter solstice ceremony includes a pilgrimage and bonfire on the sacred mountain. All of the seasonal meetings involve dancing by PMT members dressed in colourful ribbon shirts, moccasins, buckskin leggings, shell bracelets, and animal furs. Bird feathers, conch shells, sage, tobacco, and other natural items have sacred importance in the ceremonies, dances, and chants. The *cacique* leads the dancing, chants, and drumming, and contributes several spiritual talks and blessings during key phases of the ceremonies. This contemporary religious and social dimension of PMT life has little to do with 'neo-tribal capitalism' and is no more or less 'constructed' than a Catholic mass.

As the tribe has no land base or physical infrastructure, PMT activities tend to be tightly connected with family gatherings such as weddings and other life-cycle events or organized public activities (in addition to those described above). The tribal *cacique*, Edward Roybal, Sr, guides these gatherings and gives them cohesion with spiritual words about how to live a life on the 'Red Road' (the indigenous way). Older female members share food and encourage social mixing. The younger male tribal members discuss tribal political matters and work on the tribe's petition for federal recognition. Tribal elders, such as Víctor Roybal, Jr and Louis Roybal, are accorded special respect.

Pablo García and Gilbert Moreno, middle-aged males, direct drumming sessions. I attended a recent (25 June 2005) gathering of the PMT at which a naming ceremony was held for the child of War Captain Andrew Roybal.

The naming ceremony was held at Aguirre Springs Recreational Area in the foothills of the rocky, picturesque Organ Mountains outside of Las Cruces, New Mexico. At the event, the *cacique*, commenting on the demographic growth of the tribe, noted that 'every time we meet it seems like we do this ... when you come to the circle, you get a name, it gives you life'. As the naming ceremony began, an eagle appeared and soared in the breeze high above the tribal members, dressed in dance costumes, who formed a human circle around a woodpile and sacred items including a conch shell filled with sage. The *cacique* filled a deerskin 'medicine bag' with herbs, corn, earth, and other symbolically charged items and gave it to the new baby, Andrew Roybal, Jr, as he proclaimed, 'From now on, you shall be called "White Eagle"'. The *cacique* blessed the baby with sage smoke and he and other PMT elders said prayers for the new tribal member, who, as a direct male heir to the *cacique*, may be called on to serve in that capacity in the future. The naming ceremony concluded with a 'toss' in which White Eagle's parents threw toys, fruit, and other gifts to tribal members. Such activities form the current PMT tribal synthesis.

Recent PMT struggles and conflicts over federal recognition

In 1971 the tribe submitted a formal petition for federal recognition to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, seventeen years before gambling on Indian reservations was legalized by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. As a younger, well-educated group of tribal members began to push harder for recognition in the 1980s and 1990s another division occurred. Members of the Portillo family clashed with the Roybals and others. The Portillos left the PMT and formed their own group, which they also called the PMT. Although the original PMT has a long-standing relationship with the federal government and is high on the list of tribes to be evaluated for federal recognition, the Portillo-led group has only recently applied for recognition and is therefore far down the list of groups to be considered. Neither group is affiliated with the Tigua tribe of El Paso (Ysleta del Sur Pueblo), though they are related by history, genealogies, and culture. An additional inter-tribal conflict is developing as Jemez Pueblo, whose reservation is located in northern New Mexico, attempts to establish a casino in the vicinity of Anthony, New Mexico. This new business would fill the gambling gap in the region left by the State of Texas's decision to shut down the Tigua casino. The original PMT opposes Jemez Pueblo's plans because they consider the Anthony, New Mexico area within their jurisdiction and Jemez Pueblo's manoeuvre an example of off-reservation 'casino shopping'.⁷

When the BIA held a meeting in Anthony, New Mexico in March 2005 to obtain public feedback about Jemez Pueblo's proposed casino a dramatic confrontation occurred between the historical PMT led by the Roybals, the Portillo-directed 'splinter group', and the Jemez Pueblo Governor. After numerous local residents spoke for and against the casino, Leroy Portillo rose and claimed that he was the Governor of the PMT tribe and that he supported the proposed casino. The next speaker, Edward Roybal, stated;

I am the *cacique*, the spiritual leader of the PMT, the man who just spoke does not represent our people, he is from a splinter group ... I am the *cacique* of the people. The *cacique* has always been in

the Roybal people ... these people [and he stared at the Jemez Pueblo group] are not from here, we are ... we oppose this petition [for a casino].

The following speaker, Edward Roybal II (son of the *cacique*), affirmed:

I am the Governor of the Piro-Manso-Tiwa, Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe of Las Cruces, New Mexico ... Jemez Pueblo claims that they originated from the Four Corners area and moved to 'Walatowa', which in their own language means 'this is the place'. That is their home ... Governor [directed to the Governor of Jemez Pueblo], you have not reached out to our people, we are the original people.

The intensity of feeling of the PMT members – as well as the strength of inter- and intra-tribal divisions – impressed the 300-member audience and federal government officials. The next speaker called for clarification of the issues through a thorough anthropological study of Jemez Pueblo's plans. In a similar scenario, PMT members have also fought New Mexico State University's construction of a large television antenna and tower on a sacred pilgrimage and bonfire site on A Mountain outside of Las Cruces, New Mexico. Such incidents vividly demonstrate the power of indigenous land and identity claims within American politics generally and Native American politics specifically, and the need for subtle anthropological analysis to interpret the complex dynamics of tribal synthesis. Anthropologists must make clear to the government that internal identity disputes are a normal, not abnormal, part of culture, and that capitalist economic activity and eclectic cultural syntheses are major components of contemporary tribal life.

Despite their lack of national 'recognition', PMT has never voluntarily relinquished its relationship as a sovereign Indian culture with the federal government. Tribal members have not abandoned their identities as Indians or as parts of tribal society. Many have exerted this status and have been acknowledged by local, county, and state schools and universities, and by Indian Health Service facilities on reservations and in urban areas. Many tribal members have received federal assistance for social services and economic development based on their affiliation with the PMT Indian tribe. The tribe and its members, despite cultural changes and schisms, have continuously maintained their internal status, tribal form of government, and ceremonial life to the present. The governments of Spain, Mexico, the State of New Mexico, and the United States have all dealt with the tribe as a self-governing entity. In spite of oppression and conflict, the PMT continues with a tribal council, seasonal dances, pilgrimages, and a distinct identity.

Conclusions: the Piro-Manso-Tiwa tribe today and the responsibility of anthropology to explain tribal synthesis

Although the Piro-Manso-Tiwa tribe persists, the people are in limbo because their future as a tribe rests in the hands of the US government, which has shown little willingness to deal with the processes of tribal synthesis (Lavery 2003). Therefore, the rethinking of American Indian tribalism proposed by Haley/Wilcoxon and Schröder – the constructionist and neo-tribal perspectives – deserves renewed scrutiny. As Field (1999, 2003) has argued, 'official anthropology', carried out by government bureaucracies, specifically the Branch of Acknowledgement and Research (BAR),⁸ has defined

Indian tribes in essentialist terms derived from dated and outmoded notions of culture and identity. I suggest that contemporary anthropologists who study Native American tribes have the responsibility of interpreting 'the constructionist' critiques of native culture to bureaucracies such as the BAR and showing how these critiques, rather than undermining Indian claims to tribal status, can be used in effective arguments for the legitimacy of tribes like the PMT (cf. Clifford 2004; Field 1999). We need to convey, as Erlandson puts it, that 'all cultures are complex entities that constantly reinvent themselves' (1998: 477).

Existing BIA regulations include discrete criteria for US government recognition. Tribes must demonstrate that they have been 'substantially continuous', a 'distinct community', and an 'autonomous entity' exercising 'political authority' through history until the present (Field 2003). These criteria hinge on legal judgments regarding some of the most intensely debated anthropological concepts today, namely 'community', 'continuity', 'political authority', and 'autonomy' (Field 2003: 84-5). They also force native people to conform to arbitrarily imposed constructs not informed by current anthropological theory (Clifford 1988; Field 2003; Sider 2003; Sturm 2002). Few unacknowledged groups could meet these criteria if rigidly applied because they fail to account for 'synthetic' processes in which groups with multiple roots and overlapping communities attempt to cope with asymmetrical power relations that impose disjuncture rather than continuity. The trend in contemporary anthropology is to emphasize multiculturalism, hybridity, messy cultural borders, interdevelopment, discontinuity, domination, and hegemony. Rather than force tribes to conform to old-fashioned standards, the BIA should be encouraged to upgrade its conception of tribal life to include a nuanced understanding of the 'constructionist' and 'neo-tribal' perspectives.

Fortunately for the PMT, substantial research by lawyer Allogan Slagle, anthropologists, and tribal members has documented a solid history of indigenous cultural survival, despite changes that have resulted from cultural mixing and the effects of outside encroachment. The El Paso-Las Cruces area, where most PMT tribal members live today, has been a cultural borderlands region – between Mesoamerica and the Pueblo Southwest and between various groups, including Apaches and other native groups, Spanish, and Mexicans – from the pre-Spanish period to the current era, in which it is dominated by the Mexican-American border (Brooks 2002; Peterson 1993). The border region has been a continual site of cultural synthesis.

The Roybal wedding with which I began this article evidenced the strong persistence of a PMT culture in an ultra-modern context despite enormous obstacles. The concept of tribal synthesis can help us understand this process and the creative ways in which PMT people have adapted synthetically to the vagaries of conquest, migration, intra-group conflict, economic necessity, and the politics of multiculturalism. A strict dichotomy of true vs false culture or authentic vs invented impoverishes discussions of Native American history and culture generally and PMT culture specifically (Briggs 1996). Even the most unimpeachable cases of American 'indigeneity', whether Inuit, Navajo, Apache, or Iroquois, involve tribal synthesis as discussed here.

Synthesis takes many forms and involves many mixes and blends of native and non-native culture (Sider 2003). Ironically, in the American Southwest there has been a reversal in the relative social economy of ethnic identities: whereas once Mexican identity was more highly valued by local society than Indian identity, today the opposite is

true for many people. Undoubtedly there are also cases of ‘Wannabe’ Indians, who have invented themselves out of thin air, as well as of Euro-Americans and others with relatively little native ancestry who have acculturated into Indian communities. What is needed is an anthropological explanation that disentangles the myriad forms of tribal synthesis and does not lump them all into reductive, pejorative categories, as has been the case with much research on the ‘invention of tradition’. We must deal with the inevitable divisions with tribal groups and the new syntheses which emerge. Likewise, to reiterate, anthropologists have an especially strong responsibility for serving as interpreters of what I have called ‘tribal synthesis’ to government bureaucracy and the larger society.

We need to articulate to a wider audience an anthropological understanding of identities or ‘identifications’, in Brubaker and Cooper’s terms (2000: 34). Whether these identifications are ‘indigenous’ or ‘non-indigenous’, they are neither inexorable nor are they, in Li’s formulation, ‘simply invented, adopted or imposed’ (2000: 51). Rather they are ‘a *positioning* which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning [emerging] ... through particular patterns of engagement and struggle’ (Li 2000: 51). An acceptance of the concept of ‘tribal synthesis’ by government bureaucracies such as the BAR would not resolve the ultimately political matter of determining which groups in society are entitled – based on claims of collective identity and antiquity – to what resources, but it would bring to the process a more current and rational notion of culture than the existing antiquated framework. Indeed, the extant United States system for evaluating petitions for federal recognition by unacknowledged Indian tribes in some cases actually forces tribal people to invent tradition and to essentialize culture. In order to meet shopworn, arbitrarily imposed standards of indigeneity that conform to bureaucratic rules, native people may be forced to reify customs or exaggerate ‘aboriginal’ characteristics rather than express how they may actually live on a daily basis. Anthropology is uniquely positioned to rectify this situation.

In the PMT case, in October 2000 the US National Park Service designated the Camino Real a National Historic Trail (i.e. incorporating it into Euro-American history). By federal mandate, heritage tourism facilities are being constructed along the trail. One outcome of this work may be greater recognition of the history and concerns of the still-existing native population of the El Paso/Las Cruces region. It would be yet another injustice if studies and projects on the Camino Real downplayed the historical Indian presence along the trail – which was originally an Indian trail – and thus neglected the legitimate struggles of unrecognized tribes such as the PMT for federal recognition.

NOTES

¹ This description and other information about the PMT that follows are based on ethnographic research that I have conducted with the tribe since 1993. The research was supported by a National Endowment for the Humanities Faculty Research Award.

² See also the comments on Bowen (2000) and Colchester (2002) in McIntosh, Colchester, Bowen & Rosengren (2002).

³ Brooks (2002) has shown convincingly that transculturalism was a profound force for both Native Americans and Spanish colonialists for hundreds of years. His argument is rich in nuance and complexity, as displayed in this passage: ‘The intergroup economic, cultural, and biological exchanges across the centuries show that ethnicities in the Southwest were often a matter of biological interchange, strategic reconstruction, and political invention, as sexual enslavement, market penetration, and state pacification policies

closed some avenues of identity while fostering others' (Brooks 2002: 37). The amalgamation of various tribes was noteworthy in the post-contact Great Plains and northeastern regions.

⁴I, for example, freely disclose that I have worked for the PMT on their petition for federal recognition by the US government.

⁵I use the word 'synthetic' not to refer to something fake or artificial but to connote the historical blending and combining of cultural elements within specific contexts.

⁶Felipe Roybal, the *cacique* at the turn of the twentieth century, had applied for permission to build a chapel in Las Cruces for Indian worship. Roybal's subsequent death is assumed to have been connected with the struggle over local land. The death of Roybal and his funeral were documented in the *Rio Grande Republican*, 9 November 1906, p. 3 and the *Las Cruces Citizen*, 10 November 1906, vol. 5, no. 21, p. 3.

⁷Jemez Pueblo's plans are also opposed by the Fort Sill Apaches of Oklahoma and the Mescalero Apache, but supported by the Portillo group of PMT.

⁸The part of the Bureau of Indian Affairs that examines and makes decisions on native petitions for federal recognition by the US government.

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Synthèse tribale : les Piros, les Mansos et les Tiwas à travers l'histoire

Résumé

Le présent article est une étude critique des théories anthropologiques récentes sur le tribalisme indigène, à partir de données ethnographiques et historiques sur la tribu indienne Piro-Manso-Tiwa du Nouveau-Mexique. Bien que les débats sur le constructionnisme, le capitalisme néo-tribal et les approches propriétaires de la culture apportent un éclairage précieux sur les récentes revendications culturelles et luttes politiques indigènes, ils présentent d'importantes limitations. L'approche adoptée par l'auteur, qualifiée de « synthèse tribale », met l'accent sur le processus, la notion d'agent, l'interdépendance et l'évolution des répertoires politiques et culturels des peuples natifs cherchant à survivre dans un contexte de domination politique et de conflit interne. Cette approche fait appel au meilleur de la théorie critique récente, dans une anthropologie de soutien qui se veut l'alliée des luttes indigènes.

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