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# THE TIGUA SETTLEMENT OF YSLETA DEL SUR

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## ABSTRACT

Ysleta del Sur, 15 miles south of El Paso, Texas, was established in 1682 for refugee Tigua Indians who abandoned the old Isleta pueblo, near Albuquerque, New Mexico, during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Despite loss of pueblo lands, intermarriage with non-Indians, and the acculturative influences of a dominant Mexican population, the Tigua of Ysleta del Sur have retained an Indian identity and tribal organization. Officially recognized by the federal government in the spring of 1968 as a surviving tribe of American Indians, they are presently active in reinterpreting and revitalizing their Indian heritage.

## INTRODUCTION

When the Spanish explorer Francisco Coronado reached the banks of the Rio Grande in 1540 there were numerous settled villages of native Indian farmers along the river from the Mexican State of Chihuahua to northern New Mexico. Today there are officially nineteen pueblos in New Mexico, from Taos, just north of Santa Fe, to Isleta, south of Albuquerque. However, a twentieth pueblo, that of Ysleta del Sur in El Paso, Texas, still exists, although long ago it slipped quietly from the roster of known living pueblos. The residents of this pueblo belong to the most southern division of Pueblo Indians, the Southern Tigua (Tiwa).

The town of Ysleta, first settled by the Tigua Indians in 1682, is one of the oldest continually settled communities in the nation and the oldest of Texas towns. Ysleta is located in the fertile valley of the Rio Grande, bounded by the river and international border on the west and by barren sandhills to the east. Not long ago, it was a small agrarian community surrounded by wine vineyards, corn fields, and orchards of apples and pears. Since World War II, metropolitan El Paso has engulfed Ysleta and other small neighboring towns, leaving in its wake oil refineries, factories, and expressways which typify many urban centers of contemporary America.

However, Ysleta has not entirely lost its rural appearance. There are some

cotton fields and truck farms, but their size and number have been reduced by the encroaching shopping center and suburban housing developments. The small Indian enclave within Ysleta is now virtually encircled by a dominant Mexican and Anglo population.

In April, 1968, the federal government officially recognized the Ysleta Indians as a surviving tribe of American Indians (U.S. Government 1968:S3692). They may very well be the last American Indian Tribe to be formally recognized by the government. There are several explanations why recognition came so late to the Ysleta Indians. Among them is the fact that they have always been a peaceful people noted for their industry and independence. For these reasons they never found it necessary to make any treaties with the United States.

The tribe has survived for nearly three centuries despite Apache and Comanche raids and the onslaught of the land-hungry white man. Until recently, they managed to live, though not without sacrifice, in the old pueblo of Ysleta del Sur, having never received nor requested a reservation or government assistance. The history of the Ysleta Indians can be pieced together from church, civil, and military records, travelers' narratives, and the oral traditions of those Indians living in Ysleta today. It testifies to the amazing persistence of this small group of people who have maintained their identity and tribal organization.

Several pioneering ethnologists of the American Southwest visited Ysleta del Sur and adjacent pueblos of the El Paso area, but their observations were of a cursory nature, limited to only a few days. The above ethnologists included John G. Bourke in November, 1881 (Bloom 1938); Dr. H.F.C. Ten Kate, Jr., in December, 1882 (Ten Kate 1885); Adolph F. Bandelier in April, 1888 (Burrus 1969); James Mooney in December, 1897 (Powell 1900); Walter J. Fewkes in October, 1901 (Fewkes 1902); and John P. Harrington in August, 1909 (Harrington 1909). These reports provide the most recent observations concerning the Tigua pueblo. Thus for a period of some sixty years, this Indian community has not received formal attention in the literature.

## PUEBLO REVOLT

Robert Bennett, Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs during the Johnson Administration, remarked that the Tigua of El Paso “. . . appear to have been stranded three hundred years” (El Paso Times 1966). Commissioner Bennett's statement refers to the historical event responsible for the location of a Tigua pueblo in El Paso, Texas.

On August 10, 1680, the feast day of San Lorenzo, the Pueblo Indians from the Rio Grande to the Hopi Mesas rebelled against the injustices of Spanish rule that followed the founding of the New Mexican capital, Villa of Santa Fe, in 1610. The Spanish colonists fled from Santa Fe and the upper Rio Grande Valley, abandoning their villages, ranches, and churches which

the Indians soon pillaged and burned. Of the 2,800 Spanish settlers of New Mexico, some 400 were slain before their comrades hastily retreated south to El Paso with the few provisions they could muster (Hackett 1942:I:xx).

The Indians of the original Tigua pueblo of Isleta near Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the Piro pueblos to the south did not become actively involved in the revolt because of their remoteness from the main centers of the rebellion in the north. But many of the 2,000 inhabitants of Isleta were in sympathy with their northern neighbors who desired to banish the Spanish Empire from New Mexico.

At the onset of the uprising, one party of 1,500 Spanish settlers from the Rio Abajo region just north of Albuquerque, under command of Lieutenant General Alonso Garcia, sought shelter at the old Isleta pueblo (Hackett 1942:I:li). During the chaos, there was no communication between the Spanish colonists of Santa Fe and those of the Rio Abajo area, and General Garcia feared that the Indians had annihilated the settlers of the Santa Fe region. Therefore, he was convinced that it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to defend a refugee contingent at Isleta pueblo, if attacked by thousands of rebels. The Isleta Indians became increasingly hostile, and on August 14, the poorly armed Garcia band vacated the pueblo and marched toward El Paso, some 250 miles down the Rio Grande (Hackett 1942:I:lxxi). This party was accompanied by 317 Indians composed mainly of Tiguas from the old Isleta pueblo and Piros from the former pueblos of Alamillo, Socorro, Senecu, and Sevilleta (Hackett 1942:II:159). These Indians may not have been Christianized, as popularly believed, but certainly had accepted some Catholic elements to add to their religion.

At Fray Cristobal, about 60 leagues south of the New Mexican capital, Garcia's group was united with the refugees from the Santa Fe area under command of Don Antonio Otermin, the Governor of New Mexico (Hackett 1942:II:104). Otermin established a temporary settlement for the refugees at La Salieneta, now in the vicinity of present day Canutillo, Texas, nine miles north of El Paso. This camp was occupied from September 18, to October 9, 1680 (Hughes 1914:315). However, La Salieneta was abandoned because it provided poor pasturage and little wood for fuel. The refugees were relocated at Guadalupe del Paso in the general area of the Manso mission. This Franciscan mission, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe del Paso, located at El Paso del Norte was founded in 1659 for the conversion of the Manso Indians, a non-agrarian tribe scattered throughout the region (Hughes 1914:305).

El Paso del Rio del Norte, now the modern city of Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, situated on the west bank of the river, opposite what is now El Paso, Texas, received the name 'The Pass of the River of the North' from the early Spanish conquistadors (Hughes 1914:298). It was here that a ford in the river allowed man, horse, and wagon to cross to the other side. From 1659 to 1680, the Pass of the North was little more than a way station along the long and treacherous trail that stretched from Chihuahua City to Santa Fe, New Mexico. A northern portion of this Royal Road, east of the river between

modern Las Cruces and Socorro, was appropriately called *La Jornada del Muerto* or 'The Journey of Death' because travelers frequently suffered from the lack of water and were easy prey for the Apache and other hostile Indians.

In November, 1680, Governor Otermin launched an expedition of some 290 Spanish and Indian soldiers, servants, and priests with the objective of reconquering New Mexico. Included within this military unit was Bartolo Pique, Captain of War, with 30 Christian Indians of the Tigua Nation (Hackett 1942:II:201).

On December 6, 1681, Governor Otermin's forces attacked Isleta pueblo, New Mexico, surprising the inhabitants who offered little resistance and soon surrendered. Otermin's army advanced within ten leagues of Santa Fe, but the Indians were determined to preserve their independence and the Spanish troops departed for El Paso. As they withdrew, they arrived again at Isleta pueblo. Here they discovered that of the 511 Indians captured during the assault on that pueblo, only 385 remained (Hackett 1942:II:393, 394). The rest had escaped to join the rebels. The remaining Indians were placed under guard and forced to march to El Paso. It was recorded that these Indians "...took their clothes, and more than a thousand fanegas of maize and a large quantity of beans were carried to the wagon" (Hackett 1942:II:394). The Spaniards then set fire to the buildings and granaries, leaving the pueblo abandoned. This expedition arrived in El Paso in February, 1682. Presumably, most of the 385 captives were resettled that year at the new pueblo of Corpus Christi de la Isleta.

In 1682, following the attempted reconquest, Spanish and Indian refugees were resettled at four locations in the El Paso district. Indians were separated from Europeans on the advice of Father Francisco Ayeta of Guadalupe Mission. This was done to maintain the policy of ethnic separation practiced in New Mexico, to prevent arguments arising over land and livestock, and to protect Spanish settlers from an epidemic among the Indians.

Spanish colonists were established at San Lorenzo, appropriately named for Saint Lawrence on whose feast day the Pueblo Rebellion had begun. A concentration of Tigua Indians was settled at Corpus Christi de la Isleta located between the two Piro villages of Senecú and Socorro (Hughes 1914:323). Thus the names of the former New Mexican pueblos Isleta, Senecú, and Socorro were merely transferred to the new settlements to the south in the El Paso region.

There is some confusion concerning locations of the El Paso settlements and subsequent changes of these sites, Ysleta included. The El Paso pueblos were reorganized in 1683 by Fray Nicolas Lopez (Hughes 1914:328). In 1684, as a result of the Manso Revolt, the villages of the El Paso district were consolidated into a more compact settlement for mutual defense. Since 1684 the pueblos of San Lorenzo, Senecú, Socorro, and Ysleta have probably more or less, retained their traditional locations. These pueblos have been subject

to occasional flooding of the Rio Grande which, in some cases, destroyed a town and resulted in its relocation in a more favorable area near the former site. Floods have also altered the main channel and hence the relative position of the settlements to the river bank.

El Paso del Norte was the most northern frontier outpost of the Spanish Empire in the Southwest until Governor Diego de Vargas completed the reconquest of New Mexico in 1697. Following the reconquest, Vargas had planned to return refugee Tiguas and Piro to their homeland in New Mexico (Espinosa 1940:287). But the 'temporary' villages of Ysleta del Sur, Socorro del Sur, and Senecú del Sur, were never deserted. It is possible that the aboriginal inhabitants of those newly-founded pueblos desired to remain in the El Paso area rather than returned to their conservative cousins whom they feared would regard them as traitors. Even today, almost 300 years since the Pueblo Revolt, some Pueblo Indians of New Mexico speak of Ysleta del Sur in disparaging terms, but generally there is mutual respect between these peoples.

## THE TWO ISLETAS

Today the Texas pueblo is simply called Ysleta, or Ysleta del Sur, meaning 'Ysleta of the South' to distinguish it from the mother pueblo in the north. Perhaps to separate the two further, the archaic 'y' spelling has been retained for the daughter colony. The modern communities of Socorro and Ysleta are located in Texas and the hamlet of Senecú is in Juarez, Mexico. The Manso and Piro Indians have become lost in the Mexican population, although their descendants can still be found.

The Tigua of Ysleta del Sur recognize a kindred relationship with Isleta pueblo in New Mexico. Some believe this to be the original home of their ancestors. However, the tribal officers and older people maintain that their forefathers migrated long ago from their homeland, either California to the west or Gran Quivira in the Saline country to the east. According to legend, these displaced Indians arrived at Isleta, New Mexico, where they were welcomed by a friendly people who allowed them to live within the pueblo. They remained here many years until an argument ensued, involving the tribal drum of the new tenants. An evil Spaniard (or Mexican) desired this drum because of its power, and tried to persuade the Indians to join him and a mischievous Indian 'king' of the Apaches and Papagos named Montezuma. But the new arrivals refused. They killed the Spaniard to protect their drum and departed from the pueblo, traveling southward until they arrived at Hueco Tanks.

These tanks, located some thirty miles east of present day El Paso, Texas, are large intrusive igneous knobs of the adjacent Hueco Mountains that arise out of the desert plain. The numerous caves and natural cisterns in this formation provided shelter and an important water source to Indians for millenniums from Basket Maker to the historic Comanche and Apache. The

Tigua claim that the tanks once exclusively belonged to them and that they fought often with the Apaches to retain possession. From 1857-1861, the old Butterfield Stageline maintained a station at the tanks (Grace 1932:71). As recently as forty years ago groups of Tiguas traveled by burro and horse and wagon to camp in this region during the summer months to hunt and gather medicinal herbs and food plants. Even today, they hunt and collect wild plants among the Hueco Mountains.

According to the origin story, the tribe lived for many years at Hueco Tanks planting corn, beans, and squash. One day a man ventured to the west while hunting and discovered the Rio Grande and a very attractive and fertile valley. The tribe then moved to this place along the river and built a church and established a pueblo which was known as Ysleta del Sur.

About five miles northeast of the tanks is Cerro Alto, the highest peak in the Hueco Mountains. Cerro Alto, according to Tigua traditionalists, is the home of the *awelo* (sp. *abuelo*) or grandfather to the Indians. He is a *katchina*-like manifestation who watches behavior and keeps the tribal leaders in line. Parents may warn an unruly child that his wrongdoing may incur the wrath of the *awelo*. Some informants have said that the *awelo* has appeared to people in the form of a whirlwind. In the old days, it is said that the *awelo* would sometimes enter the *tusla* or tribal ceremonial room (*kiva*) and join the people in dancing (Figure 1). His presence in the *tusla* caused the entire room to light up and glow as if there were lights in the building. Also, it is remarked that in these days long ago the *awelo* would join his people when they traveled to old Isleta pueblo in New Mexico to take part in the fiestas there.

The *awelos* are clowns and one is the grandfather and the other is the grandmother. The male *awelo* may carry a whip to scare the children and the female dancer (which is always a male as is the grandfather) possesses a rag doll which is treated in a funny or amusing manner. Both dancers often moved about scaring the young observers and scattering both dogs and chickens.

The masks are made of buffalo hide, believed to be sacred and therefore are handled with extreme care. The *awelo* dance was presented on the day of Santo Reyes or the sixth of January. A man made a promise to God to serve as an *awelo* dancer. Following this dance he would remove the *awelo* dress and then swim in the cold Rio Grande to purify himself.

Despite conflicting origin stories, the elders of Ysleta del Sur acknowledge the affinity they share with Isleta, New Mexico. They remind their grandchildren that if ever the tribe approaches extinction, the drum, bows, arrows, rattles, and other ritual paraphernalia must be taken to the pueblo of Isleta, New Mexico, because these sacred things belong only to the Tigua Indians. The canes of office, however, which are distinctively of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, must be given to the waters of the Rio Grande, as are the *bastones* (willow staffs) that the officers carry during the feast day of San Antonio and which are thrown each year into the river.

Although the two pueblos are separated by a distance of some 250 miles, throughout the centuries they have maintained a sporadic but warm





Figure 1. Masked dancers representing Tiwa supernaturals known as *abuelos*, a form of katchina.



relationship with one another. Though infrequent, visits are made, fiestas attended, and even marriages between the two groups have resulted. An official reunion between the two pueblos was held at Isleta Pueblo, New Mexico on July 10, 1969 (Albuquerque Tribune 1969). This event, the scene of considerably curiosity by members of the New Mexico pueblo, was characterized by amiable hand shakes and *embrazos*.

The Texas pueblo also enjoys a rapport with the nearby Tigua community of Tortugas in Las Cruces, New Mexico. This Indian pueblo may be a daughter colony of Ysleta del Sur and probably was founded before the turn of the century by a composite of Tigua, Piro, and Manso Indians from the El Paso-Juarez region (Hurt 1952:106).

### THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PERIOD

From 1680 until 1881, Tigua scouts faithfully served the Spanish, Mexican, and American governments, defending the settlements along the Rio Grande from Indian rebellion, Apache and Comanche raids, and marauding bandits. Indian warriors from the newly-established El Paso pueblos assisted Diego de Vargas in the reconquest of New Mexico in the last decade of the seventeenth century (Espinosa 1940:51). During the 1683-1684 revolt of Manso and Suma Indians of the El Paso and Casas Grandes districts, Tigua and Piro allies rendered invaluable service to Spanish troops in helping subdue the rebels (Walz 1951:176). In this uprising the Tigua Indians fully supported the New Mexico governor, and refused to abandon El Paso as desired by the *cabildo* representing the fatigued and hungry Spanish colonists (Walz 1951:173). During the Mexican period (1810-1846), Tigua and Piro scouts frequently reconnoitered the river banks and sand hills for Comanche raiding parties (Campbell 1950).

The Tigua soldiered with the Texas Rangers and the U.S. Cavalry during the Apache campaigns in that state. In one encounter with Mescalero Apaches at Paso Viejo near Valentine, Texas on June 11, 1881 (U.S. Government 1880:I:149), a detachment of the Tenth Cavalry was surprised by an ambush and quickly deserted the scene of battle. But four stubborn Tigua scouts held ground to protect the body of their fallen war chief, Sergeant Simon Holguin. They succeeded in fending off the entire enemy force which soon withdrew, escaping to the mountains (Gillett 1925:202).

On several occasions throughout the Anglo-American period, the Tigua of Ysleta del Sur were recognized by various departments of the United States Government. However, federal attention was sporadic and soon forgotten. The Texas pueblo was far removed from the heart of the traditional New Mexican pueblos. Moreover, the Indian inhabitants of this pueblo blended with the predominantly Mexican surroundings. For example, by the 1900's, most Tiguas had adopted Mexican dress and hair styles (Fewkes 1902:71).

During the Anglo-American era, several visitors to Ysleta predicted that within a short time Indian identity would be lost entirely. As early as 1849, Lieutenant William H. Whiting, who traveled through western Texas while conducting a government survey, made this funereal prophecy “. . .their numbers are fast dwindling away, and but few years will pass before the last altar fire of their race will be extinguished” (Whiting 1849:289). Some fifty years later, Colonel George W. Baylor, who during the 1880’s commanded a company of Texas Rangers stationed at Ysleta, wrote the following: “. . .it is only a question of time when the Tiguas who settled Ysleta will be a name only, as the Sinecus, [ Senecú Piros] their one time powerful neighbors are” (Baylor 1900:7). Colonel Baylor knew the Tiguas well, in fact, his company employed scouts from this pueblo during the last Apache campaigns in Texas.

In 1847, a census of “the pueblos or civilized towns of Indians of the Territory of New Mexico” compiled by the New Mexico Legislature recorded a combined population of 600 persons for the Ysleta and Socorro pueblos of the El Paso region (Calhoun 1850:206). Three years later, James S. Calhoun, Indian Agent in Santa Fe, wrote to his superiors in Washington suggesting that a federal commission be sent to the Texas pueblos to learn more about these Indians, protect Indian land grants, and give these Indians additional lands if necessary (Calhoun 1915:172). Furthermore, he recommended that a sub-agent be sent to the military post near El Paso (Fort Bliss) and that a representative of the Indian Service be stationed at every pueblo (Calhoun 1850:218,219).

Around the turn of the century, some Tigua Indian children from both Ysleta del Sur and Las Cruces attended Albuquerque Indian School operated by the Indian Service. Between 1894 and 1907, over twenty children from Ysleta were enrolled at this institution (Rosenberg 1966).

### BARRIO DE LOS INDIOS

In many respects, the Tigua hardly differ from their Mexican neighbors. The highly acculturated nature of the Texas Tigua may provoke speculation as to an acceptable definition of “what is an Indian”. It would be futile, especially in this case, to employ as a criterion the “degree of blood” or distinctive racial features, because for centuries the Ysleta Indians have intermarried with other Indians, Mexicans, and some Anglos. No doubt the best definition is that of the people concerned, hence it is a matter of self or group identity. According to the Tigua, an individual is Indian if one or both parents was Tigua, regardless of the degree. In addition to the above definition, a person is considered Indian if he takes an active part in tribal affairs, attending the meetings and the fiestas. “Pure bloods” are individuals whose mother and father were regarded as Tigua. An opinion expressed by many Tiguas is the following: “You’re a full Indian if you got the blood from both your parents because it flows in your veins, but Tigua blood is stronger

than Mexican blood.” Tiguas are all related, and it is not uncommon to find cousins who have married cousins.

To a casual observer, the Tigua neighborhood would appear not unlike any other *Chicano* community in the south El Paso area. Some eight blocks east of the old church is the *Barrio de los Indios*, meaning “The Neighborhood of the Indians”. It is in this area that most of the approximately 170 Tiguas live. The neighborhood is pocketed by Mexican families whom the Tigua call *vecinos*, or neighbors. It is interesting that in the old census records of the 18th century the inhabitants of Ysleta included both *Indios* and *vecinos*. However, in this case, *vecino* meant a Spanish citizen. The relationship between *vecinos* and Indians is quite congenial. Most Tigua families are very poor, earning a livelihood from seasonal labors such as chopping wood and picking cotton. Some Indian homes lack both water and lights, and few have indoor plumbing.

In the center of the *Barrio de los Indios* is the modest adobe home of the war chief (Capitan de Guerra). Attached to the north side of the roof is a long ramada or shade. It is a latticed framework some 15 feet long of cottonwood and two by fours intersected by canes and twigs. Under the ramada tribal meetings and dances are held. Not more than ten feet from the shade is a bee hive oven (Figure 2), used for baking bread during the tribal celebrations.

The tusla (kiva), would not be readily perceived, as it occupies a bedroom in the war chief's home. In the tusla the ritual paraphernalia are stored. These include the drum, the bow-and-arrows, gourd rattles, and the Katchina-like masks known as the *awelos* (grandparents). The drum hangs from the wall of the tusla. It is sacred and must always be respected. Only those who know the chants well may play it. On the rawhide stretched across the top of the drum is a large red star representing the sun which the Tigua believe is symbolic as the source of all life. Often during the dances, the dancers bow reverently as they pass before the *juan-chee-ro*, or drum. Once a month, the drum is fed by the war captain, who blows smoke into a small hole at one side. Also in the war chief's home is the tribal altar containing several statues of the tribe's patron, Saint Anthony.

Over 200 years of acculturative influences from Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo contact have exerted many changes upon the traditional Tigua culture, forcing the acceptance or adoption of many new items and the alteration or loss of old ones. However, the Tigua still possess the form of civil government received from the Spaniards centuries ago. In fact, the tribal officers have what they say are the original canes of office obtained from the colonial government of Spain. They have retained the native position of *cacique*, or chief, who is an elder chosen for life. He is never a dictatorial leader, but gives advice and seeks cooperation among the people.

The present *cacique*, 67 year old José Granillo, maintains a pet rooster in a cage before his home. The bird is symbolic of his office and a substitute for the sacred eagle which now is scarce and too difficult to obtain. The tribal officers have said that “In the old days the *cacique* had an eagle; but when



Figure 2. Trinidad Granillo, the War Chief of the Tigua Indians of Ysleta del Sur, Texas stands before the bee hive oven in front of his home which serves as the *tusla* or center of the Indian Community. He holds the tribal drum which has the sun painted in red paint on the front.

you cannot have eagles, you have a hawk, and if you do not have a hawk, then a rooster will do". Supporting this assertion, John Bourke, during his visit to Ysleta in November, 1881, reported that his informant told him that formerly they kept eagles (Bloom 1938:207). Other tribal officers include the lieutenant cacique or governor; *alguacil*, or sergeant-at-arms; the war chief; and four captains. With exception of the cacique, these offices are subject to re-election each year at the midnight tribal meeting on the first of January. Three sets of *mayordomos* (a man and woman each) are selected to serve for the fiesta of San Antonio.

A clan and moiety system no longer exists, although some of the older people vaguely recall that such organization existed. Bourke wrote that his Tigua informant acknowledged the existence of some ten clans. "The pueblo was very small now and had but few clans and these had only a few in each one" (Bloom 1938:208). J. Walter Fewkes in October, 1901, remarked "There still remain in Ysleta survivals of the former clan system of the Tiwa, in which the decent was matriarchial" (Fewkes 1902:70).

All Ysleta Indians speak Spanish and a few converse in fluent English. The last Tigua speakers died in the 1930's, but some descendants know thirty to forty words and phrases in addition to the songs. The oldest tribal member, 100 year old Margarita Carbajal, does not speak Tigua, but she can understand the language.

Pottery was made as late as 1930, mainly in the form of bowls of different sizes and tortilla irons or flatteners. This pottery was quite simple, though not unlike those items manufactured in the pueblos to the north. Women as well as men were potters. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the 1860 federal census recorded several female Indian potters for the town of Ysleta (U.S. Government 1860).

Traditionally, pottery was made for home use as well as for local markets. Around the turn of the century, souvenir items such as pottery bowls, and bows and arrows were made to sell at Ysleta's railroad depot. Some of the old people recall that during their childhood a few old men wove blankets and braided rope and that some women made baskets from willows and plants gathered along the river banks. These crafts were sold in the El Paso – Juarez area, although sometimes the men would organize a joint enterprise of six or seven wagons to trade and sell their goods in Chihuahua City. Unfortunately, no examples of these crafts could be found except pottery.

A revitalistic spirit to retain and reinterpret Indian identity is very pronounced as a result of recent publicity. The tribal bee hive oven was badly damaged two years ago by the summer rains, and it was decided to destroy it in order to build a much larger and better one. There is much interest in reviving some of the old dances and celebrations like the *baile de olla* (water jar dance), the *awelo* dance, and the *porfidado* (carnival dance) which have not been performed in some forty years. Tribal rabbit hunts have not been held in some fifteen years due to the scarcity of these creatures in urban

Ysleta. There is now discussion of reviving these communal drives by traveling by automobile into the desert east of town. Recently, the men participated in an all Tigua deer hunt in the Hueco Mountains where their grandfathers traditionally hunted.

Several families are engaged in making colored beadwork products such as head bands, neck ties, and pendants. Two men have fashioned small drums, and another purchased one from an Indian curio shop and painted it red to resemble the tribal drum. Mrs. Pablo Silvas and her daughters are making oven-baked pottery ash trays and tortilla irons.

## FEDERAL RECOGNITION

Many organizations and individuals have provided assistance to better conditions in the Barrio de los Indios. In the spring of 1966 the local anti-poverty program in El Paso established a temporary school for Indian adults and also supported a community survey conducted by the author. The National Congress of American Indians aided the pueblo with an emergency fund and sent their representatives to the April 12, 1967, hearing before a subcommittee of the Public Affairs Committee of the Texas House of Representatives. At this meeting, Andy Abeita, then governor of Isleta pueblo, New Mexico, declared that the little tribe of El Paso Indians were his people and said that they shared many identical dances and songs.

On May 23, 1967, Texas Governor John Connally signed into law Art. 5421Z entitled "Transfer of Trust Responsibilities Respecting the Tigua Indian Tribe". This act reads as follows: "If the Congress of the United States so legislates, and the Tigua Indian Tribe indicates its consent by appropriate resolution, the governor may accept on behalf of the state a transfer of the trust responsibilities of the United States respecting the Tigua Indian Tribe. Those trust responsibilities shall be administered by the Commission for Indian Affairs" (Vernon's Annotated Revised Civil Statutes of the State of Texas 1969:91).

In August, 1967, tribal leaders testified in Washington before a special congressional hearing inquiring into the history and nature of the Tigua community. On April 12, 1968, the United States Congress approved Public Law 90-287 entitled "An Act Relating to the Tiwa Indians of Texas" (U.S. Government 1968:93). This act gave federal recognition to the Texas pueblo declaring that they ". . . be known and designated as Tiwa Indians of Ysleta, Texas" (U.S. Government 1968:93). This statute transferred ". . . Responsibility, if any, for the Tiwa Indians. . . to the State of Texas" (U.S. Government 1968:93). The law further stated that this tribe would not be ". . . eligible for any services performed by the United States for Indians because of their status as Indians nor subject the United States to any responsibility, liability, claim, or demand of any nature to or by such tribe or its members arising out of their status as Indians, and none of the statutes of the United States which affect Indians because of their status as Indians shall



be applicable to the Tiwa Indians of Ysleta del Sur” (U.S. Government 1968:93). The act also declared that the Tigua Tribe would not be prevented from receiving assistance of programs under the auspices of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

When Ysleta was incorporated by the City of El Paso in 1958, property taxes increased and many Indians could not pay the new rates. This threatened the Tigua community and tribe with seemingly inevitable destruction. In 1966, the tribe received the assistance of a prominent El Paso attorney, Tom Diamond. He became acquainted with the problems of the pueblo, and stopped tax foreclosure by claiming the existence of a land grant of four leagues or 36 square miles issued to the pueblo by the king of Spain on March 13, 1751 (West 1924:435). In the winter of 1970 the tribal attorney filed a petition to intervene against the Lipan and Mescalero Apache claim for aboriginal lands in western Texas because the Apache suit includes lands within the Ysleta Grant. This complaint of intervention was recognized in the spring by the Indian Claims Commission and is now subject to review and adjudication.

The historical record indicates that the lands of this grant were seized in 1871 by an allegedly illegal incorporation of the town. Until that time Ysleta del Sur had withstood European encroachment upon Indian lands over a 100 year period, as did the Indian pueblos of New Mexico. In 1871, when the last of the Indian lands were subject to non-Indian appropriation, several Indian families retained some land ownership while others merely purchased small plots in the general area of the old pueblo and worked the surrounding farms. For example, Borke reported in 1881, that the old Tigua governor “. . .complained that the Americans and Mexicans were crowding into their beautiful valley and taking up, without any recompense, land belonging to the people of the pueblo” (Bloom 1938:207).

Though the intentions of the Texas Commission for Indian Affairs are well meaning, the benefits to the Tigua are questionable. This little tribe only recently entered the “reservation” era to which most U.S. Indian communities have had time to adapt to for many generations in one way or another. Technically, there is no reservation of Ysleta del Sur. There are no tribal lands and thus no land trustee status by either the federal government or state, although plans include purchase of lands by the state of Texas for community housing, a museum and office complex.

The commission’s concept of the Indian represents the all too familiar stereotyped feathered pseudo-plains variety which can serve as a commercial tourist curiosity. The community development program includes a 16th century mock up of a multi-storied pueblo to be constructed across from the old mission. This “pueblo” is to function as both an Indian housing area and tourist attraction. Plans also include the teaching of “Indian culture” such as plains dances, pueblo beadwork and pottery, and basket making.

The Tigua Tribal Council is infrequently consulted about such plans. According to the superintendent, this is because the tribe does not possess a formal constitution. However, this situation has not hindered several New Mexico pueblos such as San Felipe, Santo Domingo, and Taos. Nevertheless, the superintendent has written a constitution and by-laws for the Texas pueblo which have not yet been accepted by the Indians. The development plan of the Texas Commission has created considerable opposition within the Tigua community. Undoubtedly, some benefit may result, especially in employment and medical services. Otherwise, this paternalistic effort in the Tigua experience adds another dimension to a broad and well known story of Indian-white relations.

Since 1966, as a consequence of frequent attention in the local media, there have been many changes in the Barrio de los Indios. The most noticeable change, however, is not in material things but in attitude. There is a greater sense of Indian identity coupled with increased community cooperation.

For many years, Tiguas were subjected to mild forms of discrimination by some Anglos and Mexican residents of the town. In some instances, the uneducated Indian traded his land for a rifle or goods of little value. Until recently, Indian children were, now and then, chided by other youngsters who called them "dumb Indians". However, during the last several years, at the fiesta of San Antonio, the feast day of the tribal patron, many non-Indian children watched in envy as their Tigua playmates danced before the church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Many individuals, over the years, disassociated themselves from the tribe, denying their Tigua ancestry. However, as result of newly instilled pride in Indian heritage due to state-wise publicity, tribal recognition, the administration of the Texas Commission for Indian Affairs, and a pending land claims case, many new members have been added to the tribal rolls. Unfortunately, recruitment has taken place without consultation and approval of the tribal council. These new "Indians" have been added to the tribal rolls of the commission and have become recipients of state funds and assistance.

The tribal census compiled by the author in 1966 totaled 166 persons (Houser 1966): It was based upon individuals who were active in community affairs and recognized as members by the tribal officers. This census may have neglected 20 to 30 members. In contrast, the present census by the superintendent of the Tigua Indian Community exceeds 400. Perhaps the Tigua may accept these new "members" as did the Tigua community of Tortugas which in 1914 was formally incorporated as a quasi-religious organization providing for the recruitment of non-Indians (Tortugas 1914).

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