

## Reclaiming Tribal Identity in the Land of the Spirit Waters: The Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation

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The San Antonio River, originally called *Yanaguana*, by the Indigenous Payaya people who were sustained by it for nearly 11,000 years, was also the lifeblood that sustained five Spanish colonial-era Catholic missions founded along its banks in the early 1700s.<sup>1</sup> Today, the modern-day descendants of the eighteenth-century San Antonio Mission Indians who built, lived in, were baptized, married, and ultimately buried (and reburied) in the five missions along the San Antonio River banks are actively reclaiming their Indigenous identity, carving out space for the voices of the Indigenous people of the region.<sup>2</sup> The ceremonial use of peyote by modern-day descendants of San Antonio's eighteenth-century Mission Indians points to evidence of Coahuiltecan cultural survival across time, and, has very real implications for the tribe, particularly with respect to issues of recognition. This paper, through a case study of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation in San Antonio, Texas, will interrogate issues of tribal resurgence, *mestizaje*, and the politics of recognition—both state and federal recognition of a Native tribe, and the politics of recognition across Indian Country at-large. Contrary to dominant narratives in the academic literature and popular literature, the Indigenous people of South Texas not only never went extinct, but, are both actively reclaiming their indigenous identity, and, pushing back against narratives of Coahuiltecan extinction.<sup>3</sup>

### ***The Struggle for Ancestral Remains: Repatriations and Reburials***

On November 26, 1999, two tipis were erected on the grounds of Mission San Juan Capistrano in the South Side of San Antonio, Texas. That evening, members of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation conducted an all-night Native American Church prayer service in one tipi, while the skeletal remains of approximately 150 of their relatives sat unaccompanied in the other tipi, waiting for a proper reburial in the morning.<sup>4</sup> The remains, mostly eighteenth-century

Coahuiltecan neophytes, were excavated in the late 1960's and early 1970's by archeologists during renovations of Mission San Juan Capistrano, but for over thirty years, were not returned to those who could, because of the Native American Graves Protection and Reparation Act (NAGPRA), be considered next of kin through cultural affiliation ties.<sup>5</sup> Instead, some were put on display as public artifacts in museums and universities across Texas; some were stored in boxes on the shelves of these institutions, with ultimately very little research conducted on any of the excavated remains.<sup>6</sup>

In 1994, approximately twenty five years after the Coahuiltecan remains were excavated from Mission San Juan Capistrano, five families of eighteenth-century San Antonio Mission Indian descendants united out of political necessity; The Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation, and its non-profit agency, American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions (AIT) were born.<sup>7</sup> The Nation would serve as a unified voice in the struggle for the repatriation of the human remains, and AIT would begin to provide various services to San Antonio residents at large. According to personal correspondence from Archbishop of San Antonio Patrick Flores to Tāp Pīlam member Raymond Hernández, Flores was more willing to work with a large group, than individuals, who were interested in conducting genealogical research through the Spanish colonial-era mission records (including birth, baptismal, marriage, and death records) held by the Archdiocese in San Antonio.<sup>8</sup>

Creating the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation in 1994, then, was a strategic political decision undertaken by five families of San Antonio Mission Indian descendants.<sup>9</sup> Raymond Hernández would become one of the most outspoken advocates of the tribe's genealogical research endeavors and repatriation struggle. In a letter dated May 10, 1995 from Archbishop Flores to Hernández, Flores wrote:

Although the process to identify his identity may seem burdensome to one who believes himself to be a descendant of the Mission Indians, it is essentially the same process that a Native American must undertake to qualify as a member of one of the tribes recognized by the federal government. The certification that may be provided by the Archdiocese should be valuable for an individual, or group of individuals, who seek further recognition. As I mentioned, the Archdiocese will be glad to

work with the individuals who are interested in verifying their ancestry and establishing themselves as descendants of the Mission Indians. Should a sizeable group be certified it would perhaps be expedient for them to put forth a representative to act on their behalf with the Archdiocese. In the meantime, the Archdiocese will deal with them on an individual basis.<sup>10</sup>

Ultimately, the San Antonio Archdiocese would also work with the Tāp Pīlam in the repatriation and reburial of the human remains, helping the tribe to broker an agreement with University of Texas San Antonio Center for Archeological Research, the Texas Historical Commission, and the National Park Service for the return and reburial of approximately 150 Coahuiltecan neophytes.<sup>11</sup> On November 27, 1999 the Nation conducted its first major reburial ceremony on the grounds of Mission San Juan Capistrano—the very grounds of the Spanish colonial-era mission their eighteenth-century Coahuiltecan ancestors built, lived in, were baptized, married, and buried in, and on that November morning, were ultimately reburied in. This reburial ceremony served as a very visual representation of what Texas A & M archeologist Alston Thoms has labeled a Coahuiltecan resurgence.

Alongside the on-going repatriation and reburial efforts (there have been two repatriations and reburials since the major 1999 reburial), the tribe's non-profit agency American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions (AIT), began offering services to the San Antonio community at large in 1994. A co-founder of the National Urban Indian Coalition, AIT now offers programs including Healing the Wounded Spirit (Indigenous-based counseling services), fatherhood education and programming as a member of The National Compadres Network, powwows, and cultural arts workshops such as beading classes. Their Four Seasons Indian Market, held quarterly on the grounds of Mission San Juan Capistrano, provides a space for Native artists from around the San Antonio area to sell their work, while guided tours of the San Antonio Spanish colonial-era missions educate the public on Coahuiltecan contributions to the missions, to San Antonio, Texas, and the United States.<sup>12</sup>

***A Brief Coahuiltecan History, Missionization, and Resurgence***

Although the term Coahuiltecan implies a unified, homogenous group of people, there were more than sixty nomadic bands of Coahuiltecan people who lived without a central polity in what is now South Texas prior to the arrival of the Spanish. Living a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle of seasonal migrations, plant staples of the Coahuiltecan people included mesquite flour, pecan, agave, yucca, and prickly pear cactus, and meat sources included bison, deer, turkey.<sup>13</sup> Seven distinct languages were spoken—Cotoname, Comecrduo, Solano, Aranama, Mamulique, Garza, and Coahuilteco (Pakawa/Tejano).<sup>14</sup> These seven, largely mutually unintelligible languages, are considered by linguists to be language isolates. That is, none of the languages are related to any of the fifty-eight major American Indian language families, a consequence of the uninterrupted occupation of the region for 11,000 years.<sup>15</sup> Despite political and social differences, the various Coahuiltecan bands did have one thing in common—the *mitote* ceremony. An all-night ceremony of singing, drumming, dancing, and the ceremonial consumption of the peyote cactus, this ancient religious ceremony is well documented by Spanish missionaries. Unlike in central Mexico, however, where peyote use by Indigenous peoples was heavily prosecuted by courts of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, the peyote ceremony in South Texas was kept alive, and even spread to other Indigenous people, through strategic Coahuiltecan negotiation of the Spanish missions in South Texas.<sup>16</sup>

In 1718, the first of five Spanish Catholic missions along the banks of the San Antonio River, Mission San Antonio de Valero (more commonly known as the Alamo), was established.<sup>17</sup> By 1731, four more missions would be established along the banks of the San Antonio River, all within a few miles apart of each other—Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña, San José y San Miguel de Aguayo, San Juan Capistrano, and San Francisco de la Espada. With their populations already decimated by Spanish diseases, and facing continued Apache and Comanche raids from the north, as well as Spanish settler encroachments from the south, the various bands of Coahuiltecan Indians around the San Antonio area strategically took up seasonal residence at the missions to ensure their own survival. Band names recorded in Spanish colonial-era records of the San Antonio missions include Payaya, Pajalat, Xarame, Orejonos, Borrados, and Manos de Perro, to name just a few.<sup>18</sup>

Until quite recently, the historiography of the Coahuiltecan Mission Indians of San Antonio has pointed either to their complete extinction, as

understood in the traditional sense of the word extinction, or to their absorption into the rapidly growing, mostly mestizo, ethnic Mexican/Tejano population of the late Spanish colonial/early Mexican Republic eras, particularly through intermarriage.<sup>19</sup> Most of the academic literature concludes that by the mid-1800s, the San Antonio Mission Indians were so unrecognizable as a distinct indigenous ethnic group that *de facto* extinction through Hispanicization was the only plausible explanation of what happened to the Indigenous people of South Texas. Historian Raul Ramos explains that “secularization of the missions in 1823 started the process of Indian ‘disappearance’ in Bexár (San Antonio)... many became Tejano, intermarrying with Mexicans and becoming ethnic Mexicans outright.”<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, scholars like historian Raul Ramos and archeologist Alston Thoms have left room for more nuanced approaches to understand what happened to the Mission Indians of San Antonio, explaining that “the historical construction of Mexican ethnicity along the lines of Indian identity meant this would be a complicated incorporation at best...the levels of identity themselves are blurred and overlap at the edges.”<sup>21</sup> The negotiation of multiple, overlapping identities, then, is crucial to understanding the ways in which descendants of San Antonio’s Mission Indians have wrestled with questions of *mestizaje* in the U.S./Mexico borderlands. The Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation, through its activism, reclaiming of language, ceremonial practices, and services offered to the San Antonio community at-large actively pushes back against ideas of Coahuiltecan extinction that have dominated both the scholarship, and the popular settler imagination in Texas, for the past three hundred years.

### ***The Politics of Recognition, Peyote, and NAGPRA***

There are three federally recognized tribes in Texas- The Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas, and Ysleta del Sur Pueblo. Following the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the Ysleta del Sur (so called so as to be distinguished from the Isleta who remained and/or returned to the pueblo in New Mexico after the revolt), fled with the ousted Spanish and settled in present day El Paso in 1682.<sup>22</sup> A recent exercise in sovereignty, Project Tiwahu: Redefining Tigua Citizenship, undertaken by the Ystela del Sur resulted in the tribe changing its enrollment criteria (previously set by the federal government in the mid-1980’s during restoration of a government-to-government relationship) to reflect the wishes of its citizenship. After close engagement with its citizens through direct outreach and surveys, the tribe won its exercise in self-

determination, successfully changing its tribal enrollment criteria to include a less restrictive blood quantum, and, a larger consideration of lineal and lateral descent, doubling the size of its citizenship.<sup>23</sup>

The Alabama and Coushatta tribes, two distinct but culturally related tribes, were part of the larger Creek Confederacy. Entering Spanish-controlled Texas in the 1780s, the two tribes would eventually merge into one nation when the State of Texas created a reservation in 1854 for the Alabama; the Coushatta would join them there.<sup>24</sup> Currently the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas is engaged in litigation with the State of Texas regarding its casino on its reservation. The Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas is the only tribe allowed by the State of Texas to have gaming, a consequence of the different ways in which government-to-government relationships were restored between the tribes, the federal government, and the state after termination.

The Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas is one of three federally recognized Kickapoo nations in the United States, and the most southerly of the Kickapoo diaspora. Fleeing Anglo settler encroachments on their traditional homeland between Lake Michigan and Lake Erie, the nation now known as The Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas accepted the invitation of the Spanish colonial government to settle in Texas.<sup>25</sup> It was the hope of the Spanish to use the Kickapoo as a strategic buffer against Anglo incursions. The Mexican War for Independence and the Texas War for Independence led to an increase in the Anglo settler population and Kickapoos, by this time straddling both sides of the Rio Grande, led raiding parties against the Anglo with their Cherokee, Delaware, Caddo, and Seminole allies. As a reward for their service the Mexican government awarded them land in Texas, which they would later trade for land in Múzquiz, Coahuila.<sup>26</sup>

Between the mid-1950s and late 1960s, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo and the Alabama-Coushatta saw their government-to-government relationship with the U.S. government terminated by the U.S. Congress, reflecting the larger termination policy that affected more than one hundred Indian tribes between the mid-1940s and mid-1960s.<sup>27</sup> In 1965, The Texas Indian Commission was established and would engage in government-to-government relationships with the three tribes until restoration (or in the case of the Kickapoo, initial recognition) of their status of sovereign nations by the U.S. government in the

mid-1980s.<sup>28</sup> The Texas Indian Commission disbanded in 1989, as government-to-government relationships between the tribes and the federal government resumed. Although the disbanding of the Texas Indian Commission left no mechanism for official state recognition of Indian tribes, resolutions passed in 2001 in both the Texas House and Texas Senate recognize the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation for the historic and contemporary contributions of Coahuiltecan people to the State of Texas, and to the nation.<sup>29</sup> The Texas Senate version reads, in part:

WHEREAS, During the early 1700s, a number of Native American groups were converted to Christianity, and members of the Coahuiltecan tribe and other groups performed important duties at the missions, such as constructing dams and irrigation canals, working in the fields and as cowboys, and helping to build communities; and

WHEREAS, Unlike the traditions of many Native American tribes, the proud rituals and traditions of the Coahuiltecan have endured, and many aspects of the tribe's early life remain the same today; time-honored occasions, such as Indian Decoration Day, are still celebrated, and ceremonial music and dress are still in use; and

WHEREAS, The Coahuiltecan have played an important role in Texas history, and they have enriched our culture by preserving and sharing their heritage and customs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 77th Legislature, hereby commend the Tāp Pīlam -Coahuiltecan for their exemplary preservation of their heritage and their many contributions to the culture of our state and nation.

As a non-federally recognized tribe, the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation's membership in the Native American Church of North America sheds new light on the politics of recognition in Indian Country, as membership has traditionally been limited to federally recognized tribes. As Indigenous Peoples of the U.S./Mexico borderlands, Tāp Pīlam members embrace multiple, overlapping identities including Coahuilteco/a, Tejano/a, Chicano/a, and Mexicano/o.<sup>30</sup> For members of the Tāp Pīlam, the use of peyote is a birthright that predates any of

the European colonial projects on the continent, with the earliest evidence of Coahuiltecan ceremonial peyote use carbon dated to approximately 8,000 years ago.<sup>31</sup> Archival sources, combined with oral histories conducted with tribal members between 2017 and 2019, point to a long history of personal relationships between non-federally recognized indigenous people of South Texas, and members of federally recognized tribes across Indian country. An article in the January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1926 edition of the *San Antonio Express News* details early twentieth century pilgrimages by the Comanche from Lawton, Oklahoma to a private ranch in South Texas to harvest peyote.<sup>32</sup> A reference to a guide from “the Indian colony in San Antonio” sheds light on the role of the Indigenous people of South Texas in the making of the modern Native American Church. Tribal elder Ramon Vásquez also spoke of a letter he held in his collection from a tribe in Oklahoma acknowledging the guidance of Coahuiltecan families from San Antonio in the peyote tradition.<sup>33</sup> Taken together, this evidence indicates that Indigenous people of South Texas (both likely Coahuiltecan and Lipan Apache people) have served as teachers and mentors of the peyote ceremony to members of federally recognized tribes since at least the early 1900’s.

The first chapter of the Native American Church was incorporated in 1918 and would rapidly spread across Indian Country, providing an inter-tribal space for prayer and healing at a particularly bleak time for Native Americans. Harassment and imprisonment of Native American Church members led to Indian political activism, resulting first in the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act, and subsequently, the 1994 amendments to that act explicitly protecting ceremonial use of peyote by members of federally recognized tribes.<sup>34</sup>

Left in a legal grey area with respect to federal protection as a member of a non-federally recognized tribe, Isaac Cárdenas, Tāp Pīlam tribal elder has nonetheless served as Texas delegate-at-large to the Native American Church of North America between 2007 and the present writing (2019). Cárdenas explained in his 2017 interview at the American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions office in San Antonio:

Our history with the medicine (peyote) goes back to even those mescal beans that you're wearing. We have a lineal history. Our lineage helps us know our identity; it shows us our identity. We've always had the medicine. It grows in our backyard. We would use it for our *mitotes*, we use it for our bear dance, we use it for our healings. We use it as a healing

herb that we use for cuts. We use it for all different types of medicinal purposes. I think it's what keeps me going.<sup>35</sup>

Cárdenas also explained that his introduction to the medicine was through his grandfather who took him to ceremonies in the peyote gardens of South Texas, the home of Amada Cárdenas, affectionately called Grandma Cárdenas by members of the Native American Church, and, the first federally licensed peyote dealer.<sup>36</sup> Her private ranch in South Texas became a pilgrimage site to members of the Native American Church who journeyed from throughout the United States to conduct all night prayer services, and return home with a supply of their sacrament. It was at this pilgrimage site that Cárdenas learned the intricacies of the Native American Church prayer service and began to build relationships with Church members across Indian Country, eventually becoming the Texas delegate-at-large to the Native American Church. He recalls of a Native American Church business meeting in Austin, Texas:

They expressed who they were, and we got information for the next convention that was going to happen in Mayetta, Kansas with the Pottawatomí—Prairie People. So, we had to get our by-laws together, we had to create our charter, our 250 dollars to join. The state recognizes us, whatever that means. We have a letter from the federal government that recognizes who we are, but we're not officially federally recognized. So, with those documents we were admitted.<sup>37</sup>

Other members of the Tāp Pīlam have also formed relationships with well-known and well respected members of the Native American Church over the years, further cementing the bond with, and inherent recognition by, federally recognized tribes as indigenous people of South Texas. Raymond Hernández traces his Coahuiltecan ancestry through both his grandfather's stories and the Spanish colonial-era records of Mission San Antonio de Valero, more commonly known as The Alamo. Popular narratives have rendered the Alamo, which was used as makeshift military fort by Anglos during the Texas War for Independence from Mexico, a bastion of White progress and American exceptionalism. For Coahuiltecan people, it holds a very different meaning. Hernández recalls of walks with his grandfather in downtown San Antonio:

He'd take me to the Alamo. He would tell me about certain family members that were there. One of the first ones that he could recall

from that line of family, my maternal, was a lady named Josefa whose parents were from the Papanac people, and Seneca—that's the way it's spelled. Now whether it's the Seneca of the Seneca Nation from New York, I have no idea. I just know how it's recorded in the archives. And we documented it, and had the (San Antonio) Archdiocese validate that it was authentic, from the actual book of the *nacimientos y bautismos* (births and baptisms). We were not allowed to go inside the Alamo, because of that era (Jim Crow South). And he would pray outside, across the street from the Alamo and we'd have our little sandwiches, and he'd leave the little offerings, you know, humble things.<sup>38</sup>

In his interview at the AIT office, Hernández spoke of the personal relationships he built over the years with people including William Tall Bull, Floyd Youngman, and Anthony Davis, roadmen (spiritual leaders) of the Native American Church who embraced him as an Indigenous person of South Texas, and, who understood his ancestral links to the peyote medicine.<sup>39</sup> That members of the Tāp Pīlam fundamentally mark their Coahuiltecan identity through the ceremonial use of peyote points to evidence of Coahuiltecan cultural survival across time, and could have very real implications in NAGPRA related claims in the future, serving as evidence of a cultural affiliation link to the various Coahuiltecan bands who have occupied the San Antonio area for millennia.

At least two NAGPRA compliance reports commissioned by the federal government regarding human remains protocols recommend the Tāp Pīlam be consulted should any Native American remains be found in and around San Antonio on federal property at any time in the future.<sup>40</sup> Letters from the U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, and the National Park Service invite the Tāp Pīlam to be a part of NAGPRA human remains and funerary objects protocol discussions with them.<sup>41</sup> These recommendations are unique, in that they go beyond the consultations required of the federal government by the letter of NAGRPR law, as the Tāp Pīlam is not a federally-recognized tribe. In May of 2000, The Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, a federally recognized tribe located in Oklahoma, passed a tribal council resolution in support of:

our traditional tribal neighbors, the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation of San Antonio, Texas in their efforts and activities to protect and preserve their sacred sites, burial grounds, and artifacts, and hereby sponsor participation of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation in all

official and appropriate matters involving their traditional homeland to include properties owned and controlled by the U.S. government.<sup>42</sup>

In effect, the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes declared themselves a sponsor of the Tāp Pīlam in NAGPRA related issues through this tribal council resolution. Although NAGPRA laws only apply to federally recognized tribes, this paper trail of *de facto* recognition by at least one federally recognized tribe could have very real implications for the Tāp Pīlam in future NAGPRA claims if the tribe ever receives federal recognition.

To be sure, there has been pushback against the Tāp Pīlam from groups and individuals who also claim San Antonio Mission Indian descent. These groups and individuals argue that the Tāp Pīlam should not be the only group consulted, at the exclusion of other Mission Indian descendants, in issues related to the repatriation and reburial of human remains. Nonetheless, the Tāp Pīlam continues with its activism regarding human remains and funerary objects. The front page story on the September 11, 2019 edition of *San Antonio Express News*, “Group Files Suit Over Alamo Changes: Native American Descendants Want Say Over Remains,” speaks to the tribe’s view of the San Antonio missions as their ancestors’ final resting place.<sup>43</sup> Major renovation plans at the Alamo (Mission San Antonio de Valero) have excluded the Tāp Pīlam from the human remains protocol, prompting the tribe to file a federal lawsuit to “protect the rights of the lineal descendants to participate in determining what happens to any of the human remains that will be discovered.”

### ***Conclusion***

The Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation is in the midst of a tribal and cultural resurgence. At the heart of the resurgence, in part, is ceremonial use of peyote—evidence of Coahuiltecan survival across time—a cultural affiliation link to the various early bands of Coahuiltecan that inhabited what is now South Texas. This cultural affiliation link could serve as a foundation for future NAGPRA cultural affiliation human remains and funerary objects claims should the tribe ever receive federal recognition. Tribal members are actively reclaiming their indigenous identity, and simultaneously, pushing back against narratives of Coahuiltecan extinction. The Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation’s non-profit agency, American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions, provides

Indigenous-based services to San Antonio residents at-large, carving out a space in an urban area whose romanticization of its Spanish/Mexican and Anglo heritage has often silenced the legacy and voices of both historic and contemporary Coahuiltecan people. Coahuiltecan language classes, Coahuiltecan-led tours of the San Antonio Missions, pow-wows, and Indian markets are all readily visible signs of tribal resurgence.

As I move my dissertation research and writing process forward, using Indigenous research methodologies in both archival research and the oral histories, I hope that my work will shed light on the continuity of the peyote ceremony amongst Coahuiltecan people, revealing multiple links, and possibly strengthening future NAGPRA cultural affiliation claims for the tribe.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cárdenas, Isaac (Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation tribal elder, Texas delegate at-large to the Native American Church), interviewed by Adrian Chavana at the American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions office (digital audio recording), June 14, 2017; Vásquez, Ramón (Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation tribal elder, American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions Executive Director), interviewed by Adrian Chavana at the American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions office (digital audio recording), June 14, 2017; Thomas N. Campbell, Handbook of Texas Online, “Payaya Indians,” <http://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/bmp53>. The Payaya are one band of Coahuiltecan people in the larger, problematic, Coahuiltecan cultural umbrella. One reason Coahuiltecan as an umbrella term is problematic is because the approximately sixty bands of Coahuiltecan Indians in what is now South Texas often had little in common, both socially and politically. Seven distinct languages were spoken, and it was only through the colonial Spanish mission system that a

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Coahuiltecan *lingua franca* emerged. *Yanaguana* means Spirit Waters in Coahuilteco according to Isaac Cárdenas; According to Vásquez, Tāp Pīlam means People of the Earth in Coahuilteco.

<sup>2</sup> Claims by tribal members to be direct lineal descendants of eighteenth-century San Antonio Mission Indians have been contentious. Based on my research thus far, it seems that some tribal members may have no direct lineal descent from San Antonio Mission Indians, instead tracing their Mission Indian descent from Coahuiltecan Indians who resided in the Catholic missions in what is now the Mexican state of Coahuila. Nonetheless, as a tribal nation asserting its sovereignty, enrollment criteria is set by the tribe. Following the recommendations for further research by Texas A & M archeologist Alston Thoms, I have begun the process of working with tribal members to build on and expand the family genealogies tracing Mission Indian descent, some of which have already been completed by tribal elder Ramón Vásquez.

<sup>3</sup> Alston V. Thoms et al., *Reassessing Cultural Extinction: Change and Survival at Mission San Juan Capistrano, Texas* (College Station: Texas A & M University, Center for Ecological Archeology and San Antonio Missions National Historical Parks, National Park Service joint publication, 2001). In this NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) compliance report, Thoms conducts a literature review of both the academic and popular literature, assessing the ways in which narratives of Coahuiltecan extinction have played out since the Spanish colonial era. Thoms ultimately concludes that Coahuiltecan people are not extinct, and that Mission Indian descendants in San Antonio are both culturally affiliated to and likely direct lineal descendants of Coahuiltecan neophytes buried in all five San Antonio Spanish colonial-era missions. My dissertation builds on his recommendations for further research.

<sup>4</sup> Cárdenas (Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation tribal elder, Texas delegate at-large to the Native American Church), 2017; Barrios, Joseph. “Indian Remains Reburial Today.” *San Antonio Express News*, November 27, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Mardith Schuetz, “The Indians of the San Antonio Missions, 1718-1821” PhD diss., (University of Texas at Austin, 1980), Box 1, American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions private archive, San Antonio, Texas. Burying neophytes at the mission they resided in was customary. Schuetz concludes that none of the Coahuiltecan remains (so-identified through bone structure) could be traced to a specific person listed in the mission records, rendering the remains unidentifiable. Although the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation was not created until 1994, individuals of Mission Indian descent had begun independently working on

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the repatriation of remains by the early 1980's. EN: Passed in 1990, the Native American Graves Protection and Reparation Act requires institutions receiving federal funding to inventory all Indigenous collections, consult with federally recognized tribes, and repatriate human remains as well as many cultural items.

<sup>6</sup> Alston Thoms et al., "Reassessing Cultural Extinction: Change and Survival at Mission San Juan Capistrano, Texas," *Reports of Investigations No. 4* Center for Ecological Archaeology Texas A&M University and San Antonio Missions National Historical Parks, Texas National Park Service, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Vásquez (Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation tribal elder, American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions Executive Director), 2017. The five founding families of the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation and the band each represents is as follows: Raymond Hernández (Pa-na-ma Payaya), Mickey Killian (Pampopa), Teodoso Herrera (Venado), Ramón Vásquez y Sánchez (Auteca Paguame), and Casanova (Pampopa).

<sup>8</sup> Thoms. Oral histories kept alive in these Mission Indian descendant communities, passed down from generation to generation, were often the only way to know which mission one's ancestor resided at prior to a concerted effort by Mission Indian descendants and cooperation from the Archdiocese. The Tāp Pīlam's archival work tracing Mission Indian descent began in earnest in the early 1990s and continues today.

<sup>9</sup> There is room for debate here whether this is a Coahuiltecan resurgence or ethnogenesis, as there was never a singular Coahuiltecan tribe, and the Tāp Pīlam is comprised of descendants from different Coahuiltecan bands.

<sup>10</sup> Thoms.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Although the National Park Service did not have jurisdiction over Mission San Juan Capistrano when the remains were unearthed, it assumed a co-management role with the San Antonio Archdiocese when it became a part of the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park in 1983, along with three other missions along the banks of the San Antonio River. These four missions—Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña, San José y San Miguel de Aguayo, San Juan Capistrano, and San Francisco de la Espada, along with San Antonio de Valero (The Alamo) also became a UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Site (one of only ten such sites in the United States) in 2015, largely because of Tāp Pīlam activism. Catholic mass services are still held at all the

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missions except Valero, with each congregation still largely comprised of Mission Indian descendants.

<sup>12</sup> AIT brochure. *Keeping the Culture Alive*. San Antonio, AIT, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Hester, *Digging Into South Texas Prehistory* (San Antonio: Corona Publishing Company, 1980); Bobbie L. Lovett et al., *Native American Peoples of South Texas* (Edinburg: University of Texas Pan American University, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Ives Goddard, “The Languages of South Texas and the Lower Rio Grande Valley”, in *The Languages of Native America*, eds. L. Campbell and M. Mithun (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 355-389.

<sup>15</sup> Rudolph C. Troike, “Sketch of Coahuilteco, a Language Isolate of Texas,” in *Handbook of North American Indians* vol. 17: *Languages*, ed. Ives Goddard (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1996), p. 644-665.

<sup>16</sup> Omer Stewart, *Peyote Religion: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987). Archeologists radio-carbon date the earliest ceremonial peyote use to approximately 8,000 years ago.

<sup>17</sup> Mission San Antonio de Valero is more commonly known as the Alamo. Its role in the Texas War for Independence often overshadows its Spanish colonial-era establishment as a Franciscan mission, where mostly Coahuiltecan Indians lived.

<sup>18</sup> T.N. Campbell and T.J. Campbell, *Indian Groups Associated with Spanish Missions of the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park*. (San Antonio: Center for Archeological Research, The University of Texas San Antonio Special Report No. 16, 1985). As was common throughout the Spanish empire in the Americas, Spaniards grafted names onto people based on what they perceived to be their physical appearance and/or the geography of the region, hence we see names like Orejones (Big Ears) and Borrados (Painted Ones). Other names like Xarame and Pajalat are probably Spanish approximations of what these indigenous people called themselves. Although a small number of people from other nations (including the Lipan Apache) resided at the missions, Coahuiltecan bands represented the majority of the Indian converts at the missions.

<sup>19</sup> Campbell, T. N. *The Payaya Indians of Southern Texas* (San Antonio: Southern Texas Archaeological Association, 1975); Campbell, T. N. *Ethnic Identities of Extinct Coahuiltecan Populations: Case of the Juanca Indians* (Austin: Texas

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Memorial Museum, 1977); W.W. Newcomb, *The Indians of Texas, from Prehistoric to Modern Times* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961); Thoms.

<sup>20</sup> Raul Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), p. 78. Secularization refers to changing the status from a mission to a local parish. When the San Antonio missions were secularized in the late Spanish/early Mexican period, Mission Indians received plots of land adjacent to the missions, and thus today, Mission Indian identity remains strongest in the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the missions.

<sup>21</sup> Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo* p. 58.

<sup>22</sup> Ysleta del Sur Pueblo official website, <https://www.ysletadelsurpueblo.org/>; Bill Wright, Handbook of Texas Online, “Tigua Indians,” <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/bmt45>.

<sup>23</sup> Project Tiwahu: Redefining Tigua Citizenship, [https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/CAJSCwwIT83\\_LA](https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/CAJSCwwIT83_LA).

<sup>24</sup> Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas official website, <http://www.alabama-coushatta.com/>; Howard N. Martin, Handbook of Texas Online “Alabama-Coushatta Indians”, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/bma19>.

<sup>25</sup> The Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas official website, <https://kickapootexas.org/>; M. Christopher Nunley, Handbook of Texas Online, “Kickapoo Indians”, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/bmk09>.

<sup>26</sup> M. Christopher Nunley, “Kickapoo Indians”.

<sup>27</sup> “Indian Termination Policy”, *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian\\_termination\\_policy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_termination_policy); Nunley. The Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas did not receive federal recognition until 1983. Before that, their migratory nature between the United States and Mexico resulted in an unclear citizenship status.

<sup>28</sup> John R. Wunder, “Texas Indian Commission”, Handbook of Texas Online, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/mdt38>.

<sup>29</sup> Texas Legislature Online, 77(R) HR 787; 77(R) SR 1038. <https://capitol.texas.gov/>

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<sup>30</sup> Cárdenas, Hernández, and Vásquez (tribal elders). The Native American Church is an inter-tribal religion that uses peyote as a sacrament. It is the largest modern-day Native American religion after Christianity.

<sup>31</sup> Stewart, *Peyote Religion*, 1987.

<sup>32</sup> “Indians Establish Camp in Kenney Co Where Religious Rite Weed, Under US Ban, Found,” *San Antonio Express News*, January 12, 1926, Peyote folder, Texas State Library and Archives, Austin, Texas.

<sup>33</sup> Although I was given unprecedented and almost unlimited access to the Tāp Pīlam private archive, the one box I was asked to not look in was labeled NACNA (Native American Church of North America), likely due to sensitive legal and political issues. I suspect this letter to be in this box. Moving forward with my dissertation, I must consider how to move forward with this sensitive subject, and even perhaps, ultimately deciding to not write about it, employing what Audra Simpson calls “ethnographic refusal.”

<sup>34</sup> Peyote is classified as a Schedule I controlled substance by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency. Legal exemptions exist for members of federally recognized tribes who are members of the Native American Church. Tāp Pīlam membership in the Native American Church, then, can be seen as *de facto* recognition across Indian Country as indigenous people of South Texas with historical ties to peyote, although that too has been contentious within the NAC.

<sup>35</sup> Cárdenas.

<sup>36</sup> Stacey B. Schaefer, *Amada’s Blessings from the Peyote Gardens of South Texas* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Here, Cárdenas is referring to the Texas House and Senate resolutions, as well as to one of several letters from the U.S. Army, the National Park Service, or the U.S. Airforce recognizing the Tāp Pīlam as Indigenous people of South Texas. Although the Tāp Pīlam is not federally recognized, many of these letters speak to issues of human and funerary remains, going beyond the consultations required by the letter of NAGRPR law.

<sup>38</sup> Hernández, Raymond (Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation tribal elder, tribal Cultural Preservationist), interviewed by Adrian Chavana at the American Indians

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in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions offices (digital audio recording), June 16, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Peter J. Powell, *Sweet Medicine: The Continuing Role of the Sacred Arrows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969). William Tall Bull is the paternal great-grandson of the noted Cheyenne Dog Soldier chief who was killed at Summit Springs, an Indian retaliation in the wake of the Sand Creek Massacre carried out by the U.S. Army, and part of the larger so-called Indian Wars. Anthony Davis, Pawnee, was a former president of the Native American Church and a well-known roadman in Texas and Oklahoma.

<sup>40</sup> Fields, Ross and Gardner, Karen. *Cultural Affiliation Overview for Fort Sam Houston and Camp Bullis Training Site, Bexar and Comal Counties, Texas*. Prewitt and Associates, Inc., January 2000, Box 10 (archeological reports), AIT private archive; Thoms.

<sup>41</sup> AIT Private archive (personal correspondence); Thoms. The National Park Service assumed a co-management position with the Arch Diocese of San Antonio of four of the five missions in San Antonio (all except San Antonio del Valero) when The San Antonio Missions National Historical Park was established in 1983. San Antonio de Valero was under the care and jurisdiction of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (a non-profit organization) until the Texas General Land Office assumed control in 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Thoms.

<sup>43</sup> Huddleston, Scott. “Group Files Suit Over Alamo Changes: Native American Descendants Want Say Over Remains,” *San Antonio Express News*, September 11, 2019.

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