



# Extinction or Survival?: The Remarkable Story of the Tigua, an Urban American Urban Tribe

*S. K. Adam*

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How could an urban American Indian tribe, having survived relentless earlier governmental attempts to declare its culture extinct, be once again on the verge of extinction? The Tigua of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo dwell in the outskirts of El Paso, Texas, where the infamous Jack Abramoff was in the news for helping to close their highly successful casino. This casino had created jobs and funded health care for the tribe, and now the Tigua are once more taking action to preserve their economy, membership, and culture. This highly publicised casino story is set against the remarkably rich history of the Tigua, including earlier attempts by national and state governments to steal the tribe's land and destroy its legal status. Anthropologist S. K. Adam explores how questions of identity can be linked to cultural survival: Had the Tigua somehow survived 300 years of persecution and urban encroachment, or, as alleged by the government, were they really just Mexicanised Indians acting fraudulently? Adam examines how terms such as indigeneity, identity, authenticity, culture change, and perseverance are understood and defined by the US government. He analyses how issues of power, law, discourse, genocide, and self-determination affect the relationship between the United States and its indigenous populations, past and present.

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