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April 5, 2024

Department of the Interior
Office of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs
Attn: Office of Federal Acknowledgment
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

RE: Petitioner # 403

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APR 11 2024

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Washington, DC**

To whom it may concern,

The San Fernando Band of Mission Indians, (SFBMI), respectfully sends information on petitioner, # 403, Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians during the comment period.

With encouragement and permission from Dr. John R Johnson, Ethno Historian, Anthropologist, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, California, SFBMI is providing Dr. Johnson's "Peer Review" written in the Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology | Vol. 42, No. 2 (2022), for the book "Coalition of Lineages, the Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians" written by Duane Champagne and Carole Goldberg.

Because this book is cited or referenced more than once throughout petitioner #403 petition, SFBMI felt compelled to include information that may be pertinent regarding this resource and in consideration of petitioner's genealogical information as well as other information that is equally important to consider.

Most Sincerely,

Donna Yocum, Chairwoman

San Fernando Band of Mission Indians

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A Coalition of Lineages: The Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians

Duane Champagne and Carole Goldberg
Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2021,
xvii + 394 pp., maps, figures, appendices, bibliography, index,
ISBN 9780816542222, \$29.94 (paperback), \$35.00 (eBook).

Reviewed by John R. Johnson

Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History,
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A Coalition of Lineages tells the story of a particular descendant group of native lineages once affiliated with Mission San Fernando. The book covers significant historical milestones that impacted the lives of San Fernando's indigenous community, and presents a central theme woven throughout the volume—that the pre-colonial lineage-based sociopolitical organization has endured from the eighteenth century down to the present day. Because independent, decentralized, localized lineages (or clans) characterized much of Southern California, the authors argue that it is incorrect to apply the concept of “tribe” to San Fernando's descendant groups today. The “tribe” as a single entity with centralized leadership did not exist historically in the area. The authors make the argument that such a definition of “tribe” presents an unfair standard for many California Indian groups working to achieve federal recognition.

Following the Introduction, the book is divided chronologically into seven chapters that cover the pre-mission, Spanish colonial, and Mexican periods, early California statehood, the late nineteenth century, the first half of the twentieth century, and developments since then up to the present day. The book is strongest in dealing with the historical record of how California's indigenous peoples responded to colonial conditions, government policies and laws, and legal proceedings, as well as the recent history of the particular coalition of lineages upon which the authors focus their narrative. Chapter 5 in particular provides a well-researched narrative of the infamous eviction of Fernandeano captain Rogerio Rocha from his land in 1885. Given these considerable strengths, it is regrettable that frequent factual errors and misinterpretations weaken the overall reliability of the volume.

The first chapter, which deals with cultures and communities that existed before the founding of Mission San Fernando, definitely would have benefited from anthropological peer review. One problem the authors faced is that an extensive ethnographic record does not exist for much of the region surrounding Mission San Fernando. They rightly recognize that localized patrilineal descent groups characterized indigenous societies in southern California generally (excepting the Chumash), but incorrectly equate the terms *lineage* and *clan*, when in fact these forms of social structure have different meanings anthropologically. Elsewhere, they confound matrilocality with matrilineality when discussing Chumash social organization, and make the assertion—unsubstantiated by any evidence known to this reviewer—that the eldest daughters of woman chiefs succeeded their mothers as lineage heads. The authors sometimes mislabel what were clearly distinct languages as “dialects,” and refer to “Chumash” as a single language instead of a language family. Sources used for this chapter are curiously chosen at times. Just to cite one example, a certain layperson's self-published and self-marketed pamphlet—one never subjected to peer review—is cited and praised as the principal source for information regarding Chumash spirituality. Little is known ethnographically regarding the Tataviam; however, this does not stop the authors from asserting as established fact that the Tataviam possessed the same cultural practices as neighboring groups. In a later chapter, they credulously repeat unsubstantiated claims that certain elders were speaking the Tataviam language as late as the 1930s! Map 2 redraws ethnolinguistic boundaries, reassigning villages in the San Fernando Valley to Serrano speakers. In this, the authors promote a distinctly minority opinion, because most ethnohistorians and all linguists, from the time of Kroeber and Harrington to the present day, have concluded that Fernandeano dialect communities existed in this territory (Golla 2011:178–179).

Chapter 1 aside, perhaps the most problematic sections of the book contain blunders of misidentification regarding the ancestors of historically-known individuals. Genealogical errors are pervasive throughout both the chapters and appendices. To detail every instance of mistaken identification is not possible here; however, certain errors are so glaring and misleading that these factual corrections must be addressed. For example,

following a decent summary of Mission Period history in Chapter 2, the authors set the stage for considering the three lineages that become the focus for historical treatment in subsequent chapters. In the section pertaining to one of these lineages, a picture of Eugenia Méndez appears, taken by famed photographer Edward S. Curtis. The caption, as well as the discussion in the text, states (incorrectly) that Eugenia Méndez was a “progenitor of the García lineage.”

It is true, as the authors accurately note, that a woman named Eugenia, born in 1817 at Mission San Fernando, grew up to marry and start a family. She gave birth in 1840 to a daughter named Leandra, who became an ancestor of the “García lineage,” not to mention many others who self-identify as Mission San Fernando descendants today. So far, so good—however, they have confused Leandra’s mother and Eugenia Méndez. What misled the authors was their uncritical acceptance of her obituary (published in a 1928 newspaper), which described Méndez as a centenarian. The parents of the “García lineage progenitor,” were a San Fernando Indian couple named Ramón and Teofila, but unfortunately, the authors appear to be unaware of Eugenia Méndez’s own testimony about her genealogy and kin connections (Harrington 1986:RI. 98, Fr. 22). The information that she provided to J. P. Harrington permits identification of her mother as Rosenda (“Urusinta”), *not* Teofila. Rosenda was baptized at Mission San Fernando in 1835 and married soon thereafter (SFR Mar. 851; SFR Bap. 2842). During his interviews with Méndez, J. P. Harrington documented that she had been born a little upstream from El Monte near the mouth of Tejon Canyon. She was not baptized until adulthood, and she identified the visiting priest as Fr. Pedro Carrasco from St. Mary’s Church in Visalia (Harrington 1985:RI. 100, Fr. 1195). Indeed, a 25-year-old woman, Eugenia, appears among the names of the Tejon Indians baptized by Carrasco on December 1, 1879 (St. Mary’s Bap. 1859). Given her estimated age at the time, Eugenia Méndez would have been born about 1854. Thus, she cannot be the same Eugenia who gave birth to Leandra in 1840!

The authors’ misidentification of Eugenia leads them down several wrong pathways with regard to discussions of the “García” lineage and its relationships to other lineages at San Fernando and Tejón. They further confuse the genealogical record by incorrectly identifying

the father of Leandra’s daughter, Josefa Leyva, who was born in 1865. Josefa’s father was a man named Juan Leyva. The authors mistakenly equate this individual with a San Fernando Indian boy named José Juan (p. 118), who is further confused with a third individual named José, shown living with Leandra at Saticoy in the 1860 federal census (p. 137). The José who lived at Saticoy was José Cupertino Chuyuy, who married Leandra at Mission San Buenaventura in 1853 (Johnson 1999). The name Juan Leyva was a relatively common one in southern California, and this reviewer has come across several different individuals with this name in mid-nineteenth century records. One of these ended up as a teamster working on the Tejon Ranch, and that Juan Leyva is the most likely candidate for being the father of Leandra’s daughter, Josefa Leyva. As in the case of Eugenia’s mistaken identification, the erroneous identification of Juan Leyva leads the authors to incorrect conclusions about inter-lineage connections.

A final criticism of this book involves what the authors omitted, rather than what they included. Although they admit here and there that other lineages of San Fernando Indians survive, most readers of the book will not realize that another prominent, state-recognized group—the San Fernando Band of Mission Indians (SFBMI)—exists and is comparable in number of enrolled members to the Fernandefño Tataviam Band. In fact, most descendants of Francis Cooke, daughter of Josefa Leyva (see above), and her husband Fred Cooke (who contrary to an assertion on p. 200, also descended from San Fernando Mission Indians) are members of SFBMI. SFBMI has an equally long history of organizing and identifying as a group descended from indigenous people once affiliated with the mission. Besides these coalitions of lineages, other families of descendants survive who remain independent of either tribal group. The overall historical narrative presented in this volume constitutes the common heritage of all of these lineages.

This book began with the provocative hypothesis that the independent, localized descent groups that once constituted the predominant form of sociopolitical organization found in the region have continued down to the present day, ever adapting to changing social, economic, and legal systems of successive nation states. From this reviewer’s perspective, as an anthropologist who has spent his career working with Native Americans

and studying indigenous genealogies of the region, the authors' argument about the continuity of lineage independence has some merit. The reconstructed history of the San Fernando Mission Indians is well told in many chapters, and for these reasons, the book possesses reference value. Unfortunately, it also propagates genealogical errors and unsubstantiated statements based on problematic sources. Further fact-checking would have given this volume much greater significance as a contribution to the literature on Native American history in Southern California.

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