THE APACHE & COMANCHE
And the Decline of the Spanish Empire, 1750s-1830s
Main Themes

- Rise of the Comanche as a continental power
- Trade networks connected NM, Comanche, Wichita, to the east with Caddo and Louisiana
- North-South trade networks, captive taking and slave trading (mines, haciendas, colonies, missions)
- Removal of Jesuits
- Growing influence of central/western Apaches
- Separation of upper/lower Lipan
- Cycles of violence, peace and treaties
- Decline of Spain and the rise of U.S. influence
Indigenous Borderlands
Lipan Apaches and New Spain

- Patterns of conflict, retaliation, and peace
- Relationships between Lipan, Comanche, Spain
- Missions sought to reduce Lipan
- **1749 Peace** agreement between Lipan and Spain
  - Tried to use Spanish peace to evade the Comanche
  - Comanche viewed the alliance as a threat, attacked Lipan
  - Spanish hoped the alliance would block Comanche and French influence in the borderlands
Apaches and Spanish Missions

- As Spain and Lipan made peace, Spanish officials wanted Lipan in missions
- 1752 first mission at Presidio San Juan Bautista
  - Effort failed and Lipan burned the mission
- 1757 mission at Santa Cruz de San Saba, near Comanche country
- Few Lipan entered as Comanche expanded
  - 1758 Comanche/Taovaya attack on San Saba, destroyed mission
Shift in Policies

- Defeat at San Saba resulted in Spain pulling back presidios, missions, settlements
- Established a string of presidios along the Rio Grande
- Reaction to power of Comanche
- Warfare with Comanche for the next 20 years
- Viceroy approved a 500-man military force to the frontier
- 1759 Parilla expedition and the Battle of Wichita Ft.
  - Defeated Comanche, but Spain doubted its power
  - Lipan doubted Spain’s power
  - Schisms in Spanish policies
- 1761 Capt. Rabago met with Lipan Chief El Gran Cabezon
  - Settle in missions, protection, return slaves, attack Comanche
New Circumstances for the Lipan

• Missions around and west of San Lorenzo, El Canon
• 1762 King Charles III of Spain entered 7 Year’s War for the French, who transferred LA to Spain.
• Attack by Comanche near San Lorenzo
• Lipan buffalo hunts into Coahuilla
• Smallpox epidemics in 1763/4
• Most fled missions
• 1766 Comanche attacks near San Lorenzo mission
• Fled south of the Rio Grande
Reassessing Spanish policy

• 1767 Jose Galvez & the Marques de Rubi inspected the entire northern frontier

• “1st Council of Monclova”
  • Spain utterly failed to control the frontier

• *Reglamento of 1772*
  • Line of presidios and provinces to stop Apache and Comanche
  • “Barbarity” of Apache
  • Declared total war upon bands

• Militarization of the northern frontier borderlands
Policy of Extermination, 1770-1800

- Lipan in southern Texas and northern Coahuilla
  - Big Bend region above Eagle Pass and to Pecos River
  - Some with Mescalero around El Paso
- Spain shifted capital of Texas to San Antonio
- Treaty overtures to the Comanche
- Viceroyal Bucareli sent Hugh O’Connor to enforce Regulaciones
  - Built new forts and oversaw expeditions against Lipan
  - Wichita treaties provided leverage against Comanche
  - 1775 O’Connor launched massive attack against Lipan
Monclova War Council, 1777

- King Charles III appointed Teodoro de Croix as governor and Comandante General of Texas
  - de Croix reiterated the 1st Monclova Council
  - Apaches as inveterate enemies: attack, reduce or exterminate
  - Recommitted to treaties with the Comanche
  - Establicimientos la Paz near frontier presidios
- Charles III rejected total war against Apache
  - Local military and colonists ignored his reversal
- Resources tied up in war against the British
- Crown promoted peace in Royal Order of 1779
  - Gifts, farming equipment, etc.
Policy in Transition

- 1779 Apaches & TX Gov Cabello made peace
- Lipan-Tonkawa warfare; Tonkawas under siege
- Coahuilla Gov Ugalde assisted Mescalero attack on Lipan
- Schisms between Mescalero and Lipan
- 1781 Ugalde year long offensive on Lipan
  - Bolson de Mapimi and Big Bend Region
  - Lipan sought peace with Mescalero
- 1782 Indians to discuss alliance against Spanish
  - Lipans, Mescaleros, Tonkawas, Caddos, and others
Courting the Comanche

• As Comanche gained power, Governor Cabello sought peace in 1784/5
• Mirrored similar attempts by Gov. Anza in NM
• 1785 peace, Cabello and eastern Comanche
• Gov. Anza negotiated peace with Ecueracapa and western Comanche
• Lipan found a way to survive
  • Trapped between Comanche, Spain, and Tonkawa mercenaries
  • 1786 Lipan convinced new governor Rafael Martinez Pacheco to agree to peace and promised to move near San Antonio
  • 1787 assisted SP in campaign against Mescalero in Big Bend
Shifting Alliances

- Upper Lipan helped Ugalde attack Mescalero
- Some Lipan sought help from NM Gov. De la Concha
- 1788 Ugalde pressured Lipan into peace
- Peace ended and Ugalde helped Comanche attack Mescalero and Lipan near Piedras Negras, Coahuilla
- 1790 Battle of Soledad Creek involved attack of SP, Comanche, Tonkawa upon Mescalero & Lipan
- New Viceroy Conde de Revilla Gigedo pursued peace
  - Upper Lipan at peace with Mescalero @ Sierra Blanca
  - Lower Lipan remained elusive, south of Rio Grande
Escalation of Violence

- 1791 Lipan Chief Jose Limbrena visited General Nava but encounter turned violent and SP killed 7 Lipan
- 1792 Lipan retaliated and attacked Reynosa
- Gov. of Nuevo Santender (Don Manuel de Escandon) signed peace with some bands, but they attacked towns
- Viceroy Gigedo approved another peace, this time in Presidio del Norte (Ojinaga) with all Lipan.
- 1793 Lipan heads Canos, Chiquito and Moreno met with TX Gov. Manuel Munoz and agreed to new peace
  - Leaders moved their bands south of the river to avoid Comanche
  - Another era of tension began until the collapse of the Spanish empire
Lipan Apaches & the Decline of Spain

- @1800 Spain began to lose grip over its colonies
- U.S. Louisiana Purchase from France (SP sold/gave it back to FR) in 1803 rearranged relations in borderlands
- Northern colonies again became buffer colonies between central Mexico and expanding U.S.
- SP sent more settlements in the north, and this placed more pressure on Indigenous populations
- U.S. traders funneled arms and goods to Natives, and this impacted power relationships
- Lipan-Comanche tensions increased
Missions, Presidios, Towns

41 missions between 1680 – 1828

16 Presidios

8 official towns or settlements
Upheaval in the Borderlands

- US growth pushed SP to negotiate w/ Comanche
  - TX governor *Antonio Cordero* met with Comanche and Lipan in 1806 to conclude treaty and establish territorial boundaries
  - Peace lasted until 1808 as revolutionary fervor grew in New Spain
- 1810 FR. Hidalgo (Sept. 16, 2012) *Grito de Dolores*
- Vacuum of power allowed Comanche and Apache to expand and retaliate across the borderlands
- Some Tonkawas and Lipans assisted revolutionaries
  - Lipan *Cuelgas de Castro* negotiated treaty with Mexico in 1813
  - Battle of Rosillo (multi-racial) led to short-lived Mexican Republic
  - Spain retaliated an re-established ‘control’
Upheaval...continued

- SP lacked $ to continue peace establishments
- U.S. weapons trafficking and trade/commerce empowered Comanche and northern tribes to destabilize frontier
- “Immigrant tribes” entered OK territory and southern Plains; SP invited some to colonize as buffer to U.S.
  - Antonio Cordero invited Kickapoo, Shawnee, Delaware, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Coushatta, and Cherokee
  - 1820: 2,000 immigrant Indians in TX, but by 1830: 10,000
- Lipan attacked, took horses, traded captives to Comanche
- Disease killed 1,000s of Comanche
- Revolution in 1812; Mexican Constitution in 1824
A Dark and Bloody Middle Ground

- 1820s - 1840s saw no clear preponderance of power, thus the Navajo, Comanche, Apache, Mexicans & Texans engaged in cycles of treaties, retaliation, and violence.
- Western Apache repelled Mexicans in Arizona and Sonora
- Comanche, Witchita, and Waco stopped Texans
- San Antonio paralyzed by Comanche, some Comanche signed treaties, others continued raiding
Tejas 1820-1840

Central & Eastern Native Peoples
Note the location of Spanish towns in relation to native communities
Trade in Humans and Goods

- Pre-existing trade and exchange
- Increased with Missouri-Santa Fe-Chihuahua Trail, legalized in 1821
  - US arms traders & trading posts: Bents Fort, 1820s
  - Closer linkage of Natives to national centers of economy
  - Destabilized treaties and “balance of trade”
- Nuevo Hispanos took matters into their own hands and organized more raids and retaliation
  - Tularosa, Socorro, El Paso, Mesilla, Dona Ana
Indigenous People & Mexico

- **Plan de Iguala in 1821** (1824 constitution) extended citizenship to “all people” in Mexico
  - Legal protections / rights, but ethnicity and class still shaped status
  - Excluded from voting and holding political office
  - Language, Catholicism, settle in stable communities, allegiance
- Failed to resolve land disputes or recognize Native title
- Confusing citizenship status of “Mexican Indians” clouded relations: made treaties & alliances unpredictable
- If Natives made peace, MX would forgive transgressions
  - **Cuelgas de Castro** signed peace treaty in Monclova, 1821
  - Went to Mexico City in 1822 to extend peace; agree to territorial boundaries, assist Mexico with wars against Comanche
A Fragile Borderlands

- Porous border open to illegal immigrants, weapons, horses, captives and other commodities
  - Americans flooded across the LA-TX border, conflicted with Natives
  - 1821 *Moses & Stephen Austin*, *empresarios*
  - 1823: 3,000 undocumented illegal alien white Americans
- 1821 Mexico opened the *Santa Fe Trail* to Missouri
  - Flow of superior weapons to Indigenous warriors
  - Strengthened economic ties to US
- Lipan settled around Anglo communities but attacked Comanche
- *Cuelgas de Castro* (1825) became peace and struggled against SP advocates for extermination of Lipan
Native People & Texan Independence

- Mexican Independence
- **Colonization laws** to increase population on frontier
- Immigration of empresarios and landed elite
- **US 1830 Indian Removal Act** brought eastern people to present-day Oklahoma and northern Texas
  - Some Indian nations brought slaves
- Standard Version: Texan Independence due to “inability” of Mexico to “protect” American immigrants from raiding Comanches, etc. & lack of liberties and freedoms
- Really: Race, manifest destiny, “civilization/savagery,” slavery, etc
Border Disputes

Rio Nueces
Rio Grande
Disputed Territory controlled by Comanche & Mescalero
Constant conflict with Mexico
Indian Removal

Removal from the East and Upper Midwest
Indian Removal, 1830s onward
Culture of War

- Texas policy of ethnic cleansing and racial warfare
- **Texas Rangers** as agents of ethnic cleansing
- Resolution to the “Indian Problem” was relocation, following US policy of removal
- Waves of violence:
  - 1835-43 up central Texas
  - 1857-60 up central Texas
  - 1864-1875: far west and northwest
“Texas Forts & Indians”
Texas Indians & Texan Independence

- Mexican treaties with Caddo, Wichita, and immigrant tribes: Delaware and Cherokee in 1820s & early 1830s
- American Immigrants trespassed on Native land and fomented tensions between Texans, Mexico, Indians
- Conflict over land grants
- Revoked colonization laws
- Talk of rebellion briefly split Texans
- Ten “immigrant” and Old tribes agreed to peace treaty ten days before 1836 TX Independence
Texas-Mexico War, 1836-45

- Native people caught in between, used as proxies, made alliances, lost land
- **Sam Houston** did not control his army, preyed on Natives, took land, used war as justification
- Texans killed Caddoes & Kickapoos
- 2nd Pres. **Mirabeau Bonapart Lamar**
  - Policy of ethnic cleansing, genocidal actions
  - Rangers “scorched earth campaigns” against Shawnee, Cherokees, Caddo, Kickapoo
  - 1840 massacre of Comanche drove Comanche into alliance with other tribes against Texans
Cycles of Violence

- Comanche peace with Kiowa, Cheyenne and others allowed them to attack Texans
- Ranger companies retaliated with vengeance
- Statehood failed to stop violence
  - Statehood 1845, President Polk
  - Texas controlled land and Indian policy
  - Sold land to pay debts from war against Indians and Mexicans, but land sales provoked more conflict
  - Texas/US border with Mexico remained disputed
  - Fueled US-Mexico War
Eve of the US-Mexico War

Apache nations

Kiowa

Comanche

Navajo & Ute

“Old” Texas Indians

Immigrant Indians

Brian Delay, AHR
Concluding Thoughts

- Spain lacked full control of its northern borderlands, despite maps, proclamations, etc.
- Apaches and Comanche controlled Texas and NM
- Slave trade and captive taking
- Shifting alliances, peace treaties, and warfare
- Expansion of U.S. destabilized borderlands
- Collapse of New Spain and rise of Mexico
- Texas Independence
- Decades of warfare and violence
- Origins of the U.S. – Mexico War tied to history of Spanish and American relations with Indigenous people