

THE FOUR SOUTHERN TRIBES AND THE HOHOKAM OF THE PHOENIX BASIN

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NAGPRA Rules provide general standards for establishing cultural affiliation:

10.14 (c) Criteria for determining cultural affiliation. Cultural affiliation means a relationship of shared group identity that may be reasonably traced historically or prehistorically between a present-day Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and an identifiable earlier group.

The Rules go on to identify the components of meeting this standard. It is necessary to demonstrate the existence of first, an identifiable modern group with standing under NAGPRA, and second, an identifiable earlier group, then to demonstrate that there is a shared group identity between the modern and earlier groups. The relevant evidence can be of many types: geographical, kinship, biological, archeological, anthropological, linguistic, folklore, oral tradition, historical, or other relevant information or expert opinion.

The focus of this assessment is the relationship of cultural affiliation that exists between the prehistoric Hohokam and the people of the modern Four Southern Tribes: Gila River Indian Community, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Ak-Chin Indian Community, and Tohono O’odham Nation, with particular emphasis on the connections between the prehistoric Hohokam of the Phoenix Basin (from Gillespie Dam in the west to the Lower Tonto Basin in the east, and from Picacho in the south to the Lower Verde in the north) and the people of the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC).

The term “Hohokam” has its roots in the O’odham language, referring specifically to ancestral people who are prominent in O’odham oral traditions. It is in this sense that the word is most meaningful to O’odham speakers. However, to more easily address the NAGPRA criteria the term will be used here in its archaeological sense, referring to a tradition of shared material culture, economy, and social organization in the Sonoran Desert region that is distinguishable from adjacent related traditions by about A.D.500.

At times archaeologists and other anthropologists have questioned the link between the Hohokam archaeological tradition and modern O'odham. This issue is no longer at the forefront of Hohokam archaeology. Continuity between these prehistoric and historic groups is widely accepted by scholars working in the area. This discussion will review the evidence for that continuity and cultural connection, with specific attention to the kinds of evidence required by NAGPRA.

THE HOHOKAM

There is a massive literature on the Hohokam archaeological tradition, spanning more than a century of research. There are also numerous short summaries of Hohokam prehistory, among them that by Fish (1989) and collections of papers by Weaver and others (1978), by Dittert and Dove (1985), and by Gumerman (1991). No attempt will be made to reiterate all of that information here. However, a brief summary will point to the important aspects of these works and to additional information sources.

It is now generally recognized that the Hohokam archaeological tradition was not made up of a single biologically or culturally homogeneous people, but was an archaeologically distinctive tradition that came to be shared by a variety of local populations in the Sonoran Desert as they grew out of local Archaic antecedents (Wilcox 1983; Huckell 1988, 1994; Mabry and Clark 1994). Recently, Shaul and Hill (1998) have argued that the Hohokam were a multi-ethnic group that encompassed speakers of earlier forms of the Tepiman (Tepehuan and Piman) languages as well as River Yuman and possibly the Zuni language.

As a consequence of their common local origins and their relationships to adjacent peoples, the Hohokam shared with their neighbors in what is now southern and central Arizona, southwestern New Mexico, and northern Mexico a number of characteristics, ranging from broadly defined attributes such as a relatively dispersed settlement pattern to such specifics as facial decoration using tattooing or painting. The horizontal loom is one technology among many that is found both among the Hohokam and among their neighbors in northern Mexico and southwestern New Mexico.

However, the Hohokam were also distinguished from many of their neighbors by conspicuous evidence of Mesoamerican influence in pottery, figurines, domesticated crops, textiles and basketry, and domestic and ritual architecture. Their pre-Classic culture was characterized by red-on-buff pottery, distinctive clay figurines, and ballcourts as central ceremonial features. These are attributes with strong Mesoamerican connotations. Recent research (Carot 1992, 1995) has documented the existence in northern Michoacan of an archaeological complex having many similarities to the Hohokam in both specific iconography and practices such as cremation burial. Irrigation technology is also often cited as evidence of Mesoamerican influence on the Hohokam, although recent documentation of early canal systems in the Tucson Basin by 700 B.C. casts doubt on the extent to which this was an import into the Sonoran Desert.

As the Hohokam tradition developed, it spread through a variety of mechanisms and was a factor reinforcing cultural similarities throughout a broad area. At Roosevelt 9:6, Haury found strong Hohokam influence in the Tonto Basin to the east (Haury 1932). Like several other areas, the Gila Bend area in the west was incorporated into the Hohokam system during the Colonial Period (Wasley and Johnson 1965). Hohokam influence also spread up the Verde River to the Mogollon Rim in the north, and south to northern Sonora.

The Classic Period, after about A.D. 1150, brought conspicuous changes among the Hohokam. There was local population aggregation accompanied by the appearance of platform mounds as community centers. Compound architecture evolved from pre-Classic pithouse and house-in-pit predecessors (Sires 1983a). Polychrome pottery appeared. Inhumation (rare in earlier periods) challenged cremation as the dominant burial form. Numerous other changes in the world of the Hohokam have been identified during this time period. At one time it was believed that northern influence or migration produced many of the changes apparent after about AD 1100. However, it is now clear that internal changes in the communities of the Sonoran Desert were largely responsible.

The overall regional extent of the Hohokam tradition also changed. Some areas in which Hohokam ballcourts were seen earlier (for example, Point of Pines in the east, between the Gila and Salt rivers) ceased to show Hohokam characteristics. At the same

time, however, the platform mounds that first appeared among the Hohokam at Gila River settlements like Gatlin and Snaketown spread to areas where the earlier Hohokam ballcourts were not found, such as the Tonto Basin.

After about A.D.1000-1100 there is evidence of the presence of Yuman groups from the west, first in the Papaguería and on the Gila River at Gila Bend (the westernmost extent of the Hohokam tradition), and later perhaps at sites such as Las Colinas in the Phoenix area.. There also was development of a distinctive, although still generally Hohokam in appearance, southern network that included the Gila Bend area, the Tucson Basin, and the Papaguería. In the north, the Sinagua bounded the Hohokam. The closely-related Trincheras Culture flourished in northern Mexico, immediately south of the Hohokam.

After about A.D.1350 there was a substantial, although far from complete, decline in population in the Phoenix Basin, associated with the end of platform mound ceremonialism. Occupation of some major village sites continued on a less intensive basis while smaller settlements on seasonal drainages were established (Sires 1983b). Although these changes show a shift to a less aggregated settlement system and apparently to a less hierarchical society, there were still signs of long-distance trade, of productive agriculture, and generally of a different but nevertheless viable society. From the time that the Polvorón Phase was first identified, it has been apparent that this was not a time of complete collapse and depopulation. Regional trade in some commodities, for example obsidian, even increased after the mid-1300's (Teague 1984a).

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Hohokam tradition during these centuries is the economic and social diversity and flexibility that was brought to life in the Sonoran Desert. There were major changes in various aspects of the tradition over a period of many centuries, sometimes leading to significant differences in the appearance of Hohokam settlements, but these reflect the underlying adaptability of the Hohokam rather than cultural discontinuities.

THE FOUR SOUTHERN TRIBES

The Four Southern Tribes are the Gila River Indian Community, the Salt River Maricopa Posh Indian Community, the Ak-Chin Indian Community, and the Tohono O'odham Nation. All are federally recognized tribes having standing under NAGPRA. The Four Southern Tribes cooperate in matters of repatriation, cooperation made especially suitable because of their shared histories and great similarity in language and culture. All four tribes are predominantly O'odham-speaking, and the Gila River and Salt River communities also include substantial numbers of Pee Posh (Maricopa). The Four Southern Tribes trace their heritage through oral tradition to the Hohokam.

EVIDENCE OF SHARED GROUP IDENTITY

Emil Haury discussed the continuity between the prehistoric Hohokam and the O'odham in his Ventana Cave (1950) and Snaketown (1976) studies. Publications by Lynn Teague (especially 1984b, 1989, 1993, and 1998a) and by Doyel (1997) discuss various lines of evidence in support of the O'odham-Hohokam connection. Bahr (1994) has evaluated O'odham oral traditions in some detail. A recent study by Shaul and Hill (1998) lends further support drawn from linguistic evidence. It would be unnecessarily lengthy to reiterate the content of each of these studies in this document, but the information that they contain is incorporated here by reference. The following is an abbreviated discussion of some of significant lines of evidence establishing the shared group identity of the Hohokam and the Four Southern Tribes.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

After about AD 1350-1400, platform mounds in the Phoenix Basin were no longer in use as ceremonial structures, and population in the area declined markedly. Many parts of the region were sparsely settled at the time of Spanish contact. Consequently, for a long time archaeologists saw a gap between the recognizable evidence of the Hohokam and the historic O'odham and Pee Posh people. With time and additional study, that gap has become far less conspicuous, although much work remains to be done to fully understand the period of late prehistory in the Sonoran Desert. The excavation of El Polvorón (Sires 1983b) in the Queen Creek area provided the first

evidence of what a post-Classic Hohokam settlement was like, and has helped in the recognition of additional very late prehistoric sites and site components in the Phoenix Basin.

Others areas in the Sonoran Desert have also provided evidence of continued occupation. The Tucson Basin and adjacent areas seem never to have undergone any significant depopulation. The San Xavier Bridge Site, for example, has produced archaeomagnetic dates very nearly contemporaneous with Spanish lime kilns (Sternberg and others 1990). Oral traditions are consistent with this evidence of continuity; those traditions that have been recorded from the Tucson Basin document no warfare and no movement of people, apparently because their history included no such events.

There is abundant evidence of parallels with the historic O'odham in the late prehistoric sites of the Sonoran Desert. The ranchería settlement pattern with extended family house clusters and basic architectural types are shared characteristics (Haury 1976). The textiles and basketry of the O'odham echo precedents from the Phoenix, Tonto, and Tucson Basins, the Papaguería, and adjacent areas (Teague 1998b). The O'odham produced and wore cotton plainweave fabrics like those found prehistorically from Ventana Cave in the west to the Upper Gila in the east (these were made on horizontal looms both prehistorically and among the O'odham) and warp-float belts like those from the Upper Ruin at Tonto National Monument (Irving 1981). Twilled basketry and matting found at Tonto Ruins closely resembles that made historically by the O'odham (Steen and others 1962).

Haury (1976: 253) has summarized the relationship between O'odham and Hohokam pottery very succinctly in his discussion of 19th century Pima pottery from the Snaketown site:

The materials, the manufacturing techniques, and the colors are basically the same; the forms and the designs differ. This is not surprising, considering the centuries that separate the latest formal identified Hohokam pottery and late nineteenth century Pima products. The tradition appears to be one and the same.

Although utilitarian vessel forms differ, formal parallels in O'odham and Hohokam pottery include very similar effigy vessels. One such parallel is not only interesting in itself, but documents the use of identical painted facial patterns among the Hohokam and the 19th century O'odham. The same pattern of facial decoration that can be seen on Sacaton and Gila Butte Phase Hohokam effigy vessels (Haury 1976: Fig. 12.43 and Gladwin 1938: Pl. CXCIX) is echoed on the face of an Akimel O'odham woman of the GRIC in 1902 (Russell 1908: Pl. XXXVIII).

Other continuities in effigy vessels can be seen in Hohokam and O'odham production of distinctively shaped duck effigy vessels (see Haury 1876: Fig. 12.42 and 12.43 for Hohokam examples and Fontana and others 1962: Fig. 39). Bowls with exterior designs of persons holding hands, apparently dancing, are characteristic of both Hohokam (Haury 1976: Fig. 12.87 and 12.88) and traditional O'odham (Russell 1908: Pl. XVIII) pottery assemblages.

Another parallel between the Hohokam archaeological evidence and O'odham practices is of particular importance in the context of NAGPRA. Beck (1999) has documented strong parallels between Hohokam burial practices and those of historic residents of the region, among them the O'odham and Pee Posh. These include a mix of inhumation and cremation burials (for example, Russell 1908:194) and a pattern of repeated funerary memorial observances that included burning of personal possessions as well as feasting and other activities.

ORAL TRADITIONS AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Oral traditions, ethnography and archaeology support one another in documenting the relationship between O'odham and the prehistoric Hohokam people of the Sonoran Desert. Publications by Teague (1984, 1989, 1993, and 1998) and by Bahr and others (1994) review that evidence in some detail; only highlights will be summarized briefly here.

There is variation in the oral traditions of the people of the Four Southern Tribes. This is a reflection of the complex but interconnected histories of the people. The primary focus here will be on the traditions of the people of the GRIC.

The earliest anthropological summary of Akimel O'odham origin traditions was provided by Jesse Walter Fewkes (1907):

In ancient times the whole drainage of the Gila and its tributaries from the points where they leave the mountains as far at least as Gila Bend was inhabited by an agricultural people in a homogenous stage of culture. Throughout this region existed minor divisions of a common stock, to whom may be ascribed the erection of the casas grandes on the Gila. These “great houses” were places of refuge, ceremony, and trade. They were inhabited and ruled by the chiefs whose names they bear among the present Pima. The people dwelt in small huts of perishable character, not unlike Pima jacales of historic times, a few of which still survive. In the course of time a hostile faction bent on pillage came into this region from east or west and drove the agriculturalists out of their *casa grandes* or at least broke up the custom of building such structures. But although dispersed, the ancient house builders were not exterminated; some of them became refugees and migrated south into Mexico, some followed the course of the Verde and the Tonto into the northern mountains, but others, perhaps the majority, gradually lost their former culture but still remained in the Gila Valley, becoming ancestors of the present Pima, Papago and Kwahadt (Quahatika). Those who went northward later built pueblos (now ruins) in the Little Colorado Valley. Their descendants ultimately joined the Zuñi and the Hopi, with whom, according to legends, they still live. Historians have paid little attention to these migrations, for they occurred in prehistoric times, but vague legends still survive among both Zuñi and Hopi bearing on the life of some of their clans in the south. These migration legends are supported by archaeologic evidence and are supplemented by Pima traditions.

This is a reasonably accurate account of what happened. Numerous O'odham oral histories focus on the demise of the platform mounds and their associated priestly leadership in the Phoenix Basin during the mid-14th century, and there are also stories about the earlier era when the mounds were the central features of desert communities (Bahr and others 1994, Hayden 1935, Mason 1921, Russell 1908). The traditions accurately describe the way that major sites would have looked prehistorically, name them and their leaders, describe the role of the platform mounds in a manner consistent with archaeological evidence, and associate sites with specific events in O'odham history, also in a manner consistent with archaeological evidence. These stories indicate that a faction united with O'odham-speakers from the south and drove out the *sivanyi* or priests and their followers from the central Phoenix Basin. These stories do not relate that there was subsequent depopulation or abandonment of the area but instead describe the amalgamation of the groups represented into the surviving O'odham groups. Farther south, for example at San Xavier, oral traditions mention no warfare or disruption (for example, Densmore 1929), presumably because there was none. The details of the stories correspond so well with archaeological evidence that there can be no reasonable explanation other than a strong thread of historical accuracy in the traditions (Teague 1993).

Some of the Hopi accounts appear to offer a different perspective on the events described in O'odham oral tradition, this time giving the viewpoint of those who left for the northern pueblos (Courlander 1982, Fewkes 1920, Nequatewa 1936). There are very strong parallels between the O'odham and Hopi stories of this period in late prehistory, including not just the role of a great water serpent and a flood, but also the sacrifice of children in the flood, commemorated among the O'odham at the Children's Shrine near Santa Rosa.

We can also look at other aspects of ethnographic information for evidence of connections between modern people and archaeological traditions. Continuities in ritual practice testify to the cultural affiliation of the O'odham to the Hohokam (Teague 1984b). Ferdon proposed that the *Wi'ikita* ceremony of the O'odham was the direct descendant of the ceremonies of the Hohokam ballcourt during the pre-Classic periods

(Ferdon 1967). Archaeological evidence suggests that the structure of religious organization among the Classic Period Hohokam may have been similar to the directional priesthoods of the historic O'odham and also of the people of the Pueblo of Zuni (Teague 1984b).

KINSHIP

In their oral traditions the people of the Four Southern Tribes trace their heritage specifically to the residents of the prehistoric settlements found in and around their modern home. This is reflected in traditional clan structure. Russell (1908:197) reported that Akimel O'odham descent is traced in the male line and that there are five groups. The *A'kol*, *A'pap*, and *A'puki* are known as the Vulture or Red People, while the *Ma'-am* and *Va'-af* are called Coyote or White People. The Red People are called *Suwu'ki O'himal* or Red Ants and the White People are called the *Sto'am O'himal* or White Ants. The Red Ants are identified as descendants of the Hohokam, while the White Ants are descendants of those who joined Elder Brother to defeat the chiefs of the platform mounds.

Underhill (1939: 31-32) similarly reports that the Tohono O'odham are divided into patrilineal moieties, the Coyote (white heart) and the Buzzard (red heart). The sibs of the Tohono O'odham parallel those of the Akimel O'odham. The Coyote includes the *aapap-kam* and the *apki-kam* while the Buzzard includes *maam-kam* and *waahw-kam*. The *a'to-kam* and the *si pat-kam* are kinship groups in oral tradition.

The inhabitants of the platform mounds have also been called *Shuhwi Ko'athan*, "Jackrabbit Eaters," in Akimel O'odham oral tradition (Saxton and Saxton 1973: 376-377; Bahr 1994: 320-321). It is said in the traditions that some of the Jackrabbit Eaters fled to the south in Sonora (Fewkes 1907: 329; Manje 1954: 86). It is consistent with this that the Tohono O'odham have referred to both Upper Pima and Lower Pima as Jackrabbit Eaters. Miller (1983:120) observed that the Nébome dialect is sometimes placed with Lower Piman but is actually closely related to Upper Piman, and might reflect such a migrant group from the north.

LINGUISTICS

Shaul and Hill (1998) argue that the Hohokam archaeological tradition represents a linguistically diverse regional system in which speakers of the proto-Tepiman languages (which are among the Uto-Aztecan languages) and proto-River Yuman languages (which are among the Hokan languages) participated, perhaps accompanied by speakers of Zuni. There are only four federally recognized tribes in the United States today that are speakers of a Tepiman language: the O'odham speakers of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, Gila River Indian Community, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and the Tohono O'odham Nation. The second and third of these, the Gila River and Salt River communities, also represent the River Yuman-speaking Pee Posh. Therefore, these four modern tribes are more closely affiliated linguistically with the Hohokam proto-Tepiman-speakers and proto-River Yuman speakers than are any other tribes in the region.

In earlier studies Hale and Harris (1979) and Bernard Fontana argued against continuity between Hohokam and modern Arizona O'odham, relying upon the assumptions that the area occupied prehistorically by the Hohokam was depopulated in late prehistory and also that prehistoric O'odham-speakers must have shared a single tradition in material culture as well as language. They did not see that common base of material culture among the Hohokam and those who prehistorically occupied the areas in Mexico where Piman-speakers now live. There are several problems with this argument. There is now evidence that there was no complete depopulation of the Phoenix Basin. Further, the assumption made by Hale and Harris that linguistically similar people must retain very similar ways of life and material culture is incorrect. Considerable divergence in way of life and material culture within a linguistic group is possible. For example, the historic O'odham-speakers of the Sonoran Desert were quite varied. In the west were people who made no pottery at all and lived in small mobile groups in the western desert. On the major rivers there were people who lived in large villages where they practiced irrigation agriculture and made distinctive pottery. Prehistorically the Hohokam showed an equally diverse range of ways of life, employing a sophisticated range of technologies

and strategies to live in the different situations available to them. Resilience and adaptability have long characterized the people of the Sonoran Desert.

Finally, at the time of Hale and Harris's publication there had been very little archaeological work south of the border compared to that in the north. Recent work (for example, McGuire and Villalpando C. 1993) demonstrates that the similarities between these areas are greater than was apparent to Hale and Harris or to Fontana.

THE BIOLOGY OF CENTRAL SOUTHWESTERN POPULATIONS

The archaeologically defined traditions of the Southwest represent shifting networks of cultural interaction and influence, not biologically discrete populations. Furthermore, we are often dealing with very closely related groups whose biological differences are expected to be small. For example, results of a study comparing more than 60 genetic markers show a relatively close relationship between the modern O'odham and Zuni Pueblo (Cavalli-Sforza 1994), a finding which emphasizes the difficulty of biologically distinguishing contemporary Southwestern populations in a way that is meaningful for affiliation studies.

As early as 1950 there was an attempt to assess the relationship between the biological characteristics of the Hohokam and those of the modern people of the Southwest (Gabel 1950). This study was done before many refinements were made in the techniques for this kind of study, and Gabel was admittedly limited by the relatively small numbers of individuals from the site. His results are nevertheless interesting. Gabel compared the characteristics of crania of prehistoric people at Ventana with those of modern O'odham and puebloan people. In the late prehistoric levels, most of which probably postdate AD 1300, Gabel found "cradleboard" skull deformation in three of four male skulls, and in only one of the seven female skulls. This type of deformation is not normally associated with the Hohokam. The male skulls also had natural features similar to specimens from the northern pueblo people, while the female skulls were found to be strikingly similar to those of modern O'odham women. Gabel concluded that variations in cradling practices may have coincided with ethnic differences in the Ventana Cave population. He therefore advanced the idea that the late prehistoric people

buried at Ventana consisted, in essence, of puebloan men and O'odham women. Two crania from Ventana date to the earlier Archaic horizons. Gabel found that they were essentially like the more O'odham-type skulls of the later period, with the exception that they were longer-headed than either Hohokam or O'odham examples. That observed difference is one that is almost certainly a product of change to an agriculture-based diet, rather than a genetic difference.

Christy Turner is the only physical anthropologist in recent years who has made questions of biological affiliation in the prehistoric Southwest a major focus of his work. Turner has observed that the dentition of Southwestern populations is fundamentally homogeneous (Turner 1993). Many of the patterns in Turner's data are consistent with other kinds of available data. For example, the dental characteristics of remains from Point of Pines and Grasshopper Pueblo are generally clustered together, and are somewhat distinct from those of groups in the Tonto Basin, Phoenix Basin, or other parts of central Arizona (Turner 1998). Similarly, the shell of the Tonto Basin is similar to that from the central Hohokam area and probably derives from Hohokam trade networks, while the shell assemblages of the Grasshopper and Point of Pines areas are more similar to those of Casa Grandes, and probably arrived through Chihuahuan trade networks (Bradley 1999). Textile traditions are also sharply differentiated along the same boundary (Teague 1999).

On the whole, Turner's data are consistent with a significant biological distinction between the prehistoric western pueblos and the Hohokam/Tonto Basin peoples. His data are also consistent with a meaningful connection between prehistoric Hohokam of the Phoenix Basin and modern O'odham.

SUMMARY

A traditional O'odham or Pee Posh village echoes the prehistoric settlements of the Hohokam, with the houses and ramadas of extended families clustered together. It is very likely that the O'odham and Pee Posh speak languages developed from earlier forms of the same languages that were spoken by the Hohokam. The pottery, textiles, basketry, and other material aspects of O'odham life are like those of the Hohokam. The burial practices of the modern O'odham and Pee Posh have their roots in the regional burial

tradition that was also practiced by the Hohokam. O'odham tradition describes many historically accurate aspects of Hohokam life, and O'odham kinship traditions identify the Hohokam roots of the people. Traditionally, even the faces of the O'odham were painted with the evidence of their Hohokam heritage. The diversity and flexibility of lifestyles among the O'odham and Pee Posh also represent in themselves a very significant continuity with their Hohokam ancestry.

Oral tradition, kinship system, and archaeology all indicate that the ancestors of the Four Southern Tribes include people from northern Mexico as well those prehistoric people identified with the archaeological Hohokam tradition. This does not diminish the basic shared identity between the prehistoric and historic groups in question here. The international boundary is arbitrary even today, and certainly irrelevant to prehistory. In the past, as today, the people of adjacent portions of Sonora share much of their language and culture, and thus their cultural identity, with the people of the Four Southern Tribes. That some of these people moved north to join their relatives in what is now Arizona in late prehistory is a minor internal population shift of the kind that occurs in all human societies.

The Hohokam are the core of the cultural heritage of the O'odham and Pee Posh people of the Four Southern Tribes. They possess a shared group identity as defined by NAGPRA.

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