

O'odham

The O'odham live in southern Arizona and northern Sonora. Two similar, but distinct groups live in southern Arizona. The Tohono O'odham (toh HOH noh AH ah tahm) or the "desert people" (formerly known as Papago), inhabit the vast region west of Tucson. Those who live along the Salt and Gila Rivers are the Akimel O'odham (AH kee mel AH ah tahm) or "river people" (formerly known as Pima). They differ mainly in their water resources and how they used them.

To Tohono O'odham, the arrival of the summer rains was a critical event which marks the beginning of their year. Tohono O'odhams or "two villagers" moved out of their winter homes in the foothills, and moved into their summer rancherias located close to the fields and desert foods. Runoff from summer rains was vital to a type of irrigation called "ak chin" in which crops were planted in runoff washes. Akimel O'odhams or "one villagers" lived in permanent villages along the major rivers such as the Gila and the Salt.

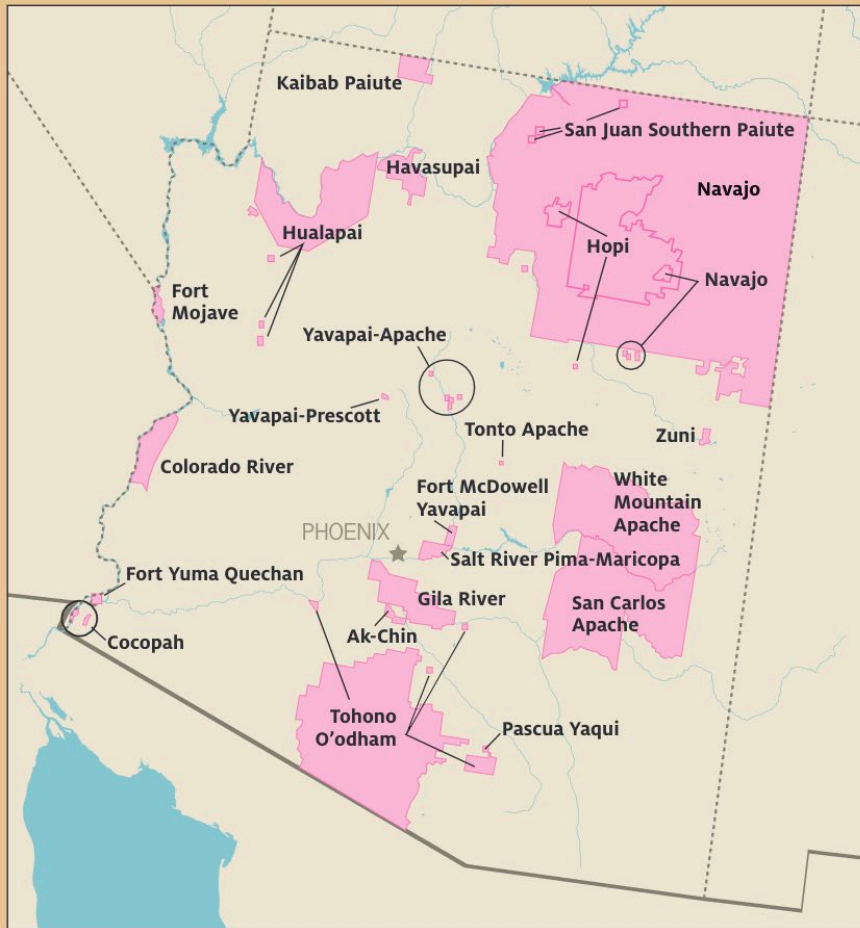
Beginning with Father Kino's arrival in 1692, Spanish missionaries brought to the O'odham new tools, new crops, Catholicism and epidemic diseases. O'odham peoples moved both willingly and under duress near such Spanish settlements as Tubac, San Xavier, and Tucson. When Anglo farmers moved into the Gila River valley near Florence in the 1870s, they built large canals that diverted the river away from the Akimel O'odham farms. With their farms destroyed, Akimel O'odhams became dependent on the government for rationed foods.

During the 1920.s the Coolidge Dam was built to provide a reliable source of water to farmers along the Gila River. However, the majority of O'odham farmers never saw any of that water. In 1978 the Ak Chin O'odham community threatened the U.S. Government with a lawsuit for their water rights. They won a large settlement and a promise of part of the Central Arizona Project (CAP) water each year. The Ak Chin community used their settlement to build a 15,000 acre farm, which has greatly reduced tribal unemployment. In 1982 the Southern Arizona Water Rights Settlement Act was passed. The legislation promised delivery of 76,000 acre feet of CAP water to the Tohono O'odham Nation. However, by August 1995 the water still had not arrived.

Today the majority of Tohono O'odham people hope to use their CAP water to irrigate tribal farms like the Ak Chin, rather than sell it to the city for revenues. Agricultural traditions and values remain central to the O'odham people.



<http://statemuseum.arizona.edu>



Arizona's 22 Federally Recognized Tribes

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Ak-Chin Indian Community | Navajo Nation* |
| Cocopah Indian Tribe | Pascua Yaqui Tribe |
| Colorado River Indian Tribes* | Pueblo of Zuni |
| Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation | Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community |
| Fort Mojave Indian Tribe* | San Carlos Apache Tribe |
| Fort Yuma Quechan Tribe | San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe |
| Gila River Indian Community | Tohono O'odham Nation |
| Havasupai Tribe | Tonto Apache Tribe |
| Hopi Tribe | White Mountain Apache Tribe |
| Hualapai Tribe | Yavapai-Apache Tribe |
| Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians | Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe |

*Reservation boundaries extend into neighboring states.



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

ARIZONA STATE MUSEUM

<http://statemuseum.arizona.edu>