

O'odham Traditional Life

O'odham is pronounced aw-aw-thum

Many Names, One People

O'odham = "the people"

Akimel = "of the river"

Tohono = "of the desert"

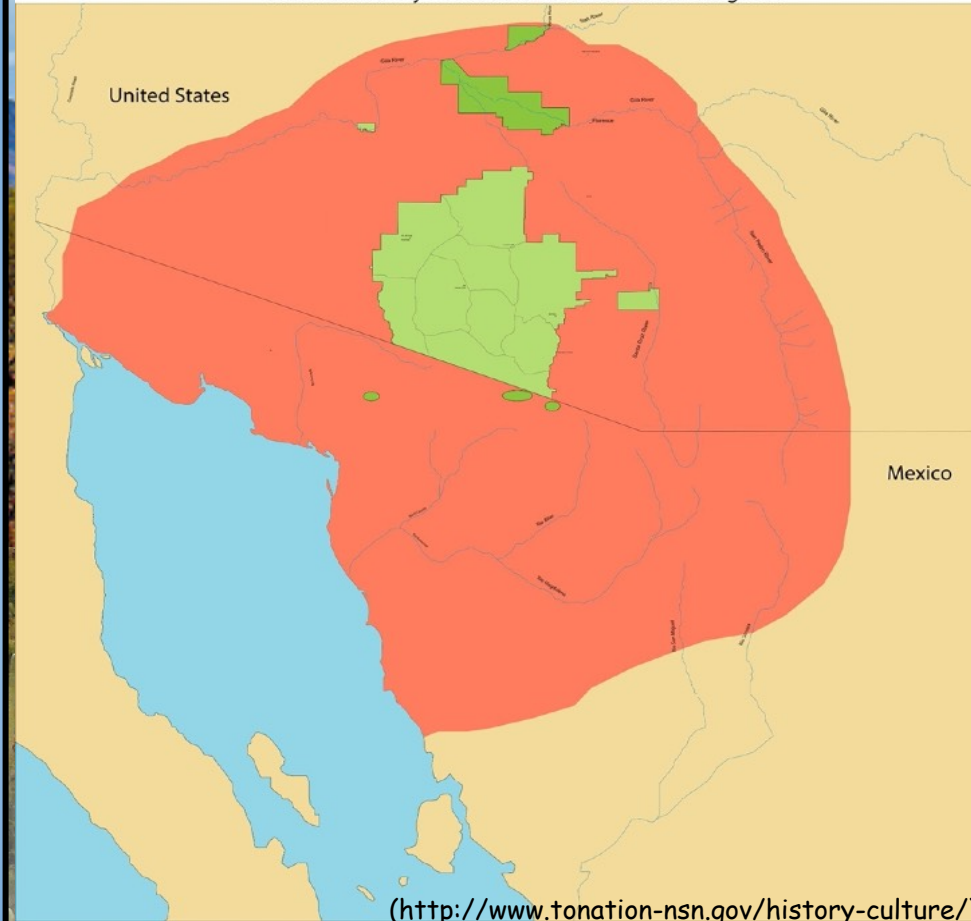


O'odham Land, (past in red, present in green)

For thousands of years, the O'odham inhabited an enormous area of land in the southwest; extending South to Sonora, Mexico, north to Central Arizona, west to the Gulf of California, and east to the San Pedro River.

** Compare and contrast the past to

Tradition O'odham territory in red
Land still held by O'odham communities shown in green



(<http://www.tonation-nsn.gov/history-culture/>)

O'odham Land

From the early 18th century through to the present, O'odham land was occupied by foreign governments. In 1853, due to the Gadsden Purchase (or Treaty of La Mesilla), O'odham land was divided almost in half, between the United States



O'odham Federally Recognized Tribal Governments

As a result, the O'odham today are enrolled into four federally recognized tribal governments:

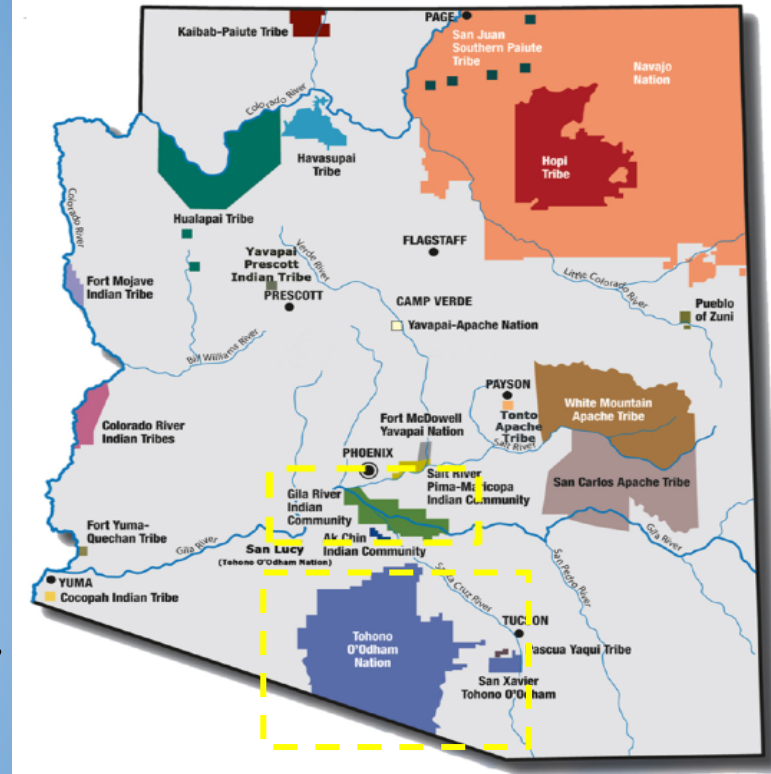
1) The Tohono O'odham Nation

2) The Gila River Indian

Community

3) The Ak-Chin Indian Community

4) The Salt River Pima Maricopa



O'odham Homes - Past

Past - Most O'odham lived in dwellings that were small round or cone-shaped shelters made of a melhog (ocotillo) and kui (mesquite) frame covered with brush and dirt.



1907 Tohono O'odham Home Photograph by Edward S. Curtis

O'odham Homes - Present

Present - O'odham families live in a variety of modern houses and apartment buildings. Located in both rural and larger villages. The O'odham government is working to build more



Tohono O'odham Home Photo by Eric Kaldahl

O'odham Clothing - Past

Past - The O'odham wore clothing appropriate for weather. In hot weather, men wore loincloths and women wore knee-length skirts. In cold weather, they layered their



Michael Chiacho Traditional Clothing

O'odham Clothing - Present

Present - O'odham wear modern, purchased clothes. Overtime, traditional clothing has evolved to skirts and shirts decorated with ribbons.



O'odham Food - Past

Past - The O'odham planted crops of wheat, corn, beans, and squash. O'odham men hunted deer, javelinas, jack rabbits, and other small game, while families gathered mesquite, saquaro fruit, cholla buds



O'odham Food - Present



Present - traditional dishes and ingredients continue to be widely eaten today to uphold traditions, like saguaro fruit, mesquite pods and flour, and cecmait (tortillas).

O'odham also eat store-bought food.

O'odham Leadership - Past



<http://www.tonation-nsn.gov/tohono-oodham-history/>

Past - each O'odham village was a self-governing community, and decisions were made with lengthy discussions and consent of all village patriarchs.

O'odham Leadership - Present



<http://www.tonation-nsn.gov/tribal-government/>

Present - O'odham governments today have three branches; the executive office, the legislative council, and the judicial branch. O'odham value harmony, so tribal governments are elected by the tribal members.

O'odham Children - Past

Past - O'odham children spent time learning from their families about their roles within the community. Due to Spanish, Mexican, and American influence, some O'odham children attended schools where they were forced to learn English and were punished



Photo Credit Gila River Indian Community

O'odham Children - Present



Present - most O'odham children do the same things all children do; play with each other, go to school, and help around the house. They still hold on to traditional games, ceremonies, and their O'odham way of life.

O'odham Song and Dance Past

Past, songs and dances were shared with the O'odham to pass down history or traditions. Also, to speak to nature. The rain dance features skipping and shuffling quietly in bare feet on dry dirt, the dust raised being believed to rise to atmosphere and assist



Michael Chiago Rain Dance

O'odham Song and Dance Present

Present, celebratory social dances are accompanied by waila music, which mixes elements of O'odham fiddle, German polka, Spanish mariachi, Mexican norteño music, and American rock



O'odham Basket and Gathering Past

Past - Baskets were first made for practical uses, such as transporting and storing materials, and food gathering. The main materials used for basket weaving are bear grass, yucca leaves, devil's claw, willow, cattail, and roots. Basket weaving is an important skill handed down from generation to generation.

Burden Basket Photo Credit Ak-Chin Him-Dak Archives



O'odham Basket and Gathering Present



Beargrass (Nolina)
Photo by Jonathan DuHamel



Tohono O'odham basket

Present - Basket weaving is a strong tradition that continues today. Many O'odham families use basketry as a means of financial support. Although most baskets today are used for decorative purposes, their quality and



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