

PREFACE

ON THE TERMS *HUHUGAM* AND *HOHOKAM*

The Akimel O’Odham (also known as the Pima) and the Tohono O’Odham of central and southern Arizona refer to their ancestors as the *Huhugam* (Lopez 2007; Shaw 1974; Webb 1959; also see Fewkes 1912:42; Haury 1976:5; Russell 1908:24). By the late 19th century, people of European descent living in Arizona were using the term *Hohokam*, a poorly transliterated form of *Huhugam*, to refer to the numerous archaeological sites in the O’Odham homeland. Frank Russell (1908:24) was the first to use the term in a scientific context (Haury 1967:5), and for the last century archaeologists have employed the spelling *Hohokam* in referring to the archaeological unit of their study.

Hohokam looks and is pronounced differently from *Huhugam*, and it would seem appropriate in the interest of accuracy for archaeologists to return to the O’Odham pronunciation and spelling of the word. There are, however, good cultural and archaeological reasons to retain the two different spellings of the word, because with the passage of time, archaeologists have come to define the word *Hohokam* somewhat differently from the O’Odham meaning of *Huhugam*.

Barnaby V. Lewis, an Odham (singular of O’Odham) Elder from the Gila River Indian Community, points out that the archaeologically (Haury 1967; Russell 1908) accepted translation of the word *Huhugam* is erroneous. Haury (1967:5), following Russell, translated the meaning of *Huhugam* as “that which has perished” or things that are “all used up” and he employed the example of a discarded tire as a thing that was *hokam* (singular of *hohokam*). Lewis points out that this definition is incorrect and resulted very likely from Haury’s O’Odham interpreters having a limited knowledge of English, and similarly, Emil Haury, a renowned archaeologist, is not known to have been conversant in O’Odham. *Huhugam* refers to the spirits of people, not things, and one translation of the word is the spirits of the “ancestors of the O’Odham.” Each Odham person becomes *Huhugam* when he or she dies.

Moreover, *Huhugam* does not refer to a population of people or a tribe distinct from the O’Odham. In O’Odham oral tradition the ruins in their land were at one time occupied by O’Odham people; it is meaningless to say they were occupied by the *Huhugam* people as if the *Huhugam* were different from the O’Odham. It is only in death that those O’Odham became *Huhugam*, the spirits of the ancestors of the O’Odham of today.

The meaning of *Huhugam* has a number of implications for archaeologists, and for the use of the term in archaeology.

Archaeologists study things, objects and places that are the material culture of past peoples. Certainly archaeologists are interested in the people behind the material culture, but there is no escaping the reality that archaeology begins with the study of

things. This is one reason, therefore, for retaining the distinction between *Hohokam* and *Huhugam*. The term *Hohokam* is defined by archaeologists as an archaeological unit referring to a constellation of material culture traits associated for a period of time in a given area. These traits include objects (red-on-buff pottery), features (irrigation canals), types of architecture (ball courts, platform mounds), places (Casa Grande Ruins, Pueblo Grande) and landscapes (Canal System 2, South Mountain, the Phoenix Basin). By using a different term (*Hohokam*) and giving it a specific archaeological meaning, it is acceptable to say *Hohokam* ruins, *Hohokam* red-on-buff pottery, and *Hohokam* ball courts.

Archaeologists also set the duration of the *Hohokam* tradition from about A.D. 300 to 1450 (Dean 1991), a period during which the prehistoric peoples of central and southern Arizona made red-on-buff and associated types of pottery, and constructed ball courts and platform mounds. The O'Odham tradition, however, is that they have lived on this land since the time of the first humans, a period that for archaeologists extends from the present back to at least 10,000 B.C. and includes the Archaic Tradition, the Early Agricultural Horizon, the Early Ceramic Period, the Hohokam Tradition and the protohistoric and historic periods.

The *Hohokam* archaeological region is based on the distribution of red-on-buff pottery, ball courts, and platform mounds in central and southern Arizona, but does not extend south of the Arizona border. The *Huhugam*, or ancestors of the O'Odham, lived in an area that extends into Northern Mexico occupying both sides of the modern political border, but archaeologists do not (as yet) include northern Mexico in the definition of the *Hohokam* region.

Archaeological science does not always make distinctions that would be evident if it were possible to directly observe the people behind the material culture. For instance, sites assigned to the *Hohokam* archaeological tradition might include people who spoke different languages, especially if those sites occur on the periphery of the *Hohokam* region. It is conceivable, therefore, that some *Hohokam* sites were occupied by people who were not the cultural ancestors of the O'Odham, although they probably were in close contact with those ancestors.

The term *Hohokam* is also so well established in museums, archaeological publications, place names, and common usage that it would be difficult and perhaps impossible to change the spelling and pronunciation to *Huhugam*.

Despite the need to retain two slightly different terms, there is nonetheless a definite relationship between the *Hohokam* archaeological tradition and the *Huhugam*, or the ancestors of the O'Odham. *Hohokam* archaeology is for most a study of O'Odham history, and of the O'Odham ancestors, the *Huhugam*.

The oral traditions of the O'Odham mention specific archaeological sites, populate them with heroes, and recount events that transpired there (Lopez 2007; also Kamal Tkak or Thin Leather reported by Russell 1908:272-282 and Juan Smith reported

by Bahr et al. 1994). One O'Odham oral tradition (Bahr et al. 1994) describes with considerable specificity the abandonment of Hohokam platform mounds at Casa Grande, Casa Blanca, Los Muertos, and Pueblo Grande. Teague (1993), an archaeologist, convincingly relates the elements of this oral tradition to the archaeological record of the abandonment of the Platform Mound system at about A.D. 1400.

A comparison of historic records from 1775 and 1900 demonstrate that O'Odham oral traditions remained essentially unchanged for at least 125 years. In the early 1900s the ethnographer Frank Russell and Jose Louis Brennan (Russell 1908:212-213) wrote down orations given by *Kamal Thak* (Thin Leather) that were the same as those recorded from an unnamed Akimel O'Odham village leader in 1775 by Father Pedro Font (Russell 1908:212-213; Fewkes 1912). The demonstrated stability of the O'Odham oral tradition for more than 125 years makes it highly plausible that these oral narratives do indeed refer to actual events that occurred five to six centuries in the past, events which transpired at sites that archaeologists refer to as *Hohokam*.

When archaeologists talk about the *Hohokam* people they frequently are also describing the *Huhugam*, the ancestors of the Akimel O'Odham and Tohono O'Odham. But the two terms are not completely interchangeable, and the archaeological usage of *Hohokam* does not capture the full breadth or duration of O'Odham history. For this reason it is useful to continue to use a different (though related) term for the archaeological unit, and not equate the archaeological meaning with the O'Odham cultural meaning.

Huhugam is the O'Odham cultural term referring to the spirits of their ancestors who once lived in central and southern Arizona and northern Mexico.

Hohokam is an archaeological term referring to an archaeological tradition in central and southern Arizona defined on the basis of ceramic types, architecture, ball courts, platform mounds and other material culture traits (Gladwin et al. 1937; Haury 1976:3-4). The term Hohokam encompasses only part of what O'Odham refer to when they refer to their ancestors as the *Huhugam*.

The people who occupied Las Cremaciones in the Phoenix Basin from about A.D. 700 to 1100 are *Huhugam* and their material culture remains are *Hohokam* (the archaeological term).

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