TU'I BWA'AME

Good Food

Yoeme/Yaqui Foodways in the Tucson Basin

Southwest Folklife Alliance

Spring 2018

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SOUTHWEST FOLKLIFE ALLIANCE
an affiliate of the University of Arizona

This report is part of the Yoeme/Yaqui Ancestral Foodways Project, funded through a grant from the Agnese Helms Haury Program in Environmental and Social Justice at the University of Arizona (2016-18).

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
Agnese Nelms Haury
Program in Environment and Social Justice

The project has two parts:
Oral history and ethnobotanical documentation in Yoem Pueblo, Marana, Arizona, and agricultural and social enterprise efforts around ancestral White Sonora wheat in Pueblo Vicam, Yaqui homeland, Sonora, Mexico.

The project's goals are:
1. to prototype a replicable model of Yoeme/Yaqui rural resiliency through reclaiming of socio-cultural memory and agricultural knowledge;
2. to advance economic development and food-based entrepreneurship among Yoeme/Yaqui communities on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border;
3. to affirm and promote Yoeme/Yaqui leadership and managerial capacity as an ethical model of partnership with non-indigenous governmental entities and educational/cultural non-governmental organizations.

Project leaders:
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Project Partners:
Traditional authorities, Yaqui Tribe in Vicam; Sonora; CBTA 26, Estación Vícam, Sonora; INIFAP, Cd. Obregón, Sonora; BKW Farms, Marana, AZ; Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Tucson, AZ; Santa Rosa Church Group, Old Pascua, Yoem Pueblo, Marana, AZ.

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1900s, when the Yoemem were well-established in the Marana area, they were fortunate to find a wide range of seasonal foods growing in the surrounding desert. Four varieties of wild greens grew throughout the Marana farming area and in the land not yet cleared for farming. The free growing wild greens were gathered and used as delicious family meals. Families bought groceries at local general stores in Tucson. The wild greens were a special addition to the store- bought groceries.

By the 1930s, there were five small communities that flourished in the farming community of Marana. The original settlers were from Sonora, Mexico. Many families came from Potam, Vikam, Vahkom, Ko'oko'im, Torim, Guaymas, Hermosillo, Santa Ana, and Magdalena. According to Yoeme oral tradition, the president of the Republic of Mexico, Porfirio Diaz and the governor of Sonora, Rafael Izabal, attempted genocide against the Yoeme Nation. Modern anthropologists and historians have recorded and published books on the history of the Yoeme persecution, oppression, slavery, and war casualties. In the early 1900s, a mass exodus from the Yoem Bwiara occurred days after the Maso Kova (Deer Head) Massacre on January 18, 1900. Some of the people who settled in Marana were survivors of the Maso Kova Massacre. To survive as a people, many Yoemem traveled north to the United States of America on foot, horses, donkeys, or on passenger trains. Many families arrived when Arizona was still called Arizona Territory.

Many Yoeme men found work with area farmers and the Cortaro Water Users Company. The first Yoeme settlement in Marana was established in 1910 and was named Ili Hu'upa (Little Mesquite). Many of the original settlers helped clear the land for farm fields in Tucson and Marana. In the 1920s the men helped construct the big canals that ran from the now-called Ina Road area to the north near Pinal County. Some of those canals are still in use by the Cortaro Water Users Company.

Photo credit: Cait NiSiomon
Location: Northwest Marana, Northwest of Yoem Pueblo

Ili Hu'upa was located southeast of Marana Public School, on the west side of the old Casa Grande Highway.

According to Paul and Susie Fish, archaeologists, Marana was an area were the Hohokam farmed and laid out three canals to irrigate their farms. The canals ran southeast to northwest. One large canal ended at the Marana Mound, an ancient ceremonial or social structure. The water source was from the Santa Cruz River near Rillito, Arizona. The Fish have published a map of the canals and Ili Hu'upa is indicated as settled between the two canals. Kampo Wiilo (Skinny Camp) was settled in the late 1920s and it was located alongside a modern canal on Trico Marana Road west of the old Casa Grande Highway. Kampo Vuuru (Donkey Camp) was settled in the late 1920s and was located alongside the modern canal on Barnett Road. Pitiquito was a cluster of homes near the Santa Cruz River near Rillito, Arizona.

South of Marana was another settlement. That settlement was not part of the Marana Yoeme settlements but was in the Rillito area. That settlement was largely made up of the Tonopuame'a family from Potam. They were settled near the Mortero ancient Hohokam site on the west side of the Santa Cruz River south of Rillito, Arizona. According to Tomas Tonopuame'a Martinez (deceased) from Yoem Pueblo, in the late 1920s an Anglo man befriended the family and gave the family ten acres to start a village. Tomas Tonopuame'a lived at Kampo Wiilo and said his mother and other family members lived at that site.

In 1937, the area farmers of Marana requested that the people of Ili Hu'upa move to an area southwest of the old location because of the availability of fresh drinking water. At the old location the people relied on canal water for everyday use.

The new location was named Yaqui Camp number 1. In 1939, a delegation of men from the Yoem Bwiara (Yoeme Land) in Sonora came to Marana and the other Yoeme settlements of Arizona to report that there was peace in Yoem Bwiara.

Tevat Kuus-Patio Cross made from mesquite wood
Photo credit: Leia Maahs | Location: Molina's Residence

"Santa Kuusim haivu ha'abwek," said Rosario Vakame'eri Castillo in the early 1970s to Felipe Molina. He was repeating what a delegation of Yoeme men had announced to the Yoeme families throughout the Yoeme communities of Arizona. The translation from Yoem Noki (Yoeme Language) to English is as follows: Santa (Holy) Kuusim (Crosses) haivu (already) ha'abwek (are standing). Traditional Yoeme families always have a mesquite cross standing in the yard. The cross is a witness to all that occurs in the home.

In Mexico, President Lazaro Cardenas set aside one third of the original Yoem Bwiara for Yoeme use only. Many Yoemem from the United States and from all over Mexico returned to the Yoem Bwiara to rebuild their villages and start up the farms. When the families returned to their homeland they set up the Santa Kuusim.

In 1980, the people of Yaqui Camp Number 1 bought the 4.2 acre land from the Cortaro Water Users with the help of PPEP (Portable Practical Education Project) director, John Arnold. That same year the land was blessed with ceremonial prayers, hymns, music, and dances.

Ceremonial people from Guadalupe, Old Pascua, New Pascua, Barrio Libre, and Marana participated in a daylong traditional blessing. The next day, on Sunday, Mount Saint Helen erupted. Before the blessing, the Yoemem of Marana participated in a contest to name the village. Josephine Garcia submitted Yoem Pueblo as the village name. The name received the top votes. She won the monetary price.

In the Arizona Territory, Yoemem established communities in Tucson, Scottsdale, Tempe and Yuma. Some of those communities eventually became permanent communities. The focus of the stories below is the Yoeme communities of Marana.

Photo credit: Cait NiSiomon
Location: Northwest Marana, Northwest of Yoem Pueblo

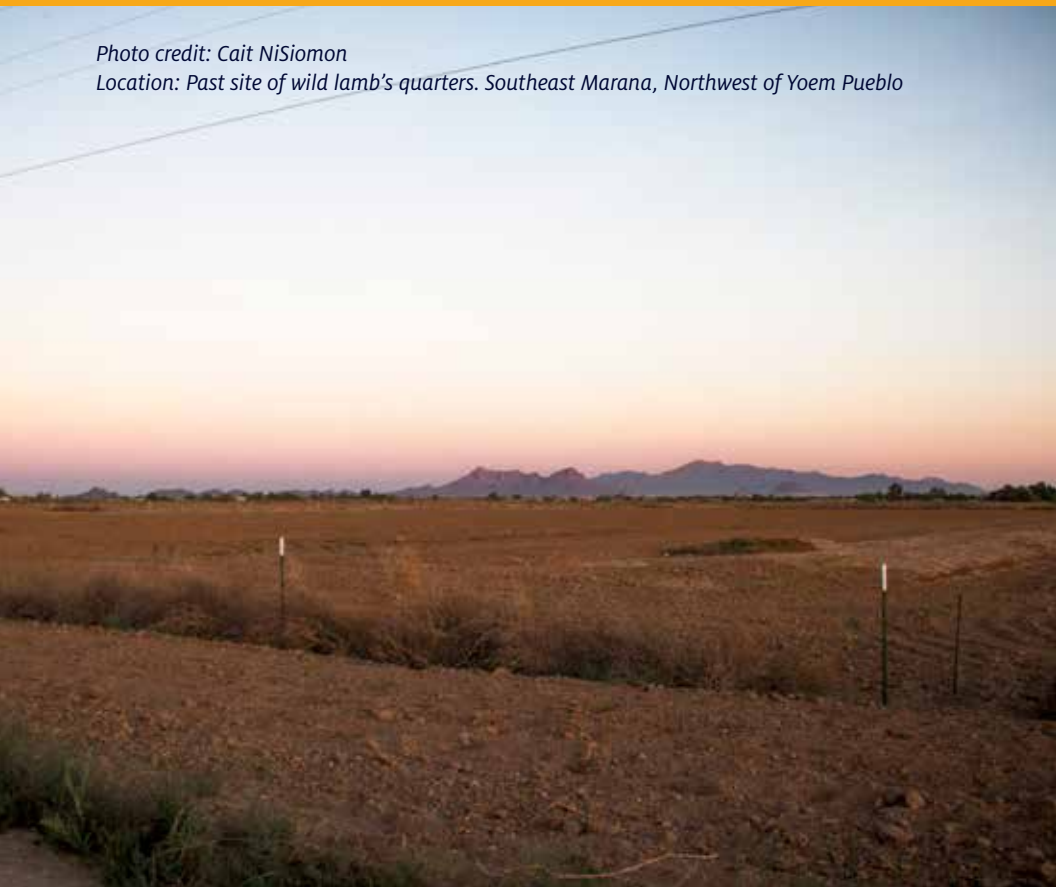


Photo credit: Cait NiSiomon
Location: Past site of wild lamb's quarters. Southeast Marana, Northwest of Yoem Pueblo

"When we were returning from the saguaro harvest in the Tucson Mountains our horse got spooked," said a village elder in the early 1990s. In the 1920s and 1930s many families owned horses and horse-drawn wagons. "The horse was running so fast that my father couldn't stop him," she continued. The elder said that the wagon was going so fast that her mother's skirt flew up and covered her face. As she talked about that incident she began to laugh. She also recalled that many families went to the Tucson Mountains to harvest the saguaro fruit. She said families would set up camps to harvest the saguaro fruit and then return to Ili Hu'upa after the harvest season.

Marana was like Teweka Looria (Heaven), said Anselma Tonopuame'a Castillo. She said in Sonora the Mexican Federal soldiers were always

hunting for Yoemem. She said that friendly non-Yoeme Mexican families would hide her when the soldiers came looking for Yoeme men, women, and children.

In Marana, the Yoemem consumed many desert plants but the wild greens were quite popular with the people. In the summer, the farm lands and the surrounding desert lands had abundance of wee'e (amaranth), totoi woki or koni woki (wild arugula), bwaarom (purslane), and kapa or choali (lamb's quarters). Even the Yoemem from Tucson would travel to Marana and gather the wild greens. In the fall, amaranth seeds were gathered to make a special pudding. In the winter, after the rains, wild mustard grew around ponds near Naviska north of Marana.

Photo credit: Cait NiSiomon
Location: Past site of wild mustard greens. Northwest of Marana and Yoem Pueblo

The elders always offered prayers before the gathering. They were grateful that such delicious wild greens were available for the picking. The young tender leaves were the preferred part of the plant.

The most common food consumed in those early years, besides the wild greens in Marana, were beans, white tepary beans, potatoes, corn, chili, chiltepin, squash, beef, and rice. Traditionally, corn tortillas were a favorite of the people in Sonora. After a while, white flour became a favorite ingredient for tortillas. Many people also relied on mesquite pods to survive. Mesquite trees produced two crops a year so the people gathered and saved the pods for year-round use.

Mesquite Beans
Hu'upa Taakam (Yoeme Word)
Prosopis velutina (Scientific Name)

"Haivu kum, kumti hiune," said Rosario Vakame'eri Castillo, when he talked about the neighbors during the ripening of the mesquite tree pods. Haivu (already) kum (thump) kumti (thump will) hiune (sound). The neighbors were well-known for their preparation of the mesquite pods for family meals. What he was describing was the pounding of the mesquite pods in a wooden mortar and a wooden pestle. Mesquite pods were another traditional desert food for some of the Yoemem.

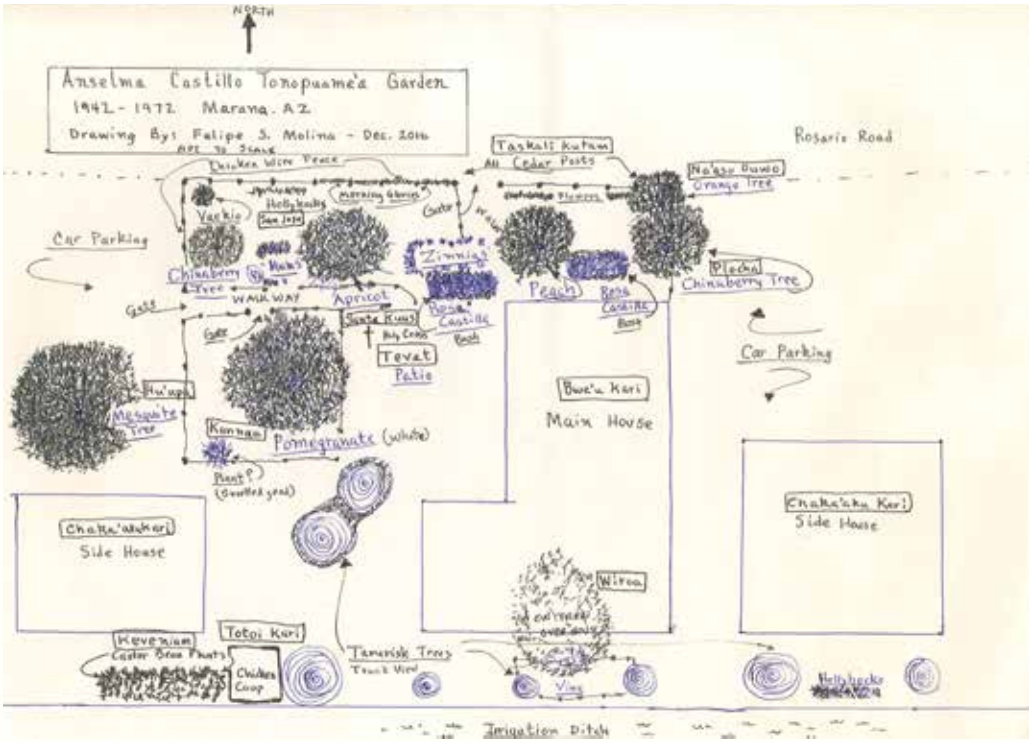
A NUTRITIOUS MEAL - WILD GREENS

Wild greens were collected in large burlap sacks. After the wild greens were brought home, they were rinsed with water and ready to cook. The common ingredients that were part of the meal were: garlic, onions, tomatoes, and salt. In the past, the people used lard to stir fry these items. Nowadays, some people prefer vegetable oil to stir fry. In a large pan or pot the wild greens were mixed with the above ingredients and cooked in water for four to five minutes. Cooked beans and some salt were added during the cooking process. Nowadays, wild greens are eaten with flour tortillas. In the past, big, thick homemade corn tortillas completed the meal.

From the late 1960s to the mid-1990s, Yoeme women from Potam and Vikam came to visit relatives in the Marana area. During their visits in Marana they would make thick round home-made corn tortillas for the family and friends. Traditional corn tortilla making never caught on with the families in Marana. Instead, the families bought corn masa and packaged corn tortillas to make tacos and enchiladas. Both of these meals used lard and later vegetable oil to fry the tortillas.

Photo credit: Cait NiSiomon

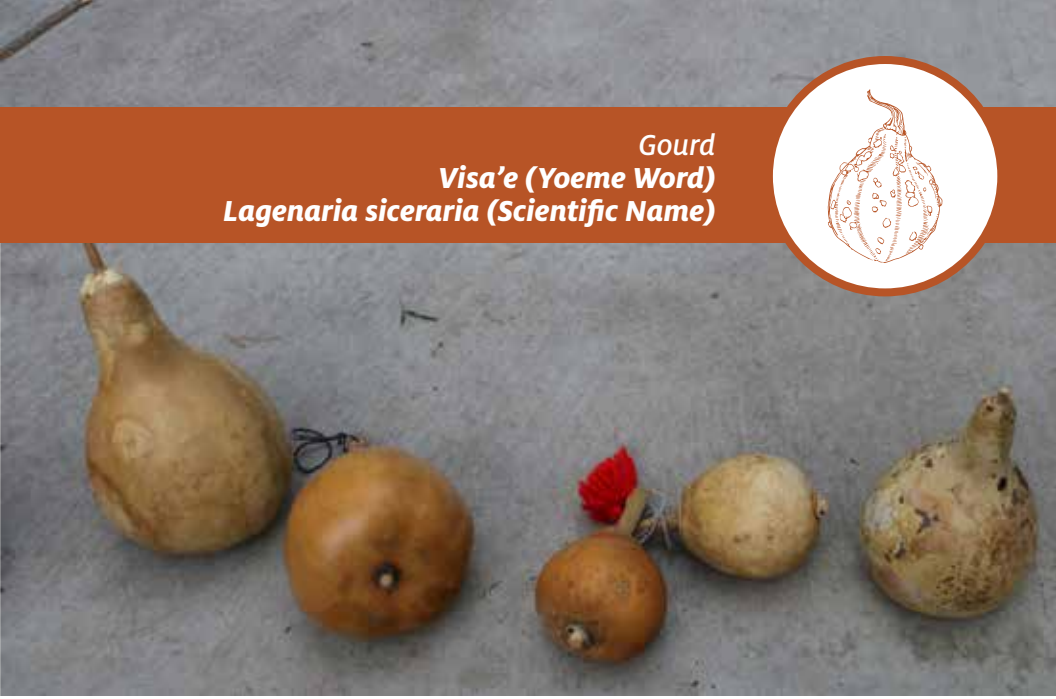
Family Gardens



Felipe's Grandmother's Garden

In the mid 1940s, some families in Yoem Pueblo decided to plant edible and non-edible plants around their homes. A variety of edible fruit trees were planted, including: mesquite, pomegranate, peach, orange, plum, fig, date, quince and apricot trees. Hackberry shrubs and grape vines were also common.

The non-edible plants were as follows: gourd plants, castor bean plants, oleanders, china berry trees, Arundo donax, seep willow, and vines. The tamarisk trees were planted in the late 1930s by the Cortaro Water Users company. Throughout Marana the tamarisk trees were planted to serve as windbreakers. Trees that grew on their own were as follows: palo verde, desert broom shrubs, and cottonwood trees. Some families planted flower gardens.



Gourd
Visa'e (Yoeme Word)
Lagenaria siceraria (Scientific Name)

Visa'em-Gourds. Ayam-Gourd Rattles.
Photo Credit: Leia Maahs | Location: Molina's Residence

The flowering plants were as follows: rose bushes, zinnias, sweet peas, hollyhocks, Mexican poppies, cuentas, and mums. Yoemem from the Tucson villages would say that the Marana village was like a jungle or a forest.

In the 1950s, an elder woman once said to a group of young people who were admiring a squash plant that they should not point at plants. She said that many plants are shy, especially the squash plant. In those years some elders still made an effort to pass down traditional plant knowledge to the young people. Those young people are now in their 60s and 70s.

In the mid-1940s, the Cortaro Water Users company allowed the Yoemem to plant vegetables north of the camp. Each family was allotted a small family plot. The Cortaro Water Users provided water from a small canal east of the camp.

Pomegranate
Kannao (Yoeme Word)
Punica granatum (Scientific Name)

Hu'upa Ouwo- Mesquite Tree on Rosario Rd. Yoem Pueblo, Marana, AZ.
Photo Credit: Leia Maahs

In the mid 1990s, the Marana Area Yaqui Association, Inc. gift deeded the 4.2 acres to the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. In a Tribal Council meeting at Marana, the people voted to gift deed the land to the Pascua Yaqui Tribe in order for the tribe to finance a much-needed housing project. Felipe S. Molina signed over the land to Chairman Benito Valencia and the Tribal Council. Since housing was the number one need for many families, the fruit trees and other home plants were bulldozed to make way for new housing.

Several years after the houses were completed, mesquite trees started to grow in the yards. Some of the mesquite trees were non-native; others were the native mesquite trees from Arizona. The mesquite trees continue to survive and provide beauty and shade for the homes.

Left: Kannao-Pomegranate Tree with Fruit
Photo Credit: Leia Maahs | Location: Molina's Residence

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