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"MOBILITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEXICAN AND AMERICAN O'ODHAMS" BY GUILLERMO CASTILLO RAMÍREZ

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THE SOCIAL SUBJECT

The purpose of this text is to give a brief overview – with the inclusion of several oral testimonies of O'odham people – on the perception of the process of social and cultural contact between the villages of the O'odham group in Sonora, Mexico and their O'odham counterparts in southwest Arizona, U.S. in the north of their ancestral territory. The Altar Desert – one of the biggest in the world – has been the land and cultural space of the O'odham people for a long time and their way of life was strongly bound up with this natural environment.

The social and religious history of the O'odham communities was, on many levels, incarnated in the desert topography: (1) due to the fundamental need for water, the villages were founded

close to the rivers or the pools, (2) the sacred places such as the Quitovac Lagoon and Baboquivari Mountain were also related with water, but in this case as a mythological and symbolic source of life and power, (3) also, the seasons of the year and the changes of weather in the desert determined the productive activity, especially agriculture, which was strongly related to the rainy season. It is important to mention that while some of the O’odham’s sacred places are in Mexico, e.g. the Quitovac Lagoon and the mountains of the Pinacate, others – such as Baboquivari Mountain and its surroundings – are in southwest Arizona, close to the international border with Mexico. This gives an idea of how the present lands of the O’odham people in Sonora and in Arizona were previously just one area.

It was a single cultural territory that was split through an international division between two recently founded nation states in the middle of the 19th century: the Republic of Mexico and the United States of America. Due to the tough living conditions in the Altar Desert, ranging from the south to the north of the O’odham territory, there were little towns with small populations and between these settlements there were complex networks of social relations that embraced different levels of activities, including kinship, religion (ceremonies and fiestas), exchanges of merchandise, inter-community works and employment. The mobility materialized in frequent visits and connections with the neighboring O’odham villages was an ancient and characteristic practice of the O’odham way of life. Before the consolidation of the States of Mexico and the U.S. and the division of the O’odham land, there was neither a “Mexican nor southern side” nor a “U.S. or northern side.” Instead, it was a huge territory where the O’odham towns shared with each other their original language, family lines and kinship, cultural practices, religion and social space, productive activities; in short, a common way of life. To demonstrate some actual manifestations of the process described, the last part of the text deals with the specific case of the paths – in the sense of connections and social networks – between the southern communities of Las Calenturas and Pozo Prieto in Sonora and their O’odham relatives in the southwest of Arizona located in the north of the Tohono O’odham Territory. This is also going to help us trace, in very succinct manner, a regional dynamic of

interconnections between the Mexican O’odham villages near the border and the neighboring O’odham towns situated just over the international line in Arizona, in the Indian Reservation of Sells.

The inhabitants of Las Calenturas and Pozo Prieto, as well as many other O’odham people from different Mexican villages, went to the north with their fellow O’odham for several reasons: 1) to attend to traditional ceremonies just over the border, as in the case of the fiesta of San Francisco in the settlement of San Francisco, which was a huge regional and religious event at the beginning of October that drew many people from southwest Arizona – particularly O’odham – and Sonora in honor of Saint Francisco; 2) almost all the southern O’odham people had relatives in the north, therefore, at least once a year, they made family visits and exchanged merchandise, such as *pitaya* (fruit of cactus) jelly, *bufo* (deer) hide, pottery and ceramics; 3) they also traveled to some towns in southwest Arizona for seasonal jobs harvesting cotton with American farmers and ranchers, although they did these jobs with their fellow O’odhams of Arizona; 4) and finally, a few members of these communities, quite a long time after the work in the cotton fields, for several years, migrated north and settled in the towns of the Sells Reservation in search of better living conditions, and it is one of the reasons why there are so many Hispanic family names nowadays among the O’odham of southwest Arizona. We will look at this in more detail and analyze the mobility process in the next section. Additionally, the last section of the text traces in a very schematic way how the displacements and migrations between the south – Sonora – and the north – Arizona – of the O’odham territory led to and consolidated other ways of expressing the ethnic attachment between the O’odham people of both sides. Based on social networks and non-permanent activities where they occasionally join together, these new forms of ethnic belonging helped them to reconfigure their common history and the way they present themselves as group, at local and regional level. On a larger scale, these activities encompassed gatherings and meetings for cultural reasons, such as ceremonies, where the O’odham people found themselves to be a huge network of communities related through kinship, social activities, territory and a common language and history.

GENERAL CONTEXT

For many centuries, the Tohono O'odham people have been living in small semi-nomadic settlements in the vast Altar Desert, a natural environment that begins in the center of Sonora State in Mexico and stretches to the southwest of Arizona in the U.S.A. covering almost all of the O'odham cultural area. A few decades after the creation of the Republic of Mexico in the nineteenth century and with the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1853), the traditional Tohono O'odham territory was split into two sections by the international borderline between the nations of Mexico and the U.S.A. Before this, the entire O'odham territory had been part of New Spain from the Conquest to the early nineteenth century and after and, with the recent Mexican independence, it was part of the Mexican state for little more than tree decades between 1821 and 1853. However, at that time (in contrast with central Mexico, which had become the cultural, economic and political capital of the recent independent Mexican state) the north of the country, a huge swathe of national territory, and the O'odham area in the northwest in particular, were lands that were almost forgotten by the federal institutions.

The O'odham people lived in small villages in the desert and their way of life was based on agriculture, cattle raising, hunting desert animals and gathering endemic plants and fruits; these last two activities, as well as agriculture, inherited from their forefathers, were closely related with the desert and its natural cycles, belonging to the ancestral way of life of the O'odham, dating back from before the arrival of the Spanish. Cattle raising was a productive endeavor that arrived with the Spanish and the historical process of the Conquest. Indeed, it was the Jesuits who introduced the Indian people of northwest Mexico and southwest Arizona to this activity. Another major transformation wrought by the Conquest was the mutation of traditional O'odham religion, which, with the arrival of the Spanish, suffered from the influence of the Catholicism and its religious events and ceremonies. Consequently, one of the most important O'odham celebrations in the twentieth century, the *Fiesta de San Francisco*, held on October 4, was a result of this enforced blending of these different religions.

According to the ethnographies consulted (Nolasco 1965, 375-448) (Basauri 1990, 155-166), (Ortiz Garay 1995, 219-290), (Neyra Solis 2007, 1-50), the traditional way of life of the O'odham people in Sonora and in Arizona from the 19th century until the beginning of the twentieth century was closely related to the natural environment, the Altar Desert. The O'odham people, mostly in Mexico, had a self-sufficient economy based on the cattle and occasionally horse breeding, seasonal farming of certain plants such as bean, corn and other vegetables, gathering fruits and hunting desert animals. Agricultural production was mainly geared to consumption within the communities, although a small portion of the harvest was set aside for exchanging merchandise between the villages. Although the traditional O'odham territory had been split in two by the international border between the States of Mexico and the US since 1853, for a considerable part of the first half of twentieth century the Mexican and American O'odham people shared strong social links and were able to cross the legal borderline between Sonora and Arizona without almost any trouble or restrictions. Despite the fact that the borderline was a geographic and legal demarcation between two nation states, the border did not represent an obstacle in the day-to-day life of the O'odham people.

Indeed, at that time, the O'odham people were not required to show any specific documents when crossing the border. With considerable frequency, the O'odham communities of Sonora went to Arizona to visit relatives, attend ceremonial events or do seasonal work in the cotton fields. Furthermore, the O'odham people of Arizona traveled to Mexico several times a year to participate in and perform ceremonies (such as the Vikita, the fiesta de San Francisco) in the O'odham villages of Sonora, and to visit sacred sites like the holy Quitovac Lagoon, the village of San Francisquito or to attend the Magdalena de Kino pilgrimage, which departed from various O'odham villages in Sonora and Arizona and journeyed to the town of Magdalena de Kino in Sonora at the beginning of October, to express their religious fervor to San Francisco. This religious event, while attracting many O'odham people, also was a social event of regional dimensions that incorporated other social actors, such as peasants, farmers and ranchers from northwest Sonora.

In the present case, we are interested mainly in the oral testimonies and the different voices of the elder people that used to live in the southern communities of Las Calenturas and Pozo Prieto up until the end of the first half of the twentieth century. These rural communities and the urban centers in which the Tohono O’odham people live nowadays are within the area close to the borderline in the northwest of Sonora State, in the municipalities of Pitiquito, Caborca, Saric, Plutarco Elias Calles and Puerto Peñasco. The latter three municipalities join the international borderline with Arizona, U.S.A. and are home to a significant part of the present Tohono O’odham population in Mexico. Although Las Calenturas and Pozo Prieto are not the only communities of the desert, these cases help to sketch general and regional networks between the villages across the whole of the O’odham territory. This enables us to understand how the O’odham people from Sonora and Arizona used to appropriate their territory and give cultural meaning to the natural environment of the Altar Desert, making this land their cultural home area.

MOBILITY, MIGRATION AND TERRITORY: THE CULTURAL USE OF SPACE

The practices of mobility and seasonal movements from one place to another have been a cultural activity and survival strategy of the O’odham people for a very long time, dating back centuries. There were several geographical and social forms of mobility and a broad range of use of the territory: for example, the distance between Las Calenturas (one of the southern-most communities) and San Francisquito (the settlement where the annual ceremony of San Francisco is held) is approximately 100 kilometers. Throughout the twentieth century people from Las Calenturas attended the ceremony of San Francisquito every year. Then they were movements for seasonal labor; for instance, the distance between el Pozo Prieto and the cotton fields of Arizona (where some of the inhabitants of el Pozo Prieto worked when they were young) is approximately 150 kilometers, and the people from this community made this journey several times during the 1950s. All of these places are part of the vast O’odham

territory. However, one of the most common forms of mobility was to move home for reasons of productive activity. Depending on the season of the year and the available resources in the desert, the O'odham people alternated between cattle breeding and seasonal agriculture. Thus, for example, in wintertime the inhabitants of Las Calenturas moved to the settlement of Pozo Prieto, where they kept and raised cattle; while in summertime, they returned to Las Calenturas where they farmed the land using water from the rains, in addition to collecting fruits and plants and hunting wild animals. This was a very common strategy to take advantage of and use in a balanced and rational manner the limited resources of the Altar Desert and it was also implemented by most of O'odham villages in southwest Arizona and Sonora. El Bajío, San Francisquito, Pozo Verde, Cumarito, el Cubabi, Quitovac and Las Norias, among other communities on the Mexican side, repeated this strategy. One aspect of the O'odham's way of inhabiting the desert was to travel the paths and roads between the natural and social places where their productive activities were located.

At the same level of productive activities, but this time in relation with external social actors and at around the middle of the twentieth century, many O'odham people of Sonora and Arizona used to work with white American ranchers and farmers in the southwest of Arizona as farm workers, mainly in water irrigation and cotton harvesting. Many people from Mexican O'odham communities crossed their traditional territory by different routes to meet up with their O'odham relatives of Arizona near the border and then traveled on together in (social, communal and familiar) groups, to the cotton fields of Maricopa, Illoy, Stanfield and Marrana, close to Casas Grandes, not far from Phoenix, Arizona. They stayed there for several months during the cotton harvest, and then each group returned to their original place. Some from the Mexican side, especially the men, did this every year while the cotton boom lasted in the southwest US.

In the case of Mexican O'odham settlements, we find that men and women from almost all the O'odham villages participated in this experience: from the far south communities such as Las

Calenturas and El Pozo Prieto, to the middle of the O'odham lands, such as Quitovac, Las Norias and San Pedro, to the northern villages of El Bajío, Pozo Verde and San Francisquito. This was a social process that lasted for years and fed the contact between the O'odham people from the south, in Sonora, and the north, in Arizona, as they lived for months in the cotton field camps during the seasonal work, spending more time among each other and sharing more situations with their O'odham relatives from Arizona than they ordinarily did before these experiences. The process of social mobility towards cotton fields in southwest Arizona began roughly at the end of the 1920s and lasted up until the beginning of the 1960s.

By end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, many of the Mexican O'odham people who made this periodic migration to harvest cotton for several years, ended up moving permanently to the O'odham area of southwest Arizona, generally in some of the O'odham reservations (mainly Sells) which, is the biggest and most southern of the O'odham reservations. These Mexican O'odhams eventually obtained US citizenship and received full rights as members of an Indian reservation in the US. A consequence of this is that many of the present Mexican O'odham people had, and some still have older relatives who worked in the cotton fields and who later joined O'odham reservations in Arizona, even though they were born in the O'odham villages of Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century.

However, the working of natural resources and paid work were not the only reasons for O'odham social mobility. There were also cultural events, such as religious gatherings, which at a regional level drew the O'odham communities of Arizona and Sonora together and which turned out to be very important social occasions for strengthening ethnic cohesion at the macro-level of ethnic group. These communal and regional meetings helped to create and consolidate the ethnic tribe image over and beyond the international border between the two nation states of Mexico and the US. Additionally, with respect to the cultural and religious life of the O'odham people, there were some ceremonies that worked as points of encounter, and, given the motifs and meanings of these cultural events, it is possible to classify them into two main groups: (1)

ceremonies more related to the traditional O'odham religion and mythology (dating back to before the Conquest) such as the *Vikita* and the *Buro* ceremonies, and (2) other ones related more with the Catholic religion and the influence of the Spanish tradition, such as the pilgrimage to Magdalena de Kino and the Fiesta de San Francisco. The Buro ceremony, held on June 24, was related to deer and hunting, and it was carried out at several sites of the O'odham cultural area at the same time: (1) in the Alamo, in the south of the Mexican O'odham land, where O'odham people from the villages Las Calenturas, Pozo Prieto and Caborca attended the ceremony; (2) in the Quitovac community, right in the center of the traditional territory, attended by people from Las Norias, San Pedro and El Aribaypa, and (3) also in the Sonoyta village, near the international border, but still in Sonora, which was attended by people from nearby Mexican O'odham villages, such as Sonoyta, San Francisquito, but also communities from the O'odham reservation of Sells, such as Gubo, El Ajo, Quitovaquita and other settlements of southwest Arizona. Since the middle of the first half of the twentieth century, the ceremony of *Vikita* has been held in one place only, in the community of Quitovac, Sonora, between the second and the third weekend of June (on Saturday and according to the given cycle of the moon) very close to the sacred lagoon, on the outskirts of the town. This ceremony was attended by people from Mexico and Arizona and was one of most important cultural events of the O'odham group. Both the *Vikita* and the *Buro* ceremony were related to annual cycle of seasons, particularly the summer time and during the first rains in the desert.

There were also ceremonies and religious events related to the Catholic tradition: the Pilgrimage to Magdalena de Kino and the Fiesta de San Francisco, both held in Mexico at the same time (at the beginning of October), the main day being the 4th of October. During the end of September and beginning of October, many people from the villages of the O'odham reservations in Arizona, San Xavier, San Lucy, but mainly from Sells, traveled in groups to Sonora making the Pilgrimage to Magdalena de Kino, to honor and show their religious fervor to Padre Kino, a European Jesuit missionary. He traveled through northwest Sonora and southwest Arizona, founding various missions on O'odham territory at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of seventeenth century.

Many Mexican O'odham communities also attended this pilgrimage. Although the O'odham people had a heavy presence at this religious event, this was not exclusively an O'odham celebration: many Mexican farmers and ranchers visited Magdalena during this celebration. Indeed, Magdalena de Quino, is mainly a Mexican town. The fiesta of San Francisco was held at the same time, but in San Francisquito, a Mexican O'odham village situated a few miles from the US-Mexico border. It was a regional meeting point for settlements of the O'odham reservation of Sells, such as Gubo, Pisinimo, Ajo, La Angostura and Topawa, but many Mexican O'odham settlements also attended this event: El Bajio, Pozo Verde, Cubabi, Cumarito, Sonoyta, Quitovac and even very southern communities, such as Las Calenturas and El Pozo Prieto. As with the Magdalena de Quino event, some Mexican ranchers and farmers also attended the San Francisco ceremony in San Francisquito village, but in the case of this ceremony the O'odham people were the organizers and the protagonists of the event. The religious celebration was in honor of San Francisco, the patron saint of the O'odham group. The people from the Sonora villages went to the Chapel of San Francisco in thanksgiving for the favors granted by the saint and to express their devotion. During this kind of event however, the O'odham families of Sonora and Arizona also had the opportunity to see each other and spend time together.

The international border was a formal and legal limit, but no real obstacle – at least not at that time. State limits between Mexico and the US were a less important geographical reference for the O'odham group than their cultural territory and the cultural practices associated with this part of the desert. The network of family ties was spread out across the O'odham territory and communities on the Mexican side and the US side were closely related. These relationships were not only based on blood lines of certain family genealogies but they also incorporated other kinds of social relationships like friendship and social kinship (such as, for example, godfathers). In addition, there was a set of social conditions that facilitated the amount of time shared together and widened the range of experiences during the religious and cultural events. In the past there were fewer differences between the villages of southwest Arizona and the

communities in Mexico. Almost every O'odham, regardless of their nation state of residence or their place of residence and origin, spoke O'odham. Spanish and English were used merely to communicate with external actors, such as ranchers and farmers of Mexico and the US, but not to socialize with the O'odham people of other communities.

Moreover, O'odham people from Sonora and Arizona had a similar cultural background concerning productive activities, cultural and religious meetings as well as their common social history. Family genealogies were clearer and there were strong social points about which to order social and family life. The borderline was quite open and it represented almost no trouble to cross it either from Arizona to Sonora or from Sonora to Arizona. All this made more contact possible between the O'odham peoples. However, these situations that allowed exchange and contact between Sonora and Arizona slowly changed due to the roles of the nation states (Mexico and the US).

Today the situation of the ethnic groups is quite special from what used to be earlier. In Mexico, only few people speak the O'odham language (less than forty people) and the federal official institutions, like CDI (the National Commission for the Development of the Indigenous People) calculate that there are between 360 and 380 O'odham people spread out around cities in the northwest of Mexico, mainly the region of Sonora. The situation of the O'odham people of US is quite different. A lot of people still speak O'odham, but English, at least in the younger generations and possibly due to the role of official institutions like education services (elementary and high school) is increasingly gaining more influence. The population is also significantly larger than in Mexico. There are between around 25,000 and 28,000 O'odham people living in the US, mainly in southwest Arizona on several Indian reservations (Sells, San Xavier, San Lucy) and some others in the cities of Tucson and Phoenix.

MEXICO, THE U.S. AND THE O'ODHAM PEOPLE OF SONORA AND ARIZONA

During the twentieth century, one of the social processes that had a huge impact on O'odham life in the villages of Sonora and Arizona were the roles the US and Mexico States had in relation to the group of native population, and specifically – in the north of Mexico and the southwest of Arizona – with the O'odham group. Mexico and US, in different ways according to their national history and policies, determined and influenced the use, exploitation and forms of ownership of the land and the natural resources of the desert in O'odham land, thereby changing some of the socio-cultural aspects of the traditional O'odham way of life, in particular social and geographical mobility.

Despite the fact that the O'odham people of Arizona had long-standing and intense contact and cooperation with other the O'odham villages as well as with white farmers and ranchers in the southwest, US government initiatives to aid O'odham people were unusually slow (Spicer 1962, 139). According to Spicer (140) this marked difference was applied to other Indians groups; it was not until 1917 that an Indian reservation was proposed for the O'odham people. The proposed reservation covered the geographical space between the city of Tucson and its southern surroundings, the town of Ajo and the south to the Mexican border. One year later, the reservation (sized around two million acres) was formally established and succeeded in covering almost the entire territory where the O'odham people had their villages and used to raise and range their cattle. Later, two other reservations were established: San Xavier (closer to Tucson) and San Lucy. As the result of internal changes, twenty years later the tribal organization (far from the traditional structures) adopted its constitution in January 1937. Under the new jurisdiction, the O'odham reservations were divided into eleven districts. Each district had two representatives in the Tribal Council. The districts worked not only as political divisions, but also as units to organize the cattle work. The seat of the Tribal Council was in the city of Sells in the Sells Reservation, the main (and the largest) O'odham reservation. The leadership of the Tribal Council was almost immediately assumed by O'odham people from the Boboquivari district, in the southeastern area, which also bordered with Mexico (Spicer 1962, 143). These people had strong links and even direct ancestors in northwest Mexico. In contrast

with what happened in Mexico between the state and the O'odham villages of Sonora, the relationship with the Federal Government in the US allowed, up to a certain point, for the O'odham people of Arizona to keep and use their land and to use the natural resources of the desert. They also had the 'aids' of the education and health services, as well as the economic support of the US Federal Government for the administrative duties and the logistics of the Tohono O'odham Nation.

The relationship between the Mexican state and the O'odham people in Sonora was quite different. Until quite late in the twentieth century, the Mexican state, at least in the north, had no specific policy regarding indigenous groups. Indigenous peoples, along with other marginal groups, were one of the most forgotten and excluded social actors until quite recently in Mexico's history. It was not until the middle of 90s and after the eruption of the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), that the Mexican Constitution was reformed to recognize and incorporate indigenous groups as part of the Nation, as specific social actors. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the situation was very different. Firstly, the Mexican state never completely recognized the totality of the O'odham territory in Sonora, nor the rights of the O'odham people to use their land and the natural resources of the desert. At that time, in terms of the agrarian law, some of O'odham villages were turned into (or were being turned into) Ejidos (land reform community) and they had the right to a certain amount of land. This was the case in the communities of Pozo Verde, San Francisquito, Cumarito, Pozo Prieto, Las Calenturas, Las Norias and Quitovac, among others. However, far away from legal terms, in actual fact the lands of the O'odham people were very often invaded by Mexican ranchers and farmers and the state did nothing about it. To disadvantage the O'odham people, the state created the Distrito de Colonización del Gran Desierto de Altar, at the middle of the twentieth century (Torres Gastelum interview, 2007), with which it promoted the colonization of the desert and brought new social groups and farmers to O'odham territory (Almada 2000, 148). Something similar happened with the use and working of the natural resources, especially with water: Mexican ranchers and farmers took over the places where there were better lands

for agriculture but also where there was water. As a consequence of land invasions and the lack of water due to the arrival of these new social actors, the continuation of the O'odham way of life (based mainly on agriculture) began to be seriously endangered. By the middle of twentieth century in Las Calenturas and in El Pozo Prieto there were five neighboring ranchers surrounding these two communities, namely: Canuto Garibay, Quiroz, Venegas, Lema and Valenzuela. The ranchers of these five localities took the better lands and also control of the use of the water. All this was provoked by the agricultural policy of the Mexican state, which gave Mexican ranchers legal prerogatives over the land as well as credits and economic support (Almada 2000, 148-9). The selective and discriminatory, implicit or explicit state policy is obvious; the state not only allowed the acquisition of land in the O'odham territory, but also gave the ranchers the legitimacy of discretionary use of the resources (the control of water, for example), a fact placed ranchers in a very advantaged position.

There was a wave of land invasions suffered by O'odham communities during the colonization process of the Altar Desert. A similar occupation happened in the O'odham communities close to the international border. Pozo Verde, Bajío, San Francisquito and others were also places where the presence of new social actors broke the balanced way of life of the O'odham people. In the case of the O'odham villages in Sonora, close to the international border, this situation of exploitation and abuse caused by directly Mexican ranchers and indirectly by the state policy, together with the lack of health and education services, led O'odham people to migrate to the O'odham reservation of Sells in Arizona.

The international relationship between Mexico and the US also had an impact upon the life of the O'odham villages in Sonora and Arizona. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, there have been general changes in the borderline between Sonora and Arizona, and especially in the geographical zone that was part of the O'odham territory in particular the border town of El Sasabe (also a border crossing) in the municipality of Saric, Sonora, and following the international border to the northwest, to the other border crossing between Sonoyta (Sonora) and Lukeville (Arizona). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the border was quite open

and was only a formal legal limit. On a day-to-day level there was no trouble in crossing from Sonora to Arizona or vice versa. Many Mexican men of Sonora who worked during the week in the mines at Ajo, in southwest Arizona, returned to Sonoyta at weekends to spend time and money. Many O'odham people from the villages close to the border in southwest Arizona also came to Sonoyta, Sonora, to shop for items (alcohol or desert products, especially pitayas), or to attend O'odham and Catholic ceremonies. Additionally, the Arizona O'odham, in agreement with the US government, had three crossings in their territory for the exclusive use of this very ethnic group: the first was the La Angostura crossing, a few miles from the international Sonoyta-Lukeville crossing to the east; the next was the El Panama crossing, close to the settlement of San Francisquito, Sonora, and the last one was the San Miguel crossing, near the settlements of Bajío and Pozo Verde in Sonora, not far from the town of Sasabe. The Arizona O'odham used to cross at these points to attend celebrations in Mexican O'odham villages, and the Sonora O'odham passed through these crossings to visit their families and for temporary work. However, the international crossing as well the 'ethnic' crossings that were used exclusively by the O'odham people, have gradually been closed due to the restrictive policies of the US government given the international context of the social process of mass migration into the US.

The process of crossing the border is increasingly complicated for the O'odham people today, particularly the O'odham people of Sonora. In the past, they could pass only by certifying their O'odham origin when they crossed the border using one of the following O'odham crossings: La Angostura, Panama or San Miguel. Now, the Sonora O'odham have to show Mexican passports and US visas if they want to cross by one of the international crossings (Sonoyta-Lukeville or Nogales); if they use one of the O'odham crossing, they have to show the O'odham card (this is a card the O'odham Nation gives to its members) to the border patrol officers that control the border. The O'odham people of Arizona, do not need to show any specific document to enter Mexico; however, once that they return to their home in southwest

Arizona they have to show an ID document to enter the US. In a very general sense, these changes drew the historical genealogy of the borderline.

MOBILITY AND CONTACTS: THE CASE OF LAS CALENTURAS AND POZO PRIETO

This section of the text drew upon the testimonies of Doña Alicia Chohua and Doña Juanita López Juárez, who grew up in these communities and had a close relationship with the O’odham communities of southwest Arizona and the Indian reservation of Sells in Arizona.

The communities of Las Calenturas and Pozo Prieto are located in the northwest of the Municipality of Caborca, close to Mar de Cortes (Informe sobre la situación de los miembros de la Tribu Pápaga en los Municipios de Puerto Peñasco, Caborca, Altar y Saric, del Estado de Sonora, 1973). Las Calenturas, which means ‘fevers,’ is an O’odham settlement and agrarian annex of El Pozo Prieto, which was given its name because – according to its old inhabitants – around 1910, water emerged from a spring that led to fever in people who drank this water (Talleres para el Microdesarrollo Sustentable en Comunidades Indígenas. Matriz de Indicadores de la Región O’odham, 1996). Today Las Calenturas lies abandoned and most of its fertile lands have been taken over by Mexican farmers. El Pozo Prieto means ‘dark pool,’ and was given its name because of the large pool of brown water there (Matriz de Indicadores de la Región O’odham. Instituto Nacional Indigenista. Delegación Sonora, Residencia Caborca, 1996). Carl Lumholtz has similar comments about the name of this community, which he discusses in *New Trails in Mexico: An Account of One Year’s Exploration in Northwestern Sonora, Mexico, and Southwestern Arizona, 1909-1910* (392).

The settlements of the desert, and especially those of the O’odham tribe, were in places where there was easy access to hydraulic resources and which were used for agriculture. In this sense, the testimony of Doña Alicia Chohua proves quite illustrative. She says that “where there was water then that was where they [the old O’odham people and her ancestors] camped, they made

their lands [right there] because, I imagine that, because, they told me it was where there was water, and where there was life, later they made [them] their lands” (Alicia Chohhua, interview, 2007). Most old O’odham settlements of the Altar Desert (in Sonora as well as in Arizona) were near to rivers or wherever there was a large pool of useful water. Las Norias, San Francisquito and Cubabi are all on the edge of one river; Quitovac is very close of the sacred lagoon of Quitovac, in the village of Sonoyta, where once was a river with the same name that ran until the 1940s; in Pozo Verde, in Pozo Prieto and in Las Calenturas there were large pools of water. The existence of communities that lived by water sources demonstrates a complex system of rational usage and working of natural resources by the O’odham people because they used the water not only for themselves (and their daily needs) but also directed the use of water towards agricultural activities through ancestral irrigation systems; they also used summer rains for irrigation channels.

Until the 1930s people who later moved in Pozo Prieto, lived mainly in Las Calenturas. They were mostly of O’odham origin. From the elder generation there was Eloisa Juárez, an O’odham woman married to Mr. López, a Mexican farmer; Eloisa and Mr. López, the parents of the López Juárez brothers. There was also the O’odham Chohhua family consisting of Prospero Chohhua (grandfather of Doña Alicia and father of Laureano), Francisco and Antonio Chohhua, who, a few years later, emigrated to the US in the northern O’odham territory in Arizona. The mother of Doña Alicia was also a Chohhua and the father of Doña Alicia, was Ruperto Méndez, who also belonged to this very ethnic group. The head of another O’odham family was Ciriaco García, the traditional O’odham governor himself, who played a fundamental role in the acquisition of the certificates of possession of the *solares* (urban lands) in La Papaguera situated in the outskirts of the City of Caborca. From the older generation there was Iziquio Tiznado, who, as Doña Alicia remembers, was not born in the south (that is, in Las Calenturas); he was from the north of the O’odham territory, from a place close to El Ajo, in Arizona. Members of the younger generation included the López Juárez brothers: Francisco, Ana, Juanita and Alberto, as well as Alicia Chohhua and Benito Tiznado and his four

brothers (two of them finally migrated to the southwest Arizona in search of better job opportunities). There were also the sons of Ciriaco García, two of whom were the parents of Mercedes García Valencia and her cousin Maria Elena. Due to the migration of family members there was a lively connection between the south and the north of the O'odham land that touched several social orders and lasted for a long time. By the first decades of the twentieth century, many O'odham families were still living in Caborca. One of them was a branch of the Chohhua family, because Don Ramón Chohhua (the uncle of the informant Doña Alicia) was born in Caborca early in the 1930s, and his parents were already living in the city even before the birth of Don Ramón.

According to oral testimonies, statistics and the documents consulted at federal agencies of the Mexican state (see the list of the Primary Sources at the end of the article), the O'odham people of these communities had a mixed economy based on mainly three activities: agricultural production, cattle raising, and hunting as well as gathering the desert's plants and animals. Most of the production in these areas was aimed at self-consumption; however, a significant part of the merchandise (both obtained by hunting/gathering and produced) was sold to Mexicans. In Las Calenturas, the main productive activity was seasonal agriculture. Doña Alicia remembers that when she was a child the main crops in the community were melon, watermelon, lemon, pumpkin and different types of corn (Alicia Chohhua, interview, 2007). There was a strict social division of labor according to gender: the women did the domestic work in the home (especially running the activities in the kitchen), manufactured ceramics and made baskets; men bred cattle, hunted and worked the land. However, in the case of some specific crops (corn) the work was done by both women and men: while men tilled the earth with the plow and yoke, women scattered the seeds during the second part of this process. Then men covered the seeds with earth. In case of wheat, covering the seeds was not required. The division of labor by gender is a common characteristic of several indigenous groups in Mexico; this division is also seen in the case of similar crops (bean, corn, and chili). Some indigenous groups of southeast Mexico, for example, the Tojolabales, who are Mayan descendants of Chiapas, today still preserve this work division.

The agricultural production of the O'odham people was mostly determined by the weather cycle of the natural environment. Farming implied a precise and practical knowledge of the desert: they waited and anticipate the first rains of June, and knew how to choose better lands close to riversides. They made *asequias* (irrigation channels) and paid attention to animals and plants that could damage crops, knowing for generations when it is best to harvest. The O'odham social and cultural life was also shaped by the desert weather. For example, the ceremonial cycle that was closely related with traditional O'odham religion, was directly linked to the change of seasons.

The products of farmers were primarily aimed for the consumption of the community, although some portions of the bean and corn production were sold or exchanged for other goods (animal oil, sugar and flour). These transactions took place in the Caborca market. Doña Alicia claims that in her childhood the O'odham people from Las Calenturas went to Caborca only for commercial exchanges and stressed the fact that their contact with Mexican people was very limited and restricted only to commercial purposes. However, in later parts of her testimony, she mentioned other reasons for going to Caborca, such as family visits or to seek out services like education and health (Alicia Chohiua, interview, 2007). In Las Calenturas farmers raised animals (chicken, pigs, horses and cows) both for self-consumption and for sale. The locality maintained its level of agricultural productivity until the beginning of the 1950s. However, supplementary productive activities were carried out in the outskirts of the community during spring and summer. These included gathering desert fruits

(*pitayas*, *pechitas*, *sahuaro* flowers, *duraznillas*, *zopichis* and *sahuaro* fruits), and the hunting of desert animals (mainly the deer or *bueros* as well as wild turtles and hares).

In contrast with Las Calenturas, the O'odham settlement of Pozo Prieto was engaged in cattle rearing. Its location made it a good place for this activity. Pozo Prieto is at seven kilometers southwest of Las Calenturas, between Puerto Lobos (Informe sobre la situación de los miembros de la Tribu Pápaga en los Municipios de Puerto Peñasco, Caborca, Altar y Saric, del Estado de Sonora, 1973). The O'odham people, who used to live in Las Calenturas during the spring and summer, migrated in winter to Pozo Prieto where they kept and raised cattle. They

made *jalea* (jelly) from pitaya, a fruit gathered during the months of June and July (Matriz de Indicadores de la Región O'odham, 1996). Sometimes there was also a second gathering of pitaya during October. According to the testimony of Doña Alicia, the O'odham people that went to Pozo Prieto were mainly men because cattle breeding was exclusively a male activity (Alicia Chohua, interview, 2007). Seasonal farmers carried grass and wheat for the cattle in carts. Men came and went between Las Calenturas and Pozo Prieto, often leaving food for the people who stayed in Pozo Prieto to watch over the animals and the houses of the settlement. Women, in addition to domestic chores, made pottery for the kitchen and for sale for the neighboring settlements and in Caborca with the Mexicans.

This mobility was a way in which the group took advantage of and increased the benefits of the desert, a natural environment in which access to the resources was limited and restricted depending on the season of the year. These periodic and repetitive displacements can also be interpreted as a survival strategy, that with time, took new forms, such as coming and going not between two rural communities, but between one of the communities in the desert and the city or between the O'odham villages and cotton fields in the surrounding areas of Phoenix, such as Maricopa, Illoy, Standfield and Casas Grandes. At that time, most of the people living in Las Calenturas and Pozo Prieto were from the same ethnic group. Doña Alicia and Doña Juanita commented that, when they were children, the adult and elderly O'odham were talking of themselves as *puros* (pure) or *legítmos* (authentic) people (Juanita López interview, 2008 and Alicia Chohua interview, 2007). They used the expression *Pápagos crudos* (raw Pápagos) to refer to marriages that were exclusively between members of the ethnic group, that is, endogamous relationships which implied that they were both maternal and paternal side of full O'odham blood. According to Doña Alicia and Doña Juanita, the tradition and the cultural practices that characterized the life of the O'odham people were closely linked to the one of the previous generations, to the rituals of their fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers (Alicia Chohua, interview, 2007 and Juanita López, interview, 2008). With the intensification of migration through time these endogamous marriages began to give way to mixed marriages with Mexican people, as a result of which the group's traditions underwent drastic changes.

PATHS OF THE O'ODHAM TERRITORY: BETWEEN LAS CALENTURAS AND ARIZONA

This section is a closer introspection at the specific relationships between the people of Las Calenturas and El Pozo Prieto with their O'odham relatives in southwest Arizona. As has been previously pointed out, strong ties of different kinds were present between the communities of the region in Sonora and in Arizona: blood kinship, social relationships (marriages, godparents), ceremony rituals with all the connections involved, and exchanges of goods containing economic affairs, to name just the most important ones. From the end of the 1930s up until the 1950s in Las Calenturas and Pozo Prieto, several members went in search of better opportunities to the O'odham communities in the north, mainly in the southwest of Arizona, USA. The reason was to find better living conditions. In a broader regional context, many of the O'odham men from different communities in Sonora went to Arizona to work as laborers in the cotton fields, especially in the irrigation and the harvest of cotton. Doña Alicia remembers that a number of young and old inhabitants of her community migrated to and forth easily across the border through the O'odham crossing. Even her mother went to work at the Sells Reservation in Arizona for several years during Doña Alicia's childhood and adolescence; she later came back to Las Calenturas to her family again (Alicia Chohhua interview, 2007). In her interview Doña Alicia recalls that her uncle, Toño Chohhua, also went north: "the father of the Chohhua who lived on 'other side' and also Chico, the brother of Toño, was there," she said but "Chico, though he married in Arizona, didn't have any sons. Then, two brothers [of the Chohhua family] went [to the O'odham territory in the US] and two stayed here [in Las Calenturas]." (Alicia Chohhua interview, 2007). Prospero, the grandfather of Doña Alicia (on her the father's side) together with Laureno, were the two Chohhua brothers who remained in the community. From the younger generations, she remembers that Guillermo and Raul Tiznado, sons of Iziquio Tiznado, migrated to southwest Arizona and they continued to live there for the rest of their lives. Many of the O'odham men from several Sonoran communities had similar migratory and work experiences in the O'odham area of Arizona. Don Ramon Chohhua from Caborca (Doña Alicia's uncle) also spent a year working in the cotton fields of

Standfield with his O'odham cousins in Arizona when he was young at the end of the 1950s (Alicia Chohua interview, 2007). The same happened with the people from the communities of Bajio, Pozo Verde, San Francisquito, El Cumarito and El Cubabi. However, many of these O'odham families, after years of seasonal work with cotton during the 1940s and 1950s, decided to settle in the O'odham lands of Arizona, specifically in the Indian reservation of Sells. This was the case of Toño Chohua and the sons of Iziquio Tiznado, Guillermo and Raul. Settling down in Arizona after seasonal work was not a very common practice in their own smaller community, despite the fact that is way a general practice for the communities closer to the international border, such as Bajio and Pozo Verde, where almost all the members of the latter community immigrated to the US in the first half of the twentieth century.

Besides a multitude of productive activities, job opportunities, cultural and religious events that were linked to the mobility practices of the social and geographical movements of O'odham people, family visits were also frequent, as were the meetings to strengthen social ties.

Additionally, the condition of free transit at that time between Sonora and Arizona also greatly contributed to more frequent and large O'odham gatherings. Doña Alicia remembers that “Matías [her uncle] went [riding] on horseback to ‘the other side’ [Arizona, US], there wasn't a division like today” (Alicia Chohua interview, 2007), to see some relatives. Doña Alicia also said that she herself went to San Francisquito several times and met O'odham people there from southwest Arizona who were her relatives. In turn, some people of San Francisquito went to Las Calenturas to help them harvest corn and other crops; the O'odham people who lived in the town of Ajo as well as the small O'odham villages in southwest Arizona close to the border went also frequently to Sonoyta to spend some time and visit their O'odham relatives.

The political factor that facilitated O'odham journeys between Sonora and Arizona during the first half of the twentieth century was the international border which did not represent a legal problem for the O'odhams to pass. “There was no border in that time” said the informant (Alicia Chohua interview, 2007). In fact, O'odham people migrated almost freely between the communities of Sonora and Arizona for family visits. The O'odham people of Arizona attended

ceremonies in Sonora, Mexico, such as the fiesta of Padre Kino in Magdalena de Kino and the fourth of October ceremony in the community of San Francisquito. However, there were communities which had closer contacts with O'odham people of Arizona (mainly in the southwest) but this was determined by social links and the geographical location of the settlements. For example, in Bajío and Pozo Verde, where Mexican O'odham communities were living almost literally on the borderline, sent their children to school in San Miguel, southwest Arizona, because then the Mexican state failed to provide sufficient education services. They had to cross the border everyday and returned home in the afternoon to the Mexican side. Later on, these children went to high school; they crossed at the San Miguel O'odham crossing and went almost daily to Topawa High School in the O'odham reservation of Sells. Some members from the community of Sonoyta were born in the towns of southwest Arizona but continued to live in Sonoyta. Most of the elderly inhabitants of the communities close to the international border (San Francisquito, El Bajío, Pozo Verde, Cumarito and Cubabi) went to and settled permanently on the O'odham reservation of Sells between the beginning and the middle of the twentieth century.

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