Seeds From The Past, Planted For The Future

FUNDING SOURCE: The author is grateful for the support of the Extension Capacity grant from the USDA/NIFA grant number 1017160/12628558
The Tohono O’odham Nation is the second largest reservations in Arizona. It is approximately the size of the State of Connecticut, and extends into the lands of Sonora Mexico.
In the past, the Wa:k O’odham used the Santa Cruz River, when it was flowing, to irrigate their fields.
Blanie (1981) mentions that the community's men would prepare the field. They would utilize the horses to help cultivate acres of farm land. Also, the women helped with the harvest, preparation and storage.
Farm laborers worked together in groups to accomplish the plowing, planting, hoeing, and harvesting.
Crops commonly grown among O’odham were grown during the monsoon.

Ge’egad/Ce’ecem Hu:ñ-June Corn, Sixty Day Corn.


O’odham Milon/Gepi-Yellow Meat Watermelon.

To:ta/S-wepegi Bawǐ-White And Red Tepary Beans.
O’odham Winter Crops

- Kalawas
- Lanji
- S-waiyo
- Wa ko/ Sawkul

O’las Pilkan
(Wheat)

I’itoi Siwol
(Creator’s Onion)

Wihol
(O’odham Peas)
Pilkan was grown in Wa:k on more acres whereas in a community known as Anegam, families grew the pilkan on a smaller scale.

Photo Credit: Siquieros, Bernard. May, 2014
Harvesting Pilkan/Wheat

Harvesting pilkan by hand required a hand sickle, which was serrated with a curved blade.

Photo Credit: Siquieros, Bernard. May, 2014
After harvest, the horses would thresh the pilkan. They would tie the horses to a central pole, guide them to walk in a circle to thresh the grains.

Photo Credit: Unknown
Depending on what the use could be, there are different processing methods. To make Hak/Bai cui, they would harvest the wheat when it was still milky; then, it is parched and ground. To process the remaining wheat, which is left to ripen before harvesting, and ground into flour.
Over time farming would advance to mechanical equipment, which was less of a demand for manual labor. Additionally, it would change family agriculture as it was once known to be.
The primary goal of Tohono O’odham Community College Agriculture Extension Program is to educate and encourage community members to grow their food. Furthermore, to realize the connection between the land, nutritious food, and the community members well-being.
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