The Dynamics of Sobaipuri Settlement in the Eastern Pimería Alta

Deni J. Seymour

When Father Eusebio Francisco Kino and Captain Juan Mateo Manje traveled north from Sonora into the nation of the Pimas Sobaipuris, they encountered more than two thousand people living in villages along the San Pedro River (Bolton 1948, 1:171, n.193). These settlements were located between present-day Fairbank and Winkelman. Through time, settlements were abandoned, new ones were established, and some were periodically reoccupied. The documents left by these and other missionaries and soldiers record the dynamic nature of the settlement system. However, when used alone, these documents are open to a variety of interpretations and often produce more controversy than solutions. For this reason, archaeological survey data have been gathered and are used to supplement the historic documents in a discussion of Sobaipuri settlement along the upper San Pedro River between Fairbank and Benson. This segment of the river is known to include the contact-period villages of Quiburi and Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea, which were visited by Kino and Manje in the 1690s.

The question of the location of these Sobaipuri villages has generated considerable debate. Charles Di Peso (1953) was the first archaeologist to show active interest in the matter, which led him in the 1950s to excavate two sites he believed to be Quiburi (AZ EE:4:11, ASM) and Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea (AZ EE:8:15, ASM). In his view, these sites had features and characteristics matching those described in early journals. Researchers have since challenged this claim, however.

Since Di Peso, archaeologists and historians have concentrated largely on documentary evidence to support their points of view concerning the locations of the two sites. The place designated by

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Di Peso as Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea has been widely accepted (Bolton 1960; Doyel 1977; Fritz 1977; Masse 1981), particularly because it had a unique structure thought to have been built for the missionaries. However, a few investigators (Charles Polzer, personal communication, 1987) have pointed out that Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea is shown on Kino’s maps south of a river, whereas Di Peso’s site is north of the Babocomari River.

Di Peso’s conclusions about the cultural affiliation and location of Quiburi have been a source of even greater disagreement. Today most archaeologists as well as historians (Gerald 1968; Cheek 1974; Fritz 1977; Masse 1981; Williams 1986) argue that the ruin of Quiburi is not located at the Spanish fort of Terrenate, as Di Peso claims. Archaeologists cite comparative archaeological and historical data and documentary evidence in support of this position. However, using the same documentary evidence, some historians side with Di Peso and believe that the fort was built over the native village of Quiburi (Polzer and Naylor 1980: 1; Polzer, personal communication, 1987).

The wide divergence of views about the locations of these sites indicates that the question cannot be resolved using documentary evidence alone. For this reason, an archaeological survey has been underway to identify Sobaipuri sites bordering the San Pedro and Babocomari rivers. One objective of the survey is to combine site-location data with documentary evidence to address questions pertaining to these and other contact-period villages. The maps and journals used pertain specifically to these two sites and others on this stretch of the river. These documents, which date to the 1690s, have been selected because they provide detailed information on the size, location, and length of occupation of villages. Furthermore, they are based on repeated visits to these villages and give a sense of the dynamics of the settlement system not provided in the accounts resulting from more sporadic visits.

**THE DOCUMENTARY RECORDS**

The earliest mention of occupied villages on the upper San Pedro is in 1695. On September 3, 1695, Captain Juan Mateo Manje and an army of three hundred soldiers were greeted by El Coro, a
Sobaipuri leader, at the village of Quiburi (Burrus 1971a: 312–13). Just three years earlier, Coro was residing at San Salvador del Baicatcan on the lower San Pedro, which at that time was the chief ranchería of the San Pedro Sobaipuri (Bolton 1948, 1:123). Although this is the earliest record of occupation at Quiburi in the 1690s, we do know that as early as the mid-1680s a settlement named Quiburi was occupied by both Pimas and Jocomes. This alliance was reportedly broken up by Captain Pacheco Zevallos (Bolton 1960: 247, n.3), so perhaps the settlement was abandoned, at least temporarily, at that time.

A portion of the earliest extant map drawn by Father Kino of the Pimería Alta is shown, redrawn, in Figure 1. The original map, entitled “Teatro de los Trabajos Apostólicos,” was compiled by Kino in 1695 (Burrus 1965: 43, 1971b: 73). Settlements along the upper San Pedro include Quiburi (Giburi), Oacot, and Pitaitutgam. Topographic details are generally lacking, and little information on any of these settlements is provided in the journals, except that the inhabitants of Quiburi had crops planted in the floodplain (Burrus 1971a: 312–13). The source of the information included on this map is unclear. Although Kino may have passed through the area in 1694 on his way to the Casa Grande, there is no record that the missionary actually visited these villages on the upper San Pedro, because as Burrus (1971b: 73) points out, Kino did not keep a day-to-day account of his journey. The lack of detail on the map suggests that Kino did not visit this area himself this early. Probably he obtained the information for this map from Manje after the latter’s 1695 expedition or from an earlier expedition by Lieutenant Antonio Solis. As noted, Manje was the first to mention specific villages along this stretch of the river in the 1690s, but in 1694 Solis also traveled to the San Pedro among the Sobaipuri (Bolton 1948, 1:127, n.128; Karns 1954: 47; Manje 1926: 233). If he did pass through this area, rather than the lower San Pedro, Solis also could have provided Kino with this information.

In December 1696 Kino visited Quiburi, perhaps for the first time. Details of Quiburi provided in his journal indicate that it had more than four hundred people, that it was fortified with an earthen enclosure, and that it was the principal ranchería on this part of the river. Coro lived here as well. At this time an adobe structure was built for the prospective missionary, and a few cattle and a drove of
Figure 1. After Kino 1695

Drawn by Don Bufkin
mares were given to the inhabitants (Bolton 1948, 1:164–65; Burrus 1971b: 95).

On his way to Quiburi Kino passed through Santa Cruz. This is the first mention in the journals of the 1690s of any village other than Quiburi along this stretch of the river. The journal text states only that the party passed through Santa Cruz of the Río de San José de Terrenate (San Pedro River) (Bolton 1948, 1: 164). Burrus (1971b: 95), Di Peso (1953), and others have assumed that this reference is to Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea. However, when this passage is compared to Kino’s map drawn in 1696–97 (Figure 2), just after this expedition (Burrus 1965: 43), it seems clear that “Santa Cruz” refers to Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam. This settlement, according to the original map symbols, had an adobe structure built for the missionaries. Quiburi had a similar symbol (the circle above and on the east side of the river is a different, unnamed site). Thus it seems that Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam was occupied in 1695 and 1696 and perhaps earlier. It is situated north of the Babocomari River, where Di Peso’s excavated site is located. Oacot is not shown on this map.

Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea is not mentioned in the writings until 1697 and not shown on a map until the next series of maps, produced in 1698 (Figure 3). It is located south of the Babocomari River. Santa Cruz on this map clearly refers to Gaybanipitea rather than Pitaitutgam: the location differs, Pitaitutgam is no longer shown, and written records specifically mention Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea.

In 1697 Kino made three visits to San Pablo de Quiburi (Bolton 1948, 1:164–71; Burrus 1971b: 96–98). Details are provided only for the third expedition, when the missionary was accompanied by Manje and Lietenant Christóbal Martin Bernal. On this trip they mention passing through Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea.

Ample details are given of both settlements. Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea was located on a hill west of the river. It was surrounded by a valley with good agricultural lands and irrigation ditches. An adobe house had been built, and there were twenty-five houses, one hundred people, and one hundred cattle (Bolton 1948, 1:168, n.185; Manje 1926: 248; Karns 1954: 77; Bolton 1960: 360; Burrus 1971b: 98, 199, 336, 359–61). Quiburi, located one to one and a half leagues north of Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea (Bolton 1948, 1:179; Bolton 1960: 381; Burrus 1971b: 360–61), was situated on the
Figure 2. After Kino 1696 – 1697
Figure 3. After Kino 1698
banks of the river overlooking a large valley. Lands here were also under irrigation, and an adobe house was present. There were approximately five hundred people of both sexes, including Coro, and one hundred houses (Bolton 1948, 1:168-69; Manje 1926: 248; Karns 1954: 78; Bolton 1960: 361; Burrus 1971b: 200, 336, 351, 359-61). No mention is made of a fortification wall.

In 1698 Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea was sacked and burned by Apaches, Jocomes, Sumas, and Mansos. Soon after the attack, Coro and the Sobaipuri inhabitants along this portion of the river left the San Pedro Valley to settle near Sonoita (Burrus 1971b; Karns 1954; Bolton 1948, 1960). The upper San Pedro was reoccupied in the first decade of the eighteenth century, but population levels were much lower and site descriptions are virtually lacking. The area was abandoned and reoccupied several times, at least until the 1780s (Hammond 1929; Wyllis 1931; Bolton 1948; Di Peso 1953; Salazar n.d.).

Several conclusions about specific villages and the settlement system on the upper San Pedro can be drawn from the historic data. Settlements seem to have been occupied for only a couple of years before most or all of their inhabitants relocated. Apparently, it was common in the 1860s elsewhere in the Pimería Alta for villages to move short distances (Underhill 1939: 58). This is evident on the San Pedro as early as the 1690s and seems to be characteristic of the following century as well. One example is the movement of Coro and perhaps other inhabitants of San Salvador del Baicatcan from the lower San Pedro to the upper portion of the river. San Salvador del Baicatcan is no longer mentioned in the documents after Coro moved. This reference in the records may also signal the establishment of a new settlement called Quiburi in the upper San Pedro. Quiburi had been the name of a previously occupied settlement. The attachment of the name Quiburi to this segment of the valley (the Quiburi Valley) may have contributed to the transfer of the name from one village to another.

This same process is apparent for other settlements as well. Although the documents do not indicate how early Oacot and Santa Cruz del Pitaiturgam were established, the maps provide convincing evidence of when they were abandoned. The fact of their abandonment suggests a drastic reduction in population in the valley or the resettlement of the inhabitants at another location. Although both
processes may have occurred, evidence for the latter is implied in at least one case. After the abandonment of Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam, the village of Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea was established nearby, a hint that perhaps the population at Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam moved to Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea. The short-term occupation of settlements is a conclusion that is also consistent with the archaeological data, as evidenced by the low density of artifacts on sites and the number of small settlements found on this portion of the river.

Another conclusion that may be drawn from the historical data is that, when village locations changed, their names often changed as well. This is most obvious for Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam and Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea, but the same may be said of Quiburi. Quiburi is first mentioned as both Giburi and Quiburi; it is unclear whether these differences in spelling at this time are significant, but Polzer (personal communication, 1987) is of the opinion that they are probably not important. In any case, later the settlement name changes to San Pablo de Quiburi. This could simply be the formal name given it by the non-native visitors or it could indicate a change in village location. Even later in time—that is, in the early part of the eighteenth century—the village is referred to as Santa Ana del Quiburi, and by the latter half of the century it is again noted simply as Quiburi. Both of these name changes do seem to suggest a change in settlement location; the exact locations of these settlements are more difficult to infer from the records since descriptions are either lacking or so brief so as not to distinguish them from the other settlements along the river which have been documented by the archaeological survey (see below). However, journals left by later missionaries and soldiers, including one written by Geronimo de Rocha (see Salazar n.d.; Williams 1986), indicate not only that the population at Quiburi was diminished (because of reduction, out-migration, or simply seasonal variation), but that it was located several miles north of the Quiburi mentioned by Kino and Manje in the 1690s.

The records document an occupation of at least one hundred years on the upper San Pedro. Occupation at any one settlement was transitory and short-term, yet overall, occupation on the river persisted over a long period despite frequent abandonments of the valley and population relocations.
RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Results of an ongoing survey between Fairbank and Tres Alamos reveal that Sobaipuri sites are scattered all along the margins of the San Pedro River. It is in this portion of the valley and on the west bank of the river that Quiburi, Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea, Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam, and Oacot were located in the 1690s. The four settlements noted on Kino’s maps represent only a small part of the settlement system. In addition, there are sites north of the area and also on the east bank of the river (cf. Seymour 1988a).

Most sites are small hamlets with fewer than twenty structures, though other classes of features (roasting pits, flat cobble pavements, rock rings, and other rock items) are often numerous. Larger settlements are fewer in number. These sites tend to have scores of additional features, many of which can be definitively associated with the Sobaipuri occupation even though these larger villages tend to overlinc prehistoric components. Confidence in their temporal affiliation is based on the direct association of Sobaipuri artifacts; the similarity of these features to those found on smaller, single-component sites; consistencies in the internal structure among Sobaipuri sites; and their stratigraphic position within sites relative to more deeply buried prehistoric remains on these sites. The smaller, single-component sites have been of considerable use in identifying the purely Sobaipuri characteristics of settlements, but it is the larger settlements that are of relevance to this discussion since the documents indicate that the two latest settlements occupied in the seventeenth century had more than twenty structures (Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea had approximately twenty-five, and Quiburi had one hundred; there are no written descriptions of Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam and Oacot). Maps and documents indicate that at least three of these settlements had an adobe structure that was built for a visiting missionary.

By comparing site distributions and sizes from the survey to information and descriptions from the maps and journals, one can draw several conclusions. First, site SPII-10, south of the Babocomari River, matches closely the description of Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea and is situated in the vicinity of this village’s location on the early maps. Second, Di Peso’s site (AZ EE:8:15, ASM), which is north of the Babocomari River, is not Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitca,
but is rather Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam. Third, at least one site north of Terrenate (AZ EE:4:11, ASM) is large enough to be a candidate for the Quiburi mentioned in the records from this period.

Concerning the first conclusion, a village (SPII-10) with approximately twenty-five structures, a stone foundation for a possible adobe building, and numerous other features is situated on a hill west of the San Pedro and south of the Babocomari River. The location, the number of structures, and the presence of an adobe structure suggest that this site is Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea. Such an interpretation is consistent with the historic records.

The site Di Peso (1953) excavated and considered to be Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea (AZ EE:8:15, ASM) is just north of the Babocomari River. This site also has an adobe structure, along with Spanish artifacts and twenty-two other structures (Di Peso [1953] reports twenty-one; one additional, unexcavated structure is visible on the surface). Kino's 1696–97 map (Figure 3) shows Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam, a settlement with a missionary's house, located in this approximate position relative to a notable but unnamed river, here inferred to be the Babocomari River. For this reason I believe that Di Peso's site is Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam. Thus although Di Peso's conclusion as to the cultural affiliation of this site is correct, his specific identification is likely incorrect.

The area between Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam and Terrenate (the Spanish fort excavated by Di Peso, AZ EE:4:11, ASM) is devoid of Sobaipuri settlements, probably because the valley narrows here and constricts the floodplain. A short distance north of Terrenate, sites are situated on gravel terraces, ridges, and hills. Here sites border a broad floodplain; perhaps the suitability of an area for growing crops in the floodplain was a major determinant of site location. Site density is highest near arroyos with year-round springs, an indication that variability in stream flow was characteristic of this river as it is of the other major rivers of southern Arizona (cf. Gregory, Graybill, and Nials 1986).

Site AZ EE:4:11 (ASM) is the Spanish fort of Terrenate, where Di Peso (1953) believes Quiburi was. Like others, I doubt his interpretation. To begin with, it appears that the location of Quiburi changed several times throughout the one-hundred-year period for which we have documents; the location seems to have changed at least twice, if not six times, between the mid-1680s and the 1780s.
As discussed above, the change in location often coincides with a change in the name of the site, which is variously called Quiburi, Giburi, San Pablo de Quiburi, and Santa Ana del Quiburi. Thus, even if Di Peso is correct in placing Quiburi at the fort of Terrenate, it is extremely unlikely that the village stayed in the same location throughout the documented period.

The relatively extensive collection of Upper Piman sherds and vessels at Terrenate (see Di Peso 1953) indicates that there was a Sobaipuri occupation at this location before or after the construction of the fort, that a contingent of natives (Sobaipuri) were living at the fort with the soldiers, or that the presidial soldiers were using native-made vessels. The sheer numbers of Spanish artifacts associated with the pottery on structure floors suggest that the soldiers, rather than natives, were using the vessels (cf. Check 1974). Clearly, this does not discount the possibility that the Sobaipuri occupied the terrace prior to the arrival of the soldiers or after the abandonment of the fort. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that most of the ceramics recovered from the fort demonstrate closer affinities to Upper Piman wares recovered from eighteenth-century sites in the Santa Cruz Valley and elsewhere than to wares recovered from earlier-occupied sites on the San Pedro. Characteristics of rim treatment, tempering material, and other traits found on the native-made vessels at Terrenate and at contemporaneous sites in the Santa Cruz Valley seem to occur only on ceramics manufactured in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These features appear later in the sequence than those ceramics recovered from seventeenth-century Sobaipuri sites on the San Pedro (Seymour 1988a, b). These preliminary conclusions based on the ceramic evidence suggest that a native occupation at Terrenate would have had to occur in the eighteenth century or later—not in the seventeenth century, as Di Peso (1953) argued.

The architectural remains at AZ EE:4:11 (ASM) provide no evidence for a Sobaipuri occupation before, during, or after the occupation by the soldiers at the fort. All structures excavated differ in construction technique and form from other known Sobaipuri dwellings (see Di Peso 1953: 58). As Gerald (1968: 19), Masse (1981), and Cheek (1974: 233–34) suggest, those dwellings Di Peso believes to be Sobaipuri were probably the temporary soldiers' quarters. But even if Sobaipuri structures from a pre-fort occupation were present, such evidence would likely have been entirely erased
by the construction of the fort, owing to the unobtrusive nature of Sobaipuri sites and the use of similar construction materials by the Spanish. Di Peso (1953: 95) himself suggests that rocks were robbed from some earlier structures for use in the construction of presidio features. The resulting conclusion must be that no convincing evidence of a Sobaipuri occupation was uncovered at Terrenate.

Furthermore, the setting of the fort is inconsistent with the pattern of Sobaipuri site location along the rest of the river. The floodplain is too narrow, the slope down to the river is too steep, and the many hills behind the fort make the location particularly vulnerable to attack by Apaches. Similarly, ethnographic and historical data concerning the locations of other major Upper Piman settlements in other river valleys of Arizona indicate that the main villages tended to be located in the middle of broad valleys with smaller, "daughter" villages spread out in either direction along the banks of the river (Underhill 1939: 58; Polzer, personal communication, 1987).

Given these factors, it is only possible to say that this is an unlikely location for the village and that no evidence of an actual Sobaipuri occupation exists or has survived. The only evidence is in the form of portable artifacts, artifacts that were likely manufactured in the eighteenth century or later. If a Sobaipuri site did exist at Terrenate, its remains are no longer extant. Nonetheless, any site there—whether or not Quiburi—probably was not occupied as long or as continuously as Di Peso suggests, given the documentary evidence for the short life span of settlements along the river. Moreover, if there was a Sobaipuri occupation at the site, there is no basis on which to evaluate whether it is Quiburi. If in fact it is Quiburi, we must then ask whether it is the Quiburi of the 1680s, the 1690s, or the 1700s.

It should be pointed out that the terrace at Terrenate is not the only location at which a large Sobaipuri site could be situated. In the three-mile stretch above Terrenate there is at least one site that, based on surface evidence, is large enough to fit the description of Quiburi, which was said to have nearly one hundred structures in 1696 and 1697. Site SPII-16 is the most likely candidate for Quiburi. It has approximately one hundred structures and well over two hundred features in all. It also has what looks like a foundation for an adobe structure.

Continuing work on this and other sites may eventually resolve this question; when maps, collections, and excavations are com-
pleted, we may be able to say with confidence that this site is Quiburi. For now we must be satisfied to know that there is an additional candidate for the site as it existed in the 1690s, a candidate with artifacts and features that are consistent with those found at other Sobaipuri sites throughout southern Arizona.

CONCLUSION

The upper San Pedro River Valley was occupied off and on for at least one hundred years by a group identified by early visitors as the Sobaipuri. Between the 1680s and 1780s, journals and maps document the dynamics of the settlement system. Throughout this period, village locations changed frequently and the valley was abandoned for short intervals. When village locations changed, it seems that their names sometimes changed as well.

By combining survey data with historic documents, we can trace some of the changes in settlement locations and identify the specific locations of certain settlements. I believe these data show that Di Peso assigns the wrong name to AZ EE:8:15 (ASM), the site north of the Babocomari River which he called Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea. According to Kino's maps, this site is Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam. There is a site south of the Babocomari River (SPII-10) which probably is Santa Cruz de Gaybanipitea. It may have been settled by the inhabitants of Santa Cruz del Pitaitutgam, given the sequence of abandonment and establishment and the similarity in size of these two settlements.

As for Quiburi, there may have been a Sobaipuri settlement at the Spanish fort of Terrenate at one time, but the evidence is meagerv. The documents indicate that the location of Quiburi changed at least twice, if not six times. Survey data show that a variety of options exist for the location of Quiburi. One site north of Terrenate is large enough to qualify as the Quiburi mentioned in 1696 and 1697. It is the only site of this size on this portion of the river.

Given the temporal framework in which documentary evidence is available, one must question whether the transitory nature of settlements was typical for the Sobaipuri or whether the Spanish and the Apache played a role. Increasing hostilities from the Apache and allied groups and pressures from the Spaniards may have increased
the rate of movements and intensified certain aspects of the indigenous adaptive strategy. Clearly, the introduction of cattle and horses made the Sobaipuri desirable targets of aggression and raids from the Apache. Moreover, successful attempts by the Spanish to break up alliances between the various hostile groups and the Sobaipuri must have increased their vulnerability. The construction of a fortification wall around Quiburi (or the establishment of the site in an area with a prehistoric compound wall) at least as early as 1696 suggests that the Apache were perceived as a threat. This perspective is also supported by the movement of settlements toward more defensible locations (e.g., on hills and high terraces) or to areas farther away from Apache territory (e.g., to the south and west).

There is also some indication that part of the population which was earlier scattered in small hamlets relocated, a trend that resulted in the aggregation of people into fewer but larger villages. This shift may have occurred in 1696, when the large size of Quiburi is mentioned for the first time. This type of reorganization is consistent with Spanish objectives (Burrus 1971a: 60), conducive to intensive agricultural techniques and the care of domestic animals, and useful for defense. With the increased vigor of Apache raids and hostilities between Coro’s Sobaipuri on this portion of the river and Humari’s villages on the lower San Pedro, defensibility may have been a primary motivating factor in these settlement shifts. Similar processes of Piman aggregation in response to Apache aggression have been noted along the Gila (Underhill 1939: 58) and Santa Cruz rivers (Hackenberg 1964, IV: 143–59) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

This inference concerning aggregation on the San Pedro seems to be confirmed by the writings of Manjc (Manjc 1926: 249; Karns 1954: 79; Burrus 1971b: 202) from 1697, in which he mentions passing several villages north of Quiburi which had been abandoned the previous year. He explains that Coro had depopulated the area because of hostilities with inhabitants to the north. The reality of the threat from nonallied groups was realized in 1698, when the last two villages, Quiburi and Santa Cruz de Gaybanipieta, were abandoned after an attack on the latter by the Apache, Jocomes, Sumas, and Mansos. But the fact that the Sobaipuri returned to the upper San Pedro even after attacks forced them to leave the valley suggests that the threat was sporadic and only one factor in the overall settlement pattern.
Although major changes in native life undoubtedly were occurring at the time of Spanish contact, there is some indication that the pattern of population movement was a characteristic indigenous trait. Archaeological evidence in favor of this position includes the extremely low density of artifacts, the lack of deep stratification, and the unsubstantial nature of the architecture on all known Sobaipuri and Upper Piman sites throughout southern Arizona. Until the early end of the Sobaipuri occupation has been established by archaeological means, however, it will not be possible to determine whether the Sobaipuri phenomenon as a whole or in certain aspects is the result of Spanish and Apache influence or whether external factors simply imposed changes on a well-established and deeply rooted tradition.

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