

**Tisdale, S. J. 1997. Cocopah identity and cultural survival: Indian gaming and the political ecology of the lower Colorado River delta, 1850-1996. Ph.D. dissertation. University of Arizona. 389 pp.**

This study examines how the Cocopah maintain and express a sense of continuity with their past and how, in today's world, they use their understanding of the past to maintain their cultural identity in the present. An ethnohistorical reconstruction of Cocopah identity from the early period of contact explores the ways in which the political ecology of the Colorado River have influenced Cocopah identity. In approaching Cocopah identity from a political ecology perspective, it is argued that the federal bureaucracy's criteria for tribal status and the recognition of individuals as belonging to particular tribes are based on the commonly held notion of Indian tribes as being clearly distinguished, unchanging cultural entities occupying exclusively bounded tribal territories in stable ecosystems. Political ecology, in contrast, provides anthropology with a dynamic analytical framework in which to understand culture as adaptive systems.

Political ecology provides a practical approach in which the interface between history and the dynamic complexities of diverse cultures within a local-global economic context can be examined. I add ethnicity theory to this political ecology framework in order to examine how these historical processes operate at the local level and how they affect Cocopah identity and cultural survival. The coping strategies that the Cocopahs applied to the ecological transformations of the lower Colorado River delta throughout the past 150 years have played a significant role in shaping present-day Cocopah identity. Recent economic development, provided by Indian gaming, has given the Cocopahs the opportunity to revitalize, redefine and perpetuate their cultural identity through the process of planning and developing a tribal museum and cultural center complex on the West Cocopah Reservation in southwestern Arizona.