

Common Middle Archaic and Early Agricultural Period Points in Southern Arizona

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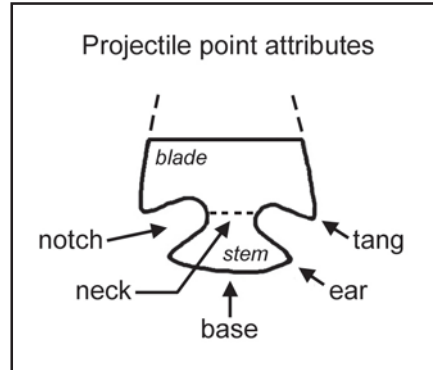
FLAKED STONE ASSEMBLAGES from Early Agricultural period sites have great utility for identifying periods of occupation. Although temporal change can be measured through several components of an assemblage, projectile points are the most visible and readily understood among them. The ways in which points were hafted to shafts changed through time, likely partially in response to the functional requirements of the weapon systems in use and partially as a reflection of group identity and design traditions. Thus, for the archaeologist, the shapes of stems and the shape, placement, and orientation of notching are the primary attributes that exhibit time-sensitive changes. However, pre-ceramic peoples in southern Arizona commonly collected and re-used points manufactured in earlier times, requiring cautious inferences in the presence of styles with different chronological associations.

Projectile points may also inform on questions of social identity and exchange networks within a particular period of time. Questions of social identity might be raised by mutually exclusive sets of styles between two sites that are likely to be coeval, and exchange relationships or mobility patterns may explain the presence of styles from distant regions in a given assemblage. Between A.D. 100 and A.D. 400, distinctions between point styles on the Colo-

rado Plateau have been thought to be related to cultural differences between the eastern and western Basketmaker. Such strongly patterned, geographically widescale variation is not apparent in the southern Southwest, although, with exceptional assemblages and detailed analyses of projectile points and the by-products of tool production, it may be possible to track the work of individual knappers being traded or moved in the Tucson Basin.

The twelve styles included in this summary are the most common types found on pre-Hohokam sites in southern Arizona. Their first appearances in the archaeological record are securely dated, making them good for dating both individual sites and regional trends through time. The maps and figures that follow provide an example

of how projectile points are used to answer questions of temporal, technological, and social change during the Early Agricultural period in the southern Southwest and north Mexico. Each symbol on a map represents the presence of a particular point style at a single archaeological site rather than the actual number of points recovered. These maps are perpetual works in progress as new information becomes available; they represent fifteen years of Desert Archaeology excavations as well as data gleaned from ongoing reviews of published reports from other institutions.



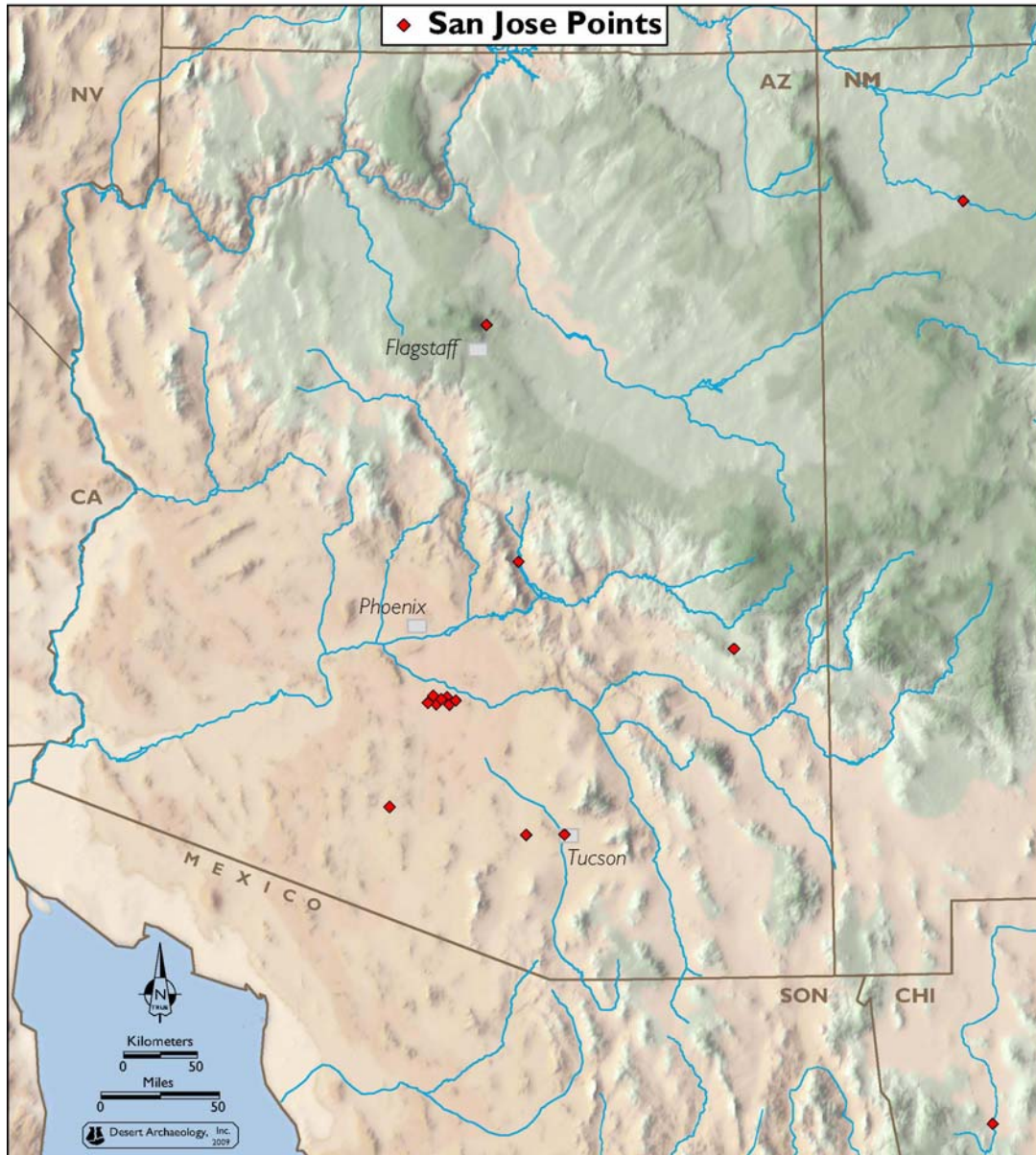
Key attributes used to define and differentiate projectile point types.

SAN JOSE



San Jose points are distinguished by relatively long stems that have incurvate edges and concave bases equal in width to the neck. Some have sharp basal corners while others have small, rounded ears; the depth of the basal concavity is also variable. Blades are almost always robustly serrated and tend to be narrow relative to overall length, creating a somewhat lanceolate appearance, although this may be a function of frequent reworking rather than initial design.

The style is firmly associated with the Middle Archaic period, between roughly 3500 and 1500 B.C. Their range extends from the Colorado and Coconino plateaus of northern Arizona south to northern Sonora and Chihuahua in Mexico, and to the east as far as Chaco Canyon in northwestern New Mexico.

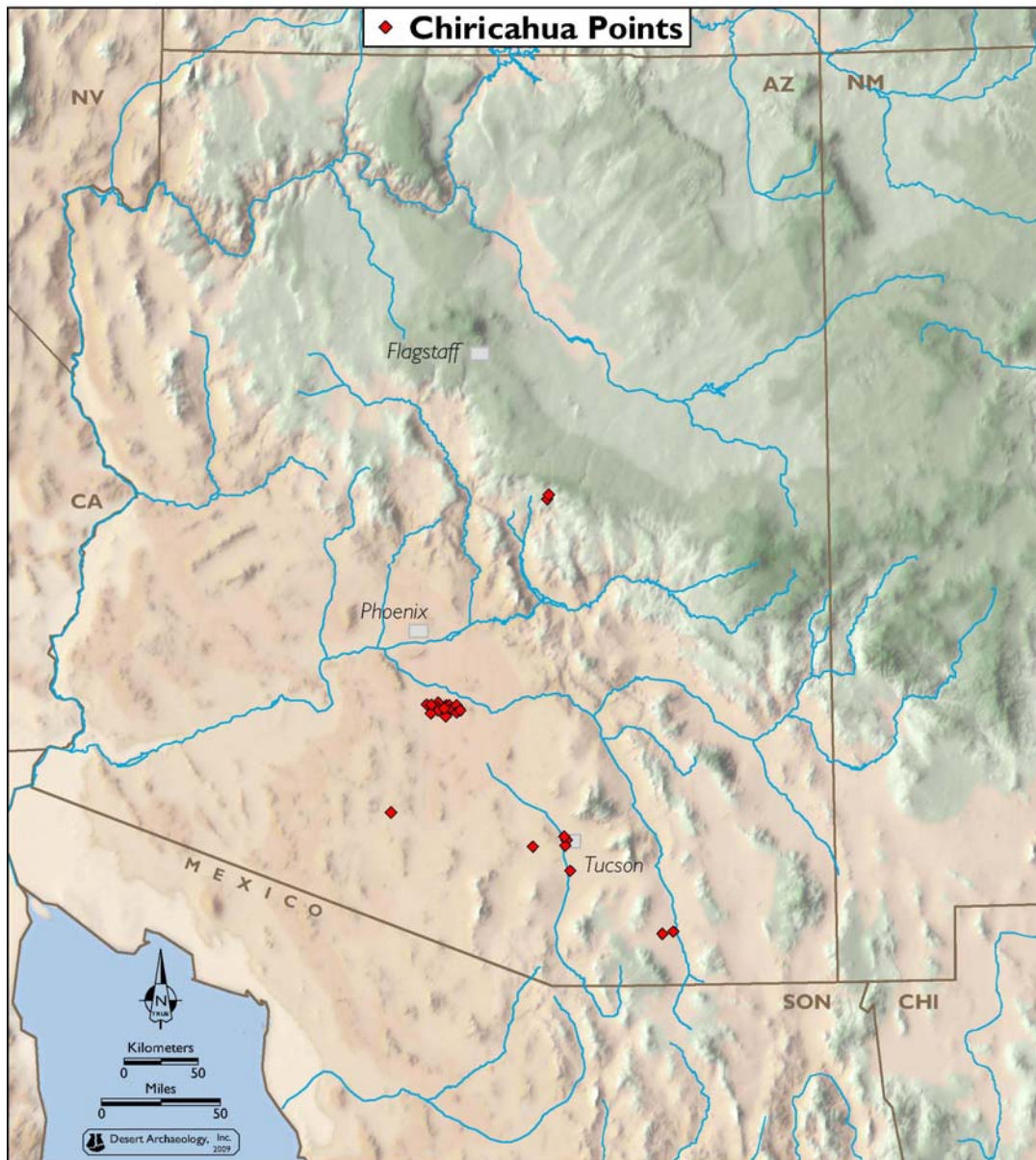


CHIRICAHUA



Chiricahua points have relatively shallow c-shaped side notches, wide necks, and concave bases with exaggerated, usually rounded ears that are wider than the blade. Recovered specimens are frequently heavily resharpened, making the observed type short-bladed in relation to stem length.

These points date to the Chiricahua phase of the Middle Archaic period, 3500-2100 B.C., and occur from the Coconino Plateau on the north to northern Sonora and Chihuahua on the south, and east into west-central New Mexico.

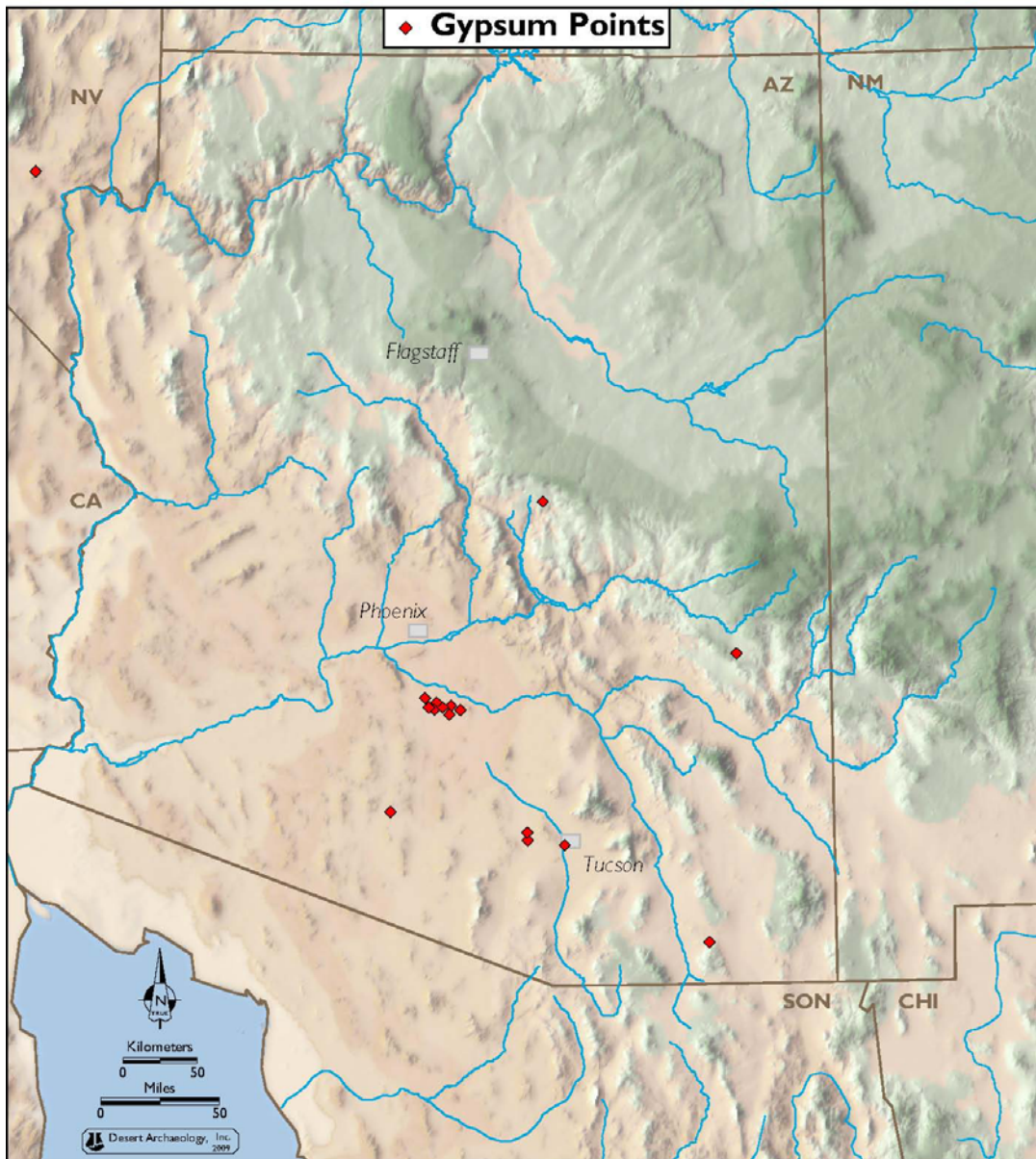


GYP SUM



Gypsum points are generally diamond-shaped, with stems contracting sharply from the corners of the blade, often without tangs or shoulders. Bases are frequently pointed; blades are not serrated. Like Chirichua points, Gypsums are frequently reworked, masking the originally designed blade-to-stem proportion.

These points date to the Chirichua phase of the Middle Archaic period, 3500-2100 B.C. They were first recognized at Gypsum Cave, near Las Vegas, Nevada, and extend broadly from there through southeastern Arizona, with the exception of the southwest and northeast corners of the state.

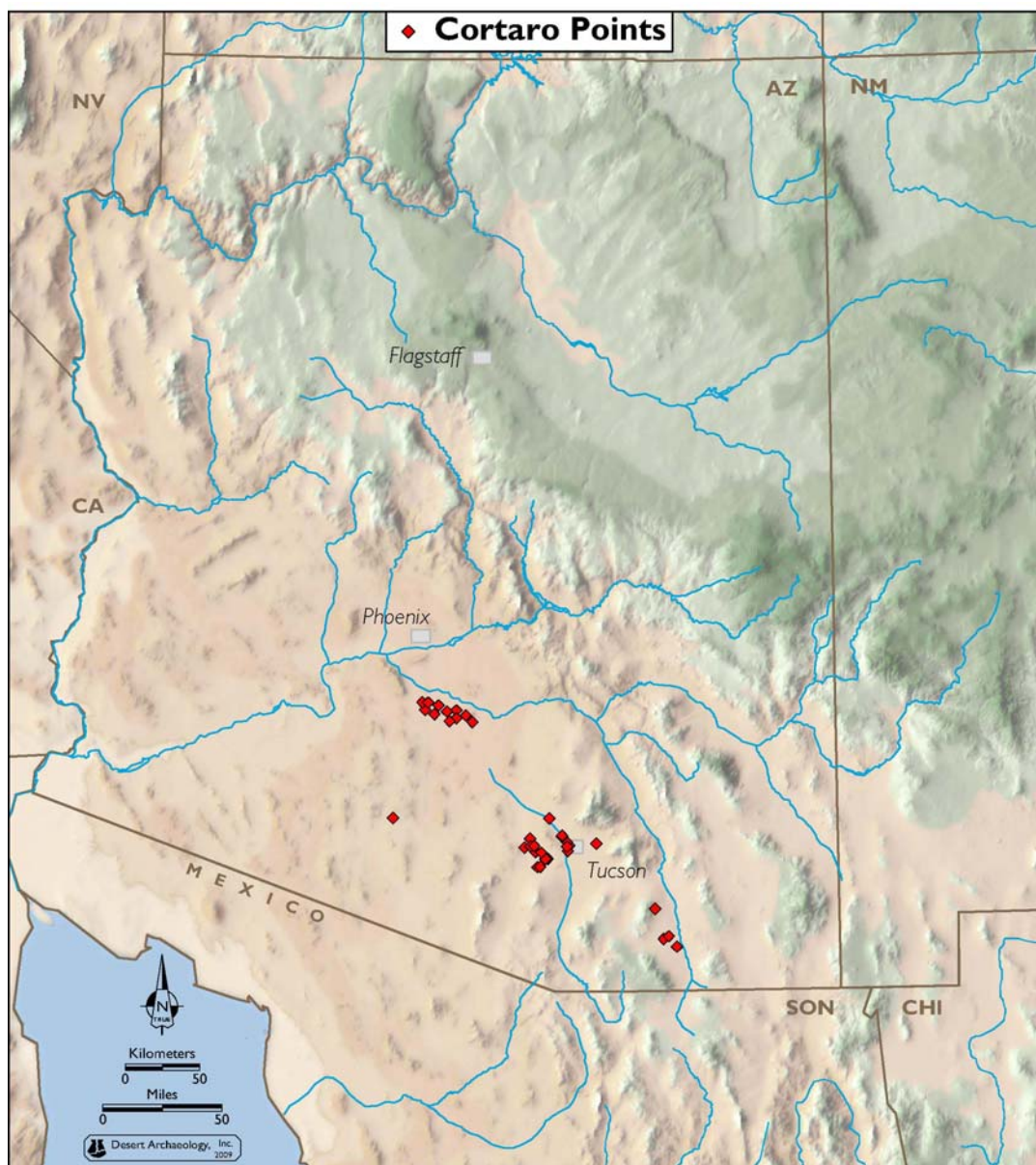


CORTARO



Cortaro points are triangular-to-subtriangular unnotched, unserrated points with bases that are usually concave. The style encompasses a great deal of variability in both morphology and flaking execution, ranging from thin, symmetrical, pressure-flaked points to thick, blocky, irregular, percussion-flaked examples.

The style was developed during the Chiricahua phase of the Middle Archaic period (3500-2100 B.C.), and continued to be incorporated into tool assemblages well into the Late Cienega phase of the Early Agricultural period (400 B.C.-A.D. 50). The morphological irregularities exhibited by so many of the examples of the Cortaro style raises the question of the purpose the points served; while the thinner Cortaros would have been effective dart points, it is difficult to imagine that some of the cruder specimens could have been capable of functioning as a reliable projectile.

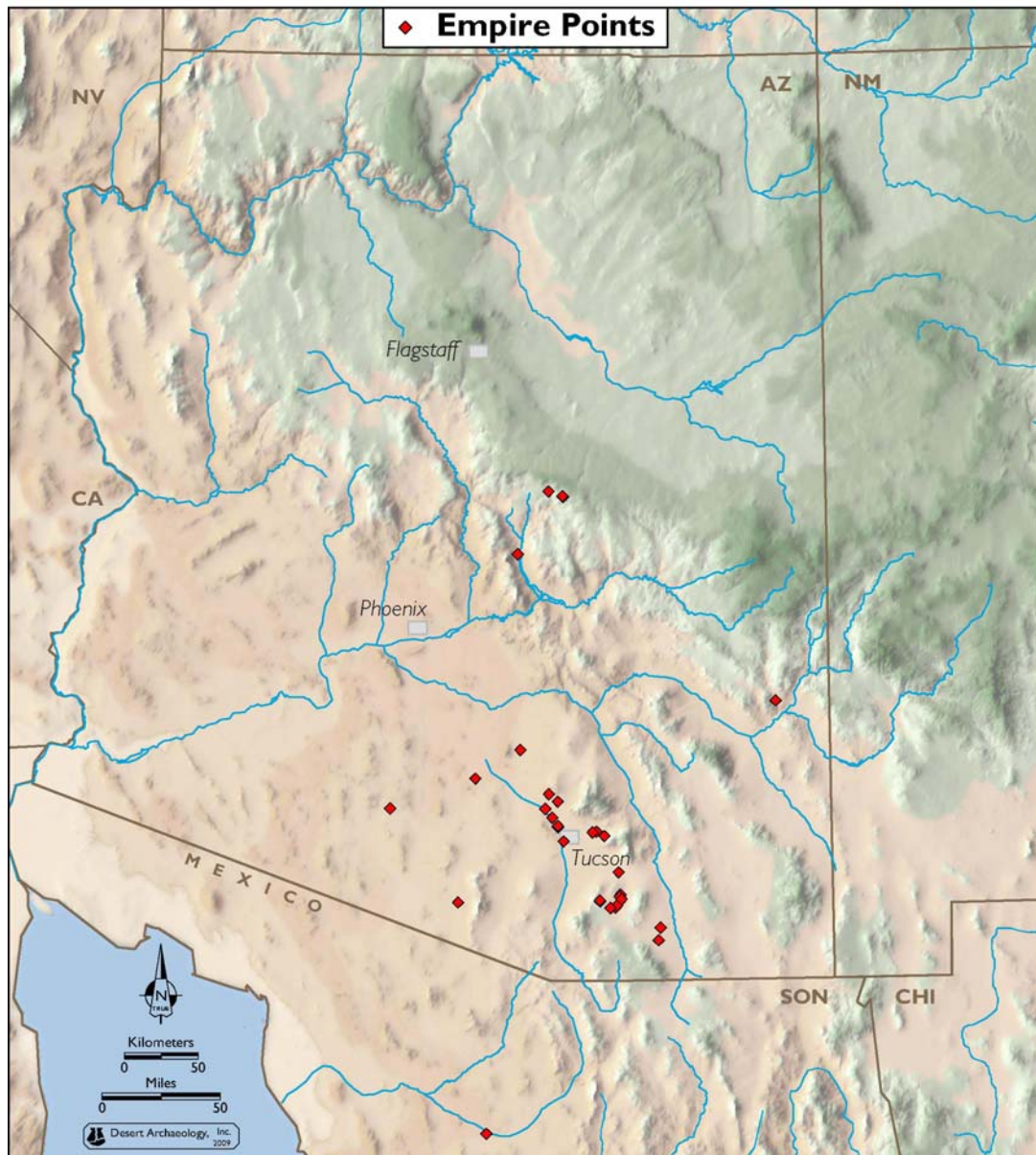


EMPIRE



Empire points have long, triangular blades, and straight stems that are only slightly narrower than the blade. Finished with pressure flaking, the blades are frequently finely serrated and the shoulders are generally rounded. The points are stemmed rather than truly side-notched, although a few examples of eared bases are known, and the stem edges and base may be ground. Bases are straight to slightly convex, and are frequently finished only with rather crude steep faceting rather than the more careful basal thinning usually found on San Pedro points.

The style is primarily associated with the San Pedro phase (1200-800 B.C.) of the Early Agricultural period, although Empire points occasionally appear in assemblages dating to the Early and Late Cienega phases (800 B.C.-A.D. 50), with a range extending from the Gila River in the north to the Gulf of California in Sonora, Mexico in the south.



TALLARÍN

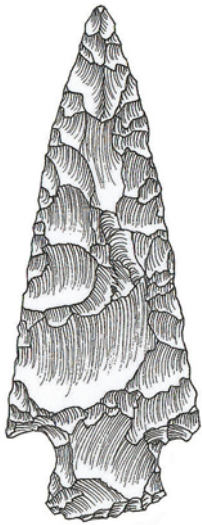


Tallarín points have wide and often finely serrated triangular blades that taper slightly toward the tip, squared to round horizontal shoulders, necks only slightly narrower than the blades, and stems that taper to rounded bases. While these nominally match the description of Empire points, their blades are wider than is typical for Empire points, falling into the range associated with San Pedro points, while their lack of true side notching and shoulder tangs, as well as the tapered stems, clearly exclude them from the San Pedro category. In addition, the degree to which their stems taper, however, falls outside the range of variability demonstrated for Empire points, although this taper does not approach the pointed base associated with Gypsum points.

The true spatial distribution of the style is as yet unclear, as only limited examples of the style have been recognized to date. Tallarín points currently are known from sites in the floodplain of the Santa Cruz River in the Tucson Basin, the foothills of the Tortolita Mountains at the northern edge of the basin, Ventana Cave west of Tucson, and two sites in the Phoenix area. The few direct dates available suggest that the style was developed during the San Pedro phase. The small numbers of Tallarín points recovered from later contexts suggest that these were scavenged rather than manufactured during post-San Pedro times.

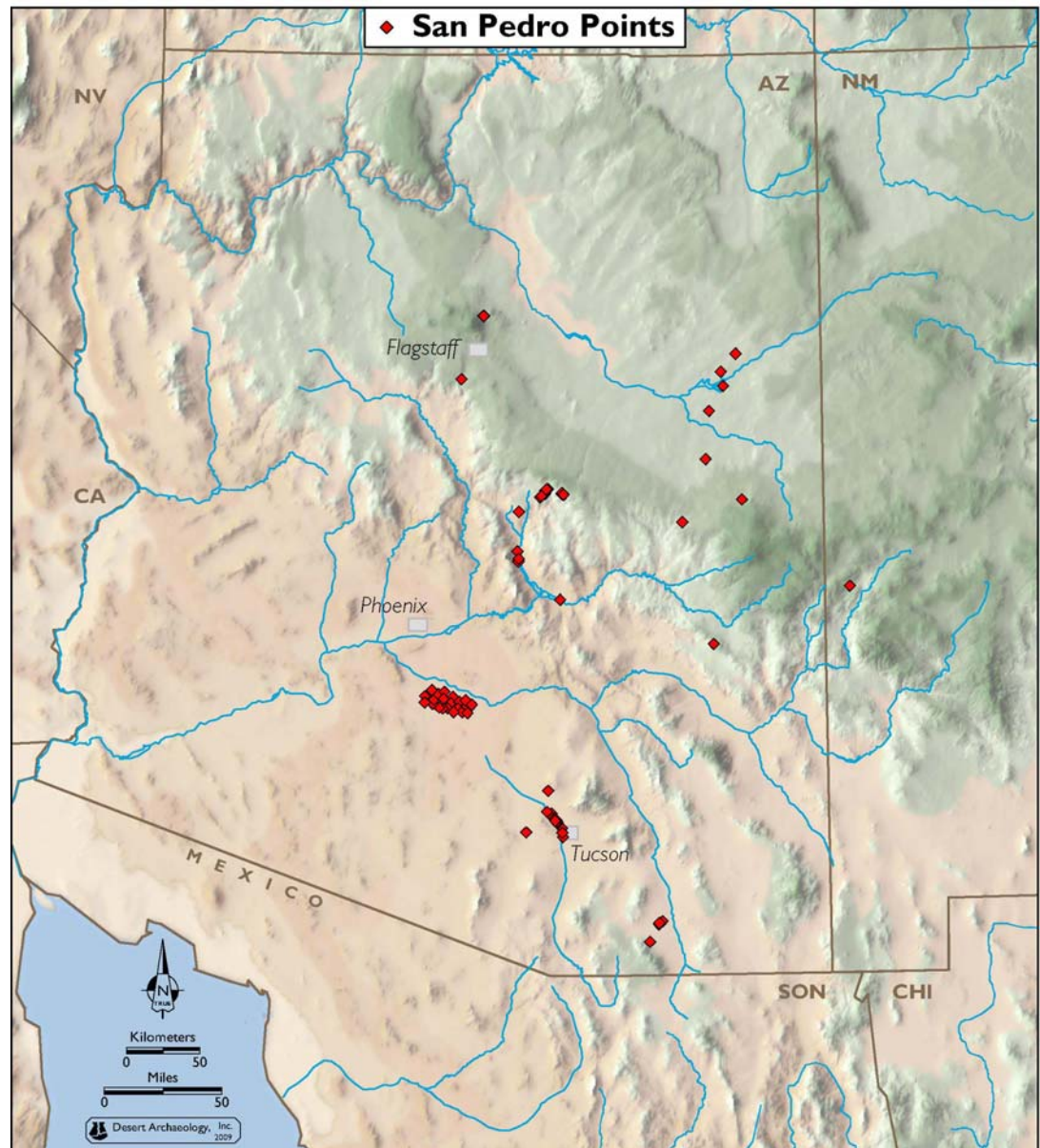


SAN PEDRO



San Pedro points have wide necks, and expanding stems with straight to convex bases. Concave bases do occur but are rare. Distinctive half-heart-shaped to c-shaped notches are located low on the sides or corners of the points, and the shoulders range from square to barbed. Serration is not unknown, but is rare. The points were manufactured through a combination of percussion and pressure flaking.

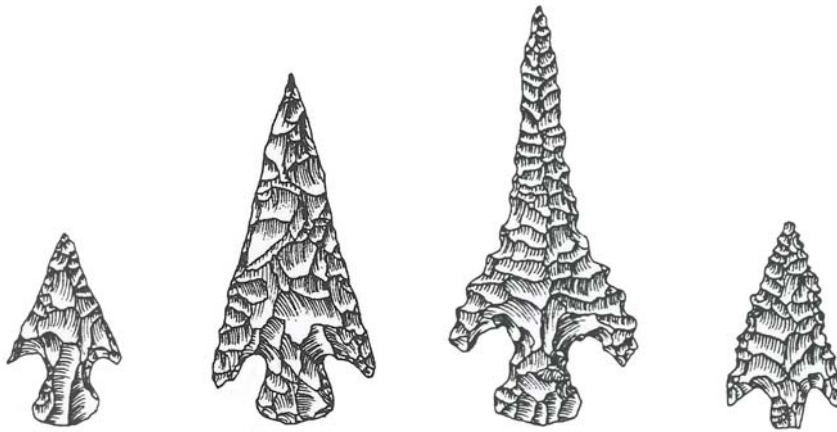
The style had its inception in the San Pedro phase but is common on sites dating as late as the Early Ceramic period (A.D. 50-500). It is widely distributed throughout Arizona, from the Coconino and Colorado Plateaus in the north to northern Sonora and Chihuahua, Mexico, in the south.



CIENEGA

Cienega points are generally defined as having triangular blades and relatively deep corner notches resulting in an expanding stem with a rounded base. All Cienega points were finished with pressure flaking, and most were manufactured with

regular, symmetrical outlines and fairly thin cross sections. The general Cienega style encompasses a wide range of morphological variability with four distinctive subtypes. *Cienega Short* points have short, straight-edged blades, short tangs, and relatively long expanding bases. *Cienega Long* points have straight blade margins, long tangs, and a relatively short expanding base. *Cienega Flared* points have concave, often serrated, blade margins that taper substantially towards the tip. A fourth subtype, *Cienega Stemmed*, is differentiated from the others by its straight or contracting stem.



Cienega Short

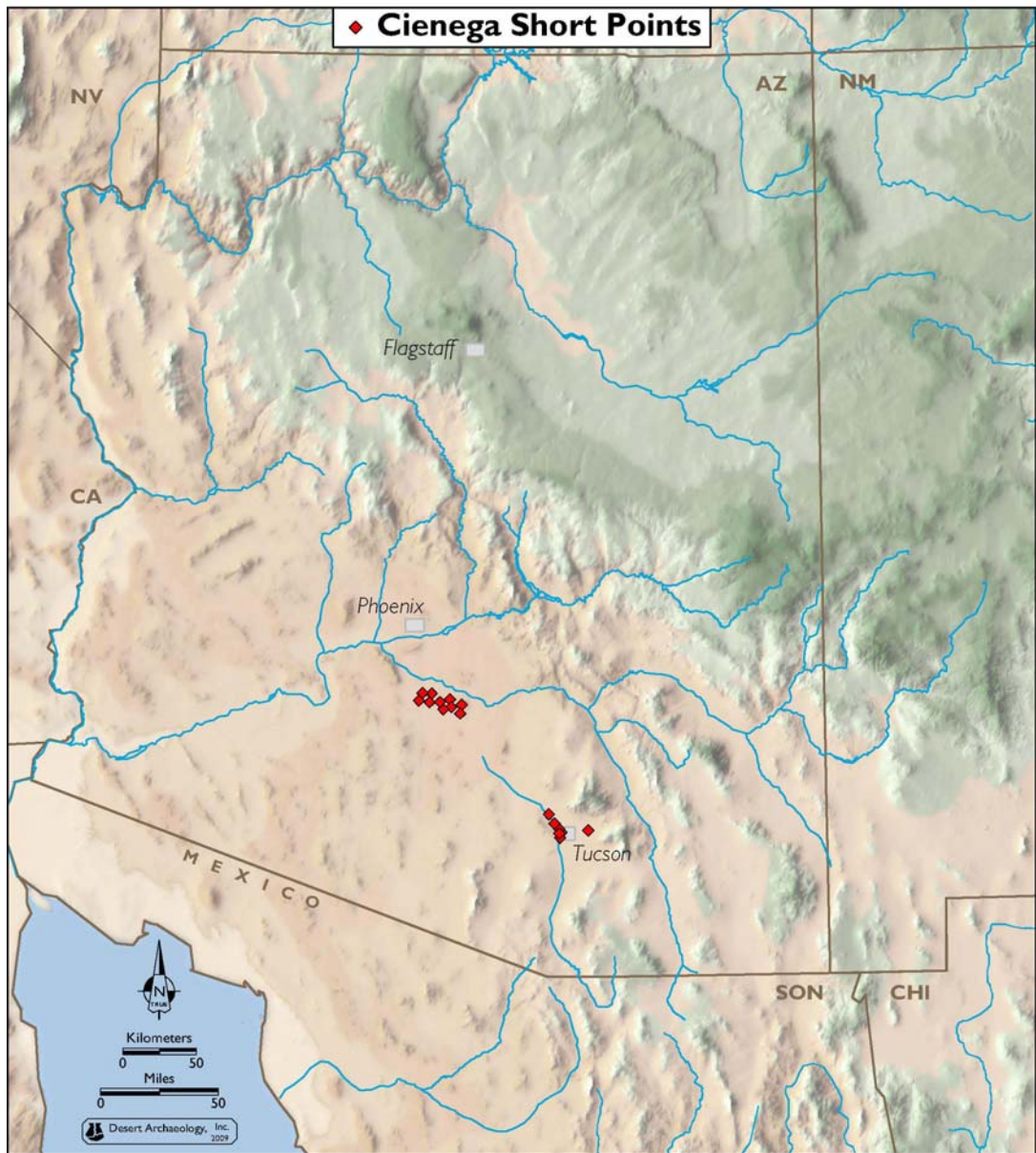
Cienega Long

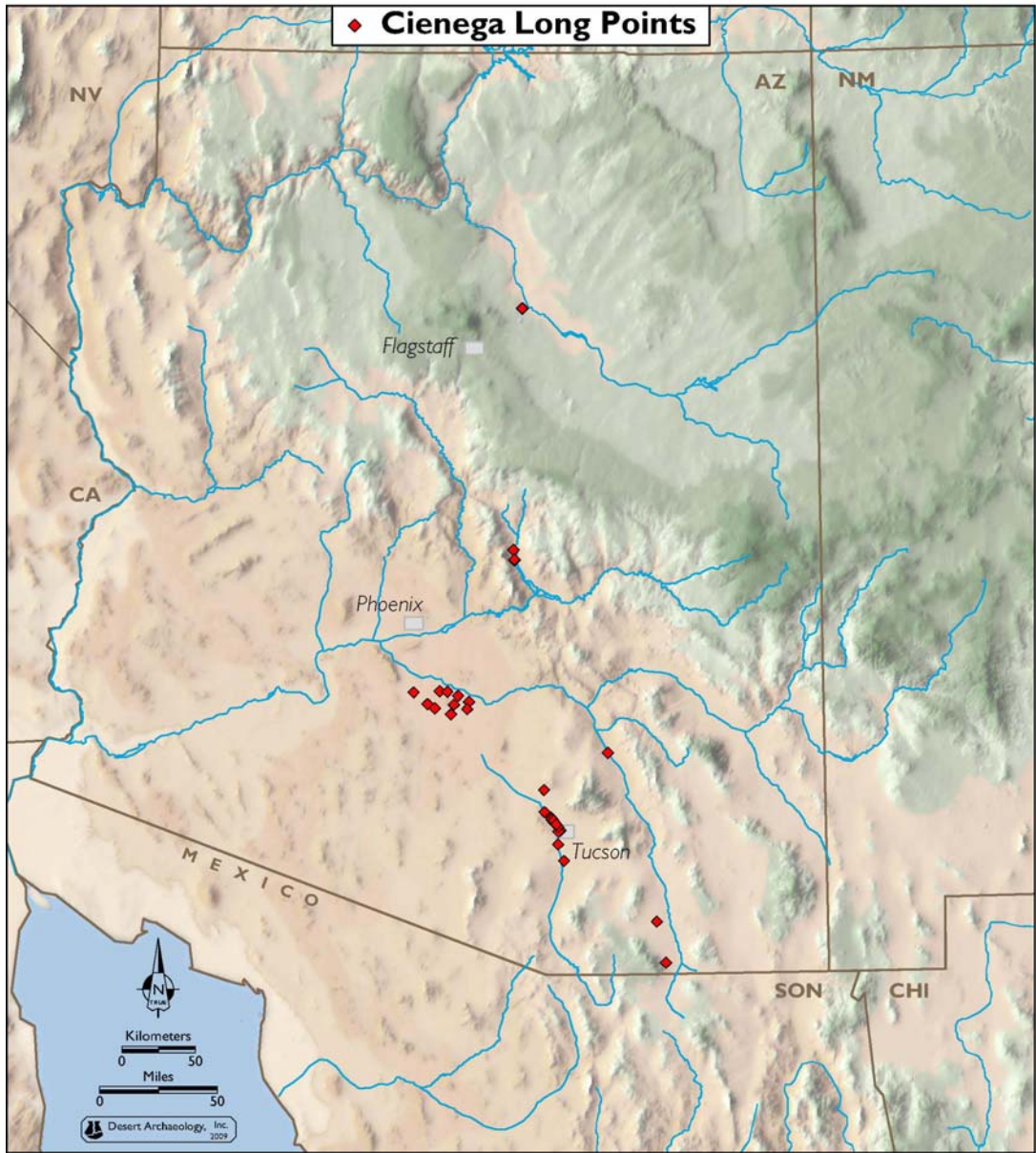
Cienega Flared

Cienega Stemmed

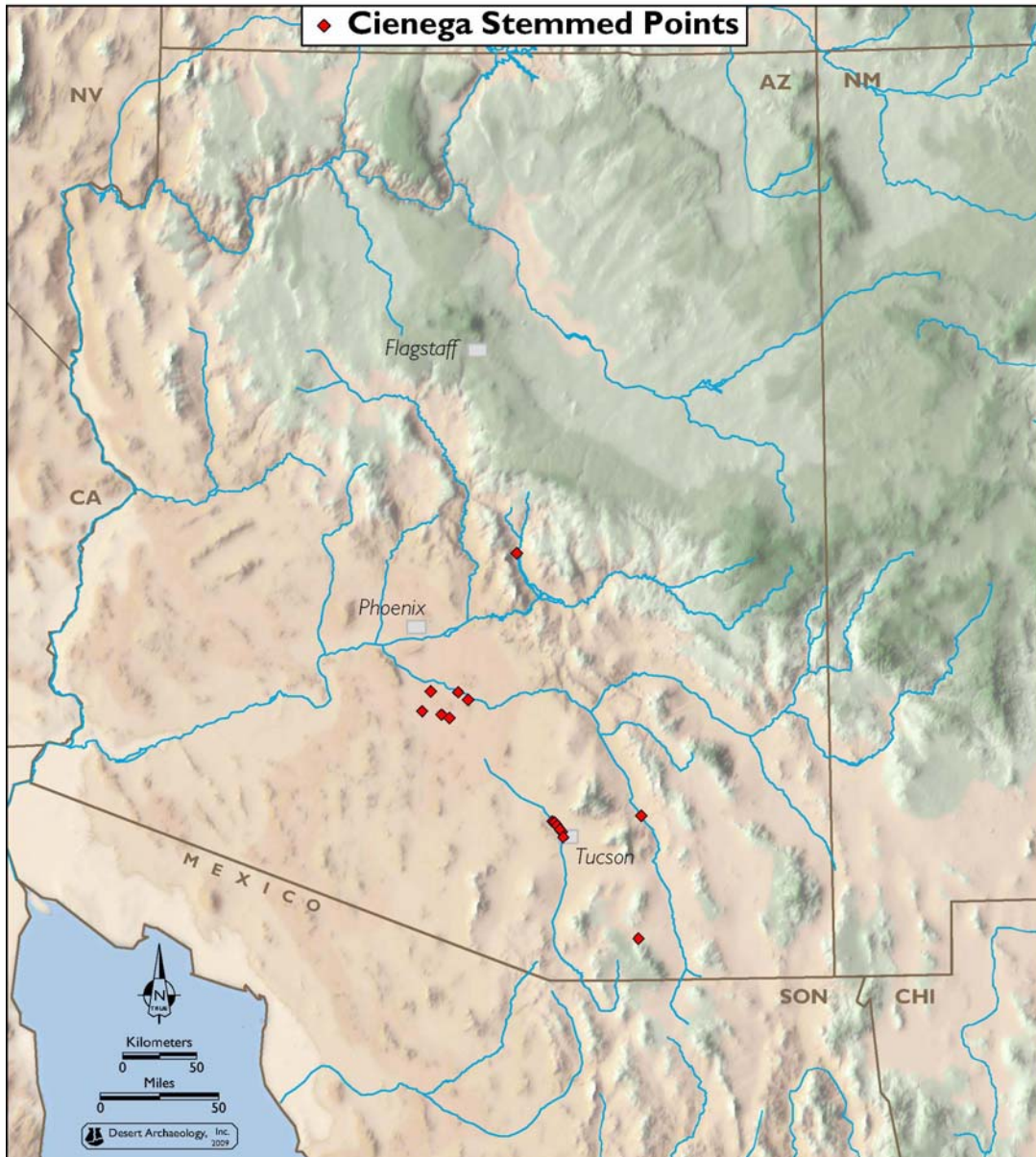
The Short subtype is predominantly associated with the Early Cienega phase (800-400 B.C.), although a few examples have been recovered from later contexts, and as the sample size increases a different time span may become apparent. Longs are nearly ubiquitous at Cienega phase sites in southern and central Arizona, and are also present in Early Ceramic contexts. Flared points appear in the Early Cienega phase, but are primarily associated with the Late Cienega phase (400 B.C.-A.D. 50). The Stemmed subtype is strongly associated with the Late Cienega and Agua Caliente phases.

Cienega points are primarily limited to regions south of the Gila River and west of the New Mexico border, extending south and west to the Gulf of California in northern Sonora, Mexico.









CRESCENT BASKETMAKER



Crescent Basketmaker points have relatively narrow, lanceolate blades, horizontally oriented, C- or very open V-shaped notches set just above the corner of the blank, flat bases narrower than the blade width, and a distinctive narrow, parallel-sided neck. They differ from the similar White Dog style in their distinctive narrow, near-crescentic curved bases with pointed ears, and horizontally oriented C-shaped notches.

The style has a predominantly northern distribution, being common on Black Mesa and on sites in far northeastern Arizona. They occur with diminished frequency on sites between the Little Colorado and the Mogollon Rim area, and only rarely in the southern basin-and-range province south of the Salt River, including three examples found at the Julian Wash site in the Tucson Basin. Crescent and White Dog Basketmaker points date to roughly 440 B.C. to the turn of the millennium throughout their range, a timespan analogous to the Late Cienega phase in southern Arizona.

