



Sunrise from Mount Graham in the Pinaleno Mountains.

Etymological Relationships of Pine Trees with Apaches and the Pinaleno Mountains. This issue of *Desert Plants* carries an excellent article by W. T. Johnson on the plants of the Pinaleno Mountains in eastern Arizona. We became concerned about Pinaleno etymology when we read Byrd Granger's treatment in the book *Arizona Place Names* (Univ. of Ariz. Press, 1960). Perhaps it was our revulsion for the lack of scholarship historically displayed on this subject, including the yet further spurious conclusions by Granger, that prompted our present missive.

The book erroneously concluded that Pinaleno came from the Apache language and should be interpreted "deer mountains" or "deer people." *Pinal*, the root of the word, was said by Granger to mean "deer" in Apache. The havoc which hearsay has wreaked with etymology finds its counterpart in the spurious element with which it has also confounded published genealogy. But we believe that misconceptions have not permanently spoiled our opportunities for obtaining the truth. Just as modern research is making gross corrections on "well-published" statements on the ancestry and posterity of Pocahontas, so too can we apply research to correct embarrassing etymologies.

Granger's misconceptions on *pinal* and Pinaleno probably arose from accepting someone's recollection of prior "hearsay" which involved stories of the Apaches and the mountains. Although the original stories were undoubtedly true, the linking of the correct proper noun with the correct etymology was somehow mixed up. The Apaches in question were indeed "deer people" in their hunting practices and the mountains we refer to as the Pinalenos were surely important "deer mountains" in their hunting economy. The word Pinaleno, however, was inherited by us from the Spanish name for these Apaches: *Pinalenños*, pre-

cisely translated as "inhabitants of the pine habitat." The word *pinal* means "pine habitat" or "place of the pines" following standard Spanish etymological practice in constructing names for ecological habitats by suffixing *-al* to the dominant plant, a language luxury allowing a flexibility unknown in English. Spanish dictionaries rarely list such *-al* names separately since literally any plant name can be inflected to designate the plant's habitat. Likewise, a "user of" or "dweller in" a habitat can be designated by a suffixing or super-suffixing of *-eño*, creating a higher order inflection which is even less likely to have a dictionary entry!

Lieutenant W. H. Emory "discovered" the Apaches in question in 1846 and obviously mis-heard *Pinalenños* since he wrote the two dictionary-words "piñon lanos" as their name, deciding to apply it also as a name for the mountains where they hunted. Apparently botanist Asa Gray's ecological training did not embrace the Spanish system. In 1856 he translated the name of the mountains to mean "the Pine Plain Mountains," thinking that they were the *llanos* upon which the Pinyon grew! Later guessers having even less ecological training thought that the *-leño* part of the mountain range referred to the *leno* of Spanish which means "lean" or "narrow," variously claiming either that the region was a narrow range of Pinyon-clad mountains or a place where the pines were lean from growing on poor soil. It was to this level of degeneracy that Granger brought the further claim of "pinal" being an Apache word for *deer*! To Spanish-speaking people who pre-dated Anglos in Arizona, the *Pinalenños* were simply those people (Apaches) who used the pine habitat, just as the *Gileños* were the people (Pimas) who lived on an irrigated strip along the Gila River.

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