

beating his body he would expire. On the day appointed the engagement commenced, which lasted for two days: after pulling up the trees and mountains as the track of a terrible whirlwind, at last the good mind gained the victory by using the horns, as mentioned the instrument of death, which he succeeded in deceiving his brother and he crushed him in the earth; and the last words uttered from the bad mind were, that he would have equal power over the souls of mankind after death; and he sinks down to eternal doom, and became the Evil Spirit.<sup>4</sup> After this tumult the good mind repaired to the battle ground, and then visited the people and retires from the earth.<sup>5</sup>

4. This may reflect an awareness of the Christian belief in the devil as the evil spirit, ruler over the lower depths.

5. Other versions go on to say that the Good Twin teaches the people how to grow corn and how to avoid harm by means of prayer and ritual.

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## PIMA STORIES OF THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD

The Akimel O'odham, or Pimas, live along the Gila and Salt rivers in the desert of central Arizona and are close relations of the Tohono O'odham (formerly known as the Papago), who occupy lands in the mostly riverless desert to the south of them. Farming close to the rivers, the Akimel O'odham grew corn and beans, gathered wild plants, and hunted small game. Late in the sixteenth century, they encountered the Spanish, who named them "Pimas" sometime around 1600. Because of their remoteness from Spanish and Mexican centers of power, the Pimas were not immediately subjected to strong European influence. In 1694 Spanish missionaries were sent out to convert them. Today, like many native peoples, most Pimas are Christian, although their Christianity both includes and exists alongside traditional beliefs and practices.

The first Pima mythological narrative to be recorded dates from a 1694 journal account written by the Spaniard Juan Manje; Pedro Font, another Spaniard, also recorded a Pima story in 1775. These stories concern the ancestors of the Pimas, the Hohokam (meaning, roughly, the "finished ones" or "those who are gone"). Of great importance to the Pimas, the narratives offer an account of how the cultural practices of everyday Pima life came to be established. But these earliest recorded stories do not tell of the creation of the world, of the origins of things, or the actions of the most distant ancestors. Such tales were not recorded until the turn of the twentieth century.

At the Pan-American Fair in Buffalo, New York, in July, 1901, J. W. Lloyd met a man named Edward H. Wood, a full-blood Pima, who told him that his greatest dream was to preserve the ancient legends and tales of his people. Wood's grand-uncle, Thin Leather, was a *see-nee-yaw-kum*, a recognized master who knew all the ancient stories. Thin Leather, as Wood told Lloyd, had no successor and feared that with his death the stories would be lost to his people and to the world. Wood persuaded Lloyd to go to the Southwest and work with him and his uncle to record the stories in English. In 1903 Lloyd traveled to Sacaton, Arizona, where he met Thin Leather and, with Wood acting as interpreter, recorded a number of his tales. Lloyd published the results of his work with Wood and Thin Leather privately in 1911, as *Aw-aw-tam, Indian Nights, Being the Myths and Legends of the Pimas of Arizona*. The title refers to the fact that these stories were traditionally told over a period of four nights.

Although the *Story of the Creation* was not narrated until the twentieth century, it is little influenced by the origin story in Genesis, which, however, Thin Leather prob-

ably knew. The important animals and vegetation, the chief protagonists, and their personalities and actions are all specific to Pima culture.

Thin Leather's story of the great flood here follows the creation story. Flood stories are among the fifteen pre-Columbian tale types catalogued in Mexico, Central America, and the American Southwest. Although Thin Leather may have heard the stories of Genesis, his Pima version shows no particular biblical influence. The flood story is important as a foundational narrative in that it tells not of creation but of re-creation, of the reestablishment or rebirth of the divine, natural, and social orders. In addition, the Pima flood story tells or, rather, *specifies* the location of the "middle of the earth," the navel of the universe, the center of all the world—where the Pimas, like other Southwestern peoples, believe themselves to dwell.

The texts are from *Aw-aw-tam, Indian Nights, Being the Myths and Legends of the Pimas of Arizona* (1911).

### The Story of the Creation<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning there was no earth, no water—nothing. There was only a Person, *Juh-wert-a-Mah-kai* (The Doctor of the Earth).<sup>2</sup>

He just floated, for there was no place for him to stand upon. There was no sun, no light, and he just floated about in the darkness, which was Darkness itself.

He wandered around in the nowhere till he thought he had wandered enough. Then he rubbed on his breast and rubbed out *moah-haht-tack*, that is perspiration, or greasy earth. This he rubbed out on the palm of his hand and held out. It tipped over three times, but the fourth time<sup>3</sup> it staid straight in the middle of the air and there it remains now as the world.

The first bush he created was the greasewood bush.<sup>4</sup>

And he made ants, little tiny ants, to live on that bush, on its gum which comes out of its stem.

But these little ants did not do any good, so he created white ants, and these worked and enlarged the earth; and they kept on increasing it, larger and larger, until at last it was big enough for himself to rest on.

Then he created a Person. He made him out of his eye, out of the shadow of his eyes, to assist him, to be like him, and to help him in creating trees and human beings and everything that was to be on the earth.

The name of this being was *Noo-ee* (the Buzzard).<sup>5</sup>

Nooee was given all power, but he did not do the work he was created for. He did not care to help Juhwertamahkai, but let him go by himself.

And so the Doctor of the Earth himself created the mountains and everything that has seed and is good to eat. For if he had created human beings first they would have had nothing to live on.

1. The editor is indebted to Donald Bahr for his help with the annotation of the Pima selections.

2. This title is equivalent to respectfully calling Juhwertamahkai a medicine person, or shaman, with great powers, although his powers seem, in a Western sense, to be godlike.

3. This is the first of several actions that must be attempted four times before it is achieved [adapted from Lloyd's note]. Four is the pattern number of

the Pimas, as it is of a great many Native peoples; it corresponds to the importance of three and seven as pattern numbers in Western cultures.

4. "The local touch in making the greasewood bush the first vegetation is very strong" [Lloyd's note]. Greasewood bushes are abundant in the Pimas' homelands.

5. He is a person and also a buzzard, which, in the earliest times, is not a contradiction or paradox.

But after making Nooee and before making the mountains and seed for food, Juhwertamahkai made the sun.

In order to make the sun he first made water, and this he placed in a hollow vessel, like an earthen dish (*hwas-hah-ah*) to harden into something like ice. And this hardened ball he placed in the sky. First he placed it in the North, but it did not work; then he placed it in the West, but it did not work; then he placed it in the South, but it did not work; then he placed it in the East and there it worked as he wanted it to.

And the moon he made in the same way and tried in the same places, with the same results.

But when he made the stars he took the water in his mouth and spurted it up into the sky. But the first night his stars did not give light enough. So he took the Doctor-stone<sup>6</sup> (diamond), the *tone-dum-haw-teh*, and smashed it up, and took the pieces and threw them into the sky to mix with the water in the stars, and then there was light enough.

*Juhwertamahkai's Song of Creation*

Juhwertamahkai made the world—  
Come and see it and make it useful!  
He made it round—  
Come and see it and make it useful!

And now Juhwertamahkai, rubbed again on his breast, and from the substance he obtained there made two little dolls, and these he laid on the earth. And they were human beings, man and woman.

And now for a time the people increased till they filled the earth. For the first parents were perfect, and there was no sickness and no death. But when the earth was full, then there was nothing to eat, so they killed and ate each other.

But Juhwertamahkai did not like the way his people acted, to kill and eat each other, and so he let the sky fall to kill them. But when the sky dropped he, himself, took a staff and broke a hole thru, thru which he and Nooee emerged and escaped, leaving behind them all the people dead.

And Juhwertamahkai, being now on the top of this fallen sky, again made a man and a woman, in the same way as before. But this man and woman became grey when old, and their children became grey still younger, and their children became grey younger still, and so on till the babies were grey in their cradles.

And Juhwertamahkai, who had made a new earth and sky, just as there had been before, did not like his people becoming grey in their cradles, so he let the sky fall on them again, and again made a hole and escaped, with Nooee, as before.

And Juhwertamahkai, on top of this second sky, again made a new heaven and a new earth, just as he had done before, and new people.

But these new people made a vice of smoking. Before human beings had never smoked till they were old, but now they smoked younger, and each generation still younger, till the infants wanted to smoke in their cradles.

6. I.e., it is a particularly powerful stone. Lloyd's interpreter called it a diamond, but as diamonds are uncommon in North America, this is probably a quartz crystal.