

## Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project

Education Initiative

2003-2004



*Restoring water to ensure the continuity of the Akimel O’otham and Pee Posh tradition of agriculture*

## The Moral Character of the Pima and Maricopa

Part 46

When Spain first made contact with the Pimas they were somewhat distrustful of them. The reason for this initial suspicion was unfounded fears and prejudices. “Traces, or roots, of what is imprinted on the mind, although being formed by contradictory evidence of facts,” Captain Juan Mateo Manje wrote regarding his 1697 trip to the Gila River, “always remain to judge with rash judgment that which was first imprinted.” As Manje explained, first impressions—even when the facts speak otherwise—are hard to overcome.

Spain’s thoughts and attitudes toward the Pimas stemmed from a fear of the unknown. Believing the Gila River Pima and/or Sobaipuris had stolen their horses, Spanish soldiers were convinced the Pimas had “corrals full of horses” that they would use to fight against them. Riding with Kino to the Pima villages, the troops were surprised when they discovered the Pimas were actually afraid of horses.

Kino brought the Spanish soldiers with him for reasons other than showing the troops the Pimas did not have their horses. They came, Kino wrote in his journal, so they “might be eye-witnesses to the very friendly and good state of all these Pima-Sobaipuris.” While Kino had taken the time to return the friendship of the Pimas, the soldiers—trained for warfare—prepared for the worst.

In the process of learning the Pimas had not taken their horses, the soldiers—witnessing the return of a Pima war party against the Apaches that resulted in 60 enemy deaths and 70 captives—realized the Gila River Pima and San Pedro Sobaipuris were not allies of the Apaches as many of them believed. They now recognized the Pimas were, indeed, a friendly and hospitable people. But despite such information, old military prejudices were hard to break. While the soldiers were “appeased by the discovery of their error,” distrust remained.

As a man of character, Kino recognized the high moral state of the Pimas, believing Spain had an obligation to share Christianity with them. There was “so great and so ripe a harvest of souls” among the Pimas that Kino asked the King of Spain to send more priests to help share Christianity in the Pimeria Alta. “The greater the means,” the missionary wrote, “the greater our obligation to seek the salvation of so many souls.” The Pimas already had “abundant fields, plantings and crops” and “plentiful ranches.” Captain Manje suggested they lacked nothing and, as tillers of the soil, lived “very well.” The people had been blessed with all the necessities of life, the captain suggested. Seventy-five years later, Juan Diaz noted the Pimas “would gladly become Christians, and it would be at the cost of very little labor.”

Spanish priests and soldiers were most impressed with the state of morality among the Pima. Priest Luis Velarde, visiting the Pimas, in 1716, noted their customs were not “irrational,” as some tribes were. Although they were seen as poor, the Pima were “generous and liberal” with what they had, such that “no one who visits their rancherias ... will lack necessities.” Strict social controls governed the people. On one occasion, when several of Kino’s horses were scattered in the desert and seemingly lost, the Pimas demonstrated their friendship and honesty by going “in search of them,” not giving up “until they had collected them all for us.”

Kino clearly enjoyed being with the Pimas, explaining that when he visited with them he felt as if he “had journeyed among Christians.” He was touched by the deep sense of “friendship,

loyalty and courtesy” the people showed him. While Manje saw the Pimas as heathens, he marveled at their eagerness and desire to accept Christian instruction. Jesuit and, later, Franciscan priests described the Pimas as “free from idolatry” and desirous of baptism, showing the people were spiritual and concerned with the temporal (here and now) as well as the eternal (the next life).

Many of the Pimas asked for and listened to the preaching of “the Divine Word.” Franciscan Priest Diego Miguel Bringas visited the Pima villages in 1796 and described the honesty, industry and intelligence of the Pimas. They were “not of those gentiles who barely have the use of reason,” Bringas wrote the King of Spain. “They are diligent, like to work [and] live from their own industry.” In short, they were “frugal,” a characteristic Bringas attributed to providence.

The Pimas repeatedly showed a desire to accept Christianity. In 1697, the head chief of Sutaquison reportedly walked 120 miles to Dolores (in Sonora, Mexico) and then continued on to Santa Maria de Baseraca “for the purpose of seeking the Gospel and baptism.” After being baptized, he was given the name Juan de Palacios. A Sobaipuris chief named Numaric (and his two sons) traveled some 100 miles to Dolores to be catechized and baptized before being given the Christian name Francisco Eusebio. His sons were given the names Francisco Xavier and Horasio Polise. When chief Antonio Leal accepted Christianity, Kino knew the Pimas could be counted as trusted allies of Spain.

Kino also rejoiced that the Maricopa wanted to become “Christians like the Pimas.” When he visited the Pima villages on his second missionary journey, in 1697, Kino was met by three village chiefs who brought him to the village of San Simon Tucsani (*Tcuk shon* near modern Blackwater). Here the Pimas offered their children for baptism. The following day, Kino was received at Sutaquison by Palacios and baptized three leading men, including the chief of Tucsani, to whom the Padre gave the name Juan Francisco de Acuna.

Despite having participated in the 1751 Pima Rebellion, in which the Pima and Papago rose up against the Spanish settlements near Tubac, the Gila River Pimas were nonetheless characterized as a people of virtue with a sacred moral code. Quiet and attentive, they were deliberate of speech and action. Kino and those traveling with him were repeatedly received “with crosses and arches erected and with many of their eatables.” While women and children initially remained out of sight, once Spain’s intentions were made known, both joined with the men in welcoming their guests with great pomp and ceremony.

For his part, Francisco Garces saw the Pimas as gentle, pleasantly mannered and “surpass[ing] all others of their nation.” The Maricopa were similarly viewed. Returning from the Colorado River, in 1774, Garces passed through the Maricopa village of Opassoita, where the village leader offered the priest a servant to accompany him back to San Xavier. This servant, Garces explained, “carried a firebrand in one hand all the way [to San Xavier], and it did not go out.” Carrying a jug of water on his head and “enduring thirst in order that I might not suffer,” Garces rhetorically asked, “Who will say this Indian is a savage?”

Garces was well respected as a religious man among the Pimas. He was also a trustworthy friend of theirs, crossing the Pimeria Alta more than any other Spaniard. In November 1775, the priest expressed his affection for the Pimas. They “took care of our wants and feasted us extravagantly,” he noted. They “served us in everything just as might be expected from old Christians and very faithful subjects of the King.” The Pimas returned the affection of Garces, who like Kino a century earlier, learned to speak Pima fluently. Such was his affection for the Pimas that fellow priest Pedro Font described Garces as “an Indian himself.”

### *Character Qualities of the Pima*

Fourteen character qualities describe the Pimas during their years of contact with Spain. Find all 14 in the word search below. Words may be forward, backwards, up, down and diagonal in all eight directions. After you are done finding the words, define those with which you are not familiar.

M	Y	L	T	T	Z	M	D	T	E	F	R	L
S	U	O	R	E	N	E	G	H	T	R	Z	X
V	F	M	G	I	C	C	O	P	A	I	L	S
L	R	R	H	U	Z	N	L	E	R	E	A	U
N	U	N	Q	Q	E	Y	V	K	E	N	N	O
L	G	G	C	S	T	I	F	Q	B	D	O	I
M	A	Z	T	O	T	Y	T	M	I	L	I	R
T	L	R	K	N	U	E	O	K	L	Y	T	T
G	T	L	E	J	H	R	L	H	E	T	A	S
C	X	T	K	B	A	M	T	T	D	M	R	U
Y	T	L	K	L	I	M	Y	E	N	B	T	D
A	T	N	E	G	I	L	I	D	S	E	Z	N
J	X	L	O	Y	A	L	L	M	F	Y	G	I

ATTENTIVE  
 DELIBERATE  
 FRIENDLY  
 GENEROUS  
 HONEST  
 LIBERAL  
 MORAL

COURTESY  
 DILIGENT  
 FRUGAL  
 GENTLE  
 INDUSTRIOUS  
 LOYAL  
 QUIET

## Teacher Plan for “The Moral Character of the Pima and Maricopa”

### Terms to know and understand

- Prejudices
- Hospitable
- Moral
- Providence
- Irrational
- Distrustful

### Critical Thinking:

- Some people have argued that the Spanish priests flowered their descriptions of the Indians (including the Pima and Maricopa). On the other hand, the views of the soldiers are also prejudicial. How might the views of the priests and soldiers differ? Why would they differ? Did each have different objectives? How might your training as a priest or a soldier affect your outlook and interpretation of what you see and who you visit? Did either have a more valid argument? Explain.

### Activities

- Before the students read the selection tell them to look for words or phrases that provide clues into the world in which the Pima and Maricopa lived. For example, what clues indicate the people were honest and friendly? What clues indicate the people raised sufficient crops for their own and others needs? What does this tell you about the Pima and Maricopa?
- Almost all the Spanish missionaries note the industriousness and strong moral character of the Pimas. Discuss what industry means. What does it mean to be morally strong? Give examples of how someone who is moral might live? As you look at the list of words on the word search, discuss with students the meaning of these character qualities. Discuss each word individually and give students opportunities to explain the words in their own language. Which virtue most stands out to the students? Why?

### About P-MIP

The Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project is authorized by the Gila River Indian Community to construct all irrigation systems for the Community. When fully completed, P-MIP will provide irrigation for up to 146,330 acres of farmland. P-MIP is dedicated to three long-range goals:

- Restoring water to the Akimel O’otham and Pee Posh.
- Putting Akimel O’otham and Pee Posh rights to the use of water to beneficial use.
- Demonstrating and exercising sound management to ensure continuity of the Community’s traditional economy of agriculture.

Students will be able to:

1. Identify and explain the character qualities of the Pima and Maricopa people.
2. Critically analyze the reading and describe the world in which the Pima and Maricopa lived during the years 1690-1821.

**Objectives**