

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

A Brisk Trade: The American Army in the Pima–Maricopa Villages, 1846

Part 49

In the fall of 1846, two American military columns descended the Gila River. In November, Stephen Austin Kearny led the Army of the West across New Mexico and through the Pima villages en route to California. Henry Smith Turner, one of 120 dragoons forming the column, welcomed the “hospitality and friendship” of the Pimas. They were, Turner admitted, “more industrious than I have ever found Indians—they have all the necessaries of life in sufficient abundance, & all produced by their own industry.” They also had, Topographical Engineer and Lieutenant Colonel William Emory commented, a “high regard for morality” and marital fidelity.

The Army of the West camped 8 or 9 miles above the Pima villages on November 10, where a Maricopa man looking for his lost cattle met it. He approached the troops in a “frank, confident manner.” Soon a half dozen or more Pimas approached the camp seeking the purpose of the visit. Dispatching word to the villages regarding the friendly nature of the visit, it was only a matter of hours before the camp was filled “with Pimos loaded with corn, beans, honey and zandias (watermelons)” to trade. While a “brisk trade was at once opened,” when Army scout and former mountain man Kit Carson asked to purchase bread, he was told “bread is to eat, not to sell; take what you want.”

Despite such hospitality, the Pima’s knew “the value of money.” When Kearny informed Antonio Culo Azul that he had heard many good reports of the Pimas and knew them to be an honest people, Azul invited the General to pass the day in trade “for such articles as [you] might require.” Turner noted the Pimas “furnished supplies for [all] parties of strangers who may pass this way.” The ease and confidence by which they approached the military camp struck as unusual many of the American soldiers with Kearny. Quartermaster Major Swords erected an awning “under which to conduct the business” of trade, an event Emory described as a “perfect menagerie” of “Pimos, Maricopas, Mexicans, French, Dutch, English and Americans.”

The Americans were astonished with the nature of agriculture in the villages. “We were at once impressed with the beauty, order and disposition of the arrangements for irrigating and draining the land,” Emory wrote. “All the crops have been gathered in, and the stubbles show they have been luxuriant.” Large fields were subdivided by earthen borders into smaller fields for convenience of irrigating. Fifteen miles downstream, the troops passed over luxuriantly rich, cultivated soil. “The plain,” Emory estimated, extended “in every direction 15 or 20 miles.” The Indian farmers drew off the “whole water” of the Gila for irrigation, taking care to return the unused water back into the river.”

As the army pushed west on November 12 it came to the Maricopa villages, finding a “great deal of land” cultivated. “[A]ll that has been said of the Pimas,” Emory explained, “is applicable to them.” The Maricopas “came into camp at full speed, unarmed and in the most confident manner, bringing water melons, meal, pinole and salt for trade.” Having never seen eyeglasses before, Maricopa women were convinced that the soldiers’ spectacles gave them the ability to “see through their cotton blankets,” a proposition Emory quickly solved by handing a pair of glasses to an elderly Maricopa woman. On the following day, a Maricopa chief met with Kearny and told him it was good to trade but if the Americans had arrived hungry and in need “it would have been his pleasure to give us all we wanted without compensation.”

The Pimas and Maricopas were all that the Americans had heard and read. They were honest, industrious, confident and “better than some others we had seen.” They “surpass[ed] many of the

Christian nations in agriculture,” Emory concluded, and were “little behind them in the useful arts, and immeasurably before them in honesty and virtue.” So keen was their sense of honesty that many of the Pimas left their trade goods in the military camp while they were “absent for hours.” While initially suspicious of their motives, Emory soon “got an indifferent set of observations,” discovering “theft is seemingly unknown among them.” Azul told Kearny “God had placed him over his people, and he endeavored to do the best for them” by giving good advice and teaching them “to take nothing but what belonged to them, and to ever speak the truth.”

Azul assured Kearny the Pima intended to remain neutral in the American war with Mexico. We “desire to be at peace with everyone,” the chief explained. Aware of the long history of Pima fidelity and honesty, Kearny left ten travel weary mules and some military supplies in the villages to be picked up by the Mormon Battalion, led by Colonel Philip St. George Cooke and trailing the Army of the West by six weeks. While difficult to acquire, Kearny managed to obtain half a dozen oxen from the Pimas. Before departing, he gave the Pima chief a letter “directing all troops that might pass [through the villages], to respect his excellency, his people, and their property.”

In the thirty-nine days between Kearny and Cooke’s visit, Antonio Comaduran, commander of the Mexican Presidio at Tucson, demanded of the Pimas the mules and supplies Kearny left at the villages. Azul, respecting the trust placed into his hands, refused, telling Comaduran he “would resist force with force.” The Pimas “had never shed the blood of a white man,” the chief later told Cooke, and they did not intend to start now. For that reason, the Pima were “not afraid of the coming [American] army” and “had no objection to [it] passing through their towns.” Furthermore, the chief explained, his people liked American trade goods better than they did those of the Mexicans. Despite intense “persuasion and promise of plunder to excite hostility,” the chief remained loyal to his promise.

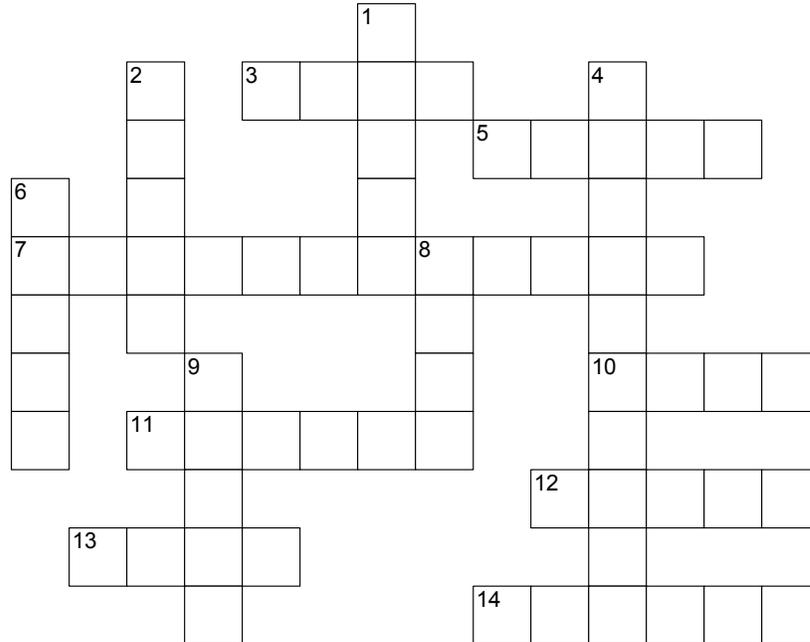
On the 21st of December, 340 beleaguered Mormon troops arrived in the villages. Hot, tired and hungry, the troops were met by a group of mounted Pimas eight miles from the villages. They came with “sacks of corn, flour, beans, etc.,” Henry Standage recalled. They were “glad to see us, running and taking us by the hand.” Upon meeting Azul, Cooke was given the letter Kearny had left behind listing the “broken down mules and two bales of Indian goods left for me.” He then traded “every spare article for corn” mustering 12 quarts per animal for the trip to California. The “wonderfully honest and friendly” Pimas eagerly traded and sold food crops “for bleached domestics, summer clothing of all sorts, showy handkerchiefs, and white beads.” So industrious were the people, Sergeant Daniel Tyler opined, “our American and European cities would do well to take lessons in virtue and morality from these native tribes.”

When the troops prepared to leave the Pima villages the following day, they were met by “groups of men, women and children” wanting to trade all sorts of “eatables, including watermelons,” and wanting only “clothing or cotton cloth and beads” in exchange. The trading reminded Cooke of a crowded New Orleans market, with more than 2,000 Indians in camp “all enjoying themselves very much.” Before departing, Cooke told Azul the Pimas were “the happiest and most prosperous” Indians he had ever seen. If they continued to hold to the “principles of industry, honesty, peace and cheerful content,” they would remain so. Cooke then presented the chief with a gift of three ewes with young. From the Maricopas Cooke picked up Kearny’s abandoned mules. So impressed with the nature of farming in the desert, Cooke prophetically suggested to his officers “this vicinity would be a good place for exiled saints [Mormons] to locate.”

The Mexican War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in 1848, with all land north of the Gila River now part of the United States. While the Pima villages on the south bank were still under Mexican administration, they would have little contact with the Mexicans after the war. Their trade with Americans heading west, however, increased. Americans expectantly looked forward to visiting and trading with the Pima and Maricopa, aware of their friendship and hospitality from the many reports left by Spanish, Mexican and early American explorers.

A Brisk Trade

Listed below are clues to 14 different trade items. Some were Pima-Maricopa trade goods and some are American trade goods. Use the clues and see if you can identify all 14. For an extra challenge, mark those that were Pima-Maricopa trade goods.



Constructed using Crossword Weaver

ACROSS

- 3 The Pima acquired it from the Papago: _____
- 5 Made from glass and used for ornamentation: _____
- 7 You wear it around your neck: _____
- 10 A food made from corn or wheat and to which water could be added: _____
- 11 Shirts and clothing made from this: _____
- 12 Made from cotton: _____
- 13 An animal to draw carts: _____
- 14 Made from corn meal: _____

DOWN

- 1 When wheat is ground up it becomes this: _____
- 2 Tepary or Pima Lima are two types: _____
- 4 Another name for zandias is: _____
- 6 Introduced from the Spanish: _____
- 8 Pimas grew it in 60 days: _____
- 9 Made by bees: _____

Teacher Plan for “A Brisk Trade: The American Army in the Pima-Maricopa Villages, 1846”

Terms to know and understand

- Topography
- Brisk
- Quartermaster
- Luxuriant
- Supply
- Demand

Students will be able to:

1. Identify items the Pima and Maricopa both traded for and acquired from the American military.
2. Define supply and demand and explain how the law of supply and demand operates.

Objectives

Critical Thinking:

- Why do people trade with others? Do trade items always have to be of equal value? Does value remain constant? How would you determine if two items were of equal value? What happens when one person (or trade partner) produces goods or services that other person (or trade partner) is not interested in?

Activities

- Teach students about supply and demand. Follow the instructions below very carefully and proceed one step at a time (from www.eduref.org/Virtual/Lessons/Social_Studies/Economics/ECO0011).
 - Using a box of tokens (have two different colored tokens and make sure you have several hundred tokens available), walk by each student and allow each to select any number from one to a handful of tokens (and any color or combination of colors).
 - After each student has tokens, place a value on them. Place the value only after each student has selected tokens.
 - Display an object that you know students would like to have. Announce to the students that they will receive an “A” for this exercise only if they happen to purchase the item, of which you have only one. Announce that the bidding will begin at 10 and they may use their tokens to bid on the item.
 - Continue the auction until one student has paid the highest price for the item and has received it. Then pull out a large supply of the very same item you just sold while announcing that you just happen to have a few more of these same items and you’re willing to start the bidding at 1. WAIT AND WATCH THE STUDENTS’ REACTIONS.
 - Write the words **supply** and **demand** on the board. Ask the student who bought the overpriced item to define what these terms mean to him in light of the experience he just had. Have him explain to the class why he was so willing to pay such a high price for the item. Ask him if he would have bought the item if he had known there were enough of the items for everyone.
 - Begin a discussion with students on supply and demand. Ask them to explain what happens when the demand exceeds the supply. What happens when the supply is greater than the demand?
 - Return to the lesson. What items did the Pima and Maricopa have to sell that was in demand by the soldiers? What did the soldiers have that was in demand by the Pima and Maricopa? Ask them to explain how value is placed on an item.

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.