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Pulling Down the Clouds

The O'odham Intellectual Tradition during the "Time of Famine"

DAVID MARTÍNEZ

Members of the Pima, or Akimel O'odham, community, despite their experiment with a pre-1934 constitutional government, not to mention their conversion to Christianity and sending their children to school, have not generated writers and activists as did their tribal peers in other parts of the United States such as Oklahoma, the Upper Plains, and the Northeast.¹ More specifically, as of the early twentieth century the Pimas did not have the equivalent of Charles A. Eastman (Dakota), Zitkala-Ša (Lakota), Francis La Flesche (Omaha/Osage), Carlos Montezuma (Yavapai-Apache), or Arthur C. Parker (Seneca), who were luminaries of the progressive Indian movement and members of the Society of American Indians. In fact, the SAI's 1913 list of active members includes only five Pimas: Mrs. Jessie C. Morago, Lewis D. Nelson, Miss Mary W. Nelson, John Plake, and Miss Olie Walker, who were all residents of Sacaton, Arizona.² Furthermore, throughout the eight volumes of the SAI's journal, spanning 1913 through 1920, not a single Pima contributor was published, though occasionally one of the O'odham communities was mentioned in an article, usually within the larger context of problems with the Indian Bureau. In fact, the first time the Pimas were mentioned in the SAI's journal was in the very first issue. Carlos Montezuma (Apache) wrote an article titled "Light on the Indian Situation" in which he dramatically recounted—as he would countless times later—his legendary abduction by a Pima raiding party.³ Why was this the case? And what is the significance of a figure like Thin Leather, who contributed to Russell's Bureau of American Ethnology report on the Pima between November 1901 and June 1902? On the one hand, Thin Leather bequeathed a substantial legacy of traditional stories to the Pima community that is still

relevant to contemporary Pima studies. On the other hand, Thin Leather only spoke O'odham, neither reading nor writing any English and thus requiring a translator in his work with Frank Russell, Jesse Walter Fewkes, and J. W. Lloyd.

In a footnote to the introduction of Donald M. Bahr's book on the Hohokam, which bridges Thin Leather's work with contemporary O'odham studies, he states that "Thin Leather's mythology . . . was taken down independently three times, first by Frank Russell (published in condensed form in 1908), then by J. W. Lloyd (published in a more oral, more Indian English in 1911), and finally by J. W. Fewkes (excerpts published in 1912)."⁴ All of the fieldwork for each of these projects, however, was conducted prior to 1910, producing by turns "The Pima Indians" by Frank Russell, *Aw-aw-tam Indian Nights* by J. William Lloyd, and "Casa Grande, Arizona" by Jesse Walter Fewkes. Both Russell and Fewkes published their reports with the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1904–5 and in 1906–7, respectively, whereas Lloyd published his work independently with the Lloyd Group of Westfield, New Jersey, in 1911. Also noteworthy is the fact that, whereas Thin Leather is listed as merely an informant in the American Ethnology reports, he is given more prominent credit in *Aw-aw-tam Indian Nights*, in which the title page describes the book as "being the Myths and Legends of the Pimas of Arizona as received by J. William Lloyd from Comalk-Hawk-Kih (Thin Buckskin) thru the interpretation of Edward Hubert Wood." It is between these three works that Thin Leather emerges as a prominent but much-overlooked figure of the Pima intellectual tradition.

In comparison to his contemporaries in the progressive Indian community, does it make sense to call Thin Leather an "indigenous intellectual"? In order to appreciate the answer that follows, there are four things that one ought to bear in mind. First, each indigenous community in its own way was capable of addressing the most poignant issues of the human condition: life and death, human nature, origins, community, and the like. Second, one is only an *indigenous* intellectual if one is an indigenous person first and foremost, which includes valuing one's people and their relationship with their homeland, language, kinship, and sacred history. Third, being an intellectual is not limited to being college educated and speaking and writing in a European language. Fourth, while indigenous communities possess an intellectual tradition, they do not have a theoretical one; instead, philosophical and religious

ideas and insights are conveyed primarily through narrative, be it in the form of a story, song, or speech. As such, one must think of Thin Leather not in terms of how he abides by mainstream definitions of intellectual but rather how he sets a standard against which “educated Indians” (such as the author of this article) ought to be measured.

At the same time, the discourse on Thin Leather exists outside of that regarding “educated Indians” such as occurs in the work of Robert Allen Warrior, Jace Weaver, or Craig Womack. The analysis of text-based Indian thought is a project on adapting and adjusting to Anglo-American norms by writers characterized with American Indian experiences and values. Thin Leather, to the contrary, remained within an oral tradition, never writing down his thought, although he communicated through O’odham translators who were capable of reading and writing in English, the results of which shaped two major anthropological reports and one story collection. In light of this, one can only tentatively refer to Thin Leather as an “intellectual,” if for no other reason than the fact that there is no such word in the O’odham language. Lloyd stated that Thin Leather was a “*see-nee-yaw-kum*, or professional traditionalist, who knew all the ancient stories” (*AIN*, 1). In this way he is similar to Owl Ear, another of Russell’s informants who is described as “an old man.” Owl Ear lived at the Salt River village and was “the first from whom a calendar record was obtained.”⁵ More specifically, Owl Ear served as a tribal historian, keeping annals of locally important events notched on a long wooden staff. Calendar sticks, as Paul Ezell describes them, are “mnemonic devices with each notch representing a year, the owner being expected to remember the events of that year.”⁶ Some of what Owl Ear recounted for Russell was of a different order from the cosmogonic account recounted by Thin Leather, such as the battle on December 28, 1872, at the “Tanks,” an area within the Superstition Mountains, during which the Pimas fought against their traditional Apache rivals alongside American soldiers, Maricopas, and even some Apache scouts. According to Owl Ear, “It was a sight long to be remembered” (*PI*, 54).⁷ In addition to two other confrontations with Apaches, Owl Ear recalls a rare earthquake in Pima Country on May 3, 1887. The earthquake, Owl Ear states, “was noticed by many of our people, if not by all, who wondered why the earth shook so” (*PI*, 60). Anna Moore Shaw, the author of *A Pima Past*, refers to Owl Ear’s historical recollections, saying of the calendar-stick keeper:

Owl Ear . . . had a gift for telling stories as well as a good memory. Some of the events recorded on his stick also appear in history books, although the Pimas often attached significance to happenings the white man thought unimportant. They just had different ways of seeing things.⁸

A very different O'odham world appears in the very first volume of the *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians*, published in 1913. In it Papago (Tohono O'odham) student José Ignacio had an excerpt from his essay quoted in an article along with other students. Excerpts were taken from submissions to the SAI's contest for the best Indian student essay on education. Ignacio's quote read:

It is in accordance with the motto "Step out," that we are getting our education, because it is on this point where many of the returned students failed. He has not gained sufficient strength to stand the hard knocks of the habits and customs of his people. He must have a better education to make a center rush on the old Indian ways and make a touchdown. It is clear he must have an education and *one* necessary to produce results, for *the Indian's greatest aid in the future must be himself*.⁹

It is unclear if this is the same José Ignacio who went on to become chairman of the Papago Tribal Council. What is known from the contest information is that the student whose essay was published in full as the "Honor Essay" was James Smith (Warm Spring), who wrote "Education and Progress for the Indian."¹⁰

With respect, then, to the Pima intellectual tradition, despite Ignacio's example, it would not be until after World War II that one sees the appearance of any Pima writers of consequence, namely, George Webb and Anna Moore Shaw. Even today, at the turn of the twenty-first century, the number of Pima writers and intellectuals remains negligible. Aside from poets and language specialists such as Danny Lewis and Ofelia Zepeda, both of whom are Tohono O'odham (formerly called Papago), along with the memoirist James McCarthy, the O'odham presence in the world of letters is modest, to say the least, virtually nonexistent in the case of the Pimas (Akimel O'odham). Nonetheless, as someone who counts himself an active member of the Pima intellectual community, this author regards Thin Leather's example as all the more important

in light of our modern history, which began with the Americans inciting the time of famine during the late 1860s. Precisely because he did not speak or write English, nor did he ever go to school, let alone college, Thin Leather provides a compelling example of indigenizing the scholarly life. Such endeavors, when otherwise shaped by the academic process, would be little more than empty theories and analyses were it not for a concrete connection to people's lives as mediated by the narrative strands that bind our society together, which, for the Pimas, extends from the Story of Creation to the time of famine and its historical consequences. The work of the indigenous intellectual, therefore, is to recover, honor, and revitalize these voices, which ought to be at the foundation of one's research and scholarship, articulating a tribal agenda that meets the multifaceted needs of one's community. For Thin Leather, this meant a people suffering from the impact of having lost the Gila River and the waters that flowed down its banks, which precipitated our cultural decline, as Pima ceremonialism withered in a waterless desert.

The Pima water crisis is brought up twice in the same 1914 issue of the *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians*. First, John M. Oskison (Cherokee) briefly recounts a visit he paid to the Pima reservation in an article titled "Acquiring a Standard of Value," in which he attempts to provide a firsthand survey of living conditions in central and southern Arizona. About the Pimas Oskison writes:

I have been down, within a few weeks, to the Pima Reservation, in Arizona, and I saw there a gradation of opportunity that seemed to me exceedingly interesting. The first group of Pimas that I went to lived near Mesa, in a section which is highly developed and all under irrigation. I found it difficult with my lack of knowledge of the irrigation technique, to follow their talks. They had a series of grievances about their water supply, and it all hinged on certain degrees of service. They were A, B and C users under certain contracts with a certain water users' association. They got so many acre-feet, and got the water on the land at a certain time. From there I went over to Sacaton, and there found a different set of grievances. The men at Sacaton wanted to talk. They seemed at Sacaton to understand less definitely what they wanted. From Sacaton I went to Black Water, and at Black Water it was a whole lot of petty details, like a bunch of children complaining that their

teacher favored somebody else; there was internal dissensions based on what seemed immaterial things.¹¹

In spite of the Winter's Doctrine, which stipulated three different grades of water users, the Pimas still endured a serious water shortage, which threw the community into disarray. Clearly, Oskison did not understand, let alone appreciate, the subtleties of the men's complaints, as they were contingent on a complicated analysis of reserved water rights on the reservation. What Oskison does detect, in spite of his condescending attitude, is the urgency of the situation. The second article in the 1914 issue, titled "Shall the Pimas Be Robbed of Water?" is a more sympathetic and informed essay (at least, compared to Oskison's), evidencing that the time of famine persists even in a so-called Progressive Era:

The Pima Indians need water if they are to continue to live. The Pimas need the water that nature provided. That water has been appropriated by the white settlers. To offset the injustice the Pimas were sold wells of poisonous water whose chemical deposits spoil the land for agriculture. The Pimas did not want those wells. But the Pimas must pay for them. For centuries the Pimas have used the waters of the Gila River, but now they are deprived of it and given instead well water pumped by electricity at such great cost that its use, even if free from alkali, is prohibitive. The Pima Indians wish to live; they do not wish to become paupers and beggars. The United States has no right to slaughter the Pimas industrially. The guardian Government has no right to sell the birthright of the Pimas. Yet it has failed to protect them. The Pimas appeal to the Nation, they appeal to Congress, they appeal to you, reader. Help the Pimas; help right; forbid injustice! You have the opportunity of writing your Congressman in support of the bill introduced by Hon. Carl Hayden (H.R. 17016), providing for the construction of the San Carlos Irrigation project. This bill provides for furnishing the Pima Reservation with water free of construction charges, which shall be judicially determined if entitled by reason of prior appropriation by the Pimas. The Indian Rights Association indorses the bill.¹²

One can justifiably claim that the "industrial slaughter" of which the article speaks is a pre-World War II figure of speech signifying what to-

day is called “genocide.” It was under similarly difficult circumstances that the earliest example of Pima (Akimel O’odham) writing appeared in print courtesy of Frank Russell, the young Harvard-trained anthropologist whose monograph, “The Pima Indians” (the same work in which *Thin Leather* appears), was published after the author passed away on November 15, 1903, in Sacaton, Arizona, at the age of thirty-five. The writing in question was a turn-of-the-twentieth-century constitution that was developed more than a full generation before the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act by two Carlisle Indian School graduates: Solon Jones, the Pima interpreter at Sacaton who first suggested the idea for a constitution, and Earl A. Whitman, the disciplinarian at a local boarding school who took on the job of writing everything down on paper. According to Russell, the motivation for constructing a constitution were the hard times the community was enduring as a consequence of “the time of famine.” Russell writes:

In recent years those living about the agency on the Gila have been deprived of water for irrigating their farms by the white settlers who have taken out ditches from the river above them. The stream which formerly furnished far more water than they could use is now a white stretch of blistering sand the greater part of the year. This has resulted in the impoverishment of the Indians; a few have died of starvation, and many others, owing to lessened powers of resistance, have succumbed to disease.¹³

Out of this strife a new era was born in which a younger generation sought to lead “the Santan community,” which “had become displeased with the miserly character of its old chief,” in a new direction. A sign of the times was marked in October 1901, when the community acquired “a more extensive system of canals.” In light of this development, the Santan community selected a new chief and collaborated on the composition of a constitution, which they submitted to the Indian agent and Pima elders for their approval and which was “modelled after that of the United States.”¹⁴ The canal was important news for the simple reason that the people were desperate for water. “In my last report,” states Elwood Hadley, U.S. Indian agent for the Pima Agency on August 15, 1901,

I expatiated on the starving and helpless condition of the Indians under my charge and the necessity for the building of a storage

reservoir by the Government. Practically the same conditions exist now, and the experience of the past year has confirmed me in my opinion and emphasized the need for the reservoir.¹⁵

At the same time, as is well known, the Pimas, similar to other indigenous nations, were under pressure to adapt to the dominant Anglo-American society.

What resulted from Jones and Whitman's endeavor was a document that Russell quoted in its entirety in a 1903 issue of the *Journal of American Folklore*, in which he notes that both the Indian agent and the community acceded their approval "with scarcely a dissenting voice."¹⁶ The content of the constitution, in spite of its proclaimed model, consists of a set of bylaws governing the duties of various key tribal positions, such as head chief, assistant chiefs, minute men, and the council, as well as the management of tribal resources, such as the canal system, water usage, roads, livestock, fields, ditches, and dams. The thinking that went behind this document, however, was inspired more by indigenous customs and values, such as those handed down from the time of the Hohokam. Fewkes observed during the 1908 excavation of Casa Grande Ruins near Florence, Arizona:

The present Pima say that they now organize to construct irrigation ditches in a way somewhat similar to that of the ancients. As all clans enjoy the advantage of the water thus obtained, every clan has its representatives in constructing the canals, and failure to work involves loss of water right, although a clan may be represented by members of other clans. The amount of labor necessary in construction of new ditches is settled in council, in which all clans interested take part.¹⁷

Although the constitution immediately met with opposition (instigated, according to Russell, by fines for violating land and cattle bylaws, which the violators did not want to pay), the document itself, contrary to the times in which it was composed, may be described as less an article of assimilation and more a statement of inherent sovereignty. Although the Pimas were suffering, as were all indigenous nations, from the consequences of settler communities soaking up resources, not to mention the heavy hand of the Indian Bureau oppressing their political freedoms, they still maintained their aboriginal right of occupancy, which came

with inhabiting an area recognized by the federal government as being exclusively Pima land—land, more to the point, that the Pimas had regarded as theirs since time immemorial. Still, though the Pimas were never victims of the 1830 Indian Removal Act, which dominated federal Indian policy from the 1830s to 1850s, nonetheless, beginning in 1853, which inaugurated the American period, the Pimas went from “favored nation” status to destitution in a matter of a decade and a half. Because they were regarded as “friendly” toward the few white immigrants who initially entered the Salt and Gila river regions, the Pimas were recognized as a vital source of provisions, not to mention protection from the Apaches. Thus, in light of the amity between the two communities, the Pimas were willing to side with American soldiers on sorties into Apache territory. Juan Thomas, a Pima from Blackwater, Arizona, recalled that sometime in 1856–57

the Pimas and Maricopas joined the white soldiers in a campaign against the Apaches under White Hat. Two Pimas were killed and two wounded, but no Apaches were injured. While the Pimas were on their way home still another of their party was killed. The Pimas burned their dead. Later they killed several Apaches who were raising corn on Salt River. (*PI*, 46)

A major consequence of westward expansion was the trade imbalance, which eventually led to Pima destitution. Upon building a stage line between El Paso, Texas, and Fort Yuma, Arizona, which brought in droves of immigrants, especially soldiers, the Pimas did not see an adequate return for the land use that the Americans were taking for granted. Ezell points out that the Pimas quickly observed that what distinguished the Americans from the Mexicans and Spaniards who preceded them was the quantity of goods that they brought with them into their territory. However, with respect to U.S. government employees, the Pimas were met with the stony indifference of federal bureaucracy. In other words, government representatives came across as greedy and insensitive to Pima needs in a rapidly changing economic and geopolitical environment. “However well or poorly perceived or understood by the Indians,” Ezell writes, “federal regulations influenced their attitudes toward government personnel from the beginning of their contacts.”¹⁸

Typical of Pima-U.S. relations is the story of John Walker, the newly appointed Indian agent to Pima Country, Lieutenant Chapman, an Army

officer, and either Juan Antonio Lluñas, Pima governor, or Antonio Azul, principal Pima chief (versions vary on the Pima leader involved). In 1858 Walker allegedly promised the Pimas that they would be supplied with “plows, spades, shovels, axes, and every article necessary for their comfort.” However, during a subsequent visit, when the promised items were not forthcoming, one of the Pima leaders offered to purchase the much-needed implements. Lieutenant Chapman explained that he could not sell them government property, as he was prohibited by government regulations. In response, the Pima doubled his offer, only to hear the explanation repeated. Exasperated, the Pima leader proclaimed: “I believe your people are a nation of liars, and *you are a liar individually*; you came with your agent and you heard what he said—you sanctioned it. . . . I trust you no more.” Adding insult to injury was news that the Apaches were being provided plows, shovels, and other tools, even though the Apaches did not want these things in the first place.¹⁹

Pima resilience enabled them to eke out a slow but growing economy during the first fifteen years of American occupation. The situation became dire, however, after the American Civil War, when a fresh wave of settlers moved in, consequently bringing about “the depletion of the Pimas’ Gila River water.” At the start of the 1870s “settlers had located above the Pima reservation, opened large canals, and were wasting water rather than returning it to the Gila.” Thus, for the next forty years ensued what the Pimas called the “time of famine.” During this era the Pimas saw themselves change from independent farmers, competing with their white counterparts, to being underpaid wage laborers and sometimes welfare recipients. Russell documents from Pima calendar sticks the travails of the precipitous economic decline, noting episodes of “alcoholism, increased killing as Indians quarreled more, and increased inter-community strife.”²⁰

At the time when Jones and Whitman were writing the constitution, the Pimas had already undertaken some rather drastic steps at adapting to—perhaps the better word is “surviving”—their difficult circumstances. In addition to giving up their farms for wage labor in the newly founded city of Phoenix and its environs, such as Mesa and Chandler, many Pimas converted to Christianity, in particular, Presbyterianism, during the 1890s as well as opened schools that were run by white teachers, such as the Cook School in Sacaton, which opened in 1871, becoming a boarding school in 1881. Additionally, by 1902 there were day schools at

Gila Crossing and Salt River as well as Blackwater, Lehi, Maricopa, and Casa Blanca. Several Pima parents even sent their children as far away as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, which hosted seventy-one Pima students during its nearly forty years of operation. Seventeen others, including members of Antonio Azul's family, went to the Hampton Normal & Agricultural Institute in Virginia.²¹

Perhaps as a result of the Carlisle educational experience, the "subject-matter of the constitution itself," in Russell's opinion, exhibits some obvious faults, namely, "the arrangement is not good, the phraseology is bad, in places condensation would improve, and in others there are omissions." Russell nonetheless argues that the men who crafted the constitution are "worthy of our respect."²² The collective "we" of Russell's appraisal, however, does not refer to a community of equals that includes the Pimas; rather, it is the civilized and modern white world, such as Russell's university-trained peers, whose favorable judgment is being carried. Writing at a time when social scientists were still debating the relative humanity of indigenous peoples on the evolutionary scale, Russell lauds the Committee on Constitution and By-laws for its modest but meaningful attempt at American-style constitutional government. As Russell extols with the endemically myopic vision of anthropology:

At the time of their [Jones and Whitman] birth their people [the Pimas] had not a single house more pretentious than the willow *ki*, shaped like a beehive and scarcely high enough to enable its occupants to stand upright. They have grown up with almost purely aboriginal surroundings, their homes separated by several miles of absolutely uninhabitable desert from the nearest white habitations.²³

Russell clearly has in mind his own 1901–2 field observations of Pima villages, in which he consistently saw very little "progress" in "Pima architecture" beyond the traditional home, or *ki*, best described, as Peter Nabakov writes, as a "brush and mud-covered structure" that "was slightly excavated and banked with earth, with a domed adobe-plastered roof . . . often accompanied by a ramada," but that Russell condescendingly refers to as looking like "an overturned washbasin" (*PI*, 153).²⁴ Regarding Pueblo-style architecture as being farther up the ladder toward true civilization, Russell points out that the

first Piman adobe house was built by the head chief, Antonio Azul, twenty-two years ago, and since that time the people have made very commendable progress. Some villages—such, for example, at Blackwater—now contain few dwellings that are not of adobe. However, there are others, such as Skâ'kâik, that retain the old-time ki. (*PI*, 153)

Out of this persistently Pima world, the only words other than the Pima constitution published by an O'odham during the time of famine appeared in an ethnographic report, an archaeological survey, and a general audience collection of traditional stories. Of significance here is that one man in particular, Thin Leather, served as a vital resource for each publication, and his knowledge was accorded great respect by each person who worked with him.

“The Pima Indians,” which was originally published in the *Twenty-sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1904–1905*, then republished as a book in 1908, was based on fieldwork conducted from November 1901 to June 1902 out of Sacaton, which is the political center of the Gila River Pima-Maricopa community. With respect to the information gathered for study, Russell notes “the aid of five native interpreters” (*PI*, 17na)—José Lewis, Melissa Jones, Jacob L. Roberts, Carl Smart, and Thomas Allison—who assisted him with recording the indigenous knowledge of “ten Pima men and women, selected because of their intelligence and special aptitude in certain lines” (*PI*, 17). In a lengthy footnote Russell provides the names of his informants along with a brief biographical description: Kâ'mâl tkâk, Thin Leather; Sala Hina, Sarah Fish, or Hina; Sika'tcu, Dry; Antonio Azul; Ki'satc, Cheese; William Blackwater; Ha'hali, Juan Thomas; Tco'kût Nak, Owl Ear; Benjamin Thompson; and Kâemâ-â, Rattlesnake Head (*PI*, 17–18na). At the top of Russell's list of informants is the most important of the group:

Kâ'mâl tkâk, Thin Leather, an old man, is said to be the most popular of the few remaining narrators of myths and speeches, or “speakers.” He is an intimate friend of the head chief, Antonio Azul, and has always occupied a prominent place in the councils of the tribe. In his prime he exceeded 6 feet in stature and was strong and sturdy of frame. Indeed, his hand grasp is yet vigorous enough to make his silent and friendly greeting somewhat formidable. Intelligent, patient, dignified, his influence must have been

helpful to those youths who formerly came to him for instruction. From him was obtained the cosmogonic myth of the tribe, many speeches, songs, and much general information. He also made a model of a loom and a few other specimens for the collection of material pertaining to the Pimas. (*PI*, 17)²⁵

Thin Leather's status as one "of the few remaining narrators of myths and speeches" may unfortunately be attributed to the cultural decline caused during the time of famine by social strife and a federal Indian policy that actively sought the elimination of indigenous traditions. Certainly, Russell perceived the traditions that Thin Leather possessed as endangered when he ruefully refers to the young people "who formerly came to him for instruction." Yet because Thin Leather must have appeared to have stepped out of the mythic Pima world that his stories evoked, the impression he made on others was profound. J. William Lloyd recounted his first impression when he was introduced to Thin Leather by Edward H. Wood, Thin Leather's grand-nephew. "We found the old man," Lloyd recalls, "plowing for corn in his field. The strong, friendly grasp he gave my hand was all that could be desired." Then, in a courteous regard for Thin Leather's status in the Pima community, Lloyd goes on to state his impression of this revered figure: "Tall, lean, dignified, with a harsh, yet musical voice; keen, intelligent black eyes and an impressive manner, he was plainly a gentleman and a scholar, even if he could neither read nor write, nor speak a sentence of English" (*AIN*, 6-7).

Thin Leather, to be sure, was not the only O'odham "gentleman and scholar" around. As noted above, Thin Leather was one of several Pima informants consulted by Russell, including Antonio Azul, Sala Hina, and Owl Ear, all of whom stand out as persons of note in the Pima community. Worth noting at this point are Russell's observations of Azul, who "was the head chief of the tribe, and from him much information concerning war customs and recent history was obtained" (*PI*, 18na). The Reverend Charles H. Cook, who began missionizing the Gila River Pimas in 1870, recounts in a letter dated March 29, 1893, a meeting he had with Azul, who was "probably about seventy-five years of age" at the time of their encounter. During the meeting, according to Cook, Azul recalled for him an expedition against the Apaches that the Pimas undertook with American soldiers under Gen. A. J. Alexander.²⁶ Many years later,

Anna Moore Shaw, while commenting on a photograph of the aged head chief, stated: "Chief Antonio Azul was my *wihkol*—a distant relative on my mother's side. . . . I remember him as a very old wise man, as in this picture, but I have been told that in his youth he was a fiery and handsome example of Pima manhood."²⁷

However, because of the prominent figures working with Russell, it is easy to overlook the fact that the stories, speeches, and songs were translated by an equally important personage in the O'odham intellectual tradition. José Lewis Brennan, a Tohono O'odham, was noted as one of Russell's five translators in Sacaton. About Brennan, Russell informs his reader:

The principal interpreter, who was employed by the month during the entire period of the writer's stay, was José Lewis, a Papago who had lived from childhood among the Pimas. He had once been engaged by the Bureau of American Ethnology to write a vocabulary of his own language and to supply other information, so that he was acquainted with the phonetic alphabet and other approved methods of procedure. He was engaged in linguistic work the greater part of the time. (*PI*, 18)

Donald M. Bahr subsequently added more detail to Brennan's biography and an appraisal of his contribution as a linguist in a book on O'odham oratory, beginning with the observation that the "oldest known Pima-English text of ritual oratory was written by a Papago, Jose Lewis Brennan, in 1897. It is a salt oration." With respect to Brennan's work with Russell, which involved all of Russell's collaborators, Bahr observes: "Brennan transcribed and translated the richest collection of Piman oratory ever made. In published form it runs for 50 pages and comprises ten different texts. Brennan also did the 56 pages of songs in the same volume." Bahr goes on to commend Brennan's impressive skill as an interpreter and linguist, stating: "It is to Brennan's lasting credit that working simply with pencil and paper he transformed Thin Leather's wholly oral product into the medium of writing. Extraordinary patience and good will must have existed between the two men, plus translating genius on Brennan's part."²⁸

In "The Pima Indians" Russell alludes to Thin Leather at various points, providing the reader a fragmented but fascinating picture in addition to actual photographs, a frontal and a profile view, of the revered storyteller

(*PI*, pl. 44). Aside from the brief biography quoted earlier, we learn that Thin Leather is approximately seventy-five at the time of Russell's field-work, making him a part of a generation that knew the Pima homeland prior to the time of famine and even before there was a reservation (*PI*, 196). The two photos show an elderly man from the chest up wearing a jacket and shirt of the era, complete with a neckerchief tied around the collar. Thin Leather's hair is white with a few flecks of black, and his face is sagacious, alert, and pensive, as if pondering the strange ethnographic practice to which he has been asked to make a substantial contribution. Indirectly, it becomes apparent that Thin Leather may have been more than a storyteller; he may also have been a *ma:kai*, or medicine man. While describing the *â'mîna*, Russell states:

Among the most important of the sacred objects in the paraphernalia of the medicine-men were the *â'mîna*, or medicine sticks. They were usually of arrowwood; always bound together with cotton twine of native spinning, either with or without feathers attached to each separate stick. There are six *â'mîna* bundles in the collection. One was made by *Kâ'mâl tkâk* [Thin Leather], to be used exclusively in the exorcism of the *Tcu'nyîm*, a spirit of disease. The bundle contains four groups of sticks: Two pairs, a bundle of 4, and one of 6. All are plain, being unmarked in any way. (*PI*, 106)

In addition to the Pima medical arts, Thin Leather demonstrated some of the practical crafts, such as weaving, which among the Pimas is generally a male occupation, as it is among the Hopi. With respect to Thin Leather's loom-making expertise, which is mentioned above, Russell observes that the Pima weaving tradition "is dying with the passing of the older generation" (*PI*, 148), making Thin Leather's knowledge all the more valuable. Symptomatic of this endangered art is the difficulty with which enough Pima cotton was procured for a demonstration on a model loom. One must remember that this was during the time of famine, when the phenomenon of "Pima cotton" had not yet arisen as part of the global economy. "This loom," Russell acknowledges, "was made by the writer's old friend *Kâ'mâl tkâk* [Thin Leather], who, though an adept in weaving, could not spin and had to engage a woman to do that portion of the work" (*PI*, 148). Nevertheless, "*Kâ'mâl tkâk* [Thin Leather] succeeded in finishing the spinning before the writer had an opportunity

to witness the process” (*PI*, 148).²⁹ It is unclear if the items produced during Russell’s fieldwork were collected for a museum or if they were simply done for the sake of field notes and the occasional photograph.

Russell also attributes to his old friend a calendar of twelve named months that is distinct from another list provided to him by Azul. Russell accounts for the discrepancy by saying that the “moons” are of “recent origin.” “Not many,” Russell goes on to explain, “have any names for them and these do not agree even in the same village.” After this statement Russell presents Thin Leather’s and Azul’s calendars side by side (*PI*, 36). What Russell does not bother to consider is whether or not the two diverging calendars represent regional differences within the broader Pima or O’odham homeland. Just because Thin Leather and Azul were living in Sacaton at the time of Russell’s fieldwork in 1901–2 does not necessarily mean that their respective bodies of knowledge come from the same place. What Russell does recount is a legend likely told by Thin Leather about the origin of the Pima notion of time:

It is said that when Elder Brother was leaving Pimería for the last time he told the people to count the tail feathers of the little bird, Gisap, which are twelve in number, and that they should divide the year into that number of parts. He gave them names for these parts, except for the coldest and the hottest months. (*PI*, 36)³⁰

The coldest and hottest months correspond to the rainy seasons in the Sonoran Desert, the most important of which is the monsoon season from July through August, when the rain ceremony, the Wi:gida, was performed, although, given that the rain ceremony does not garner much more than a few brief references in Russell’s work, it may have already incurred a significant decline as a social and religious practice. What Russell records instead are details like the names of historic Pima villages: “During the early part of the nineteenth century there were eight Pima villages on the Gila, according to statements made by Kâ’mâl tkâk [Thin Leather] and other old men of the tribe” (*PI*, 20). The villages that Thin Leather and others named were:

1. Petâ’ikuk, Where the Petai (ash tree?) stands,
2. Tcupatâk, Mortar Stone,
3. Tcu’wutukawutûk, Earth Hill,
4. Os Kâ’kûmûk Tco’t-cikâm, Arrow-bush Standing,
5. Ko’-okûp Van’sîk, Medicine Paraphernalia,
6. Ko’mît, Back,
7. Tco’ûtîk Wu’tîk, Charcoal Laying,
- 8

and 9. Akûcîny, Creek Mouth. One 5 miles west of Picacho Peak and another southwest of Maricopa station. Both depend upon flood waters. (*PI*, 22)

Russell also notes the two Maricopa villages within the Pima homeland, Hi'nâmâ, or Hina Head, and Tco'ûtcîk Wu'tcîk. Residents of the latter presently live below Gila Crossing, while the "Hi'nâmâ people now reside on the south bank of the Salt, east of the Mormon settlement of Lehi" (*PI*, 22). The Pima villages, however, "were principally upon the south bank of the [Gila] river, along which they extended a distance of about 30 miles. Some have been abandoned; in other cases the name has been retained, but the site has been moved" (*PI*, 20).³¹

There have been various, albeit dubious, attempts at generating accurate numbers for the Pima population. Russell cites two late-nineteenth-century sources: first, a report that "in 1858 Lieut. A. B. Chapman, First Dragoons, U.S. Army, completed a census of the Pimas and Maricopas," which was published in 1859, complete with the "names of the villages, leaders, and populations for both tribes." Between the ten Pima villages listed, Chapman counted 1,152 "Warriors" and 2,965 "Women and children," for a total of 4,117. The two Maricopa villages listed contained a mere 192 "Warriors" and 326 "Women and children," making a modest total of 518 (*PI*, 20–21nc). Russell points out: "The number of Maricopas is included that the comparatively small importance of that tribe may be appreciated." Russell then cites J. Ross Browne, "a member of Commissioner Poston's party" who "visited the villages in January, 1864." Browne's count was slightly different from Chapman's, as the former enumerated ten Pima villages and two Maricopa villages, subsequently listing the names of seven villages for a total population of 3,067, adding, "There are 1,200 laboring Pimas and 1,000 warriors" (*PI*, 21nc). In turn, the population, according to the thirteenth census of 1910, was 4,236 Pimas and 3,798 Papagos.³²

We must now turn to Thin Leather's most lasting and important contribution to his descendants. The sites of the oldest villages named above and the land that surrounds them are the location of the origin, or cosmogonic, myth that Thin Leather recounts for Russell. In "The Pima Indians" the Creation Story, or Tcŋ-Ûnnyikita, which according to Russell's notes is also called a "smoke talk" (*PI*, 206na) in likely reference to wintertime hearth fires, is roughly twenty-four pages long before

switching to a section on Coyote.³³ According to Lloyd, before recounting the origin story Thin Leather

began by saying that these were the stories he used to hear his father tell, they being handed down from father to son, and that when he was little he did not pay much attention, but when he grew older he determined to learn them and asked his father to teach him, which his father did. And now he knew them all. (*AIN*, 36)

In Russell's book *Thin Leather* recounts the alleged corruption of Elder Brother and the need to terminate his negative impact among the people. Toward this end one of the survivors of the flood, Vulture, as Thin Leather tells it, "told the sun to spit on the house of Elder brother" (*PI*, 225na), which is said to have been in the Estrella Mountains.³⁴ Vulture also told the sun to spit "on the four pools of water at the va'akî where Elder Brother kept his magic power, on his dwelling places so that heat might fall upon him and smother him" (*PI*, 225). Vulture's instructions worked, and Elder Brother died as a result. But who was Vulture, such that he had the power to kill a sacred being? According to Thin Leather,

Vulture was a man who transformed himself into a bird with his own magic power and had gone through the openings in the sky and thus saved himself from destruction during the flood. After he came down from the sky he wandered about the country and finally built a va'-âki, magic house, the ruins of which yet remain, south of where Phoenix now stands, between the Gila and Salt rivers. (*PI*, 225)³⁵

Another version of the Creation Story follows the section on Coyote, going for little more than a page. There is an abundance of spelling and grammar mistakes, making the piece difficult to read. Russell explains its inclusion in an accompanying footnote, which states: "It seems worth while to present here the version of the cosmogonic myth which was written for the author by a young Pima who had learned to write English during the term of several years which he spent at a Government school" (*PI*, 237na). Russell conscientiously does not name the young Pima author of the poorly written alternate Creation Story. He does, however, regard the poor writing as being typical of the students graduating from places like the Carlisle Indian School, where the Pima constitution au-

thors obtained their education. Russell continues his footnote in the spirit of the salvage anthropologist, saying: “It [the alternate Creation Story] illustrates the confusion existing in the minds of the younger generation; to some extent, also, the order of words in the Pima sentence, as well as the difficulties that must speedily beset the ethnological investigator as soon as the older people have gone” (*PI*, 237na).

Thin Leather’s knowledge of medicine and songs completes Russell’s portrait of his old friend in “The Pima Indians.” More specifically, Russell describes Thin Leather as a medicine man’s assistant while discussing an O’odham treatment for an “evil spirit” called *À’mîna*, which is a “disease of the throat which causes the victim to lose flesh” (*PI*, 265).³⁶ The treatment regimen consists of prescribed ritual actions, information about which Thin Leather willingly supplies Russell:

The treatment consists in placing *à’mîna* [sticks] in an olla of water to soak while the doctor [i.e., *ma:kai*, or medicine man] or his assistant blows through a tube, called the *tcunyîm* cigarette, upon the forehead, chin, breast, and stomach of the patient. The tube has a bunch of feathers attached called *a-an kiatûta*, and these are next swept in quick passes downward over the body. The *à’mîna* are then taken and sucked four times by the patient, after which the end of the bundle is pressed against the patient’s body, then laid flat upon his breast and rubbed. Finally, the assistant repeats the speech of *Siu’u* [Elder Brother] at the time when that deity restored himself to life [after being killed according to Vulture’s instructions], at the same time making passes toward the patient. (*PI*, 265–66)

The three songs that Thin Leather sang for Russell, according to the published record, consisted of a song from the Creation Story, in which Earth Magician, or *Juved ma:kai*, “shapes this world” (*PI*, 272).³⁷ *Juved ma:kai*, or Earth Doctor, as he is called in the creation myth section of “The Pima Indians,” figures prominently in Thin Leather’s narrative. Brennan’s translation mimics the biblical language of Genesis:

In the beginning there was nothing where now are earth, sun, moon, stars, and all that we see. Ages long the darkness was gathering, until it formed a great mass in which developed the spirit of Earth Doctor [*Juved ma:kai*], who, like the fluffy wisp of cotton

that floats upon the wind, drifted to and fro without support of place to fix himself. (*PI*, 206)

Because of his need for a place on which to settle, Earth Doctor created the creosote bush, which necessitated making the land into which the creosote could implant its long, deep roots. The song corresponds, more specifically, to the part of Thin Leather's narrative when Juved ma:kai had taken from his "breast a little dust and flattened it into a cake" (*PI*, 206).³⁸ Upon bringing forth "some kind of plant," which was a creosote bush, Juved ma:kai attempted three times to stand his new creation on the recently formed cake of earth only to see it topple each time. On the fourth attempt, however, the creosote bush remained standing upright, at which point Juved ma:kai sang a song of celebration:

Earth Magician shapes this world.
Behold what he can do!
Round and smooth he molds it.
Behold what he can do!

Earth Magician makes the mountains.
Heed what he has to say!
He it is that makes the mesas.
Heed what he has to say.

Earth Magician shapes this world;
Earth Magician makes its mountains;
Makes all larger, larger, larger.
Into the earth the magician glances;
Into its mountains he may see. (*PI*, 206–7)

The additional songs that Russell recorded by Thin Leather were about rain and corn, respectively. Both songs, although this is not made explicit in Russell's text, were more than likely sung during the appropriate ceremonies. The rain song that Thin Leather sung is made all the more mysterious because it evokes a sense of the extraordinary without ever naming or even mentioning a sacred being. Instead, the song conjures a vision of a healthy field of corn swaying and rustling in the wind as evening approaches, which is an extraordinary image given the arduous times in which it was recounted. The song then climaxes with the refrain:

Hi-ya naiho-o! The earth is rumbling.
From the beating of our basket drums.
The earth is rumbling from the beating
Of our basket drums, everywhere humming.
Earth is rumbling, everywhere raining. (*PI*, 331–32)

According to Russell, the rain ceremony, or Tcutc kita (Wi:gida), which means “to make rain” (*PI*, 347na), is performed when “one of the leading men who understands the ceremony” notifies “the medicine-men, the orator or reciter, and the singer” (*PI*, 347). The ceremony commences with the recitation of a ritual speech that recounts the mythic time when “the earth was new” and “it was shaking and rough” (*PI*, 347). The people needed a way to gain control over the land and make it stable. In Brennan’s translation the orator recites the speech in the first person and the present tense, recalling journeys to the four directions: to Black Mocking Bird in the west, Blue Mocking Bird in the south, White Mocking Bird in the east, then “above me enveloped in darkness lived the magician Kuvik,” whom one can only suppose lives to the north (*PI*, 347–49). What the seeker in the speech wanted at each turn were “commands to control the hills, mountains, trees, everything” (*PI*, 348). After visiting the three mockingbirds, the seeker observes after seeing Kuvik that the “earth became much quieter, but still moved somewhat” (*PI*, 349).

With more work to do, the seeker then spots Gray Spider, a “wise man” who further stabilizes the earth by sewing bundles of sticks along “the edges of the land” (*PI*, 350). Gray Spider then proceeds to envelop the land with the powers of the three houses that stand at three of the four cardinal directions. In these houses dwell three different rain gods whose powers are colored black for west, blue for south, and white for east. Kuvik, of course, lives in the north, and his home was not a part of Gray Spider’s work. Black Measuring Worm and Blue Gopher assist the seeker at completing his task, making the land hospitable for the people. Black Measuring Worm aligns the poles around which Blue Gopher covers the frame with brush, something like the willow *ki* that Russell belittled earlier.

Unexpectedly, snow begins to dust the ground. Since the Pimas do not have a migration legend, as do the Hopi, for example, we can only assume that the ceremonial speech refers to a rare occurrence of snow in the area, as opposed to a place beyond the Gila River valley. Upon light-

ing a ritual cigarette, an unnamed figure blows smoke in an arch toward the east. Grass appears. The speech concludes with the fruition that was caused by the medicine power gathered by the seeker. Referring to the unnamed figure, the speech states:

Scattering seed, he caused the corn with the large stalk, large leaf, full tassel, good ears to grow and ripen. Then he took it and stored it away. As the sun's rays extend to the plants, so our thoughts reached out to the time when we would enjoy the life-giving corn. With gladness we cooked and ate the corn and, free from hunger and want, were happy. Your worthy sons and daughters, knowing nothing of the starvation periods, have been happy. The old men and the old women will have their lives prolonged yet day after day by the possession of corn.

People must unite in desiring rain. If it rains their land shall be as a garden, and they will not be as poor as they have been. (*PI*, 351–52)

Needless to say, this is a very poignant speech to recount during a time of famine, which, as we should not fail to remember, was still ongoing when Thin Leather recited these words for Russell. The corn song is equally moving in this regard, evoking as it does the name of Elder Brother, who consequently blows winds over a mountain, Ta-atúkam, driving “the clouds with their loud thundering” (*PI*, 334).³⁹ In the end, because of the rain there is singing and rejoicing.

On the one hand, it appears that Thin Leather was taken advantage of by Russell, as were the other informants, because of his ignorance regarding the anthropological process. In other words, because Thin Leather and the others never went to the American-run schools, let alone college, they could not possibly fully comprehend the purpose and ideas behind Russell's fieldwork in Sacaton. Did the Pimas ask questions, and did Russell take them seriously? We will more than likely never know. We do not even know from Russell's final report what he may have told his collaborators about his work. On the other hand, what we cannot doubt is the expertise with which Thin Leather, in particular, understood the stories and traditions he relayed for Russell and the indigenous values and customs surrounding them. Taking into consideration the times in which Thin Leather collaborated with Russell in addition to Fewkes and Lloyd, it is conceivable that he felt what many aged Indian leaders did

during this critical era—that “the old ways were gone.” Unlike Russell, however, who showed obvious signs of suffering from the “vanishing Indian” syndrome endemic to his discipline, Thin Leather would have understood the fate of the old ways, in this case, the O’odham *himdag*, in mythological terms. Giving stories and traditions to Russell, Fewkes, and Lloyd was like when I’ittoi, Elder Brother, jumped into his olla as the Great Flood covered all the land. I’ittoi then sang songs for his safety and well-being as the waters tossed him about. When the flood had subsided, however, I’ittoi emerged from his olla, singing:

Here I come forth! Here I come forth!
With magic powers I emerge.
Here I come forth! Here I come forth!
With magic powers I emerge.

I stand alone! Alone!
Who will accompany me?
My staff and my crystal
They shall abide with me. (*PI*, 210–11)

I’ittoi emerged into a whole new land and a whole new world from the one he left behind. Nonetheless, he brought his power with him, using it as the foundation for the new life he was compelled to lead now, a life that would form the basis for the O’odham *himdag* and the communities that would maintain its principles. The books into which Thin Leather placed his knowledge are comparable to I’ittoi’s olla, as the time of famine is the obverse of the Great Flood: it is the absolute lack of water rather than its abundance that is sweeping away the O’odham world as he once knew it.

Thin Leather played a much more peripheral role in Jesse Walter Fewkes’s BAE report on his excavation of Casa Grande Ruins during the winters of 1906–7 and 1907–8, less than a decade after Russell conducted his fieldwork in Sacaton. In “Casa Grande, Arizona” Thin Leather recalls a story about the Hohokam ruins that stand prominently near Florence, Arizona, ruins that belong to a culture as distant and mysterious to outsiders as the Anasazi ruins to the north. Fewkes says of the aged but knowledgeable storyteller:

The following existing Pima legends relating to Morning Green, chief of Casa Grande, were collected from Thin Leather (Kamalt-

kak), an old Pima regarded as one of the best informed story-tellers of the tribe. Some of his legends repeat statements identical with those told to Father Font, 137 years ago, a fact which proves apparently that they have been but little changed by intervening generations. . . . The following stories supplement published legends of this chief and other ancients and shed light on the condition of early society in the settlement over which Morning Green is said to have ruled.⁴⁰

Thin Leather goes on to tell a story titled "How a Chief of Another 'Great House' Enticed the Women from Casa Grande," which is followed by another legend attributed to Thin Leather called "How Turquoises Were Obtained from Chief Morning Green."⁴¹ These stories are then followed by four additional legends; however, it is unclear if these are attributed to Thin Leather as well. The legends, titled "How Morning Green Lost His Power over the Wind Gods and the Rain Gods," "The Birth of Hok," "A Creation Legend," and "A Flood Legend," are similar to stories Thin Leather told to Russell and Lloyd. With respect to Thin Leather, Fewkes recounts: "Thin Leather slept for several weeks in the west room of the [Casa Grande] ruin. The hooting of the owls which nest in the upper walls may add to the Pimas' dread of [being near the ruins], but did not seem to disturb him."⁴² Fewkes found Thin Leather's attitude fascinating because other Pimas "formerly had a superstitious fear of Casa Grande which at times led them to avoid it, especially at night, and many do not now willingly sleep or camp near this remarkable monument of antiquity."⁴³ The so-called superstitious attitude of which Fewkes speaks is common among many tribes across the Southwest regarding ruins. The Navajo, for example, are taught to respect the Anasazi ruins located throughout their reservation such as in Canyon de Chelly. They even go so far as to prohibit themselves from either visiting the ruin sites or taking pottery sherds and artifacts from them.

Thin Leather's attitude toward Casa Grande is symptomatic of someone who believed that the sanctity of the place had been destroyed by Fewkes's excavation, leaving him with little concern for sleeping there. Consider, for example, how Russell portrays Thin Leather's peer Sala Hina. Russell describes her as "an earnest Christian" who "had no scruples about relating all that she knew concerning the religious beliefs of the tribe." Yet, similar to Thin Leather, Sala Hina possessed an impressive

amount of traditional knowledge. In this regard Russell notes that Hina had “undergone a long and exacting training in practical botany which rendered her a valuable assistant in gathering information concerning the economic plants of the region.” Lastly, she “inherited through her father some of the Kwahadk’ potters’ skills, which enabled her to impart valuable knowledge of the art to furnish specimens” (*PI*, 17na). Russell goes on to make specific references to Hina throughout “The Pima Indians,” including information she provided on cattle, basketry, sieve making, pottery, intermarriage, and medicine men. Later on, Fewkes points out her peripheral participation at the excavation he led at Casa Grande, stating in a footnote: “At the present day Sala (Sarah) Hina, of Kwahadt ancestry, is regarded as the most expert Pima potter. She spent considerable time at Casa Grande while the excavations were in progress and copied many designs.”⁴⁴ Unlike what happened with the work of Nampeyo (Hopi) or María Martínez (San Ildefonso), Sala Hina’s work did not lead to a revitalization of Pima pottery.

When J. William Lloyd published *Aw-aw-tam Indian Nights* in 1911, he felt fortunate to have met and worked with Thin Leather, who, in the frontispiece, looks much more frail than when he posed for Russell. In spite of what he may have thought of Edward Hubert Wood, the Pima who did yeoman’s work translating the aged storyteller’s myths and legends, Lloyd portrayed Thin Leather as the last of his kind: “Comalk-Hawk-Kih, or Thin Buckskin, who was a *see-nee-yaw-kum*, or professional traditionalist, who knew all the ancient stories, but who had no successor, and with whose death the stories would disappear” (*AIN*, 1–2).⁴⁵ In the course of a single summer in 1903 Thin Leather, in collaboration with Lloyd and Wood, recounted nineteen separate stories, beginning with “The Story of Creation,” for a volume extending to 241 pages. One of the legends, “The Story of Corn and Tobacco,” Lloyd read “before the Anthropological Society of Philadelphia, May 11, 1904” (*AIN*, 217n).

Thin Leather’s copious knowledge of Pima tradition is cited four times substantially throughout *Aw-aw-tam Indian Nights*. In “The Story of Vandaih, the Man-Eagle” Thin Leather provides an extensive account of what must be done when a Pima kills an Apache. “It seems to have been held by the Awawtam [O’odham],” Lloyd writes, “that to kill an Apache rendered the slayer unclean, even tho the act itself was most valiant and praiseworthy, and must be expiated by an elaborate process of purification. From old Comalk Hawk Kih [Thin Leather] I got a careful descrip-

tion of the process” (*AIN*, 90–94). Then, in “The Story of Wayhohm, Toehahvs and Tottai” Thin Leather demonstrated the Pima technique of making fire. “But he [Thin Leather] was old and breathless,” Lloyd writes, reminiscent of Russell’s weaving anecdote, “and ‘Sparkling-Soft-Feather,’ the mother of my interpreter, took [the two pieces of wood] and made the fire for me” (*AIN*, 105). Next, in “The Story of Ee-ee-toy’s Army” Thin Leather gives an account of how the Maricopas came to live among the Pimas, which stemmed from a conflict between the Yumas and Mojaves on one side and the Pimas, Papagos, and Maricopas on the other (*AIN*, 164–65).⁴⁶ Lastly, in “The Story of the Children of Cloud” Thin Leather is unexpectedly noted as being ignorant of the stories told about the daughter of the ancient chief of what is now the Casa Grande Ruins, or “Casa de Montezuma,” her children, or any of the other ruins, or “vahahkkees,” in the area (*AIN*, 234). This completes the historical record of Thin Leather, about whose own life is little known but whose gift to his Pima descendants will go on for generations.

So why, then, were there no Pimas comparable to Carlos Montezuma and Charles Eastman? We have yet to hear an explanation. Volume 3, number 4 of the SAI journal for 1915 includes a list of “Members and Associate Members of the Society of American Indians who Registered at the Lawrence Conference, September 28 to October 3rd—1915,” in which only a single Pima name appears: Dan L. Thomas of Sacaton, Arizona.⁴⁷ We cannot help but wonder what Thomas thought of Montezuma’s speech, “Let My People Go,” in which “the fiery Apache” excoriates the SAI for doing little more than meeting and talking, calling instead for the immediate abolition of the Indian Bureau, making his case based on the deplorable conditions on the reservations and the bureaucratic oppression that keeps Indians in destitution.⁴⁸

In the previous 1915 issue of the SAI journal Arthur C. Parker (Seneca) gives an analysis of the 1910 U.S. census, which he regarded as “the most satisfactory census report on Indians ever made.” Parker notes in his analysis that when the Indian population is divided into linguistic stocks, the number of “Piman” language speakers is 8,607, making the O’odham communities the sixth largest group. However, when we examine these same groups according to the “proportion of full-blood and mixed blood Indians, and of Indians of full-tribal blood, in each principal tribe,” then the Pimas rank fourth and the Papagos sixth, with the Hopi, Navajos, and Zuni comprising the top three. With respect to

the numbers of children attending school as of 1910, Parker documents 1,435 Pimas, age six to nineteen years old, of which 1,021 attended classes, or 71.1 percent. However, Papago numbers were far worse, as 1,299 six- to nineteen-year-olds were counted, of which only 420 attended classes regularly, or 32.3 percent.⁴⁹ The discrepancy may be explained by the fact that Pima communities, in addition to building their own day schools, were in closer proximity to towns and cities such as Phoenix, Chandler, and Mesa than were their cousins to the south. At the same time, symptomatic of the era we are discussing, going to school did not necessarily entail an education. As Robert A. Trennert observes in his article “From Carlisle to Phoenix: The Rise and Fall of the Indian Outing System, 1878–1930,” Pima students were just as likely to be farmed out for menial labor as their counterparts from other indigenous nations, making their lot little better than the wage laborers who received little or no education.⁵⁰

Unsurprisingly, given the priority placed on manual labor, illiteracy within the Pima and Papago communities is rather high. Parker cites the census’s “percentage of illiterates among Indians 10 to 19 years of age and 20 years of age and over, in each principal tribe,” in which we find for Pimas a slightly more than 70 percent rate of illiteracy among those twenty years and older but only slightly more than a 10 percent rate for those ten to nineteen years old. For the Papagos, on the other hand, we find a nearly 85 percent illiteracy rate for those twenty and older and slightly more than 50 percent for those ten to nineteen. Equally unsurprising are the numbers documented for English-speaking proficiency for the same age groups. For the Pimas they recorded a bit higher than 65 percent of those twenty and older who could not speak English proficiently and just under 10 percent for those ten to nineteen. The Papagos scored an almost 85 percent rate for those twenty and older and nearly 50 percent for those ten to nineteen. “In measuring the possibility,” Parker writes, “of civilizing and educating Indians and bringing to them the folk-ways and thought-world of white America it is important to have adequate figures on the ability and inability of the Indians to speak English.”⁵¹

What all of these numbers demonstrate is that the O’odham world, in spite of federal government efforts, was by and large defined by the O’odham language. What had been founded as of 1910 were reservation communities that still maintained the values of a preliterate culture. As such, because parents raised their children with very little schooling—of

which there was not much to gain in the first place from Indian schools—these same children raised families in turn with little regard for learning more than what was necessary for functioning in an impoverished environment. In other words, the O’odham were victims of the low expectations that engulfed them. Certainly, one thing that is missing from the 1910 census figures that Parker analyzed were numbers of Indian college students and graduates—not even a token number appears. Montezuma would have seen this as evidence that the reservation system ought to be terminated and the Indians set free. He pointed out in “Let My People Go” the number of successful Indians in American society who had obtained their education off the reservation, such as Eastman, compared to the dearth of success stories coming out of the reservations. Montezuma wrote: “Where are the names of those Indians who have been educated on reservations? It is not surprising that no name can be mentioned.”⁵²

Having said this, I do not mean to imply that Thin Leather somehow represents failure in the Pima community. On the contrary, during a time of famine Thin Leather’s knowledge of the O’odham *himdag* was like a deep well, albeit forgotten, lying in the cool darkness below the dusty roads of Sacaton. What he thereby accomplished by virtue of his work with Russell, Fewkes, and Lloyd was the preservation—against the threatening effects of “civilization”—of the O’odham oral tradition by playing an active role in its metamorphosis, enabling it to survive the pandemic of assimilation that was sweeping through Indian Country like wildfire. What this article purports to have accomplished in turn is the recovery of this knowledge, its veritable revitalization, which will make possible the resumption of the narrative that Thin Leather began in the fall of 1901, when he told how Juved ma:kai created the first plant.

NOTES

1. For a synonymy of Akimel and Tahono O’odham words, see Bernard L. Fontana, “Pima and Papago: Introduction,” in *Southwest*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz, vol. 10 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, William C. Sturtevant, general editor (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 134–35. The synonymy is credited in a footnote to Ives Goddard.

2. Arthur C. Parker, ed., “List of Active Members,” *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians* 1, no. 2 (1913): 247–49. It should be noted that the membership list only notes name and place of residency but not tribal affilia-

tion, in which case it was not possible to determine the tribal identity of anyone listing, say, a boarding school address.

3. Carlos Montezuma, "Light on the Indian Situation," *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians* 1, no. 1 (1913): 50. A footnote to this article states this was "an address delivered at the [SAI's] Second Conference, at Ohio State University, Joint Session, Oct. 5, 1912." Montezuma wrote of this seminal event: "In one of these midnight raids made by the Pimas in 1871 many Apaches were slaughtered, and I was captured. That dark memorable night with all its awful horrors of massacre is indelibly impressed upon my mind." Noteworthy is the fact that, although Montezuma went on to become known as "the fiery Apache," he was actually a Yavapai-Apache, who are Apaches because of a misnomer applied by white settlers.

4. Donald Bahr, *The Short Swift Time of Gods on Earth: The Hohokam Chronicles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 291. See also J. William Lloyd, *Aw-aw-tam Indian Nights: Being the Myths and Legends of the Pimas of Arizona: As Received by J. William Lloyd from Comalk-Hawk-Kin (Thin Buckskin) thru the Interpretation of Edward Hubert Wood* (Westfield: Lloyd Group, 1911), hereafter cited in the text as *AIN*; and Jesse Walter Fewkes, "Casa Grande, Arizona," in *Twenty-eighth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1906-1907* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1912), 25-179.

5. Frank Russell, "The Pima Indians," in *Twenty-sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1904-1905* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 3-389. Reprinted in book form as *The Pima Indians*, with introduction, citation sources, and bibliography by Bernard L. Fontana (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975), 18na. Hereafter cited in the text as *PI*.

6. Paul H. Ezell, "History of the Pima," in Ortiz, *Southwest*, 157, fig. 8.

7. See also John Gregory Bourke, *On the Border with Crook* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 191-200.

8. Anna Moore Shaw, *A Pima Past* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 87. Shaw, in a story collection titled *Pima Indian Legends*, names Owl Ear as a revered storyteller in "The Rattlesnake Receives His Fangs." See Anna Moore Shaw, *Pima Indian Legends* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1968), 17-19.

9. Arthur C. Parker, ed., "What Indian Students Say about Education," *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians* 1, no. 3 (1913): 296, emphasis in original.

10. James Smith, "Education and Progress for the Indian," *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians* 1, no. 3 (1913): 292-94.

11. John M. Oskison, "Acquiring a Standard of Value," *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians* 2, no. 1 (1914): 47-48. A footnote states that this article was first "an Address delivered before the Third Annual Conference of the Society of American Indians at Denver, Colorado."

12. Arthur C. Parker, ed., "Shall the Pimas Be Robbed of Water?" *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians* 2, no. 2 (1914): 159.
13. Frank Russell, "A Pima Constitution," *Journal of American Folklore* 16, no. 63 (1903): 222.
14. Russell, "A Pima Constitution," 222.
15. Office of Indian Affairs, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1901* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901), 183.
16. Russell, "A Pima Constitution," 226.
17. Fewkes, "Casa Grande, Arizona," 115. See also Russell, "A Pima Constitution," 225, specifically, the section titled "Labor on Ditch or Dam."
18. Ezell, "History," 157.
19. Ezell, "History," 157–58.
20. Ezell, "History," 158–59. See also *PI*, 156–66.
21. Carlisle Indian Industrial School, <http://home.epix.net/~landis/tally.html>; Jon L. Brudvig, "Hampton Normal & Agricultural Institute," <http://www.twofrog.com/hampton2.txt>.
22. Russell, "A Pima Constitution," 227, 228.
23. Russell, "A Pima Constitution," 228. For a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between Progressive Era social science and federal Indian policy, see Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).
24. Peter Nabakov and Robert Easton, *Native American Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 340 (see the photo caption).
25. An alternate orthography for Thin Leather is Comalk Hawk-Kih (Komalk Hok), which is sometimes translated as Thin Buckskin, the name used in Lloyd's *Aw-aw-tam Indian Nights*. According to Fewkes, Thin Leather (which he spells "Kamalkcak" in O'odham) was "popularly called Higgins," in addition to being "a member of the Eagle clan." See J. Walter Fewkes, "A Fictitious Ruin in Gila Valley, Arizona," *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 9, no. 3 (1907): 511, 511n1.
26. Charles H. Cook and Isaac T. Whittemore, *Among the Pimas or the Mission to the Pima and Maricopa Indians* (Albany: Printed for the Ladies' Union Mission School Association, 1893), 32.
27. Shaw, *A Pima Past*, 64.
28. Donald M. Bahr, *Pima and Papago Ritual Oratory: A Study of Three Texts* (San Francisco: Indian Historian Press, 1975), 8, 9.
29. Russell includes a description of the process in a footnote to his text written by Lieutenant Emory in 1846; see *PI*, 148–49a.
30. The gisap is identified as a verdin by Mike Touch. It is a small songbird with a gray body and a yellowish head. See Amadeo M. Rea, *Wings in the Desert: A Folk Ornithology of the Northern Pimans*, Culver Cassa, linguistic consultant (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 216–18.

31. Paul H. Ezell notes:

When the written records of the Pimas begins, they occupied at least seven rancherias separated from each other by distances of from seven to nearly 40 miles. One of these, Santa Catarina, was on the Santa Cruz River west of Picacho Peak; five were on the south side of the Gila between Casa Grande Ruins and a few miles above Gila Bend; and one was on the north bank of the Gila above the junction of the Salt River. ("History," 150–51)

32. Bureau of the Census, *Indian Population in the United States and Alaska, 1910* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1915), 15.

33. Russell also notes that smoke talk is "from tcu-utc, smoke, and nyiák, talk. This myth is also called Hâ-âk Akita, 'Hâ-âk Telling.'"

34. Russell notes that "Antonio [Azul] thinks it [Elder Brother's home] is in Baboquivari mountain." Baboquivari is the prominent mountain near Sells on the Tohono O'odham reservation, south of Sacaton.

35. The location is likely just north of the Estrella Mountains and south of West Lower Buckeye Road.

36. Thin Leather is likely only an assistant because of his advanced age.

37. In a footnote Bahr elaborates on the translation of Jewed ma:kai, stating: "Sometimes translated as 'Earth Shaman' or 'Earth Medicine Man.' The word *jewed*, 'earth,' also means 'land' or 'ground' as opposed to sky or water. At its lowest level of contrast, the word also means 'soil' or 'dirt' as opposed to sand or rock" (*Short Swift Time*, 45).

38. Juved ma:kai's gender is actually ambiguous. My arbitrary selection of the masculine possessive is merely in keeping with the existing literature on O'odham religion. It is more accurate to say that gender is a human limitation that can only tenuously be ascribed to sacred beings.

39. Today the mountain is called Picacho Peak.

40. Fewkes, "Casa Grande, Arizona," 45.

41. Fewkes, "Casa Grande, Arizona," 45–47.

42. Fewkes, "Casa Grande, Arizona," 34n1.

43. Fewkes, "Casa Grande, Arizona," 34.

44. Fewkes, "Casa Grande, Arizona," 140n1.

45. The fact that Thin Leather would tell stories during the summer is a clear indication that he may have felt just as urgently about preserving the Pima oral tradition as Lloyd, not to mention Russell before him. Pimas, like other indigenous people, normally did not tell stories, least of all the Creation Story, during the summer months but restricted it to the dead of winter.

46. See also Clifton B. Kroeber and Bernard L. Fontana, *Massacre on the Gila: An Account of the Last Major Battle Between American Indians, with Reflections on the Origin of War* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986).

47. Arthur C. Parker, ed., "Members and Associate Members of the Society of American Indians Who Registered at the Lawrence Conference, September 28 to October 3rd—1915," *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians* 3, no. 4 (1915): 313–15.

48. A shortened version of this speech was subsequently published in the next issue of the SAI journal. See Carlos Montezuma, "Let My People Go," *American Indian Magazine* 4, no. 1 (1916): 32–33. Beginning with this issue, the SAI quarterly journal changed its name to the *American Indian Magazine*, with Arthur C. Parker remaining as editor. With respect to Montezuma's speech, a footnote informs the reader: "This address has been published and circulated in a pamphlet."

49. Arthur C. Parker, "The Status and Progress of Indians as Shown by the Thirteenth Census," *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians* 3, no. 3 (1915): 185, 187, 191, 195.

50. Robert A. Trennert, "From Carlisle to Phoenix: The Rise and Fall of the Indian Outing System, 1878–1930," *Pacific Historical Review* 52, no. 3 (1983): 278–79.

51. Parker, "Status and Progress," 198, 197, 199, 206, 208.

52. Carlos Montezuma, "Let My People Go" (Chicago: self-published pamphlet, 1915).