Pima Creation Story (Traditional – Ancient)

The Pima lived in the Arizona desert along the Gila and Salt rivers, a remote location that helped them resist European influence. They were named "Pima" in the fifteenth century by the Spanish, who later recorded their first narratives. However, no creation stories were transcribed until the early twentieth century when a Pima named Edward H. Wood met J. W. Lloyd at the Pan-American Fair in Buffalo and asked his help in preserving the legends of Wood's grand-uncle, Thin Leather. The Pima creation story takes us to a landscape on the other side of the North American continent, to a people who favored stability, settlement, and peace and whose artistic traditions were long and rich.

In the beginning there was no earth, no water – nothing. There was only a Person, Juh- wert-a-Mah-kai, “The Doctor of the Earth.”

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

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

The first bush he created was the greasewood bush.

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

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

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

The name of this being was Noo-ee – the buzzard.

Noo-ee was given all power, but he did not do the work he was created for. He did not care to
And so The Doctor of the Earth himself created the mountains and everything that has seed and is good to eat. For if he had created human beings first they would have had nothing to live on.

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

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

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

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

Juhwertamahkay’s Song of Creation

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

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

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

But Juhwertamahkai did not like the way his people acted, to kill and eat each other, and so he let the sky fall to kill them. But when the sky dropped he, himself, took a staff and broke a hole thru, thru which he and Nooee emerged and escaped, leaving behind them all the people dead.
And Juhwertamahkai, being now on the top of his fallen sky, again made a man and a woman, in the same way as before. But this man and woman become grey when old, and their children became grey younger still, and so on till the babies were grey in their cradles.

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

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

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

And Juhwertamahkai did not like this, and let the sky fall again, and created everything new again in the same way, and this time he created the earth as it is now.

But at first the whole slope of the world was westward, and tho there were peaks rising from this slope there were no true valleys, and all the water that fell ran away and there was no water for the people to drink. So Juhwertamahkai sent Nooee to fly around among the mountains, and over the earth, to cut alleys with his wings, so that the water could be caught and distributed and there might be enough for the people to drink.

Now the sun was male and the moon was female and they met once a month. And the moon became a mother and went to a mountain called Tahs-myet-than Toe-ahk (sun striking mountain) and there was born her baby. But she had duties to attend to, to turn around and give light, so she made a place for the child by trampling down the weedy bushes and there left it. And the child, having no milk, was morsished on the earth.

And this child was the coyote, and as he grew, he went out to walk and in his walk came to the house of Juhwertamahkai and Nooee, where they lived. And when he came there Juhwertamahkai knew him and called him Toe-hahvs, because he was laid on the weedy bushes of that name. But now out of the North came another powerful personage, who has two names, See-ur-huh and Ee-ee-toy. Now Seeurhuh means older brother, and when this personage came to Juhwertamahkai, Nooee and Toehahvs he called them his younger brothers. But they claimed to have been there
first, and to be older than he, and there was a dispute between them. But finally, because he insisted so strongly, and just to please him, they let him be called older brother.