Eusebio Francisco Kino
Kino Protects the O'odham People
" Kino's Biography of Javier Francisco Saeta"
Book 3 Chapter 1
"The Circumstances And Causes Of The Death Of Venerable Father Francisco Javier Saeta And
What Motivated The Deaths Of The Seven Other Christians, Servants Of The Fathers,
The Pillage And Burning Of Their Houses And Even Of The Holy Images"

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There has been a great variety of opinions spoken, written and reported about the circumstances and causes of these eight deaths.

These variations are founded either on the diversity of the individual events and motives, or from not having heard the facts or from living far away from the happenings. This was the situation of the informers who were, perhaps, badly informed — as when they reported that all the Pimeria (which has over ten thousand souls) was rising in rebellion and apostacy; [1] actually only seven or eight rancherías or locales were the delinquents and evildoers. The rebellion hardly involved more than two or three hundred malefactors and accomplices. If, at the start, there would not have been such mistaken and disgraceful leadership, many or all of the evils, which later befell San Ignacio and San José de Imuris, would have been avoided.

I will recount here the circumstances and causes which, before God and my conscience, I have witnessed at close range. Using these clear and very particular sources of facts, I desire in Our Lord to propose necessary and useful remedies for the future in matters which are so much for the service of the two Majesties and for the common good of so many souls. [2] I am convinced that, if evils are never manifest, they |81| remain unknown; if they are unknown, they are irremediable; if they are irremediable, we are left always with the same burdens, misfortunes, set-backs, and miseries. We lose time and, perhaps, the glory of eternity. Such matters elicit very serious concern.

 1. Many would say that the circumstances and causes of these deaths have been simply the barbarity, ungratefulness, cruelty, and hate of the Faith by the natives. As this is an evil which is usually found in all new and barbarous nations, this cause would apply to the glory of the holy martyrdom of our venerable Father Francisco Javier Saeta.

 2. The second circumstance or cause was that, days and months before these eight deaths occurred during Holy Week, there had been many various disorders, severities, and cruel and rigorous punishments in San Pedro del Tubutama; the Captain, Governor and the natives had given notice of these things.

 3. The third, and most special, cause was the hotheaded temperament and the cruelty of a servant of the parish of San Pedro del Tubutama. This servant, named Antonio, was an alien from the Opata tribe; [3] he was very harsh and had dealt maliciously with the Pimas, often beating them severely. In particular, he left the foreman of the farm badly injured and half-dead on the day that eight killings were initiated, as will be related in the next chapter.

 4. The fourth circumstance or cause that has contributed to these deaths, riots and outbreaks has been the constant opposition to the Pimas which in turn has been founded on sinister suspicions and false testimony as well as on rash judgments because of which many unjust killings have been perpetrated in various parts of the Pimeria.

The Pimas have been viciously and unjustly blamed for the thefts of the livestock and the plunder of the frontiers. Such was the widespread opinion particularly until last June when General Juan Fernández de la Fuente and General Domingo Terán discovered the booty among the Jocomes and Janos; it is evident that the treatment of the natives in the Pimeria has been very unjust — leading as it has to mistreatment, torture and murder. [4] |83|

5. The fifth circumstance or cause, particularly for the five killings and the sacking of the mission of La Concepción de Nuestra Señora del Caborca, was the mistreatment, envy, hate and somewhat justifiable grief of the justices or chiefs of the very newly established pueblo of San Antonio del Oquitoa, which, after more than eighty baptisms were performed, had been promised a resident Padre. This was some five years ago when Father Visitor Juan María Salvatierra visited there. [5] Seeing that a Father had been provided for permanent residence, together with all kinds of provisions, clothing, cattle and supplies to the people farther down river, that is to La Concepción, many departed from San Antonio to go there. This left San Antonio depopulated with hardly more than its officials, who then felt they had been tricked and cheated, as they said, by lies. Hearing of the murders and pillaging at San Pedro del Tubutama, they took advantage of the occasion to do the same as the other malcontents, killing and robbing just as much at La Concepción. [6]

6. The sixth circumstance or cause was without doubt the hate that the common enemy has for new missions, seeing in them the loss of his dominion over so many souls, who for so many years he has held under the tyranny of his secure power.

Some of the malefactors were moved by one cause; others, by other causes; and in many ways, all concurred. The evils were permitted by the Most High in His Divine Providence; for He knows that even from evils He can draw much good, as in the case of the immense glory and heavenly crowns of the holy martyrs — “ The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians.” [7]

We must not for any reason fail to try to remedy our own errors, faults, defects, harshness or severity, and our narrowness, displays of temper, and foolish resentments. Our common sense, prudence, and Christian charity has to solve and overcome these difficulties in dealing even with these most barbaric peoples, winning them for our most Catholic King and for our eternal God. |85|

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English Translation from

"Kino Biography's of Father Saeta, S.J." 1971

by Eusebio Francisco Kino, S.J. 1696

Original Spanish text edited by Dr. Ernest J. Burrus, S.J. with introduction and notes

Epilogue by Charles W. Polzer, S.J.

Notes

[1] See "Informe del P. Kino, 1703": “This extensive Pimería numbers more than 17,000 souls.” ABZ 4:487; see also Bolton, "Rim," p. 248: “The Pimería Alta in Kino’s day had a population of perhaps 30,000.”
[2] The two Majesties to whom Father Kino refers are the Divine Majesty and the Spanish Imperial Majesty.
[3] The Opata Indians who inhabited the central part of the Sonora River Valley were won over early to Christianity. This tribe became wholly acculturated to Spanish life and are today unknown as a distinct Indian group. See Edward Spicer, "Cycles of Conquest," pp. 91-104.
[4] For further information on General Juan Fernandez de la Fuente see Bolton, "Rim," p. 636; "Kino’s Historical Memoir," 2:307; "Historical Documents," 2:487. For information on General Domingo Teran de los Rios, see Bolton "Rim," p. 643; "Kino’s Historical Memoir," 2:327.
[5] Father Juan María Salvatierra; born in Milan, Italy, November 15, 1648; entered the Society through the Milanese Province on July 10, 1668. He embarked from Cadiz, Spain, on July 11, 1675, and arrived at Veracruz on September 13 of the same year. After finishing his studies in Mexico City, he worked among the Indians in Puebla at San Miguel. In 1681 he moved on to the missions at San Ignacio on the Río Yaqui and then to Santa Ines in Chínipas. He continued working in these northern missions until he was appointed rector of Guadalajara in 1693; then, in 1696 he was made rector and master of novices in Tepotzotlan. In October, 1697, he left for Baja California where he founded the first permanent mission of California. He was named Provincial in 1704 and served in this office until 1706, after which term he returned to California. He died in Guadalajara on July 18, 1717. ABZ 4:250, n. 16.

[6] See above Book II, Chapter 4. Also Manje, "Luz de Tierra Incognita," pp. 30-31;" Favores Celestiales" ("Las Misiones," pp. 37-38); "Kino’s Historical Memoir," 1:140-141.

[7] “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians.” See "Kino’s Historical Memoir," 1:157, n. 157, where Tertullian is cited ("Apologeticus adversus gentes," cap. I: “Plures efficimur, quoties metimur a vobis; semen est sanguis Christianorum.”

Editor's Note: Ernest Burrus' English translation is printed on the odd numbered pages and the Spanish translation is printed on the even numbered pages.